



# Shir Notes

The Official Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 23, Number 2, February 2025. Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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## Events of the Month

### Shabbat services at de Toledo High School, on Zoom and Livestream

Saturday, February 1 10:30 am  
Birthday Shabbat

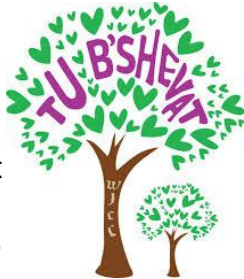
Saturday, February 15 10:30 am  
Anniversary Shabbat

**Around the Rabbi's Tisch Thursdays February 6, 13, and 27. 7:30 pm via Zoom**  
See flyer for more information

**Torah and Shabbat Study Saturday, Feb. 8, 10:30 am at the Schroeders'**

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

See article on page 4.



Tu B'Shevat Thursday February 13

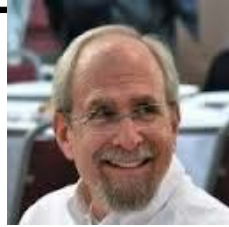


Presidents' Day Monday, February 17

See articles on pages 8, 10.

Visit our website: [www.shirami.com](http://www.shirami.com)

## Rabbi's Column



I attended a Bar Mitzvah in Boca Raton last month for a relative. There was a lovely service followed, in the evening, with a party.

I try to find learning experiences in every-day life, both the positive and the negative. And here are two lessons from the celebratory party. A party overwhelmed by the music!

Now, I've been to enough simchas to know how important music is in setting the mood and adding to the gaiety of the affair. The *freilich* dancing and singing are part of the spirit that enhances the gathering.

My problem was with what happened later in the evening.

After the initial *hora* and a number of Israeli dances, the dancing part of the evening was over. The dinner buffet opened up and the rest of the evening found the young people playing games outside and the adults sitting around tables chatting. No one ever got back on the dance floor.

But the music continued. Loudly! Background music would have been fine. There didn't seem to be any reason for the music to play at such a high decibel rate for the next 3 hours! I looked around and found other guests dismayed by the inability to hear the voices of those sitting even right next to them.

And I even watched the father of the Bar Mitzvah standing near my table talking with a friend. And I could tell they had difficulty hearing each other. He was paying the bills. All he had to do was walk over to the DJ and ask him to tone down the music! But, apparently, it never occurred to him.

I learned two lessons:

1. When you're in charge, take charge. Especially in a setting like the one described above. Don't assume DJs are working for the benefit of the guests. They are getting paid to play music, not to gauge the comfort level of the audience. They are the ones protected from the noise by wearing headphones, not the ones trying to engage in conversation.
2. And don't become oblivious to the needs and comfort of your guests. This is true for any setting. If you have people coming to your home on a cold night, don't crank up the heat. People can only take off so much cold weather clothing when indoors. When serving food, accommodate various diets. Vegetarians or those who keep kosher would like to have options other than a salad. And make sure you have air freshener spray in your bathroom (now there's a suggestion that is sure to turn people's heads!).

If you've got your own stories or lessons, I'd love to hear them! Email me at [rabbivorspan@gmail.com](mailto:rabbivorspan@gmail.com).

Rabbi David Vorspan

### President's Report



Shalom,

Short month. Tall plans. Last month we had the first meeting of our new board of directors and with new people come new ideas. We hope to put these ideas into action over the next few months.

I want to thank all of you who actively participated in our Linen Shabbat service. It is gratifying to know that our Social Action Committee and Programs are going strong in a time when they are most needed. We can be proud of the job we are doing.

This is the point in my monthly message when to mention our Shabbat services, the Rabbi's Tisch and the Shabbat/Torah Study Sessions. If Social Action is our strength, our services and programs are our soul. They serve as an opportunity to check up on each other and get together as a congregation. And cookies after a Shabbat Service make it all that much better.

Short month. Short message. Keep your eyes open and check the *Shir Notes*.

