



Shir Notes

The Official Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 21, Number 11, December 2024. Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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Events of the Month

Shabbat services at de Toledo High School Zoom and Livestream

Saturday, December 7 10:30 am
Birthday Shabbat

Saturday, December 21 10:30 am
Anniversary Shabbat

Annual Membership Meeting at de Toledo and via Zoom

Sunday, December 15, 2:00 pm
See notice at the bottom of this page and page 3.

Around the Rabbi's Tisch at de Toledo and via Zoom

Thursdays, Dec 5, 12, and 19
7:30 pm

See flyer for more information

Torah and Shabbat Study Saturday, Dec. 28, 10:30 am at the Schroeders'

Stan Schroeder leads our monthly study and discussion session. See flyer for more information.



Visit our website:
www.shirami.com

Rabbi's Column

Forgive this self-serving article, but bear with me...



I received an email recently from a former student at de Toledo High School. I had her as a student around 10 years ago. This is part of what she wrote:

“With the holidays coming up I was thinking about the impact you had on my Jewish path...I wanted to let you know I began working at Hillel. My decision to pursue a career in the Jewish world was in large part due to your passion and dedication to me as well as all the other students at de Toledo...I felt compelled to let you know that your impact on me as a high school student changed the trajectory of my career and my understanding of what it means to be Jewish, and I know I am not the only student of yours who feels this way.”

Needless to say, I was near tears when I read this. It is rare to know what impact one has on others. And for a teacher to learn that I had such an effect on a student was overwhelming.

I share this because we have entered the month of December during which we have holidays that encourage gift-giving.

Most gifts have a limited life-span. Clothes run out of style, electronics become obsolete, books are read, food is consumed, and so forth.

But the gift of words can last a lifetime.

And words of gratitude for acts performed in the past but which have had lasting affect are priceless.

So if there was ever a person who did something for you that changed you for the better, or improved your life in some way, let them know.

It will bring a smile to them, and not just once.

Rabbi David Vorspan

Our Annual Membership Meeting at de Toledo High School Rita's Room and via Zoom Sunday, December 15, 2:00 pm

Congregation Shir Ami will hold its annual Membership Meeting in person and via Zoom . **Alan Burman**, our Nomination Chair, will conduct the election of our Officers and Board of Directors for 2025. President **Jordan Pistol** will give his State of Shir Ami message. Our Officers and Committee VPs will discuss their status and plans. We encourage all members to “attend”. **ID 864 4008 2040 Password 677588**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9lVzhwVWVSRGgraEFJdz09>

President's Report



Shalom and Happy Chanukkah,

As we round out 2024, I would first like to thank those who participated in our Mitzvah Day at the Jewish Home for the Aging. Everyone had a wonderful time eating pizza, making Chanukkah cards and watching master Bingo players in action. If you weren't able to make it this year, we are planning to return for next year's Mitzvah Day.

In addition to all those holidays in December, this is also the month for our Annual Members Meeting where we will be electing (or re-electing) members of the Board of Directors and Officers. This year, as a change of pace (and time), we will be holding the meeting Sunday, December 15 at 2:00 p.m. That's right, during the day, for those of us who don't (or shouldn't) drive at night. We look forward to seeing you there as we ready ourselves for 2025.

Of course, December, along with a teeny-tiny bit of January, is also the month of Chanukkah, so we are collecting **\$10 Target gift cards** for the families in the shelters. Please contact our Social Action Committee Vice-President, **Rebecca Finlay** for further information.

Add to that our regular program of Shabbat Services, Shabbat Torah Study Sessions and Around the Rabbi's Tisch, this December will prepare us to ring out the old year and ring in the new as we fondly remember 2024 and look forward to 2025.

We're Congregation Shir Ami and that's what we do! If you have any ideas you would like to see us put into action, feel free to contact me at jdpistol@aol.com.

Shalom,
Jordan Pistol, President



Social Action Committee

I want to thank everyone who attended Mitzvah Day at the Jewish Home for the Aging November 3. We played Bingo, wrote cards to Israeli soldiers, and had a delicious pizza lunch.

