

Events of the Month

Shabbat services at de Toledo High School

Saturday, March 4 - 10:30 am
Birthday Shabbat

Saturday, March 18 - 10:30 am
Anniversary Shabbat

Torah and Shabbat Study

Saturday, March 11, 10:30 am
Northridge Mobile Home Park

Stan Schroeder leads our monthly study and discussion session. Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 or see flyer.

Around the Rabbi's Tisch

Thurs, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
7:30 pm at the Vorspans'

Our 5777 season of Rabbi's weekly discussion continues its second half. Call Rabbi at (818) 888-9817 or see flyer.



Rabbi's Column

This will be old news by the time Shir Notes is "published," but I want to reflect on President Trump's news conference of a few weeks ago—specifically the interchange between the president and a Jew relating to antisemitism.

As you will remember, the reporter, after clearly stating he didn't believe the president nor those on his staff were guilty of antisemitism, then questioned how the country should deal with the uptick of antisemitic incidences.

President Trump's response was to defend himself—that he was neither an antisemite nor a racist. For this response he was roundly condemned.

I want to use this episode as an opportunity to apply a Jewish value.

The lesson is ascribed to Joshua ben Perachia and Nitai the Arbelite in the Talmud: "...judge every man to the side of merit."

I've decided to give President Trump the benefit of the doubt—that he didn't hear the entire question. If he thought he was being personally attacked as being antisemitic and racist because he didn't hear the first part of the question, either because of the noise in the room, or because he wasn't paying close attention, his response would have been appropriate.

This may sound naive, but deciding to give people the benefit of the doubt has made my life much more stress-free! I don't have to question people's motivation ("I really meant that apology—why don't you believe me!"). I don't have to get angry at someone for the way they parked their car or the poor job they are doing making that left turn.

If I get a response to something I said that seems either out of character for that person, inappropriately argumentative or seriously off point, I chalk it up to factors I just don't understand. And not because they're idiots or fools!

My sense of President Trump at this point is of a man who doesn't have strong powers of concentration. As a result, he might not get facts straight on something he heard, read or saw. Worrisome in a President of the United States, to be sure.

But giving him this benefit of the doubt might help us emotionally get through the next four years.

Rabbi David Vorspan



See Purim article on page 9



Scene from Purim carnival *adloyada* in Israel

See **Fiona Taylor's** article about her recent trip to Budapest and Prague on page 6.

Visit our website:
www.shirami.com

President's Report

Shalom,

Is it just me, or is this year rushing by faster than last year? Or is it just the emails from **Stan Schroeder**, Editor-in-Chief of Shir Notes wondering where the President's Message is?



This year's Board really knows how to roll up its sleeves and get down to work. Apparently, when you ask Shir Ami members for their time and energy in taking on extra duties, they respond by giving 110%. Who knew? Many programs are being planned for the coming months, so you'll all have to read the Shir Notes, just to keep up.

We have just begun the second semester of **Around the Rabbi's Tisch (and on the Rebbitzen's Chairs)** on Thursday evenings. (Sorry you missed the homecoming game!) And if you join us for our twice-monthly **Shabbat services**, you're bound to see an extra bottle of "something." But you'll have to come and check it out for yourselves. Our Ritual Vice-President Stan Schroeder is leading his once a month **Shabbat Torah Study Session**. Why do we do these things? Because we're Shir Ami, that's why.

I hope everyone is getting in training for the Shir Ami Walking Team's upcoming season. In May we will be joining together with other walking teams for **Jewish World Watch's Walk to End Genocide**. You can sign up a cv.walktoendgenocide.org. And once we're all in shape we're going to stay that way for our own **Walk Around Lake Balboa** for The Blue Card to provide assistance for needy Holocaust survivors.

Remember, above all, Shir Ami is you!

As always, if you have any questions or want to provide your input, please feel free to email me at JDPistol@aol.com.

Thank you.

Jordan Pistol, President

Congregation Shir Ami Tribute Cards

Thanks to **Phyllis Schroeder** for sending your cards celebrating *simchas* and conveying your get-well and condolence messages.



She is creative with individualized, artistic cards that include a message and color graphics. Call her at (818) 718-7466. Minimum donation of \$5 per card is appreciated.

Rabbi Ed Feinstein - Another Success

by Sima Schuster

Bravo to **Stan Schroeder** for another fantastic installment of his Contemporary Jewish Lecture Series. **Rabbi Ed Feinstein** spent his Sunday afternoon, February 12th, speaking to us on various aspects of the American/Israeli scene. Stan arranged for Temple Ramat Zion to share in this amazing educational experience. TRZ graciously provided the venue and light refreshments.