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

Thank you,

**Jordan Pistol, President  
Linen Shabbat January 25**



Our annual Linen Shabbat, in which our members and supporters donate linens to the families in the Jewish Family Service Hope domestic violence shelters, was held January 25. JFS Community Outreach Coordinator **Kitty Glass** spoke to us via Zoom. She thanked our Congregation and Social Action Vice President **Becky Finlay** for our support, going on 20 years, and for the legacy of former VP **Fran Kobulnick** who created the annual Mitzvah event.

Kitty also shared the following statistics from 2024:  
Shelters: Adults 134 Children in shelter: 285  
New counseling center clients: 156 plus continuing clients  
10 groups facilitated weekly in English and Spanish  
24-hour crisis calls: 6437



A family of services.  
A family that serves.

### World Jewish Congress

by Shayne Marine

The World Zionist Congress is the only democratic body with representatives of all of World Jewry: all countries, all streams. Our movement is represented by the political party Mercaz in the WZC. I'm proud to be the Captain for MERCAZ USA. In online elections for the Congress every five years, Diaspora Jews like us have a vote. Our next election is in the spring.

The results of elections to the Congress decide who controls the Jewish Agency and KKL/JNF, and how their billions of dollars are spent each year. These are the Jewish world's largest philanthropies, and your vote for the Zionist Congress determines what they do and how they spend their money.

These funds shape our community and Israel. It delivers funds for Conservative/Masorti congregations like our own and organizations like Ramah, USY, Sisterhoods, Men's Clubs, and more.

In Israel, it helps those who were hardest hit on October 7 and ensures that our hostages and their families are taken care of through the Israeli government's Hostages and Hostages Family Directorate, now under the auspices of the WZO.

It builds bridges between the Diaspora and Israel by ensuring our communities and Ramah camps continue to receive amazing *shlichim* (young Israelis) and *shinshinim* (Israeli high school graduates who defer military service for a year) through the Jewish Agency.

Your vote in this election ensures our community and like-minded communities around the world have a hand on the steering wheel for these funds.

It secures our movement in Israel and helps make sure EVERY Jew from EVERY stream is treated equally in Israel.

If you ever felt like you wanted a voice over in Israel, this is your chance. All it will cost you is 5 minutes of your time and \$5 to vote. YOU CAN SIGN UP TO 5 PEOPLE ON ONE CREDIT CARD. BE SURE TO ENTER SHIR AMI'S CODE NUMBER **610** WHEN YOU SIGN UP

Thank you,

**Shayne Marine**  
Mercaz Team Captain



Elections will be held from March 10 to May 4.



# DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

## Yahrzeits

Janet and Harvey Kirshbaum for Helen Finkenstein, Marjory Ein, and Florence Kirshbaum  
Sam Kobulnick for Rose Suckman  
Linda Tapper for Ruth Tapper, Nathan Josephy, and Gertrude Josephy

## Birthdays

Claire Silverman (93)  
Leon Nachenberg

## Anniversaries

Jay and Gale Cohen (19)  
Laura Simon in honor of Ellie and Jerry Zatz (65)

## Other

Linda Tapper in memory of Harvey Tapper

"Dear Shir Ami Friends & Family,

Thank you to all who have come together to help Mom (Sima Schuster) through this very difficult time, and for making the memorial plaque for our father, Steve, to become a reality. We are blessed to have you in our lives.

Sarah Schuster Kudela & Maita Schuster"

# Birthdays & Anniversaries

## Birthdays

- Carol Koransky..... 2/2
- Michael Easley..... 2/5
- Bette Delman..... 2/9
- Lorraine Simansky..... 2/10
- Karen Benson..... 2/10
- Sima Schuster..... 2/13
- Eric Dollins..... 2/17
- Janet Kirshbaum..... 2/22



### Fran Feinman

1640 Monrovia Ave. #222  
Costa Mesa, CA 91627

## Our Condolences

We regret to inform the congregational family of the passing of our member **Jerry Gort**. May God comfort Jerry's family during this time of their bereavement.



## Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

**Lew Silverman**  
**Phyllis Schroeder**  
**Sheilah Hart**



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](mailto:Helgaunkeless@yahoo.com)

## Tu B'Shevat (from My Jewish Learning)

*The "birthday of the trees" is a time for seders, tree-planting and more.*

The name of this festival is actually its date: "Tu" is a pronunciation of the Hebrew letters for the number 15, the Hebrew month of Shevat.



