



# Shir Notes

The Official Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 13, Number 1, January 2015  
Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

## Events of the Month

### Shabbat services at New Community Jewish High School

Saturday, January 3 - 10:30 am  
Birthday Shabbat  
Consecration of Officers  
Saturday, January 17 - 10:30 am  
Anniversary Shabbat  
Social Action Linen Shabbat

### Breakfast with the Rabbi Sunday, Jan. 11, 10:00 am Northridge Mobile Home Park

This is an opportunity to learn, discuss, and engage with Rabbi Vorspan at a delicious breakfast prepared by our members. See the article on page 2 or flyer to sign up.

### Around the Rabbi's Tisch Thursdays, Jan. 8 and 15 7:30 pm at the Vorspans'

We complete the first half of our 5775 season of Rabbi's popular weekly discussion around his dining room table. Call Rabbi at (818) 888-9817 or see flyer,

### Torah and Shabbat Study Saturday, Jan. 24, 10:30 am Northridge Mobile Home Park

Stan Schroeder leads a monthly study and discussion session on a Saturday we don't have a service. See flyer for more details.

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



## Rabbi's Column

I took 3,109 photographs last Saturday night. All within three hours! During an entire year studying in Israel in the 70s, I didn't take that many pictures!

It was Homecoming at New Community Jewish High School, and I was chronicling the two basketball games (we won both!) and a performance by the Dance Team. My camera is capable of taking six photos a second, helpful when recording a fast-paced sporting event.

But so many pictures! A few days later I reviewed them all, and found about 50 that were good enough to use in the future. All the rest were trashed.

Was it worth it to take so many photos and then have to spend so much time winnowing them down to a manageable few? There's a part of me that believes that I wouldn't have taken the "money shots" without so many to choose from.

But the other part of me feels that if I were more discriminating, I could have taken exceptional pictures even with fewer photos. After all, what did professional photographers do before 64 gb ScanDisks were invented, giving us the ability to take so many photos without costing a penny? They took probably not more than a few hundred during a football game.

So I am getting mixed lessons.

We can read lots of books, retaining only a portion of that material; we can pray every day, achieving a level of prayer only intermittently; we can watch five hours of tv a night, being truly impressed with perhaps one show. Such would be the rewards gleaned from exposure to a lot.

Or, we can be choosier, reading only a few books, but with more comprehension; attending services only now and then, but working hard at achieving *kavanah*; being more discriminating in what we watch on tv, and using the extra time to...

What has been your experience? On which side of this issue do your actions fall? Is less really more, or is more...more? Let me know, and I'll post the results.

Send a note to [vorspan2@att.net](mailto:vorspan2@att.net).

Rabbi David Vorspan



This issue of *Shir Notes* is dedicated to the memory of **Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis** (1925 - 2014). Please see pages 5 and 6.



## President's Report

Shalom,

First, I want to thank those of you who braved the rain and lack of parking to attend last month's members meeting. We actually managed to elect some new members to the board and at least one new face among our officers. Please join us for Shabbat Services on January 3, when we consecrate our new board and officers.

With our congregation's leadership set, we can begin the new year, hitting the ground running. We have a full, if not overstuffed, calendar for January. In addition to our two Saturday Shabbat services, we will be completing our first "semester" of *Around the Rabbi's Tisch (and on the Rebbitzens' chairs)*. We have a "Breakfast with the Rabbi" scheduled, plus our Social Action Committee's "Linen Shabbat." Our Ritual Vice President, **Stan Schroeder** continues leading our monthly Torah and Shabbat Study Group.

Our attendance for Shabbat Services has been amazing. **Rabbi Vorspan** has been playing to full house. And, if it weren't for **Bonnie Vorspan** bringing more chairs into the services on one Shabbat, it would have been standing room only! Shir Ami is active in so many ways, but the Shabbat Services will always remain as our center.

Congregation Shir Ami has had such a rich past that it would be easy to imagine ourselves resting on our laurels (or whatever else we rest on) and settle down to attending the occasional Shabbat service, while waiting for the High Holy Days to come around. Instead, as this month's activities demonstrate, we continually re-affirm our sense of community, learning and service. Each year, we recommit ourselves to the principles that have made Shir Ami not only a part of our lives, but a vital part of the Southern California Jewish Community.

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



## Congregation Shir Ami Board for 2015

President	Jordan Pistol
Executive Vice President	Ken Bereny
Membership Vice President	Esther Perez
Program Vice President	Sherry Dollins/ Ellen Fremed
Ways & Means Vice President	Sherry Dollins/ Ellen Fremed
Ritual Vice President	Stan Schroeder
Social Action Vice President	Fran Kobulnick
Treasurer	Clara Rosenbluth
Secretary	Mike Easley

Board of Directors	
Members-at-large	Art Altshiller Owen Delman Barbara Grubman Sheilah Hart Stan Rosenbluth

In addition, former presidents Harvey Cohen, Helga Unkeless, and Jerry Zatz are Board members.