Our committee is once again collecting \$10 Target gift cards for the children and women in the domestic violence shelters for Chanukah. Please mail the gift cards to me at
Becky Finlay
17603 Miranda St.
Encino, CA 91335



We will have our **Annual Linen Shabbat** at our Shabbat service January 20. See the flyer in this *Shir Notes*.

Becky Finlay, Social Action Vice President





DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

Yahrzeits

Barbara and Neil Hattem for Nettie Soloman
Ed Schneier
Claire and Lew Silverman for Ben Besbeck
Rae and Armand Wazana for Messoda Wazana

Birthdays

Lew Silverman (94)
Armand Wazana (88)

Other

Irene Goodman in memory of her beloved brother Roger Goodman

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Davida Tydings..... 12/8
Rae Wazana..... 12/8
Rabbi David Vorspan..... 12/9
Becky Finlay..... 12/14
Steve Spetner..... 12/20
Andrea Nachenberg..... 12/24
Mark Hyman..... 12/25
Laura Simon..... 12/25

Anniversaries

Ellie and Jerry Zatz..... 12/6 65th
Barbara and Neil Hattem..... 12/29 50th

Jewish Proverbs

A half-truth is a whole lie.

All things grow with time --
except grief.

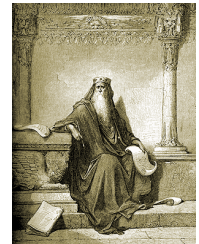
Against stupidity, God Himself is helpless.

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.



Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

Jerry Gort
Sheilah Hart
Phyllis Schroeder



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

Congregation Shir Ami Tribute Cards

Our **Tribute Card Coordinator** will send your
cards celebrating *simchas* and conveying your
get-well and condolence messages.

Call **Helga Unkeless** at (818) 340-5751 or
(preferably). email Helgaunkeless@yahoo.com

Minimum donation of \$5 per card is appreciated.

2025 Shir Ami Officers and Board Nominees

President: Jordan Pistol
Executive Vice President: Alan Burman
Treasurer: Mike Easley
Secretary: Becky Finlay
Program (vacant)
Ways and Means VP: Eric Dollins
Membership VP: Jenn Dollins
Ritual VP: Stan Schroeder
Social Action VP: Becky Finlay



Board of Directors: Owen Delman, Fran Feinman,
Judy Eisikowitz, Sheilah Hart

Other Board Members (former Presidents)

Helga Unkeless and Jerry Zatz

Biography of the Month Louis Brandeis

by Stan Schroeder

Louis Brandeis was born November 13, 1856 in Louisville, Kentucky to **Adolph and Fredericka**. His family had left Prague, fearing a conservative reaction to the failed democratic revolution there. Although Louis's family was Jewish, they did not observe Jewish customs or religious practices. Louis maintained that secular life, although he felt the influence of his uncle, **Lewis Dembitz**, a practicing lawyer and orthodox Jew, and took Dembitz's last name as his middle name.



Although he received no formal religious instruction, the young Brandeis did get an education. He attended Louisville's best schools and proved to be an excellent student. Louis left Louisville to finish high school in Dresden, Germany. It was there, he would later recall that he "really learned to think."

Brandeis excelled at *Annen Realschule*, his German school, and when he graduated, Harvard University admitted him into its law school although he did not have a college degree. Even without formal training that so many of his law school peers had, the young scholar managed to make the best grades in the law school's history. Brandeis graduated in two just years at the unprecedented age of 20.

After settling in Boston, Brandeis became a successful lawyer spending a good deal of his time pursuing cases with a political bent. In particular, he enjoyed representing small companies against giant corporations, and aiding the cause of the minimum wage against companies opposed to this principle. In 1912, he supported **Woodrow Wilson's** nomination for Presidency and in 1916 during World War I, was appointed by Wilson to the Supreme Court, the first Jew ever to be appointed..

He would become one of the most influential and respected Supreme Court Justices in US history. His votes and opinions envisioned the greater protections for individual rights and greater flexibility for government in economic regulation that would prevail in later courts. In 1928 Brandeis argued in a minority opinion that the Constitution protected a "right of privacy," calling it "the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men." His opinion finally prevailed in 1967 when the Olmstead verdict of 1928 was overturned.