Traditionally, Tu Bishvat was not a Jewish festival. Rather, it marked an important date for Jewish farmers in ancient times. The Torah states, "When you enter the land [of Israel] and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten" ([Leviticus 19:23](#)). Only the fruit of older trees could be eaten. This law raised the question of how farmers were to mark the "birthday" of a tree. The rabbis therefore established the 15th of the month of Shevat as a general "birthday" for all trees, regardless of when they were actually planted.

Fruit trees were awarded special status in the Torah because of their importance in sustaining life and as a symbol of God's divine favor. Even during times of war, God warns the Israelites, "When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees... Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed" ([Deuteronomy 20:19-20](#)).

At a later time, the rabbis of the [Talmud](#) established four "new years" throughout the Jewish calendar—[Rosh Hashanah](#), or the Jewish new year for the calendar date; a new year for establishing the reign of kings; a new year for tithing animals of Jewish farmers to be given to the Temple; and finally, Tu Bishvat, the new year for the trees ([Mishnah](#), Rosh Hashanah 1:1). The rabbis discussed why this date was chosen; saying that Tu Bishvat falls after mid-winter (usually in February), they concluded that the majority of the annual rainfall has usually already fallen by this time in the land of Israel, thus yielding a healthy, water-logged soil in which to plant new trees (Talmud, [Rosh Hashanah 14a](#)).

In medieval times, kabbalists (Jewish mystics) gave Tu Bishvat greater spiritual significance. Seeing in Tu Bishvat a vehicle for mystical ideas, the [kabbalists](#) imbued Tu Bishvat with new religious significance as well as created elaborate new symbolic rituals. According to [Lurianic Kabbalah](#) (which is a

form of mysticism studied by the students of Isaac Luria), all physical forms—including human beings—hide within them a [spark](#) of the Divine Presence. This is similar to some kinds of fruits or nuts, which hide within them seeds of new life and potential growth. In Jewish mysticism, human actions can release these sparks and help increase God's presence in the world. On Tu Bishvat, the kabbalists would eat certain fruits associated with the land of Israel as a symbolic way of releasing these divine sparks.

In modern times, Tu Bishvat has become a symbol of both [Zionist](#) attachment to the [land of Israel](#) as well as an example of Jewish sensitivity to the environment. Early Zionist settlers to Israel began planting new trees not only to restore the ecology of ancient Israel, but as a symbol of renewed growth of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland. While relatively few Jews continue to observe the kabbalistic [Tu Bishvat seder](#), many American and European Jews observe Tu Bishvat by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund, an organization devoted to reforesting Israel.



For environmentalists, Tu Bishvat is an ancient and authentic Jewish "Earth Day" that educates Jews about the Jewish tradition's advocacy of responsible stewardship of God's creation as manifested in ecological activism. Among them, contemporary versions of the Tu Bishvat seder, emphasizing environmentalist concerns, are gaining popularity.

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In 2025, Tu Bishvat begins at sundown on Wednesday, Feb. 12 and ends at sundown on Thursday, Feb. 13. Tu Bishvat or the "birthday" of all fruit trees, is a minor festival. The name is Hebrew for the 15th of the Hebrew month of Shevat.

In ancient times, Tu Bishvat was merely a date on the calendar that helped Jewish farmers establish exactly when they should bring their fourth-year produce of fruit from recently planted trees to the Temple as first-fruit offerings.

(continued on page 7)



## Whose fault is it, anyway?

by Lou Loomis

As I write this, the fires in Los Angeles County are still not fully contained, and whole neighborhoods have been destroyed. Further, it appears an Israel and Gaza/Hamas cease-fire agreement is holding. Anything could change in a heartbeat, so I can't get too excited (yes, I'm a very reluctant optimist). There are also peace proposals coming from other parts of the Arab world that offer a win-win for both Israel and the Gazans. Time will tell, as the wise ones say.

