



Shir Notes

The Official Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 16, Number 2,
February 2018. Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Events of the Month

Shabbat services at de Toledo High School

Saturday, February 10 - 10:30 am
Birthday Shabbat

Saturday, February 24 - 10:30 am
Anniversary Shabbat

Torah and Shabbat Study Saturday, Feb. 3, 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.

Antisemitism in America Ariella Schusterman of ADL

Sunday, February 18, 2 pm
at de Toledo High School
We will learn the threats and
fighting them. See article in page 2
and flyer. Call Sima Schuster at
(818) 774-1951.

Around the Rabbi's Tisch Thursdays, February 15 & 22 7:30 pm at the Vorspans'

Our 5778 season of Rabbi's weekly
discussion begins its second half.
Call Rabbi at (818) 888-9817 or see
flyer.



President's Day

Monday, February 19

See article on Jews in
American history on page 6.

Visit our website:
www.shirami.com

Rabbi's Column



I recently saw a t.v. show where a 9-1-1 operator
deceived two home robbers, telling them she was going
to find an escape route out of the neighborhood for them,
so long as they released a girl they were holding hostage.

She promised them safety, but as soon as they emerged from the back
door they were arrested by the police. The 9-1-1 operator admitted to lying
to get them out of the house and removed from the young girl.

A justifiable lie?

A t.v. show, to be sure, but it presents us with an interesting moral dilemma.

I found a similar example in the Torah. When Moses pleads with Pharaoh to
release the Israelites, he specifies: "We must go a distance of three days
into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God..."

Really? That's the plan? And then they will return to their slavish existence?
Is Moses asking for less here hoping to win an agreement? And then, once
beyond the clutches of the Pharaoh, hightail it out of town?

I think we do similarly, at least from time to time, with the hope that when we
have been able to achieve a little of our goal, circumstances will change
and we will be able to continue further.

Remember doing this with our children? "Just eat two Brussel sprouts!"
Maybe two will become the bowl! "Just read 4 pages of that history book!"
hoping 4 becomes the chapter.

But our kids did this with us: "Just let me stay up 5 more minutes..."

We are not beyond using some chicanery to get people to come along. For
example, we might throw an ingredient into the mix we know they won't
usually eat. Maybe they won't notice it's there and will actually like it!

Ultimately, we decide that the ends can sometimes justify the means.

Which just goes to show us that life can get messy and complicated when
we feel an ulterior good is at stake. But if we feel free to manipulate others,
we shouldn't be upset when the tables are turned.

And, maybe we'll actually like it!

Rabbi David Vorspan

Jewish Proverbs

A half-truth is a whole lie.

All things grow with time -- except grief.

Against stupidity; God Himself is helpless.

A pessimist, confronted with two bad choices, chooses both.



President's Report

Shalom,

I was considering going through all my past "President's Messages" in an attempt to take the easy way out and recycle one of my past "February" messages. Unfortunately, the combination of the fact that we don't have all that much turnover in membership and Stan's sharp eye put the squelch on that plan.

Besides, recycling programs just isn't our style as we always seem to come up with something different every year. Oh, sure we have our standard activities. For some reason, we just can't shake the idea of having our **Shabbat Services** on Shabbat.

Thursday nights are still "**Around the Rabbi's Tisch**" (and on the Rebbitzin's chairs). **Breakfast with the Rabbi**, the **Walk Around Lake Balboa**, our recently very, very successful **Linen Shabbat** (a *yasher koach* to all of you!) are the stalwarts of our congregation activities.

But we also bring in the new and (sometimes) untested. Our **Shabbat/Torah Study Session** is relatively new. We have an ongoing video presentation of the **Story of the Jews**. This month, we are having a presentation by the ADL on the rise of anti-semitism. The key concept is that while we are "**The Little Schul that DOES**," we are not "**The Little Schul that does the same thing over and over again**." We are certainly not committed to one track and one track only.

And we can't be committed that way. At our Shabbat Services we sing every prayer as though we were singing it for the first time. You can listen all you want, but you won't hear a single "drone." Our enthusiasm is both infectious and a bit exhausting to those of us that have trouble keeping up with you. (I wasn't dozing. I was just resting my eyes!) At our Consecration Service, approximately 40% of our membership attended services. And we get close to that number every Shabbat, even when my family doesn't show up. We are getting so used to it, that we tend not to notice how remarkable it is.