Rabbi Feinstein began with a Q and A segment---a brilliant way to engage the audience and be sure everyone got their questions answered. Soon the sanctuary was buzzing with all possible views and positions being explored. It is no surprise that Rabbi Feinstein is a brilliant scholar and orator. He also showed us how to "reframe the narrative" so civil discourse can continue.

He concluded with a brief commentary on the parashat which clearly demonstrates how faith needs to be coupled with action in order for us to be triumphant. Faith is the vital first step, but, Action trumps rhetoric.

Thank you Stan for an enlightening afternoon.

Gladys and Sima: Our New Program VPs

Dear Friends,

We are the incoming 2017 Program VPs for Congregation Shir Ami. The year started with a lecture by **Rabbi Ed Feinstein** arranged by **Stan Schroeder** on Sunday February 12. Stan kicked off the year brilliantly. Now, we have to live up to the very high bar he set.

Our next program will be Sunday afternoon, April 30, featuring a Rabbinic Panel with **Rabbi David Vorspan** and his colleagues. Light freshments will be served. Once the details are confirmed, additional PR will be available.



We are open to any ideas and would appreciate suggestions of interest to you.

B'shalom,

Sima Schuster (email: sima@sprynet.com)

Gladys Sturman (email: wseditor1@sbcglobal.net)





DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

Yahrzeits

- Doris Beck
- Fran Black for Shayne Zinke
- Lynn Cherney for Bert Dones
- Gary and Becky Finlay for Faridah B. Morales
- Corinne Geller for Hildegard Geller
- Jacque Gordon for Joseph Gordon
- Lou and Paula Loomis for Minnie Berman and Roy Loomis
- Stan and Clara Rosenbluth for Sadie Rosenbluth
- Edward Schackman for Harry Schackman and Belle Schackman
- Edward and Fay Schneier for Esther Schneier
- Bonnie and Rabbi David Vorspan for Sime and Leonard Meshul
- Rae and Armand Wazana for Fifyne Henderson and Paul A. Kroop

Birthdays

- Michael Easley
- Sima Schuster
- Ahud Sela



Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Fran Black	2/21
(omitted last month)	
Carol Cramer.....	3/5
Neil Hattem.....	3/9
Seymour Potell.....	3/15
Jerry Michaelson.....	3/19
Stephen Schuster.....	3/26

Anniversaries

Paula and Lou Loomis.....	3/3	44th
Rae and Armand Wazana.....	3/11	50th
Fran and Sam Kobulnick.....	3/23	48th

Mailbox



Dear Congregants,

I wish to thank the congregation for their cards and phone calls in response to **Laurie's** passing.

It is good to know that being in a caring group of people is very helpful in a time of need. Laurie really enjoyed being part of this group for such a long time going back to Temple Beth Ami.

Ed Orens

Our Condolences

We regret to inform the congregational family of the passing of: longtime member **Laurie Orens**.



May God comfort Laurie's husband **Ed** and his family at this time of their bereavement.



Correction to Our Roster

Fran Black
New phone no.: **(818) 785-4022**

Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

- Lynn Cherney
- Fran Kobuknick
- Al Simon
- Paulette Pistol
- Sam Hochberg
- Gerry Hochberg



May they be blessed with a complete recovery in body and spirit.

Social Action Committee



Hear Ye! Hear Ye! We are short 45 **Target \$10 Gift Cards** for the women and children in the **Domestic Violence Shelters** we help sponsor for Mothers Day! It would be great if you could please help us by purchasing these cards and send them to **Fran Kobulnick**, 5139 White Oak Ave. #13, Encino, CA 91316. Our **Mother's Day** program at **West Valley Healthcare** will be Friday, May 12. Thanks in advance for your kindness in helping us with this special Mitzvah Project.

Good news! **Passover 2017 FIVE lb. packages of matzo** are in our local stores. We are collecting Kosher-for-Passover 2017 Matzos for SOVA. You can either bring your donations to all services, meetings, Rabbi's Tisch, or directly to SOVA. Or you can ask **Sima Schuster, Leon Nachenberg, Neal Tober, Sheilah Hart, Claire Silverman, or Rae Wazana** to pick them up. If you choose to take them to SOVA, please mention that you are donating on behalf of Congregation Shir Ami. SOVA will also accept your personal checks as donations. We would like to complete our Passover Drive by April 3 so we can get them to SOVA in time for Passover. Also remember that we collect food for SOVA all year in our SOVA barrels located at de Toledo High School lobby. See the Passover SOVA flyer included.