Brandeis showed little interest in Jewish affairs until the turn of the 20th century when a combination of his professional work and a changing political climate brought about an alteration. He was introduced to

Zionism by **Jacob de Haas** and **Aaron Aaronsohn**, the Palestinian botanist who founded Nili, a Jewish espionage network that helped the United Kingdom in its fight against the Ottoman Empire in the Land of Israel during World War I.

Brandeis became active in Zionist affairs during the First World War, when he accepted the role of Chairperson of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs. Brandeis had a major impact on the American branch of the Zionist movement, drawing to it a number of sympathizers, improving its organization and its finance.

Though he resigned his official position on joining the Supreme Court, he nonetheless worked behind the scenes to influence President Woodrow Wilson to support the Zionist cause. After the war, Brandeis headed a delegation of American Zionists to London where, at a conference differences emerged between **Chaim Weizmann** and himself. These arguments over the role of the organization and its pursuit of political activities caused a rift between the two leaders with Weizmann gaining the upper hand. Brandeis withdrew from Zionist activity although he continued to take part in Eretz-Israel economic affairs. Brandeis did intervene from time to time in political matters; for example he appealed to President **Roosevelt** to oppose the British partition scheme of 1937 calling instead for the whole area of Eretz-Israel to become a Jewish National Home.

We in southern California are fortunate to know of Brandeis because of his association with **Shlomo Bardin**. Bardin was a Ukrainian Jew who immigrated to Palestine. He came to the US in the late 1930s to do doctoral work in education at Columbia. Brandeis wanted to combat the assimilation among young Jews he found in America. He provided Bardin with funds to develop a kibbutz-like camp program for young adults in 1941. The program moved to Simi Valley in 1947, and was later renamed the Brandeis Bardin Institute. Louis Brandeis died in Washington DC October 5, 1941.

My wife Phyllis and I attended many Shabbat and weekend scholar-in-residence programs at Brandeis-Bardin Institute starting in the 1980s, and joined an adult study group. We also sent our granddaughter Dvora, then 11, to Camp Alonim there for three summer sessions.

Our member **Judy Eisikowitz** was a member of a young adult group there. I am currently reading ***Brandeis: An intimate biography of one of America's truly great Supreme Court justices*** by **Lewis J. Paper** (1983).that she lent me.

Boycott!

by Lou Loomis

The violent attack against Jews in Amsterdam last month was not unique to Europe but just another incident in what Israel's antisemitism envoy **Michal Cotler-Wunsh** described as a "tsunami of antisemitism" this year.

She said October 7 was the "worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust" and led to the "mainstreaming of antisemitism" around the world, including anti-Zionism, which denies Israel's right to exist.

Personally, I have been asked numerous times to explain why antisemitism, both by Jewish and gentile friends. I usually answer that I don't really know, because that is the truth. It makes no sense to me. Is it some kind of envy? Or fear that Jews are in league with the forces of evil? Or our non-belief in Jesus as messiah, or Mohammed as God's Messenger? It's an old hatred with no single rationale. We Jews have been hated for our beliefs and disbeliefs. Religious Jews, atheist Jews, communist, socialist and capitalist Jews all have been targets of antisemitism. Liberal and conservative, the targeted list is long and includes Rabbis, teachers, intellectuals, artists, musicians, scientists, regular Joes and all kinds of creative types. Lately, Jewish writers and authors, Israeli or not, have become boycott targets.

TSUNAMI OF ANTISEMITISM

In 1933, the Nazis publicly burned the books of German-Jewish authors. And while book-burning has a long and tawdry history, currently the publishing world is being challenged to resurrect the boycott of writers because of either their faith and nationality or their refusal to conform to the anti-Israel narrative.

In 1933 books deemed "degenerate" by the Nazis for being "un-German" — especially those written by Jews — were purged from bookstores and libraries for reasons of racial as well as intellectual superiority. This self-righteous effort to purify German thinking targeted such Jewish luminaries as **Albert Einstein**, **Sigmund Freud**, or **Vicky Baum** (author of *Grand Hotel*) outright or torched by Nazi Stormtroopers.