And if you look around during services you will find things that weren't there a few years ago. We have a beautiful *parochet*. And we have another beautiful *parochet*. We have a *yad* that we didn't have before and we have a chair for the Torah. Who knows what we're getting next? No, it's not a building fund.



I always used to wonder why we call our Shabbat Service a "Contemporary Service." I guess that in the past, we had to distinguish it from a more "traditional" service. But the "Contemporary Service" it remains. And now I know why. Because Shir Ami is a Contemporary Congregation. We respect and observe traditions, but let's face it: We have 70, 80 and 90-year-olds who are always looking to the future. (Including one 95-year-old Executive Vice-President who is planning a coup to take over the presidency in the next five years.)

So, there you have it. We look forward to the coming year to see what changes will come and to see how we will all be part of those changes. Shir Ami, where tradition and the future walk hand in hand!

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

Antisemitism in America - February 18

by Sima Schuster

A new secular year has dawned and we all pray for a kinder, more peaceful 2018.



We start the new year with a Sunday, February 18th program from 2 - 4 pm at de Toledo High School. It features guest speaker Associate Regional Director **Ariella Schusterman** from the ADL. The Anti-Defamation League

has been engaged in fighting antisemitism and intolerance for over 100 years.

Ariella is an accomplished educator and will speak on the rise of antisemitism and how we can combat it. We have seen local incidents in local schools and Jewish centers. This is spreading at an alarming rate throughout America and Western Europe. As Jews, we must unite and stand up to battle this pernicious outbreak.

See the flyer in this *Shir Notes*. Please fill in tear-off at bottom as directed, Phone me (818) 774-1951 or email sima@sprynet.com for more information.



DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

Yahrzeits

Lynn Cherney for Joseph Dones
Jay and Gale Cohen
Ethel Granik for Sarah Golberg
Jacquie Gordon for Revella Katz and Joseph Gordon
Fran and Sam Kobulnick for Rose Suckman
Elizabeth and David Raider for Naomi Packer
Stan and Clara Rosenbluth for Sadie Rosenbluth
Lonny and Nancy Scharf for Sally Bricker
Ed and Fay Schneier
Steve and Marcie Spetner for Sarah Lurie
Bonnie and Rabbi David Vorspan for Leonard and Sime Meshul
Rae and Armand Wazana for Fifyne Henderson and Paul A. Kroop

Birthdays

Jacquie Gordon
Jerry Gort (85)
Claire Silverman (86)
Fiona Taylor (73)
Neal Tober (69)

Anniversaries

Jay and Gale Cohen (12)

Other

Stan and Clara Rosenbluth in honor of the birth of their great-granddaughter Calla Rose Nickelsberg, welcomed by parents Tamara and Josh and big brother Brayden

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Nancy Scharf..... 2/1
Carol Koransky..... 2/2
Michael Easley..... 2/5
Esther Perez..... 2/7
Bette Delman..... 2/9
Lorraine Simansky..... 2/10
Karen Benson..... 2/10
Sherry Dollins..... 2/12
Sima Schuster..... 2/13
Elizabeth Raider..... 2/17

Anniversaries

Elizabeth and David Raider..... 2/5 57th

Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

Fran Kobuknick
Al Simon
Stan Goodman
Phyllis Schroeder
Becky Finlay



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

Editor's note:

Last month's *Shir Notes* listed the 2018 Shir Ami officers and Board of Directors. We now have a new member of our Board: **Alan Burman**

Welcome and congratulations, Alan!

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.



Correction to Our Roster

Robin Burman
Email address: 1robbur1@gmail.com

Social Action Committee

Special thanks to all those who donated the much needed new linens to the women and children in the JFS Domestic Violence Shelters we help sponsor! Also thanks to our guest speaker, **Kitty Glass**, JFS Outreach Coordinator for Domestic Violence Project and to those who came to our Annual Linen Shabbat to show their support! We filled up Kitty's car to the max and all the new linens were delivered to the shelters early Monday morning. And, as always, to **Rabbi and Bonnie** for leading us in this special Mitzvah Project.