Rae Wazana and **Fiona Taylor** are Team co-captains for the annual Conejo Valley **Jewish World Watch Walk to End Genocide**. See article on this page.

Our **Annual Walk Around Lake Balboa** is Sunday, June 4 at 8:30 am. This year we will be walking to raise money for the **Blue Card Fund** supporting **needy Holocaust survivors**. We are pleased to have three co-chairs for this special Walk; contact **Fiona Taylor, Sheilah Hart, or Claire Silverman** or see flyer for more information. Please mail your flyer for the Walk along with your donation to Congregation Shir Ami.

On behalf of our Committee, we send our condolences to **Ed Orens** on the death of his wife **Laurie**. We will all miss Laurie's beautiful smile and her eagerness to make this world a much better place by doing so many mitzvah projects, including Telephone Chair, Lifeline Volunteer, Operation Gratitude (along with Ed, both volunteers from the very first day). May Laurie's name be a blessing and inspire us to continue her efforts.

Shalom,
Fran Kobulnick, Social Action Vice President

Jewish World Watch Walk to End Genocide

by Rae Wazana



The **JWW Conejo Valley Walk to End Genocide** is a little more than two months away on Sunday, May 7th. We have a few Shir Ami Walk Team members who are registered for this event. We need your help and support to reach our Team goal of raising at least \$1,000 for Jewish World Watch so that it can continue to fund programs of education, advocacy, and on-the-ground projects with other partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and in the refugee camps of Chad.

You can help support the work of JWW and the Shir Ami Walk Team by registering as a Walker or making a donation on-line at cv.walktoendgenocide.org If you prefer, you can also call the JWW office at 818-501-1836 and tell them you want to support Congregation Shir Ami's Walk Team for the Conejo Valley Walk to End Genocide on May 7th. The Walk this year will start at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza at 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks; on-site registration at 11:00 am.

Fiona Taylor is my Team co-captain, and we greatly appreciate your support. Please help JWW by **not standing idly by!**



Thank you.

Operation Gratitude

by Charlene Kazel



March is the time for the "wearing of the green" (my favorite) and the harbinger of Spring. It's a time to start over, to put away the winter clothes, and bring out the new ones.

It's Holiday time, a time for remembrance, and a time for Victory. Our holiday is Purim, a time for

Peace
Unity of mankind
Righteousness
Independence of thoughts and action
Miracles



May we band together with our warriors on distant shores. May their efforts make our world a better place. And may our prayers bring them home safely!

Happy Holiday and a happy life for one and all.

Biographies of the Month: Left and Right George Soros and Sheldon Adelson

by Stan Schroeder

With the recent inauguration of President **Donald Trump** following a bitter and divisive election campaign, I am writing two brief bios of very wealthy Jewish philanthropists who support opposite political views.



George Soros was born **Gyorgy Schwartz** August 12, 1930 in Budapest, Hungary to a well-to-do non-observant Jewish family, who, like many upper-middle class Hungarian Jews at the time, were uncomfortable with their roots. Soros has described his home as anti-Semitic. His mother **Elizabeth** came from a family that owned a thriving silk shop. His father **Tivadar** was a lawyer and had been a prisoner of war during and after World War I until he escaped from Russia to rejoin his family in Budapest.

George escaped Nazi Germany occupied Hungary and emigrated to England in 1947. He attended the London School of Economics, graduating with a bachelor's and eventually a master's degree in philosophy. Soros moved to New York City in 1956 where he worked as an arbitrage trader specializing in European stocks. He became a US citizen in December, 1961.

His business career began with him taking various jobs at merchant banks before starting his first hedge fund, Double Eagle in 1969. He is known as "The Man Who Broke the Bank of England" because of his short sale of US\$10 billion worth of Pound sterling, making him a profit of \$1 billion during the 1992 Black Wednesday UK currency crisis. Soros is considered by some to be one of the most successful investors in the world.

As of February 2017, *Forbes Magazine* listed Soros as the 31st richest person in the world, the world's richest hedge-fund manager, and 19th on its list of the 400 wealthiest Americans, with a net worth estimated at \$25.2 billion. Soros lost almost \$1 billion in the weeks after the election of Republican Donald Trump as U.S. president in 2016.