Both Democrats and Republicans are each taking credit for a hoped-for Middle East peace. Does it really matter? Or isn't peace the most important goal? I hope to discuss this more fully in next month's *Shir Notes*, as the agreement either takes shape or just falls apart.

The wildfires are another item also caught up in partisan bickering. The Los Angeles fire chief blames the Mayor, who is pointing the finger back at the Fire Chief. Our local newspapers blame the governor and those papers' owners each blame the mayor and governor. Added to the list of blame, some 'experts' blame the fires on global warming. The federal NOA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) says it was just chance (no one is to blame; fires happen).

And on we go: republicans blame the democrats, while the democrats blame the republicans. No one has yet blamed the Russians, but just wait....that'll happen, soon enough. And yes, Jews have already been blamed (that never changes).

Maybe it's just human nature to point the finger at others, but for me, I would rather listen to someone else, anyone else, who neither blames others or is shouting hysterically because "they know."

Meanwhile, I think it's prudent to donate to the wildfire relief, but first find out where to send donations and where our help is most needed.

We all know someone who has been affected by the fires, including Shir Ami members who have lost all their possessions. Soon enough we'll learn the names of those who have lost homes or family pets in the fires, and I'm afraid the list may be



These are real people, real families who live near us who we see and interact with at holidays and shabbat services.

Paula and I are making donations to individual Go-Fund-Me accounts, as the list of names of people we know grows.

Shir Ami will be releasing information on where to donate, both money, clothes, or other needed items, to fire victims. Yes, there are scams, so first do your research, as there are many deserving organizations who can make a difference.

Meanwhile, if you are angry at anyone because you believe they had something to do with starting or spreading the fire—**stop!** Please, redirect your focus to giving help to those in need. Let the "experts" fight it out amongst themselves. May they all win.

There are dozens of non-profit organizations now offering aid for wildfire victims, including those affiliated with the Los Angeles Jewish Federation, which means these organizations are legitimate and not out to scam money from the innocent and well-meaning.

Just to name two:

**The Jewish Free Loan Association of Greater Los Angeles.** It makes interest-free loans to all those in need (up to \$15,000) regardless of the fire victim's religion (or political affiliation). The loans go to helping those in need of shelter, food, clothing, and more. **You can call the JFLA at (323) 761-8830** for more information.

Also the **Jewish Family Services**, which includes **SOVA** and the **Women's Shelter**. Call **(877) 275-4537** and ask how you can donate.

The **LA Jewish Federation** is one of the best and most-trusted of non-profit organizations in the country. Call them regarding donations at **(323) 761-8200**.

It may be fun, or someone may get some kind of satisfaction in blaming others for this local disaster, but really, consider the fact that actual human beings are suffering through no fault of their own. We can all help.



## Biography of the Month: Rabbi Max Vorspan

by Stan Schroeder

**Max Vorspan** was born in St. Paul, Minnesota May 22, 1916, son of **Ben (Berek)** and **Feiga 'Fannie' Vorspan**. **Max** had three brothers, **Chet, Harvey, and Albert**. Max graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1937.



During his senior year at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he served first as assistant director of the Seminary School of Jewish Studies and then as the program director of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Young Men's Hebrew Association.

Max married **Sandy Robinson** in June, 1943 They had two children, **David** and **Rachel**. Shortly after his ordination in 1942, Max enlisted in the Army and served as a chaplain in the Pacific. Returning to the United States after the war, Rabbi Vorspan was employed as the Executive Director of the Young People's League of the United Synagogue in New York City, the national organization of Conservative Judaism, until September 1947 when he arrived in Pasadena to be the first full-time rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel. He was invited to the position by **Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan**, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, who saw Pasadena as the opportunity to implement his vision of Jewish community there.

Promoting a diverse community, Kaplan felt that all Jews, whether they were Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, devout, secular, men or women were needed for Jewish survival. Kaplan also believed that women should have the same ceremonial responsibilities as men. He took a major step in achieving that goal more than two decades before writing Judaism as a Civilization by calling his daughter **Judith** to the Torah and officiating at the first Bat Mitzvah in America. The philosophical thrust of Judaism as a Civilization was a supplement to Kaplan's earlier promotion of the "synagogue center" as a way of making Judaism relevant to the lives of modern Americans. As early as the 1913, Kaplan proposed that rabbis should not just continue the religious traditions of the community but "must make the synagogue a social center."