It is hard to believe, but Passover is almost here! All our local stores will be receiving Passover 2018 five-pound packages of matzah and the other Passover items by the second week of February. Usually the best sales take place the first week Passover items are displayed. Congregation Shir Ami will again be collecting these packages of **Passover 2018 matzah for SOVA** this year. See the flyer in this *Shir Notes*. We will continue to collect non-perishable and non-breakable food items in our de Toledo SOVA barrels at our services and events. SOVA will gladly accept your checks for the Passover. When you mail a check to SOVA, please include a note that you are from Congregation Shir Ami, and include your address so they can mail you a thank you. If you have any questions, please contact members of our Committee. They will also assist in accepting your matzah donations.



Committee members will gratefully accept your \$10 Target gift cards that are given to the mothers and children in the Jewish Family Service domestic violence shelters.



Looking ahead, these events are upcoming and more information will be forthcoming:

Sunday, May 6, annual **Conejo Valley Jewish World Watch Walk to End Genocide**

Friday, May 11, West Valley Healthcare Center annual **Mothers/Fathers Day Shabbat celebration**

Sunday, June 3, annual **Walk Around Lake Balboa to benefit charity** (yet to be selected)

Thank you for your emotional, physical, and financial support with all our projects. We truly are the *Little Temple That Could and Does Good in our Community and Across the World!* I am proud of our Congregational family!

Please let members of our Committee know if someone is ill or needs extra prayers, and perhaps a special call or visit. *Bikkur holim* (visiting the sick) is a big part of who we are.

On a personal note, I am very grateful for your prayers, special kindness, emails, and cards during my surgery and long recovery. You have made this difficult time much more tolerable.

Shalom,
Fran Kobulnick, Social Action Vice President

Operation Gratitude
by Charlene Kazel



This is a happy month, the month of hearts and flowers filled with much love.

Hearts are organs with feelings, as in straight from the heart.

There is the "lub dub" of our heart beats.

When there is sorrow, our heart aches.

When it is someone we love or care about, we wear our hearts on our sleeves.

Have you ever had a heart-to-heart talk with a loved one or friend?

Or what's the heart of the matter or what matters in our hearts?

And then there are the "brave hearts" who serve our country and keep us safe. These souls need you know that our hearts beat as one. We are all on the same path, the road to respect and peace. That's what **Operation Gratitude** is all about.



Service personnel receiving Operation Gratitude packages

Jewish World Watch

by Rae Wazana
Synagogue Advisory Council
Representative for JWW



We have two beautiful “quilts” (see right hand column) to give to JWW to help provide shade and beauty in a Refugee camp in one of the countries in which JWW has projects. The individual squares in these quilts were decorated by many people on Mitzvah Day last November and were lovingly sewn together by our very talented Rebbitzin **Bonnie Vorspan**. They are truly beautiful, artistic creations which will help bring



some beauty, shade, and caring into the lives of people who are living in Refugee camps.

Thank you, Bonnie, for all your talent, your caring, and your help in completing this Shir Ami project for **Jewish World Watch!**

JWW has expanded its mission of advocating for victims of violence and mass atrocities to include the Rohingya people in Burma (also known as Myanmar). JWW has joined with a broad coalition of organizations from across the Jewish community in writing a letter urging the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee to advance the Burma Human Rights Freedom Act of 2017 (S. 2060). The Bill would increase humanitarian aid for displaced Rohingya communities, codify targeted U.S. sanctions against those responsible for the violence, and help establish a mechanism to help provide accountability for crimes committed against the Rohingya people and other minorities in Burma.

24 national organizations including **Jewish World Watch**, the **American Jewish World Service**, the Anti-Defamation League, and the **Jewish Council for Public Affairs** signed this letter along with 48 local organizations and 248 Rabbis and communal leaders. If the Senate passes this resolution, as did the House of Representatives, it would help send a message that the United States will NOT be silent or inactive in the face of mass atrocities.

Please don't forget the annual Thousand Oaks JWW Walk to End Genocide will take place on Sunday, May 6th. More information will be forthcoming about our Shir Ami Walk Team once the Walk Registration website is available on-line. Thank you, everyone, for your continuing, amazing support of Jewish World Watch!



