



# Shir Notes

Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 22, Number 4,  
Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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## Rabbi's Column

For those whose lives are shaped by the Jewish Calendar, in rapid succession we observe Pesach, Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), Yom HaZikaron (Israel Memorial Day) and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day).

They occur within one month's time: Yom HaShoah is 5 days after the conclusion of Pesach, and Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut one week later.

Bonnie and I will be participating in the "March of the Living" this year. This means that immediately after Pesach we will be flying to Poland where we will be joining around 6,000 others for a Yom HaShoah ceremony at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

And one week later we will be in Israel to celebrate Israel's Birthday.

And all this while Israel fights a war for her survival.

During previous years, there was a distinct shift in moods as "March" participants departed the land of work and concentration camps and landed in the country that was given birth as a result (in part) of the Holocaust. And the joy of celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut was without restraint.

This year, I think I can anticipate the mood of those with whom we will be observing Yom HaShoah, but what will be the mood in Israel? Where tourism is down. Where life is lived in apprehension. Where the economy has been suffering. Where we will be joined with only half of those who were with us for the Poland segment of the "March."

But we Jews are an indomitable people. We are resilient. I anticipate the people of Israel will not deny themselves the joy of their communal birthday.

When Bonnie and I return in May having experienced the swing in emotions, I suspect joy will have been mingled with sorrow not a few times.



But it will have been an experience not to have been missed!

We'll let you know!

*Hag Kasher v'Sameach* from my family yo yours **Rabbi David Vorspan**

See flyer for sale of Hametz 2024.

## Events of the Month

### Shabbat services at de Toledo and via Zoom and Livestream

Saturday, April 6 - 10:30 am

Birthday Shabbat

Saturday, April 20 - 10:30 am

Anniversary Shabbat

### Around the Rabbi's Tisch Thursdays, April 11 & 18

7:30 pm via Zoom

Our 5784 season of Rabbi's weekly discussion continues online.

These two sessions are a bonus in preparation for Passover

### Shabbat Torah Study

Saturday, April 27, 10:30 am at the Schroeders'

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

## President's Report

Shalom,

In our traditions, it is customary for the mourners to walk around the block of the Shiva home at the end of the Shiva period. One reason given is that with this walk, they accompany the soul on its path. Another is that it symbolizes the family's return to society following their intense mourning period.

Last month, our Shir Ami family took a metaphorical walk around the block as we held our Brunch with the Rabbi program in which we encouraged personal attendance. This symbolized our return to society and a return to in-person events and I thank all of you who shared this return with us. It was a rousing success and based on that success, we hope to have many other in person program events in the future. If you have any ideas for a programming event, please don't keep it a secret. Let us know and we'll see what we can do about putting it into action.

April is the month for Pesach, which we begin with two searches. One is searching for the chametz in preparation for the holiday. The second search, for me at least, is the search for the Haggadot as I can never remember where I put them after Pesach last year.

This April, following a short hiatus, we will have two sessions of Around the Rabbi's Tisch to get us in the Seder mood. You may even take away a few hints on subjects for leading your own Seder.

Looking toward the future, next month, Mother's Day will be upon us so you had better start now so we can provide \$10 Target gift cards for the mothers in the shelters.

And we will continue with our two Shabbat Services and one Shabbat/Torah study session.

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).



Shalom and Happy Passover,

**Jordan Pistol**, President

### About this Shir Notes

by Stan Schroeder, Editor and Publisher of our Award Winning *Shir Notes* since November 2007

By now regular readers realize this issue is not in my usual format. I started creating *Shir Notes* on my home computer following my retirement from a 50-year career as a computer scientist/programmer, mostly in aerospace. Before that I had been submitting monthly biographies to **Mariana Stark**, our previous Editor. She submitted her copy to a professional company that formatted it for publishing. I now had time "on my hands" and wanted to use my skills and save Shir Ami the cost of professional publishing. At that time, we were printing and mailing to our roughly 100 members – no email.

I had a Sony desktop running Windows XP. I bought Microsoft Home Publishing and started creating *Shir Notes* with the approximate format of the previous issues, but my own design. In 2012 my internet interface on my computer failed and I bought a Dell desktop with Windows 7. I expected the Home Publishing to accept the previous files, (I edit previous issues to create the current one) only to find out that they changed the format and it did not. So, I retained the Sony, just to use Home Publishing, and wrote the results to a thumb drive for the new computer to send. I replaced the Dell in 2021 and continued the process. Now the Sony failed again. It had failed last year for the May issue and I created May and June with WORD and this issue is in that format.