Rabbi Vorspan claimed that his move to Pasadena was not just to be the spiritual leader of Temple B'nai Israel, it was also for personal reasons. He left the east so he "could pursue his dream of owning a house with a picket fence." He was not alone for he was one of many ex-GIs who settled in Southern California after WWII, continuing a massive migration to the region that began in 1940 when America was gearing up for war.

Rabbi Vorspan and the temple were a good fit: there were leaders of the congregation who were receptive to his ideas and the congregation had a history which held promise that it would support his vision for the future.

Rabbi Vorspan was there for four years, implementing many of his ideas. On October 11, 1948, the night before Yom Kippur, Temple B'nai Israel voted to disband and reconstitute itself as the Pasadena Jewish Community. Formal papers legalizing the reorganization, which grafted the Conservative religious practices of most congregants within a framework based on the Reconstructionist principles articulated by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, were filed with the State of California on June 10, 1949.

When Vorspan left in 1952 there were 362 family members of the 500 Jewish families in Pasadena. However, the B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Jewish War Veterans, Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT), Pioneer Women, and the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), were represented on the Council of Organizations, which controlled the calendar of events of the community.

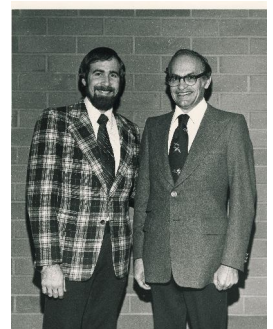
The buildings of the Pasadena Jewish Temple Center were destroyed in the recent Eaton fire. However, all the Torah scrolls from the sanctuary, chapel, and classrooms were saved.

In 1954, Vorspan was invited, again by Kaplan, to become the first full-time registrar and instructor at the University of Judaism, which was then the West Coast branch of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He remained there for some 40 years, retiring in the early 1990s as associate professor of American Jewish history and senior vice president. Universally liked, he was instrumental in establishing the Pacific Southwest Coast Region of the United Synagogue, Camp Ramah in California, and the University's School of Fine Arts.

Rabbi Vorspan hosted "*Commitment*," the university's weekly Sunday morning public affairs program on KCBS-TV Channel 2 for 18 years,

With **Lloyd P. Gartner**, Vorspan co-wrote "*The History of the Jews of Los Angeles*," in 1970. It chronicles the Jewish community's growth from the first establishment of the City of Los Angeles until the present day and was jointly published by the Jewish Publication Society and Huntington Library.

Max Vorspan died June 10, 2002. Our **Rabbi David Vorspan** has followed in his giant footsteps.



David and Max Vorspan (around 1980)

## Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Quotations

Tuesday evening, January 21, 2020, our member (and *Shir Notes* column author) **Lou Loomis** and I attended a lecture at the Sephardic Temple in Los Angeles by **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**. Rabbi Sacks was world renown, not only in the Jewish world. It was a “once in a lifetime” experience. I regularly use his Torah commentaries at our monthly Shabbat Torah study sessions.



“The test of faith is whether I can make space for difference. Can I recognize God's image in someone who is not in my image, whose language, faith, ideal, are different from mine? If I cannot, then I have made God in my image instead of allowing him to remake me in his.”

“Why did God create mankind? Because God likes stories.”

“The journey is not yet over. Israel has not yet found peace. And after four thousand years Jews still find it hard to live their faith without fear. There is only one Jewish state, a country less than one quarter of one per cent of the land mass of the Arab world; the only place on earth where Jews form a majority, the only place where they are able to do what almost every other people takes for granted, to construct a society according to their values, and to be able to defend themselves. For every Jew alive today there are 100 Muslims, 183 Christians. Yet still we have to fight for the right to be.”

“[Genesis] is not myth. It is not history in the conventional sense, a mere recording of events. ... To put it at its simplest: philosophy is truth as system. Genesis is truth as story. It is a unique work, philosophy in the narrative mode.”