Today a new effort is underway to compel Israeli, and Jewish, non-Israeli, authors, into a contemporary variant of ideological surrender. Last month, more than 1,000 writers, including some highly acclaimed best-selling authors, signed a letter calling for a boycott of Jewish and Israeli



writers, publishers, book festival organizers and literary agents who have yet to publicly denounce the "genocide" in Gaza.

Boycotts like this enable the signatories to congratulate themselves for taking a stand on the "right side of history" as Iran's **Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** last spring described the protestors in Western countries championing groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. That such *literary boycotts* are as blatantly antisemitic as they are hypocritical is of course ignored by their supporters.

The statement these writers have endorsed proudly declares that it is the "biggest cultural boycott against Jewish/Zionist and Israeli cultural institutions in history," and encourages Jewish writers and literary institutions to "Denounce and distance themselves from Israel's genocidal apartheid regime" and "Affirm the full protected rights of the Palestinian people under international law, including the right of return."

In essence, the statement's signatories want Jews to publicly acknowledge that Israel has **no right to exist**, thereby disavowing their religion, whose hope has for centuries been the return to Zion.

In the 1930s, German Jewish writers were just banned. Today, their Jewish counterparts, are being told to denounce their own religious identity and cruelly distance themselves from Israel or else risk ostracism and vilification.

The statement's hypocrisy is obvious. The most notable of these boycotters have no record of similarly protesting China's treatment of its enslaved Uyghur population, or boycotting Russian writers for failing to condemn the Kremlin's war in Ukraine or writers from Afghanistan who refuse to publicly criticize the Taliban's barbaric rule and policies or Syrians who have not denounced the Assad regime's barbaric killing of over 200,000 of their fellow citizens since 2011. It is a dangerous precedent that cleverly endows hate with logic and respectability, masking a markedly more malign and malevolent intention.



Burning of the Talmud in France (1242)

(continued on page 6)

Boycott! (continued)**FIGHTING BACK!**

It's a fair bet that the authors and publishing professionals who have called for a boycott of Jewish or Israeli cultural institutions didn't anticipate the scale of revulsion and outrage they have caused.

After all, given the current tsunami of hatred and insanity directed at the Jewish people throughout the west, they may well have thought they were merely going along with the overwhelmingly accepted narrative in "progressive" circles — in other words, anyone whose opinion was worth bothering about — that Israel should be shunned as a pariah because of the war in Gaza

The reaction to this letter from within their own creative world has been seismic. More than 1000 leading names in the entertainment industry have hit back. A counter-letter has been published by the Creative Community for Peace, signed by writers such as **Lee Child, Bernard Henri-Lévy, Herta Müller, Sir Simon Schama, Howard Jacobson, Simon Sebag Montefiore, David Mamet, Lionel Shriver** and **Elfriede Jelinek** as well as names from film and TV.

Jacobson said he was "staggered" that the boycott signatories could dream they had a right to silence other writers, while **Lionel Shriver** said they had sought to "intimidate all authors into withdrawing their work for consideration at Israeli publishing houses and refusing to participate in Israeli festivals".

Remember, Israel is currently fighting genocidal enemies who carried out the worst single set of atrocities against the Jews since the Holocaust and who openly declare their aim to annihilate Israel and the Jewish people. Instead of supporting the resistance to such evil, the signatories are actively pumping out the propaganda lies being invented to promote that unspeakable cause.

The *London Guardian* notes:

Institutions that have never publicly recognized the "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as enshrined in international law" will also be boycotted.

(There are no "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people" in international law. The only inalienable legal rights to the land belong to the Jews)

These much-lauded authors and hangers-on aren't targeting people because of what they are said to have done. They are attempting to silence Jews because they have failed to express the only approved opinion by opposing Israel's actions.

That's a totalitarian impulse to crush all dissent. And there's worse still.

The *London Times* reports:

Brian Message, the co-chair of ATC Group which represents many of the world's leading musicians, said he was "somewhat staggered by the arrogance of the boycott signatories".