Soros has been active as a philanthropist since the 1970s, when he began providing funds to help black students attend the University of Capetown in apartheid South Africa, and began funding dissident movements behind the Iron Curtain. Soros's philanthropic funding through his Open Society Foundations includes efforts to promote non-violent democratization in the post-Soviet states. He is also a major contributor to the New Israel Fund and other politically left organizations in and dealing with Israel.

Sheldon Gary Adelson was born August 4, 1933 into a low-income family and grew up in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, the son of **Sarah and Arthur Adelson**. His family was of Ukrainian and Lithuanian Jewish ancestry. His mother immigrated from England, and one of his grandfathers was a Welsh coalminer. His father drove a taxi, and his mother ran a knitting shop.



He started his business career at the age of 12, when he borrowed \$200 from his uncle and purchased a license to sell newspapers in Boston. At age 16 in 1948, he then borrowed \$10,000 from his uncle to start a candy-vending-machine business. He attended trade school to become a court reporter and subsequently joined the army. Adelson attended City College of New York, but decided to drop out.

He established a business selling toiletry kits after being discharged from the army, then started another business named De-Ice-It, which sold a chemical spray to help clear frozen windshields. In the 1960s, he started a charter tours business. He had soon become a millionaire, although by his 30s he had built and lost a fortune twice. Over the course of his business career, Adelson has created almost 50 of his own businesses.

He now is a casino magnate, the founder, chairman and chief executive officer of Las Vegas Sands Corporation, which owns the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, and is the parent company of Venetian Macao Limited, which operates The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and the Sands Expo and Convention Center. He also owns the Israeli daily newspaper *Israel Hayom*, and the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Adelson, a lifelong donor and philanthropist to a variety of causes, founded with his wife's initiative the Adelson Foundation.

As of February 2017, *Forbes Magazine* listed Adelson as the 28th richest person in the world and 14th on its list of the 400 wealthiest Americans, with a net worth estimated at \$27.6 billion.

In February 2012, Adelson told *Forbes* magazine that he is "against very wealthy people attempting to or influencing elections. But as long as it's doable I'm going to do it. Because I know that guys like Soros have been doing it for years, if not decades. And they stay below the radar by creating a network of corporations to funnel their money. I have my own philosophy and I'm not ashamed of it."

He donated over \$25 million to build a Jewish K-12 school in Las Vegas. He also contributed \$25 million to Yad Vashem. He is also a major contributor to politically right organizations in and dealing with Israel.

Travel to Budapest, the Danube and Prague

by Fiona Taylor

Last year I made arrangements with one of my travel companions to take the Danube River cruise from Budapest to Nuremberg, ending up for three days in Prague. While this cruise is often referred to as the Christmas Market trip, there are plenty of Jewish sites to explore and a great deal of history.

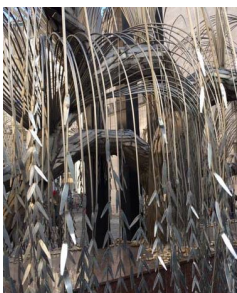


First, let me introduce you to my friend, **Ival**. She and I met 3 or 4 years ago on another winter river cruise: at the time, both of us were with our respective school/college friends. This year, neither of them was available, so we decided to become roommates for the trip. We are essentially the same age and she, like me, is a convert to Judaism: strangely enough, neither one of us converted to get married but for entirely personal reasons because we both felt drawn to Judaism. As she said, on a trip with only around 150 people on board, what are the odds of finding two such kindred spirits? Anyway, we do get along very well.

Ival lives on the East Coast so we met up in Budapest for our pre-cruise extension. It was her first visit so I was able to be somewhat of a guide, having been there once before. Of course we visited the Dohany Synagogue and were lucky enough to have a wonderful guide - although they are probably all pretty great! For anyone who has not visited this iconic site, it appears to be more like a church than a synagogue due to the style of building that was used to construct it. It can hold up to about 3000 people but obviously, since World War II, the congregation is much smaller so it is not used for regular services especially not in winter because heating would cost a fortune.



Behind the synagogue is a memorial garden, which includes a "tree" donated by **Tony Curtis** whose family was originally from Hungary: the metal leaves are inscribed with names of Holocaust victims. At the side of the building is the cemetery used during the short time period when all Jews were confined to a very small area towards the end of



the war, before being shipped off to camps. The dates on the grave markers are all within a matter of days of one another. The community was not allowed to bury their dead outside of the ghetto area so they had no choice but to keep them within the confines of the building precinct. There is also a memorial plaque for Sir Nicholas Winton, the Englishman who quietly helped to transport hundreds of Jewish children away from the Nazis.