“Judaism is a religion of continuity. It depends for its very existence on the willingness of successive generations to hand on their faith and way of life to their children, and on the loyalty of children to the heritage of their past.”

“Broadcasting is being replaced by narrowcasting. The difference is that broadcasting speaks to a mixed public, exposing them to a range of views. Narrowcasting speaks to a targeted public and exposes them only to facts and opinions that support their prejudices. It

## Tu B'Shevat (from My Jewish Learning)

(continued)

The Tu Bishvat seder, modeled after the Passover seder, traditionally includes eating a variety of fruits and nuts and drinking four cups of wine of various colors. The seder has kabbalistic roots and was first mentioned in the book [Pri Etz Hadar](#), written in the 18th century. There is room for much creativity when planning a Tu Bishvat seder, including the choice of foods, readings, and discussions. Popular topics include trees, the environment, appreciating the physical world, examining personal characteristics, and the important role of nature in Jewish texts, traditions, and rituals.



### Wine or Grape Juice

Some have the custom of drinking four glasses of wine at the seder. Participants mix each glass to be a different shade from white to red, representing the four seasons, beginning with winter. The order of the wine is white, white with a splash of red, mostly red with a splash of white, and red. The blessing for wine is said before drinking each cup.



### Fruits and Nuts

It is common to eat a variety of fruits and nuts at the seder. The fruits and nuts are grouped by their characteristics, such as having a hard shell or the type of seeds. The order of the fruits is as follows:

- Fruits and nuts with a hard shell and soft inside, such as walnuts and citrus fruits.
- Fruits without a protective shell but with a pit in the center, such as olives, cherries, and dates.
- Soft fruits which can be eaten entirely, such as figs, grapes, and star fruit.
- Fruit with a tough outer skin but is sweet inside, such as a sabra or banana.

The blessing for the particular food is said before eating.

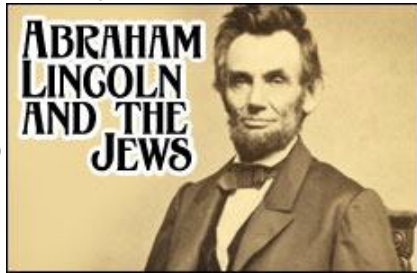
Explanations and poetic readings are often added to the seder. Readings about nature, the environment, the seasons, personal characteristics, Torah learning, and other inspirational topics are often chosen.



## Abraham Lincoln and the Jews

By Marnie Winston-Macauley  
(from aish.com)

Lincoln was the first President to make it possible for rabbis to serve as military chaplains by signing the 1862 Act of Congress, which changed the law that had barred all but Christian clergymen from the role. It all started on September 8, 1861, when a 30-year-old Philadelphia cantor, **Michael Mitchell Allen**, returned to his encampment with the 65th Regiment of the Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry, known as Cameron's Dragoons. The regiment of 1,200 men, mostly Jews, elected him their chaplain. Complaints flew up the military ladder. Lincoln then signed the Act and Jewish chaplains have been serving in the American Armed Forces ever since.



He was also the first, and happily, the only President who was called upon to revoke an official act of anti-Semitism by the U.S. government. He canceled General **Ulysses S Grant's** "Order No. 11" expelling all Jews in Tennessee from the district controlled by his armies during the Civil War. (Grant denied personal responsibility for this act, attributing it to his subordinate.)

Shortly after delivering the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln met Canadian Christian Zionist, **Henry Wentworth Monk**, who expressed hope that Jews who were being oppressed in Russia and Turkey be emancipated "by restoring them to their national home in Palestine." Lincoln replied this was "a noble dream and one shared by many Americans."