He argued a boycott movement targeted at Israel was support for the "regimes of Iran and its proxies who wish to eject Israel from the Middle East". He told *The Times* that whether he was "right or wrong ... I wouldn't try to boycott the signatories for their views. As for the danger of boycott movements, both in literature and other art forms such as music; it looks to normalise the shutting down of free speech, differences of opinion, debate".

In similar vein, the *Jewish News* reports:

Lucy Abrahams, a Tel Aviv-based literary scout, told *Jewish News* that "even before [the boycott] letter, we've been having big problems this year. I'm in touch with an agency here in Israel who says they are about 30 per cent down in business this year".

She said she had had four different meetings recently in which people had expressed reluctance to publish anything to do with Jews or Israel, saying it was "not the moment". When she had challenged them because the books under discussion had nothing to do with the Israel Hamas conflict, they insisted that it was not the right time to publish such books.

But Ms Abrahams investigated and discovered "it was two specific people who were telling all the agents that their clients weren't interested in such books." Nevertheless, she added, there were more and more agencies "who are really pumping out a lot of books of a certain persuasion, only telling one perspective, very much against Israel's narrative".

She deplored a situation in which "it was just accepted that Israel should be boycotted. I think there should be outrage at the demonizing of Israel, our ally, who did not start or want this war, while publishers have no such qualms about selling to Russia and China".

As **Rabbi David Wolpe** has tweeted on X:

"Chinese, Russian, Iranian and North Korean authors, relax. They are only going after the Jews."

And as *London Times* columnist **Melanie Phillips** writes. "The boycott letter is particularly shocking because literature is not only the quintessence of free expression but stands for truths about the human condition which exist above and beyond division and aggression. (continued on page 10)

Modi'in and the Maccabees: Then and Now

by Stan Schroeder

As we enter the Hanukkah season, I reflect on the stories of miracles we tell as we celebrate the holiday and the reality of the miracle of the Jewish State



of Israel. We read from the first **Book of Maccabees** about the Jewish revolt against **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**, ruler of the Seleucid Empire, who issued decrees in 167 BCE banning Jewish practices such as sacrifice and circumcision. When Antiochus' s emissaries went to **Modi'in** to enforce the decrees, **Mattathias**, a high priest, killed a Hellenistic Jew who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol. Mattathias and his five sons fled to the wilderness.

The short version of the story is that Mattathias died the following year, and Judah, one of his sons, led a small army of Jewish dissidents to victory, over the vastly larger Syrian army of the Seleucid dynasty, using guerrilla warfare. Judah and his followers became known as the **Maccabees**, derived from the Aramaic word for hammer. After the victory, the Maccabees entered Jerusalem in triumph in 164 BCE and ritually cleansed the Temple, reestablishing traditional Jewish worship there, and installing **Jonathan** Maccabee as high priest. More than 400 years later the rabbis of the **Talmud** elaborated on the story to state that one small cruse of oil lasted eight days, enabling the menorah to stay lit until additional ritually pure oil could be obtained.

In ancient Israel, a town named Modi'in existed in the general area of the modern city. Today **Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut** is a city in the Central District of Israel; it is located roughly halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. It was formed by the merger of Modi'in and Maccabim-Re'ut in 2003. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics the city's 2017 population was 91,328. It is a modern planned city, and the highest standards of urban planning, environmental concern, and planning for future growth were taken into consideration during its design. Large green spaces were incorporated into the city's layout and comprise half of the area within the city limits.



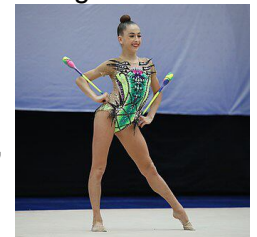
The name "Maccabee" has been adapted to become the *Maccabi* or **Maccabiah Games**, an Olympic style competition for Jewish athletes. (This is ironic since the Olympic Games originated in Greece, and glorified the very culture the revolting Jews opposed.) It is held at an

international level in Israel every four years, the year following the Olympic Games. Most traditional Olympic sports are included. Some additional "sports" include bridge, chess, golf, and bowling. There is also competition in junior (15 – 18 year-old), masters (35 or 40 and over, depending on event), and para-olympic categories.