There is a wonderful museum upstairs with all kinds of artifacts, from ritual items - Seder plates, menorahs of all kinds, etc. - photographs, books, clothes - anything and everything that could be hidden and preserved and has since been donated to the museum. We saw an extremely unusual Chanukiah made of concrete and metal, with 8 sides, each with a different number of holders for the candles. As Ival and I were about to leave to go back downstairs, we stopped where there appeared to be some half-unpacked items. A man who was standing there started to talk to us and showed us a number of them. The most unbelievable was a tombstone that dates back to the 3rd century with a menorah carved into it. The man told us that it demonstrates that Jews were in the area hundreds of years before Hungary became Hungary.



Római kori sírkő a 3. századból
Roman tombstone, 3rd Century
מצבת חממתא ה-3

When we finally left the synagogue, I was on a mission to find somewhere to buy a yearzeit candle. Nothing in any of the gift shops in the synagogue grounds, nothing in any of the little stores on the streets just nearby. Finally I was about to give up but I saw an Orthodox man walking towards us, so I took a chance and asked him if he spoke English - he did. I told him my problem and he directed us to a shop a couple of blocks away - it was sort of a Jewish 7-11 with anything and everything available from food to newspapers to candles.

We walked back through the city, map in hand, and ended up in one of the Christmas markets. Hot mulled wine is available everywhere and, after walking several miles in very cold weather (at least for me, less so for Ival who is used to New Jersey winters), nothing tastes better and it warms your hands too. There is food in abundance, most of which isn't for me - it's hard enough to find anything that isn't closely related to a pig, never mind anything kosher. However ... we chanced upon a stall selling "Rachel's Flodni" - billed as "traditional Hungarian Jewish cake". Couldn't pass on that - layers of plum jam, walnuts, apples and poppy seeds - not exactly dietetic but very delicious. (continued on page 7)

Travel to Budapest, the Danube and Prague (continued)

After two days in Budapest, we boarded our river boat and we were off sailing up the Danube, with stops in Estergom (Hungary), Vienna, Passau, Regensburg and Nuremberg. Ival had been to Nuremberg before but I had not. The city tour took us - of course - all around the remains of Hitler's grandiose buildings where he held his rallies. There is a building reminiscent of the Colosseum in Rome which was intended to be one of his crowning achievements in architecture. It's now used for some minor government offices and the like. The parade grounds are absolutely chilling when one realizes that the Hitler Youth marched from all over Germany to attend in the tens of thousands, so they could listen to his vile speeches. All the swastikas and Nazi logos have been removed but it's not hard to imagine what it must have been like because of the vast scope of the area. I can't imagine living in this city today with the ever-present specter of Nazism all around.

As we left the boat the following morning, we said goodbye to a fantastic crew and some of our new friends before boarding a bus for the three-hour ride to Prague for our 3-day post-cruise extension.

In spite of the cold weather, Prague was an absolutely wonderful city to visit, full of music, art, history - including a great deal of Jewish history - good food and friendly people. When we arrived at our hotel, we had to wait to check into our room so we browsed through the guide books and flyers in the lobby. I found that there was a concert that evening at 5.30 in the Mirror Chapel of the Clementium. With excellent directions from the hotel, we negotiated our way across the city and found the venue. It was a short 70-minute concert but the standard of music, from the selections to the singers and musicians, was wonderful. A great start to our visit.

The following day we took a tour which gave us a great overview of the city. In the afternoon, we arranged to take the Jewish History tour visiting the old Jewish quarter, the Old New Synagogue, the Spanish Synagogue, the old cemetery, Jewish stores etc. We were told that, in this day and age, a large percentage of the population does not identify with any religion but is tolerant of all. How true the last part is, I'm not sure but none of our guides was Jewish so we couldn't dig any deeper - however, everyone was very friendly and helpful. They told us the story of the Golem so they are well versed in Jewish lore.

One of my favorite stories was told to us by our guide. On the roof of the Prague Concert Hall (maybe opera house?) there are statues of different composers.

During the Nazi occupation, the building was used as Nazi headquarters led by **Heydrich**. Upon learning that one of the statues was of **Mendelssohn**, a Jew, he ordered it removed. The statues were not identified by name so the workers decided to look for the one with the largest nose and removed it: unfortunately, it was actually **Wagner's** statue, not **Mendelssohn's**. Heydrich, furious, eventually had the correct statue taken down but, instead of destroying it, the workers just left it on the roof, out of sight. At the end of the war, it was placed back in its original position. As an aside, Heydrich was assassinated in Prague.