My wife, Phyllis, and I wish you and yours a happy and meaningful Passover (*Hag Sameach*).

# DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

## Yahrzeits

Sheilah Hart for Joseph Lipman and Belle Lipman  
Ethel Granik for Tena Granik  
Nancy and Lonny Scharf for Lillian Scharf and Norman Scharf

## Birthdays

Bonnie and Rabbi Vorspan for Aaron Brenner (42)

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Birthdays

Sylvia Hockmeyer .....	4/5
Joan Easley.....	4/5
Lee Dollins .....	4/16
Carol Altshiller.....	4/17
Jerry Zatz.....	4/20
Pat Michaelson .....	4/22
Ed Orens.....	4/23
Marcie Spetner.....	4/25
Ellie Zatz .....	4/26



## Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

**Sheilah Hart      Steve Schuster      Phyllis Schroeder**

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

## Social Action Committee

We are collecting \$10 Target gift cards for JFS HOPE Domestic Violence Project for **Mother's Day**. These cards are given to mothers and their children who often use them for basic necessities. You will be able to donate the Target gift cards by mailing them or dropping them off:

*Becky Finlay*  
17603 Miranda St.,  
Encino, CA 91316.

Call her at (747) 998-3804 for more information.

## Brunch with the Rabbi at de Toledo March 17 Featuring Shayne Marine's Presentation

*Editor's Note: We had our first lox and bagel Brunch since COVID at de Toledo High School with a capacity attendance of 47. Our event chair **Sheilah Hart** was assisted by her daughter **Lisa Hart** and members **Judy Eisikowitz, Helga Unkeless, and Robin and Alan Burman**. The brunch, including herring, fruit, and pastries was delicious. Instead of Rabbi's usual topic, he prepared a PowerPoint presentation for Shayne Marine to tell about her three weeks in Israel with an organization that brings volunteers to work in agriculture because of the severe shortage of workers after the Hamas horrific invasion October 7. She and her husband Joel were part of a group that worked in a persimmon farm on a moshav north of Ashdod in southern Israel.*

*Stan Schroeder, Editor of Shir Notes*

by **Shane Marine**

First of all, thank you to all who attended the Sunday Brunch with the Rabbi and heard about our journey to Israel. It was with great please to see so many familiar faces and friends of my beloved parents **Phyllis and Bernard Robinson z"l**.

When the war broke out in Israel we wanted to go there help out and make a difference. We decided going on an agricultural mission would be a great fit for us as so many farmers were in desperate need of volunteers. We actually had to arrive in Israel two days before we started our job with the Israel Food Rescue because all the flights were sold out. The two days in Tel Aviv were extremely moving as we went to Hostage Square and met with families of loved ones who are being held as hostages. It's also where the press headquarters are and the long Sabbath table is located.

We ventured on to Jerusalem to start our mission and met up with the other 22 volunteers like us were from various parts of the world, but mostly from the East Coast.

Our hostel in Jerusalem was our home for the next 3 weeks. It was in the perfect location but maybe 8x8 at the most. We got picked up by a bus the next morning at 6:00 am sharp that took us to Moshav Gan HaDarom, located near Ashdod. Ashdod is a major cargo port on the Mediterranean coast, 20 miles south of Tel Aviv and 12 miles north of Ashkelon. This is where we picked and packed persimmons for 8 hours every day with 1/2 hour for lunch.

We learned so many things being out on the farm, and all about persimmons. Yes, we were exhausted by the end of the day but it was a wonderful feeling knowing we were doing something meaningful. In the evening after dinner we did walk around empty Jerusalem, shops were closed and very few people out and about. It was very bittersweet to leave such a wonderful country where the Israeli's were so appreciative of us coming and helping them out in this time of crisis. We did experience three sirens and we did see an iron dome in action, but never once did we feel unsafe. We hope to go back and volunteer. But we also hope the war will end soon and we can go for a celebration the next time. We pray the hostages will return home and for better times in Israel.

Wishing everyone a meaningful Passover, Shalom Shayne and Joel Marine



## Let Our People Go by Lou Loomis

This year, Passover starts on the evening of April 22 and goes for eight days until sunset, April 30. It is one of the big Jewish holidays, following Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and, of course, the big one: Hanukkah.

However, and all levity aside, Passover clearly defines us as a people. We yearn for freedom. Freedom is a major theme that runs constantly through Jewish literature and all our holiest books; Jewish history is the story of a people fighting to be free. The Ten Statements- we are taught they are not really commandments- are nothing without us, as a people, having the free will to embrace, deny, or modify our acceptance of those statements. And the heroes of the Jewish people are trying to instruct us with the skills and knowledge of how to be a free people. Some would even say that protesting slavery or forced restrictions is a part of Jewish DNA.