The first Maccabiah was held in the spring of 1932, in Tel Aviv, a city of 50,000 residents. Israel's first sport stadium was completed there, barely in time for the Games. The Maccabiah was opened by a colorful parade through the streets of Tel Aviv led by Mayor **Meir Dizengoff** riding a white horse. 390 athletes from 18 countries attend, including 69 participants from Egypt and Syria. The U.S. delegation was the smallest – only ten participants. Poland, Austria and the United States finished 1-2-3 in team medals won. The Maccabiah stirred an athletic spirit throughout Palestine and inspired the development of sports in the Holy Land.

The **21st Maccabiah** took place July 14 to 25, 2022. The 21st Maccabiah games brought together 10,000 athletes from 80 countries in 42 sports categories making it the third largest international sporting event in the world after the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup. Competitions were held in four categories: Open, Junior, Senior, and Para.

US President **Joe Biden** attended the Opening Ceremonies, cheering the US delegation of 1400 athletes, larger than the Olympic games delegation. Israel had the most athletes, followed by the US, Argentina, Canada, and Australia.



Israeli gymnast Daria Atamanov

In keeping with its Mission to perpetuate and preserve the American Jewish community by encouraging Jewish pride, strengthening Jewish bonds, and by creating a heightened awareness of Israel and Jewish identity, **Maccabi USA** established a Pre-Camp in Israel in 1989, including B'nai Mitzvah and touring of Israel. The organization has used the athletic competition to promote Judaism and Israel with American youth.

We see the evolution of the miracle in the examples of Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut and the Maccabi movement. Whereas the biblical/historical holiday teaches us miracles performed by God to protect and perpetuate the Jewish people, the miracles of modern Israel and Jews everywhere teach us the process is ongoing, and we must do our part.

See my Hanukkah poem on pages 8. (Stan)

The Miracles of Hanukkah

For well over a century
The culture in Israel was Greek.
The Jews adapted to a way of life,
Form and beauty to seek.

For many years it wasn't hard
To follow the Torah laws.
But then an edict was issued
That caused some Jews to pause.

In the Temple Antiochus IV,
An altar to Zeus erected.
Jewish worship was forbidden,
And many Jews defected.

Soldiers went to the town of Modin,
And forced the Jews to bow.
Though many decided to obey,
Mattathias said, "No way, No how!"

He killed one Jew for bowing down
And the soldier who gave the order.
Then fled to the hills with his sons,
To the other side of the border.

There they launched swift attacks;
The Syrians were in disarray.
Mattathias died the following year,
And his sons continued the fray.



The next year, 165 BCE
The battle had been won.
And in Jerusalem the
Cleansing of the Temple begun.

Then came the celebration,
Eight days of sacrifice and song.
The Holy Lamp burned anew,
A symbol of right over wrong.

Some 600 years later
The rabbis of the Talmud said
Oil that should last a single day
Burned for eight days instead.

A miracle straight from God
Enabled the rededication.
A manifestation of the Light
That He formed at His Creation.

So now we have two miracles,
And we are free to choose
Whether the Maccabee's victory or
Menorah is more important as Jews.

I think they're both important,
Each miracle in its place.
The victory is the province of man,
The Menorah from God's Grace.



Stan Schroeder, Hanukkah 5768



The History of Hanukkah

How the festival of lights became a holiday, and how it has evolved in modern times.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

Hanukkah is one of the few Jewish holidays not mentioned in the Bible. The story of how Hanukkah came to be is contained in the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, which are not part of the Jewish canon of the Hebrew Bible.



These books tell the story of the Maccabees, a small band of Jewish fighters who liberated the Land of Israel from the Syrian Greeks who occupied it. Under the reign of **Antiochus IV** Epiphanes, the Syrian Greeks sought to impose their Hellenistic culture, which many Jews found attractive. By 167 B.C.E, Antiochus intensified his campaign by defiling the Temple in Jerusalem and banning Jewish practice. The Maccabees — led by the five sons of the priest **Mattathias**, especially Judah — waged a three-year campaign that culminated in the cleaning and rededication of the Temple.