Our guide also told us that there had been a lot of intermarriage in what is now the Czech Republic so many people today believe that they have, or have had, Jewish relatives. Perhaps it is this fact that, in part, had led to the tolerant attitude of the Czech people. However, during the war the Jewish population was absolutely decimated - from more than 200,000 Jews to about 18,000 at the end of the war.

On our last day in Prague, Ival opted to stay in the city and toured around with another of the friends we had made on the boat: she did not want to visit a concentration camp but I took the special tour to Terezin which was absolutely fascinating. I already knew about the artists of Terezin (I bought the book many years ago and still have it). However, I knew little about the history of the fortress. Unlike the death camps like Dachau, Auschwitz and the rest, Terezin was not built by the Nazis. It was, in fact, constructed between 1780 and 1790 as a bulwark against invasion by the Ottomans. By the time it had been completed, they were no longer a threat, so it was used as a garrison, a prison and so on.

There are two parts: the small fortress which has isolation cells and the buildings which housed the occupying forces during World War II and the large fortress which is essentially the town itself where most of the Jewish prisoners were housed. In some ways, it did function as a town - at least on the surface. Prisoners lived there for some time but, as they got sick or unable to work, they were moved out to the larger camps. Terezin did not have a gas chamber although it did have a crematorium because many prisoners died during their captivity. There is a beautifully kept cemetery as you walk between the Small Fortress and the large fortress with a giant Star of David above the many gravestones.



(continued on page 8)

Travel to Budapest, the Danube and Prague

(continued)

As most people know, towards the end of the war Terezin was used as a "model" when members of the International Red Cross were invited by the Nazis to inspect one of their camps. All the malnourished, sickly-looking inmates were shipped elsewhere and more prisoners who had not yet suffered so harshly were brought in so that they looked quite healthy. The Red Cross inspectors were shown the camp orchestra, the sports teams and all manner of activities that looked fairly normal. Of course the inmates were told they had to lie about their lives or they would face dire punishment. The inspectors were completely taken in by this charade. It's amazing how gullible they were.

There is an excellent museum within the area of the large fortress and also a small room that served as a synagogue, upstairs above one of the buildings. Unfortunately, it has suffered damage from flooding, so that much of the interior decoration is incomplete. I bought some books to bring home so I could read more about the camp. Regular Czech citizens live in the large fortress (town) today. The small fortress is really only open for visitors as far as I could ascertain. The guides are specially trained and all wear an Israeli flag pin on their jackets: I asked our guide if he was Jewish - he said no, but they are deeply immersed in the history.



On another note, that particular guide showed me the isolation cells in the Small Fortress. He told me that Cell #1 was used to house **Gavrilo Princep**, the 19-year old Serbian nationalist who assassinated Archduke **Ferdinand** - the action that sparked World War I. He said that the authorities brought him there to get him as far away as possible from Serbia because he was considered a hero by his fellow-countrymen and apparently still is by many Serbians. We got into a discussion about how this one action might very well have been the first tile in a domino effect that has led the world to where we are today. If Princep had not killed the Archduke, World War I would not have begun the way it did, the after effects of the war might not have led to the economic crisis in Germany that fueled the rise of Hitler, the Holocaust might not have happened, World War II, the Cold War - on and on. It's interesting to speculate. Princep died a few years later from tuberculosis.

Our last evening was an outing to a restaurant serving traditional Czech food, accompanied by music and dance. The musicians were again excellent and took requests, even playing songs from Fiddler on the Roof to

Zorba the Greek. They seemed to have a huge repertoire. One of them played an instrument that looked to be related to a xylophone but a great deal more complex, played with small hammers/beaters. I've never seen anything like it in my life. This was a fitting end to our trip.

I must say that three days in Prague is not nearly enough. I feel that we just scratched the surface. Next time, I hope to go back in the spring or fall because, even though I enjoy seeing the festive aspect of European countries in December, I had quite enough of heavy clothing!

Blue Card Fund - Our 2017 Walk Recipient

Of the nearly 2,500 Holocaust survivor households The Blue Card serves, 3/4 are over the age of 75 and nearly 70% live alone. Many struggle to afford basic needs, such as adequate food and healthcare; more than half of them fall 200% below the federal poverty line, meaning their income is less than \$23,540 annually.