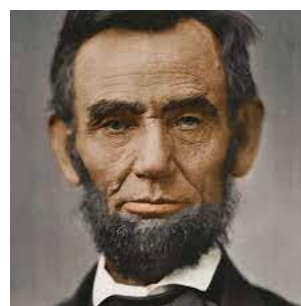
*Factoid: **Edward Rosewater**, a young Jewish member of the Telegraphers Corps of the Union Army, transmitted President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in 1863. President Lincoln was a frequent visitor to read the field dispatches. After the war, Rosewater founded the Omaha Daily Bee, and was elected and appointed to public offices.*

Lincoln and Jewish lawyer **Abraham Jonas** (1801-1864) were intimate confidantes. In one correspondence between them Lincoln wrote: "You are one of my most valued friends." The friendship began soon after Jonas settled in Quincy, Illinois in 1838. When Lincoln visited Quincy in 1854, he spent most of his time with Jonas, who came from Kentucky where he served in the State Legislature for four terms. From 1849 to 1851, he was postmaster and Lincoln re-appointed him in 1861. More, Jonas was one of the first to suggest Lincoln for the presidency when **Horace Greeley**, the editor of the New York Daily Tribune, went to Quincy in December 1858 to meet with leading Republicans to discuss the election of 1860.

Lincoln and Jewish doctor **Isachar Zacharie**, an English-born chiropodist, met in September 1862 professionally. The President gave him the following testimonial: "Dr. Zacharie has operated on my feet with great success, and considerable addition to my comfort." Zacharie became both friend and emissary for Lincoln. The New York World wrote that the chiropodist "enjoyed Mr. Lincoln's confidence perhaps more than any other private individual." Zacharie also actively solicited the Jewish vote for Lincoln.

Lincoln was exceptionally generous to prominent rabbi **Dr. Morris J. Raphall** of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun. The Rabbi had met Lincoln only once, but asked a favor of the president regarding his son. Raphall told his congregants, Lincoln had "granted it lovingly, because he knew the speaker to be a Jew- because he knew him to be a true servant of the Lord." Lincoln did more for Raphall's son-in-law, **Captain C. M. Levy**. Levy had been distributing special food and clothing to Jewish soldiers in Washington's hospitals. When he was dismissed from service, Lincoln came to his rescue.

Ironically, the Lincoln head penny was designed by Russian-Jewish immigrant **Victor David Brenner** in 1909 to celebrate Lincoln's 100th birthday. Happy birthday, Mr. President.





## Whose fault is it? (continued)

Finally, it appears that the Gaza War may be winding down, starting with the cease-fire in January. We all hope and pray for the return of all the hostages, both living and not. If and when that war does end (may it be now), there will be much discussion in the Jewish community as to who actually allied themselves with world Jewry and who didn't. In other words, who can we trust and who betrayed the Jewish community while it was under attack? Sadly, this is an important issue and one we need to carefully study.

Politics aside, just being Jewish often means placing one's life at risk. It's an old story, one we know about due to World War II and the holocaust; one all Jews understand. You don't have to be Jewishly religious or observant to be singled out for death by your identity.

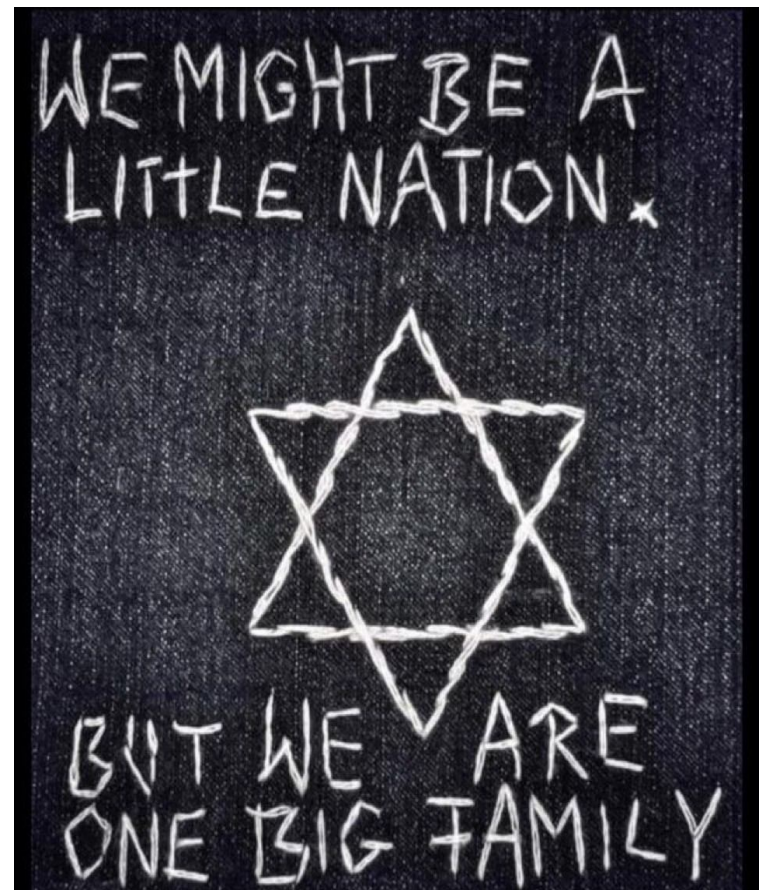
I believe it's important with whom we interact, and who we must avoid. There were many individuals and organizations who we thought would stand with us (both as American Jews and Israelis), and there has been much disappointment. On the positive side, many organizations and celebrities took what turned out to be brave stands showing support for the Jewish people. For some, their avowed support for Jews turned out to be career-harming. And for others who turned against Jews, their stars rose, although I'm sure not for very long.