This isn't just ancient history. It is as contemporary as today's headlines. One such hero's story exemplifies our eternal yearning for freedom. His name is **Natan Scharansky**. He was born Anatoly Borisovich, in the Ukrainian Soviet State in 1948. He took his current Hebrew name, Natan Scharansky in 1986 when he was freed from Soviet incarceration as part of a prisoner exchange and received an Israeli passport with his new name, Natan Sharansky. He is married to Avital Sharansky and has two daughters, Rachel and Hannah. He was a scientist working for the Soviet government, when, in the early 1970s, he became involved with the Russian Jewish Dissident Movement and was jailed for his activities. His incarceration became a world-wide cause celebre and his plight became a symbol of the cry for freedom by Soviet Jews. Protests broke out throughout the world at a time the Soviet Union was starting to disintegrate. He was freed and made Aliyah to Israel in 1986.

The dissident movement was eventually responsible for nearly three million Jews leaving the Soviet Union, most of whom ended up in Israel, the United States, and Canada.

Since moving to Israel, he has been active in Israeli politics and today is the Chairman for the Institute for the study of Global Antisemitism. Scharansky is also a very vocal critic of those who insist Israel back down from defeating Hamas in its current conflict. He believes that Hamas must be totally defeated or else there will be more 10/7 - type attacks not only on Israel but throughout the world. He believes that countries showing weakness against terrorism and especially antisemitism are making themselves targets for future attacks and expresses his fear that the western world, especially the United States, is facing great danger by not facing down terrorist states, which include Qatar and Iran, both sponsors of Hamas and Hezbollah.

In the early 1970s the Save Soviet Jewry movement, an offshoot of the Dissident Movement, started gaining world-wide attention, and especially here in Los Angeles. Paula and I brought our two young daughters to the protests and marches. My two daughters were both very young and we were able to join the walk with numerous young families, like ours. The protest was more like a wonderful outing with Jewish music, food, and rousing speakers who explained the importance of the movement's goals. Of course, the underlying theme was not just freedom for the Jews in the Soviet Union, but for the return of all Jews to Israel, the most deeply-held and desired dream. The event was organized to highlight the plight of the Russian Jewish Dissidents, and in particular, one individual whose incarceration in Russia represented all Russian Jews who were not allowed to leave that country, Natan Sharansky. He had been working as a scientist in the USSR and had been jailed on charges of espionage. His connections with the Soviet Jewish Dissident Movement had been the real reason for his imprisonment.

The connection between Scharansky and the holiday of Passover is not coincidental. And it also ties in with the war crimes committed against Israel by the terror groups of Hamas and Hezbollah. The overt goal of Islamic fascism is the annihilation of the Jewish state, and also the elimination of all Jews, worldwide. It also states that it wants to destroy and replace the religion of the Jews with its own brand of Islam. These aims are also written into the founding documents of Hamas, Hezbollah, and even the Palestinian Authority.

(continued on page 6)



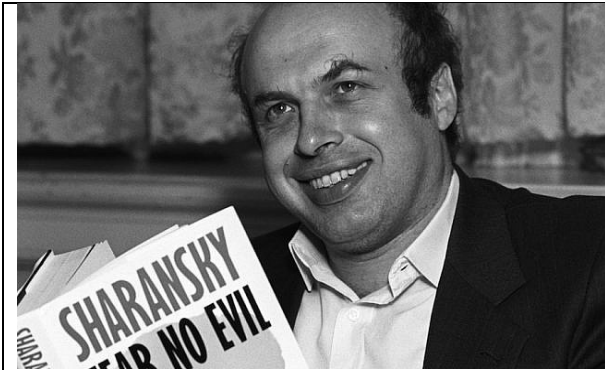
**Let Our People Go** (continued)

**It doesn't stop there.** Hamas and Hezbollah also want to replace the democracies of the Western world, which include Europe, the Americas, Australia, and wherever else democracy exists. It is a fascist movement with ambitions of earthy domination. It is like the resurrection of Nazi ideology in Moslem clothes.

Many supporters of Israel believe that if Hamas can be stopped by Israel, it will send the signal that world-wide Islamic fascism can be defeated; that Israel can send a signal of freedom to all countries facing the rise of fascism. This is the lesson of Passover: that freedom and the will to survive is necessary and actually teachable.