The Blue Card clients profile:

- Range in age from 73-107 years old
- 78% have difficulty performing daily activities such as dressing, washing, and cooking
- 77% are women
- 67% cannot leave their homes without assistance

As these men and women age, they are plagued with the consequences of surviving the most devastating conditions imaginable, including poor nutrition and no medical care.

Many survivors came to this country after World War II and worked in menial jobs. Tiny pensions from those jobs, social security, and Medicaid simply cannot keep up with the financial needs of this most vulnerable population. They are frequently desperate for uncovered expenses such as dental care, hearing aids, and transportation to doctors.

After all they have suffered, these men and women should not have to choose between paying for food or paying for medicine. Dignity was forcibly taken from them during the Holocaust, and The Blue Card ensures that its clients don't lose their dignity again, in their last years.

Jewish National Fund Breakfast for Israel

by Leon Nachenberg

I am one of the Table Captains for the JNF's **Inaugural Breakfast for Israel** to be held at the **Warner Center Marriott**

Woodland Hills, 21850 Oxnard St. in Woodland Hills Thursday, **March 30 from 7:30 to 9:00 am** (registration opens at 6:30 am). There is no cost and dietary laws are observed.

A riveting panel discussion on the **50th Anniversary of Jerusalem's Reunification** will be moderated by Film and TV Producer **Howard Rosenman**, panelists include: **Yoel Rosby**, JNF-Ammunition Hill Liaison; **Larry Russ**, Attorney and generous supporter of the Ammunition Hill Memorial site; and **Phillip Yankofsky**, IDF Veteran of the Six-Day war.

This will be an exciting and important opportunity to be with over 500 Israel supporters for an inspiring morning!



I hope you will join me to learn about how JNF touches every life, every day in Israel. This includes programs that connect the next generations to Israel.

IMPORTANT: For security purposes, please register by March 20 at www.jnf.org/sfvbreakfast17 or call **(323) 964-1400 ext. 958**. Be sure to put my name in the box that reads "I was invited by (Table Captain)" so that we will be seated together.



I look forward to seeing you there. If you have questions, please call me at (818) 885-6736.

Purim in Israel

Then...

The source of this holiday is in the Biblical **Book of Esther**, traditionally read twice on Purim – once on the eve of Purim and once on the day of Purim, which relates the saving of Persian Jewry from **Haman**, chief minister to Persian **King Ahashuerus**, who was plotting to kill all the kingdom's Jews (the time frame of this story is estimated as between the destruction of the First Temple and the building of the Second Temple, in the late 6th century BCE). His new queen, **Esther**, and her cousin and/or uncle **Mordechai**, collaborated to turn the fate of the Jewish people around, succeeding without one mention of God in the entire 10-chapter book.

The date on which Purim is observed, the 14th of the Jewish month of Adar (usually in March, this year March 12), in keeping with the date Haman had determined for all the Jews to be killed. In Jerusalem, being a "walled city", Purim celebrations continue through the following day, which is called Shushan Purim.

“

And now...

They tried to kill us. We won. Let's eat." That is the theme of many of the Jewish holidays, and Purim is no exception, except in this case we also drink alcohol, give charity to needy people and give gifts of food to friends.

On Purim, in order to celebrate the complete turnaround of the Jews' lot (in Hebrew *pur* – hence the name Purim) and of the hidden face of God in the story, we dress up in costumes and drink alcohol which both help us see the world from a different point of view.

One of the biggest Purim events in Israel is the **adloyada** (parade/carnival). In Jerusalem there are plenty of festivals and parties, some for families and children, some for those who want to go all out with their drinking, dressing up, and dancing until they can no longer tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai.



Shop at Ralphs - Earn Money for Shir Ami

by Maralyn Soifer

Here is an easy way to earn money for our Temple. We

are now officially a **Ralphs' community agency**. All you have to do is follow these simple instructions to help earn money for Congregation Shir Ami.



1. If you don't have a Ralphs' rewards card already, go to the store or go to website **www.ralphs.com** and select **Order a Ralphs reward card**.
2. Once you have your card, go to the website: **www.ralphs.com** and select **Create an account**
3. If you have an account, your email address is your account ID. If you forgot your password, select **Forgot your password?** and you will receive an email with instructions to reset it. Follow the instructions to enter your email address and create a new password.
4. If you already have a Ralphs' reward card and an account, you will see Account Summary when you login. You can change to our Temple by clicking on **Edit** within **Community Rewards**.