Some Jews in U.S. History on President's Day

by Stan Schroeder

In 1584, **Sir Walter Raleigh**, a favorite of **Queen Elizabeth I**, received a royal patent to explore the Virginia territory and found a permanent settlement. The queen hoped that the colonists would discover copper, silver, and gold, or at least find a passageway to the Orient. Sir Walter recruited **Joachim Gaunse**, a Bohemian (Czech) Jewish metallurgist and mining engineer, to join the Virginia expedition. Gaunse thus became the first recorded Jew to set foot on English soil in North America.



Invited to England by the Royal Mining Company in 1581, Gaunse completely revamped English methods for smelting copper. In 1584, Britain was preparing for war with Spain and desperately needed copper, a critical element in the production of bronze from which the English manufactured the accurate cannons that gave their warships an advantage over the Spaniards' inferior cast iron cannons. The superior firepower provided by bronze cannonry proved crucial in the English navy's victory in 1588 over the much larger Spanish Armada.

Gaunse's contributions to English bronze manufacture were monumental. Before his innovations, English smelters required a minimum of 16 weeks to purify a batch of copper ore. Gaunse's process reduced that time to just 4 days. As an added bonus, Gaunse found a way to use the impurities removed from the ore in textile dyes. In an age when many still believed in alchemy (the "science" of turning base metals into gold), Gaunse pioneered modern scientific research methods.

"We hear much these days about our 'Judeo-Christian' heritage and its early and enduring influence on our culture," says the *Jewish Press*. But given that only about 2,500 Jews lived in the American colonies in 1776, it continues, "usually those of us who speak of that early dual influence are referring to the Christian Bible with its Jewish roots." Turns out, however, there was at least one influential Jew at the time of the first official Thanksgiving in 1789. **Gershom Mendes Seixas** was the

cantor and spiritual leader of New York City's only synagogue, Congregation Shearith Israel, until it shut down operations during the Revolution. He became the leader of a synagogue in Philadelphia, where he used his pulpit to speak out in support of **General George Washington**. When Washington was inaugurated as president, Seixas was one of the presiding clergy. "This was certainly an act of gratitude by Washington for the preacher's stalwart support during the war," says the *Press*. "It was also, though, an expression of Washington's thinking about the



importance of religious freedom and diversity in the new nation."

And when Thanksgiving became an official holiday that year, Seixas, back at Shearith Israel, preached that Jews were "equal partakers of every benefit that results from this good government" and should try "to live as Jews ought to do in brotherhood and amity, to seek peace and pursue it."



The most fascinating – and influential – of Lincoln's Jewish acquaintances was undoubtedly his Jewish chiropodist, **Isachar Zacharie**. A New York newspaper described him as having "a splendid Roman nose, fashionable whiskers, an eloquent tongue, a dazzling diamond breastpin," and, most important of all for treating a patient with chronically aching feet, "great skill in his profession."

In 1862, Lincoln heard that Zacharie could boast in his résumé of having had feet of Clay – *Henry Clay*, that is, Lincoln's personal and political hero. So the President sent for him to see if the chiropodist could alleviate his aching corns. One newspaper joked, "It would seem that all of our past troubles originated not so much with the head [of the nation] but with the feet of the nation."

Jokes aside, Zacharie worked wonders with Lincoln. He not only retained Zacharie as his physician, but he also found other ways for him to serve the Union as an unofficial envoy to Jewish communities in the South with an eye toward rebuilding their ties to the Union. Zacharie worked hard for Lincoln's re-election in 1864, writing to assure the President during the campaign:

The Israelites, with but few exceptions, will vote for you. I understand them well.... I have secured good and trustworthy men to attend to them on Election day. My men have been all the week seeing that their masses are properly registered—so that all will be right.

Zacharie's efforts predictably aroused a stir among – who else? – his fellow Jews, some of whom took issue with Zacharie's claim that he could "deliver" the Jewish vote as a bloc. "There is no 'Jewish vote,'" the editor of the *Jewish Messenger*, **Meyer Isaacs**, wrote angrily to Lincoln, "and if there were it could not be bought." The fracas threatened to erupt into a political crisis until Lincoln ordered an aide to write a letter assuring Jewish leaders that no one had ever pledged the Jewish vote to the President, and he in turn had offered no inducements to secure it.