What surprised me perhaps the most was how many superstars in show business, long and wrongly considered the domain of Jews (Hollywood), actually condemned Jews for defending themselves or accused Jews in a Nazi-like manner with the blood-libel. This is unforgivable.

We will be discussing this in the next few months, or even years. As we all should.

Lastly, I want to conclude by reminding everyone that Purim is quickly approaching. It's story is just like the one we have recently lived through, starting with October 7 of 2023. Jews have been libeled and hunted down. And when we back away from the fight of self-defense, we lose. But we have vowed **Never Again**. Listen to the voices of Never Again. That's how we survive and thrive.

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### Haym Salomon, Jewish Financier, and George Washington

Haym Salomon's (1740 - 1785) life was brief and tumultuous, but his impact on America was great. A Polish-born Jewish businessman, he advanced from a penniless refugee to become one of the most important financiers of the American Revolution.

Risking his fortune, he helped fund General Washington's army, securing loans at rock-bottom prices. After the war was won, Salomon used his own money to help finance America's newly-formed but impoverished government.

Sadly, his generosity was not repaid. It seemed that Congress did not recognize their debt to Salomon, refusing to repay the money they'd borrowed. When Salomon died in poverty at the age of just 45, his family was left unable to reclaim his debt from the government.

In 1975 the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp hailing Salomon as a "Financial Hero of the American Revolution."

There is a bronze statue in Heald Square in Chicago's Michigan-Wacker Historic District of **George Washington** and the two Revolution financiers **Robert Morris** and **Haym Salomon**.



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

# “Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” on Zoom

## Thursdays February 6, 13, and 27 7:30 pm



This popular Shir Ami educational series has continued 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. Rabbi usually starts the Zoom early for chatting.

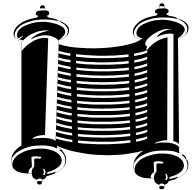
The link is

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9lVzhwVWVS  
RGgraEFJdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9lVzhwVWVSRGgraEFJdz09)

**Meeting ID: 864 4008 2040 Password: 677588**

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### **Saturday February 8, 10:30 am Torah/Shabbat Study at Schroeder home**



Stan Schroeder has started his tenth season 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 February 8. The Torah portion is *Beshalach*, Exodus 13:17 - 17:16. It includes crossing of the Sea of Reeds. We will also discuss the upcoming holiday of Tu B’Shevat.

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



**Congregation Shir Ami Schedule of Shabbat Services 2024  
at de Toledo High School, Zoom, and Livestream [www.shirami.com](http://www.shirami.com)**

**If you want to be added to our email list, please send an email to [stanpacbell@gmail.com](mailto:stanpacbell@gmail.com) and you will receive ongoing information.**

**Saturday 10:30 am unless otherwise noted**

**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

**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



David Vorspan



Jordan Pistol

For Zoom:

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

***If you would like more information about our congregation please visit our website at [www.shirami.com](http://www.shirami.com)***