You can do a search for Congregation Shir Ami by putting in the number **92785**. Our congregation will pop up and click on the button next to the name. Click on the button that saves the changes.

5. You should also check the bottom of your receipt when you shop. It should say "**At your request, Ralph's is donating to CONGREGATION SHIR AMI**".
6. If all else fails, call me in the evening at (818) 704-0306. I'll be happy to walk you through it.
7. Start Shopping!

Make sure that the clerk swipes your card each time you shop. Verify that your receipt shows a contribution to Congregation Shir Ami at the bottom.

Important Note: All participants must confirm their selection annually starting in September. On or after September 1, sign into your account and reconfirm Community Rewards selection.

Congregation Shir Ami
P.O. Box 6353
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

Thursdays March 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30, 7:30 - 8:30 pm “Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” at the Vorspans’

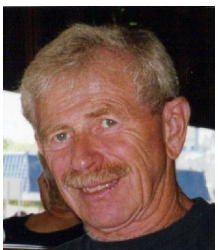
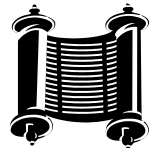


This popular Shir Ami educational series continues the second half of its 5777 season. Come join us for our weekly discussion of Rabbi Vorspan’s selected topics of Jewish interest. We discuss Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This is a unique opportunity to learn and share in an informal format around the Vorspans’ dining room table.

The Vorspans’ home is located at 22320 Philipprimm St. in Woodland Hills. Call Rabbi Vorspan at (818) 888-9817 for more information.

Saturday March 11, 10:30 am: Torah/Shabbat Study at Northridge Mobile Home Park

Stan Schroeder leads a Shabbat study session one Saturday morning a month at 10:30 at the Northridge Mobile Home Park Rec Room, 19120 Nordhoff St. We discuss the weekly Torah portion, the Shabbat prayers that are included in our Contemporary service, and various subjects relevant to Conservative Judaism.



Our next session will be March 11. The Torah reading will be parsha *Tetzaveh* (Exodus 27:20 - 30:10). It discusses garments worn by the high priest and the initiation of Aaron and his sons. The holiday of Purim starts that night and we will delve into the story of Queen Esther. We are commanded “*la asok b’divre torah*” (to engage in the study of Torah). Join us and fulfill the mitzvah.

Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 for more information.



Let's go for a walk around Lake Balboa!

Join Congregation Shir Ami's Social Action Committee on **Sunday, June 4th at 9:00 am.**
 Registration required starting at 8:30 am

All proceeds go to Blue Card Fund for Holocaust survivors

Minimum donation: \$10 per person, NO MAXIMUM! Following the walk, a brunch will be provided by our Social Action Committee near the lake. Please bring vegetarian salad, side dish, or dessert to share, and remember to wear your Mitzvah Patrol shirt.

The Blue Card organization started in 1934. It now provides services for the 2100 most needy Holocaust survivors in the U.S. 100 % of our donations will reach them, most of whom are over eighty.

Also please bring non-perishable and non-breakable food for SOVA.

Sit-down activities are available for those who don't walk. Call **Fiona Taylor** at (818) 903-6381 or **Sheilah Hart** at (818) 884-2342 or **Claire Silverman** at (747) 237-7130. Sign up by returning this tear-off with your check for \$10 (or more) per person to Congregation Shir Ami, P.O. Box 6353, Woodland Hills, CA 91365. Make check payable to **Congregation Shir Ami.**

Total Donation \$ _____

Walker Names: Brunch (y/n)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Donation Amount: \$10 [] \$18 [] \$36 []
 \$72 [] Other []

Phone no. _____

In honor/memory of _____

Number of participants _____

I will bring: Salad [] Dessert [] Side dish []

JFS { SOVA COMMUNITY FOOD & RESOURCE PROGRAM

Passover/*Chumetz* Food Drive



Help SOVA clients celebrate Passover
and “eat and be satisfied” all year long.



At this time of year as we are cleaning out our chumetz and purchasing Passover foods, think of SOVA and bring food donations to your Temple/Synagogue. Donation barrels are available.

Donate your *chumetz* and Passover food between March 20th to April 10th.

We accept any unopened canned or packaged foods as well as personal hygiene items and gently used children’s books.

No glass containers please.

For more information, call Kathi Dawidowicz at 818-988-7682, x120.



**JFS { SOVA Community Food & Resource Program, 16439 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406
Visit our website at www.jfsla.org/sova**