Since they were unable to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot at its proper time in early autumn, the victorious Maccabees decided that Sukkot should be celebrated once they rededicated the Temple, which they did on the 25th of the month of Kislev in the year 164 B.C.E. Since Sukkot lasts seven days, this became the timeframe adopted for Hanukkah.

About 250 years after these events, the first-century Jewish historian **Flavius Josephus** wrote his account of the origins of the holiday. Josephus referred to the holiday as the Festival of Lights and not as Hanukkah. Josephus seems to be connecting the newfound liberty that resulted from the events with the image of light, and the holiday still is often referred to by the title Josephus gave it.

By the early rabbinic period about a century later — at the time that the Mishnah (the first compilation of oral rabbinic law included in the Talmud) was redacted — the holiday had become known by the name of Hanukkah (“Dedication”). However, the Mishnah does not give us any details concerning the rules and customs associated with the holiday.

It is in the *Gemara* (a commentary on the Mishnah) of the Babylonian Talmud that we are given more details and can clearly see the development of both the holiday and the stories associated with it. The discussion of Hanukkah is mentioned in Tractate Shabbat.

Only three lines are devoted to the events of Hanukkah while three pages detail when, where and how the Hanukkah lights should be lit.

Completed approximately 600 years after the events of the Maccabees, the Talmud contains the extant version of the famous story of the miraculous jar of oil that burned for eight days. The Talmud relates these stories in the context of a discussion about the fact that fasting and grieving are not allowed on Hanukkah. In order to understand why the observance of Hanukkah is so important, the Rabbis recount the story of the miraculous jar of oil.

Perhaps the *Amoraim* — the sages of the Talmud — were retelling an old oral legend in order to associate the holiday with what they believed to be a blatant, supernatural miracle. Although the seemingly miraculous victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Greeks was certainly part of the holiday narrative, this event still lies within the natural human realm. The Rabbis may have felt this to be insufficient justification for the holiday’s gaining legal stature that would prohibit fasting and include the saying of certain festival prayers. Therefore, the story of a supernatural event centering on the oil — a miracle — would unquestionably answer any concerns about the legitimacy of celebrating the holiday.

Hanukkah gained new meaning with the rise of Zionism. As the early pioneers in Israel found themselves fighting to defend against attacks, they began to connect with the ancient Jewish fighters who stood their ground in the same place. The holiday of Hanukkah, with its positive portrayal of the Jewish fighter, spoke to the reality of the early Zionists who felt particularly connected to the message of freedom and liberty.

Hanukkah began to find new expression in the years leading up to the founding of the modern State of Israel. In the post-Holocaust world, Jews are acutely aware of the issues raised by Hanukkah: oppression, identity, religious freedom and expression, and the need to fight for national independence. Hanukkah has developed into a holiday rich with historical significance, physical and supernatural miracle narratives, and a dialogue with Jewish history.



Boycott! (continued)

Creativity is the generous flowering of the human spirit. Yet in their Israel boycott letter, some of the west's most garlanded authors and creatives are expressing murderous lies and bigotry. In their inhumanity, they don't just reveal their moral degeneracy. They also betray art itself."

So far, the literary boycott has had its greatest impact in Europe. America is not immune to such boycotts, but there is sure to be some residual effort to silence American Jews as well. Yes, it can happen here, but not without a fight. It is the pushback that the boycotters can't tolerate, and that is something we American Jews do so well.



Hanukkah in Israel
by Stan Schroeder

Hanukkah is one of the most beautiful Jewish holidays, it commemorates the victory of the Maccabees against the Greeks' impositions of their gods, even after the whole city was destroyed. The lighting of the candles comes from the miracle of the Menorah that kept its light for eight days with oil for only one. It lasts for eight days and every day a new candle of a Menorah is lit. It's especially beautiful in Israel, where anywhere you are, when it's time to light a candle everyone comes together to sing and light the candles.



Hanukkah may come at the darkest time of year, but the festival of light is one of the most exciting times of the year to be in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Israel.