TREE OF LIFE

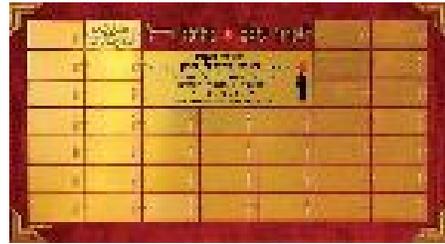


This beautiful Tree of Life, with leaves priced at \$100 and rocks at \$250 (one remaining), makes a perfect way to celebrate family occasions and support Congregation Shir Ami.

The Tree is on a rosewood background and consists of gold-colored leaves and rocks. It is displayed at all Congregation Shir Ami services and events.

For more information or to place an order, call Sherry Dollins at (818) 886-7590.

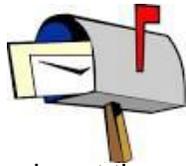
Congregation Shir Ami Memorial Board



If you would like to honor the memory of your loved ones by dedicating plaques on our new Memorial Board, please call Sherry Dollins at (818) 886-7590 so she may mail you an order form. The cost of each plaque is \$36.

Each plaque may contain up to three lines of engraving: English name, Hebrew name, and the years of birth and death. Both of our Memorial Boards are displayed at all our services.

Mailbox



Dear Friends,

It was wonderful seeing you all on Saturday at the Linen Shabbat. I feel as though I'm having a visit with "family" as that's how you've all become to me and to our program. Thank you so very much for your incredibly generous contribution of towels, sheets, pillows, socks and comforters for the shelters. The staff was completely overwhelmed with the amount of items you all contributed and these will fulfil a great and ongoing need for our shelter residents.

Imagine having to leave the comfort of your own home and coming into another with whom you have no familiarity.....and then being blessed to have a beautiful warm bed fully decorated with brand new accessories to provide comfort and warmth. The smiles on the faces of the residents are priceless and they immediately feel welcomed and secure. They realize that people out there truly do care about their well-being and happiness.

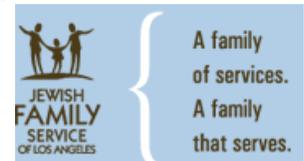
Your donations provide an important component of welcoming new residents into our shelters so they may begin their healing process.

Our hearts are overflowing with appreciation to you all. Many thanks to everyone for your commitment, love and support for our work. Many blessings and wishes for good health to each and every one of you.

Warmly,

Kitty Glass

Community Outreach Coordinator



More Jewish Proverbs

A mother understands what a child does not say.

A person worries about the past, distresses about the present, and fears the future.

A slave shows his true character, not while he is enslaved but when he becomes a master.

A friend you have to buy; enemies you get for nothing.

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

Sunday, February 18 at 2:00 pm
Ariella Schusterman: *Antisemitism in America*
at de Toledo High School
22622 Vanowen St., West Hills



Our guest speaker is **Ariella Schusterman**, Associate Regional Director from the ADL. The Anti-Defamation League has been engaged in fighting antisemitism and intolerance for over 100 years.

Ariella is an accomplished educator and will speak on the rise of antisemitism and how we can combat it. We have seen local incidents in local schools and Jewish centers. This is spreading at an alarming rate throughout America and Western Europe. As Jews, we must unite and stand up to battle this pernicious outbreak.

The cost is \$10 per person and includes coffee and cookies. Call **Sima Schuster** at (818) 774-1951 or email **sima@sprynet.com** for more information.

We need your reservation by February 11. There will be no follow up phone calls, so please respond quickly. Mail the tearoff below to Sima Schuster, 6300 Newcastle Avenue, Encino CA 91316.

Please reserve _____ places for ***Antisemitism in America***
Sunday, February 18 at 2:00 pm.

Include check payable to Congregation Shir Ami.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Thursdays February 15 and 22, 7:30 - 8:30 pm “Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” at the Vorspans’

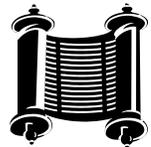


This popular Shir Ami educational series begins the second half of its 5778 season. Come join us for our weekly discussion of Rabbi Vorspan’s selected topics of Jewish interest. We discuss Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This is a unique opportunity 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 February 3, 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 February 3. The Torah reading will be parsha *Yitro* (Exodus 18:1 - 20:23). It includes the epic story of the Israelites at Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments. 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.

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 30th to April 7th.

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**