I also want to remind everyone that our own Shir Ami **Rabbi Vorspan** is giving lessons on the Passover Seders, on line, through his Around the Rabbi's Tisch. And, a further bonus, **Stan Schroeder** (Shir Ami Ritual VP) also has a monthly Torah class at his home, which also illuminates these themes of freedom through the study of our Jewish great books. Don't miss either.

Am Yisrael Chai and Pesach Sameach!





*Editor's Note: Our member **Judy Eisikowitz** showed me a paper copy of this article by member **Barbara Grubman** that was published in the Jewish Journal during Passover. I include it here in her memory. Stan Schroeder*

### **Hail to the Seder Chief** by Barbara Grubman - *Jewish Journal* (April 21, 2005)

I can just imagine my Orthodox grandparents worrying about making the seder come alive for their grandchildren. Grandma was too busy de-feathering chickens and grandpa taking care of business in his violin shop to think about how we might be kept happy at their seder table. Entertainment and seder would never have been uttered in the same sentence in their Bronx home behind the H. Bass Music store.

But I am different. I have the time and the energy to make our seder a swirling, interactive event for my four grandchildren. Why, they can even dip their little feet into my cellophane Red Sea as it parts on my living room floor.

And, to top it off, I am the maven of plague bags. When the kids were very little, the bags were little. The first years they were small, white paper bags with simple black lettering. Simple items went into them: frogs that I had made out of green paper, 99 Cent Store kid's sunglasses for darkness, wrapping bubbles that popped like boils and small plastic cups colored with red markers to signify the blood.

No grandchild would ever sit tired and glassy eyed just waiting and praying for the meal. We would go through the entire hagaddah, but with enough diversions to allow them to stay 'with us' without having a grand melt down before the first course.

In 2003, I went big time. I bought small canvas bags for 99 cents each but then had them machine embroidered by my dressmaker friend Liz. Each child's name was written in a different font and color. She attached ribbon fringe with multicolored beads to the bags. Creativity and hopes of keeping their attention and in the process teaching them the significance of the seder meal was my goal. And now, my friends were getting involved as well.

Last year, we had our bags, we had our green gummy frogs, we had our boils and our blood. When it came to talk about darkness, I turned out all the lights and each person at the table talked about what darkness meant to them. The kids said bedtime and a few of the adults joked about sex.

But everything seems to pale in comparison to my hail. Now, you have to understand that the previous years' foil did the trick and could be playfully tossed around hail was quite adequate. Small rolled up pieces of silver foil did the trick and could be playfully tossed around the table. But, a few weeks before Passover, I had read in the *New York Times* about a grandfather (surely he did not own a violin-making store) who also tries to engage his young grandchildren at seder time. During the day, the article said, this man secretly and gently places minimarshmallows on top of the blades of his wooden ceiling fan. My eyes lit up. This would be a real crowd pleaser. When the fan was turned on, the little white pseudo-hail would fly around the room, just like the real thing as all would watch, wide-eyed.

I had a ceiling fan. I would buy the tiny puffs and we too would have our authentic San Fernando Valley hail. Surely the kids and the grown-ups would stand in awe of this my most fabulous creation to date.

Everyone followed me from the table as we marched to my computer room where the fan was silently waiting with its marshmallow topping. One of the kids turned on the fan and as predicted, the tiny white confections started flying. Up, down and on the ground. I waited, if not for deafening applause, at least oohs and ahd from my adoring fans.

Here is what really happened. They looked; some may have even thought, "Wow, that was great!" At least I hoped they did. But no one said much and if they did, it was lost in the shuffling of feet as they scurried back to the seder table.

The marshmallows. I was too tired to even think of cleaning them up that night or even asking for help. We did get a few up, but that was because they had stuck to the bottom of shoes and kept sticking us down as we walked.

The marshmallows a week later? Many still remained where the fan had dutifully blown them the night of our seder. Many more hardened where they lay but I learned to walk gingerly among them. As the days melted into weeks, they began to harden. A friend said, "If you leave them on the floor long enough, next year they will really feel like hail." She was on to something. My ever-creative mind clicked in and I answered:

"Yes, and the kids could wear woolen hats and mufflers and maybe even ski clothing."

When I started to think about erecting a miniature ski lift next to the pool, I knew, that even for me, that would be going over the edge.

Maybe my grandparents back in the Bronx had the right idea after all.

## Every Step I Take is a Blessing Passover 5784

On Passover we make blessings for matzah and wine.  
We read psalms and pray for dew.  
At the seder we are told to recline;  
Once again, we relive our story anew.

We were freed from *Mitzrayim*, a Narrow Place;  
In our time we have our own nation.  
Though we realize the problems we daily face,  
We marvel at the wonders of Creation.