The cities are alive with special decorations, *hanukkiah*s in the windows, special events for the whole family, and lots of *sufganiyot* (jelly filled doughnuts) at all the bakeries.

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

Thursdays December 7 and 14, 7:30 - 8:30 pm “Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” on Zoom

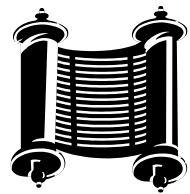


This popular Shir Ami educational series continues its 5785 season. Come join us for our weekly discussion of Rabbi Vorspan’s selected topics of Jewish interest. We discuss Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This is a unique opportunity to learn and share in an informal format.

This semester we will again hold our sessions on Zoom. The link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9lVzhwVWVSRGgraEFJdz09>

Meeting ID: 864 4008 2040 Password: 677588

Saturday December 28, 10:30 am Torah/Shabbat Study at Schroeder home



Stan Schroeder is into his 11th year of Shabbat study sessions one Saturday morning a month at 10:30. 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 December 28. The Torah portion is *Miketz*, Genesis 41:1 - 44:17. We read the stories of Joseph’s brothers coming to Egypt for food due to the famine. Joseph requires them to go back and get Benjamin, holding Simeon as a hostage.

This session will be held at the Schroeder home, 8450 Winnetka Ave. #14. Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 or email stanpacbell@gmail.com for more information.

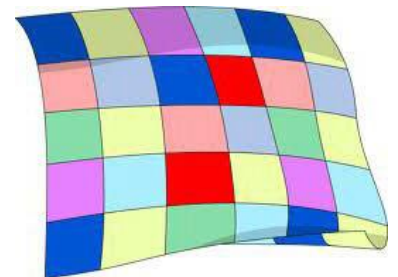
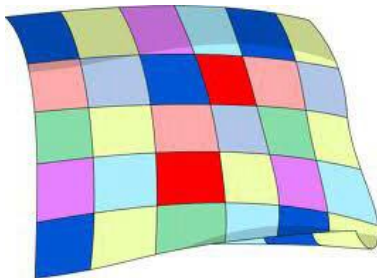
Please join Congregation Shir Ami
on Saturday, January 25 at 10:00 am
(Service starts at 10:30 am)



at de Toledo High School
for a special Linen Shabbat.



Please bring **NEW** twin, full, or queen size blankets or quilts, **NEW** full or twin size sheet sets, **NEW** full or twin size waterproof mattress pads, **NEW** pillow cases, and **NEW** bath towels and washcloths to Shabbat services on **Saturday, January 25th**. They will be given to moms and their children in domestic violence shelters. There will be a speaker to discuss the shelters and ongoing projects.



We look forward to seeing you and your family at this special community *mitzvah* project Shabbat. Please bring your non-perishable SOVA food donation to the service.



For more information, please call
Becky Finlay at (747) 998-3804.



**Congregation Shir Ami Schedule of Shabbat Services 2024-25
at de Toledo High School, Zoom, and Livestream www.shirami.com**

If you want to be added to our email list, please send an email to stanpacbell@gmail.com and you will receive ongoing information.

Saturday 10:30 am unless otherwise noted

October 2024

Saturday, October 5 - Birthday

Saturday, October 26 - Anniversary

November 2024

Saturday, November 9 - Birthday

Saturday, November 23 - Anniversary

December 2024

Saturday, December 7 - Birthday

Saturday, December 21 - Anniversary



David Vorspan
Rabbi

January 2025

Saturday, January 4 - Birthday, Consecration of Officers

Saturday, January 25 - Anniversary, Linen Shabbat

February 2025

Saturday, February 1 - Birthday

Saturday, February 15 - Anniversary



Jordan Pistol
President

March 2025

Saturday, March 1 - Birthday

Saturday, March 15 - Anniversary

April 2025

Saturday, April 5 - Birthday

Saturday, April 26 - Anniversary

May 2025

Saturday, May 10 - Birthday

Saturday, May 24 - Anniversary

June 2025

Saturday, June 7 - Birthday

Saturday, June 21 - Anniversary

If you would like more information about our congregation please visit our website at www.shirami.com