Bitterness and prejudice still exist;  
Mass murder and terror make news.  
Social and fiscal issues too many to list,  
And too many scoundrels to accuse.

Yet here I am blessed with long life,  
Though many my age have died.  
Doubly blessed with a wonderful wife,  
A home with peace and joy inside.

I know my life comes with my own task  
With a special connection to Jews.  
There are my own questions I need to ask  
And a path only I can choose.

One step at a time is given to me,  
My time is daily compressing.  
Thanks to those before who set us free.  
Every step I take is a blessing.

At the seder we tell our story with zeal  
As if we made that journey in haste.  
We eat symbolic foods at our meal  
And celebrate freedom with each taste.

Just as from slavery we once were freed,  
From this virus we'll develop immunity,  
Recognize those who now meet each need  
Of our blessed Shir Ami community.

Stan Schroeder



## **“Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” on Zoom Thursdays April 11 and 18**



This popular Shir Ami educational concludes its 5784 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. These sessions are a bonus to the season to prepare us for the upcoming Passover holiday. The Tisch starts at 7:30 pm; Rabbi Vorspan opens the Zoom 15 minutes early for chatting.

The Zoom link is

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9IVzhwVWVlS\\_RGgraEFJdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9IVzhwVWVlS_RGgraEFJdz09)

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

### **Saturday April 27, 10:30 am Torah/Shabbat Study at Schroeder home**



Stan Schroeder is continuing 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



Our next session will be April 27. This is the intermediate day of Passover Shabbat. We will learn from our usual esteemed rabbis such as Jonathan Sacks and Meir Soloveichik and each other.

This session will be 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 Contract for the Sale of Hametz

Know ye that I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit Rabbi David Vorspan to act in my place and stead, and in my behalf to sell all Hametz possessed by me (knowingly or unknowingly) as defined by The Torah and Rabbinic Law (e.g. Hametz, doubt of Hametz, and all kinds of Hametz mixtures). Also Hametz that tends to harden and to adhere to a surface of inside of pans, pots or cooking and usable utensils, and all kinds of animals that have been eating Hametz or mixtures thereof. And to lease all places wherein the Hametz owned by me may be found.

Rabbi David Vorspan has the full right to sell and to lease by transactions, as he deems fit and proper and for such time which he believes necessary in accordance with all detailed terms and detailed forms, as explained in the general authorization contract which have been given this year to Rabbi David Vorspan to sell the Hametz.

This general authorization is made a part of this agreement. Also do I hereby give the said Rabbi David Vorspan full power and authority to appoint a substitute in his stead with full power to sell and to lease as provided herein. The above given power is in conformity with all Torah, Rabbinical regulations and laws, and also in accordance with the laws of the State of California and of the United States. And to this I hereby affix my signature on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Please note additional locations (summer home, cottage, work place) where Hametz might be located:

***Please return this form to Rabbi Vorspan, 22320 Philipprimm Street, Woodland Hills, CA 91367  
or take a photo (or scan) and send it to [rabbivorspan@gmail.com](mailto:rabbivorspan@gmail.com)  
by Friday morning, April 19, 2024***

# Congregation Shir Ami

## April 2024

### (Adar II/Nisan 5784)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 22 Adar II	2 23 Adar II	3 24 Adar II Board Meeting at Helga's & Zoom 7:30 pm	4 25 Adar II	5 26 Adar II Candle Lighting 6:59 pm	6 27 Adar II Birthday Shabbat at de Toledo, Livestream, & Zoom 10:30 am Shemini
7 28 Adar II	8 29 Adar II	9 1 Nisan	10 2 Nisan	11 3 Nisan 7:30 pm Around the Rabbi's Tisch on Zoom	12 4 Nisan Candle Lighting 7:04 pm	13 5 Nisan Tazria
14 6 Nisan	15 7 Nisan	16 8 Nisan	17 9 Nisan	18 10 Nisan 7:30 pm Around the Rabbi's Tisch on Zoom	19 11 Nisan Candle Lighting 7:10 pm	20 12 Nisan Anniversary Shabbat at de Toledo, Livestream, & Zoom 10:30 am Metzora
21 13 Nisan Search for Chametz	22 14 Nisan First Seder	23 15 Nisan Passover	24 16 Nisan Passover	25 17 Nisan Passover	26 18 Nisan Intermediate Day Passover Candle Lighting 7:15 pm	27 19 Nisan Shabbat Torah Study at Schroeders' 10:30 am Intermediate Day Passover
28 20 Nisan Intermediate Day Passover	29 21 Nisan Passover	30 22 Nisan Yizkor Passover				