We welcome new Board members **Barbara Grubman**, **Sheilah Hart**, and **Stan Rosenbluth** and **Ken Bereny**, our new Executive Vice President.

## Breakfast with the Rabbi

by Sherry Dollins



Begin your New Year with a delectable and delicious **Breakfast with the Rabbi** on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. This program will be held in the recreation room at the Northridge Mobile Home Park at 19120 Nordhoff St. We will enjoy a breakfast of hot and cold foods and then listen to Rabbi Vorspan inform us about a topic of relevant interest and concern. A lively discussion usually ensues based on the Rabbi's presentation. This annual event is always popular and will be a special way to start 2015 with congregational family and friends.

The cost is \$10 per person. For \$18 you can sponsor the event and help defray the costs. Sponsors will be acknowledged during the program. R.S.V.P. by January 3<sup>rd</sup> to ensure your place at this most "tasty" and informative breakfast discussion.

Please call me at 818-886-7590 for further information. See the flyer in this *Shir Notes* to make your reservations.



# DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

## Yahrzeits

- Fiona Taylor and Stan Goodman for Sheena Mendoza
- Nancy and Lonny Scharf for Charles Kaplan
- Doris Beck
- Rosalind G. Schackman
- Claire and Lew Silverman for Leah Besbeck
- Lori and Ed Orens for Vera Orens and Irving Zelenitz
- Shirley Esko for Marvin Esko and Rudy Esko
- Gerry and Sam Hochberg for Chaim Hochberg and Gertrude Salle
- Ann and Seymour Potell for Herb Potell
- Lorraine and Daniel Simansky for Sitzer
- Irv Strassner for Fannie Strassner, Abraham Strassner, and Eli Strassner
- Eileen Avneri for Solomon Yudelson
- Andrea and Leon Nachenberg for Simon Nachenberg
- Jacque Gordon for Revella Katz and Joseph Gordon
- Irv Strassner for Clara Levin and Rae Sher
- Gerry and Sam Hochberg for Leble Salle
- Lynn Cherney for Miriam Forman and Joseph Dones

## Birthdays

- Rabbi David Vorspan
- Rae Wazana
- Jacque Gordon

## Anniversaries

- Ann and Seymour Potell

## Shabbat Service/Lunch and Learn February 7

We will have a kiddush lunch sponsored by **Gloria Weinstein**, followed by her son-in-law **Mark Abelson's** presentation: ***Creating a Just Pluralistic Society in Israel***. See flyer with this *Shir Notes*.

## Congregation Shir Ami Tribute Cards

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

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



## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Birthdays

- Paul Soifer..... 12/2  
(omitted last month).
- Jacque Gordon..... 1/1
- Jerry Gort..... 1/2
- Leon Nachenberg..... 1/2
- Owen Delman..... 1/7
- Karen Harvey..... 1/16
- Fenton Harvey..... 1/20
- Claire Silverman..... 1/20
- Lawrence Scharf..... 1/21
- Fiona Taylor..... 1/21
- Lynn Cherney..... 1/22

### Anniversaries

- Gale and Jay Cohen..... 1/15 9th
- Debra and Wayne Geffen..... 1/23 32nd
- Marian and Isadore Perlmutter..... 1/30 66th

## Mailbox

Dear Friends,

I just wanted all of you to know that I think of you often and I miss all of you very much! I'll be with you in spirit for the Hanukkah dinner and wish I was there to enjoy Hovav's food. I'm still loving my job and I'm so happy there. We do so much good for so many kids and I'm proud to work there and be a part of it. Take care of yourselves and, if you'd like to call me, my home phone number is (432) 653-4208.



Love, **Donna Levine**

## Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

**Stan Schroeder** hernia surgery

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



## Social Action Committee

Oops, please accept my apology. I forgot to thank **Armand Wazana** for his help building our backpack mountain on Mitzvah Day and **Jordan Pistol** for the pictures he took and shared with us.

I'm proud to tell you that our Social Action Committee truly had a very successful Mitzvah filled year thanks to our supportive, caring, and generous **Rabbi and Bonnie Vorspan** and our congregation, family, and friends. As a small congregation, we do as much, and sometimes even more, than the larger congregations when performing community Mitzvah Projects! It is safe to say that we are blessed to be part of a congregation that believes in the power of community mitzvah projects as a way of making our community and our world a better place. We look forward to 2015 as another productive year.

We ended our year with two amazing mitzvah projects! We collected over 75 **Target \$10 gift cards** for the women and children in the **Domestic Violence Shelters** we help to sponsor for the holidays. The cards were delivered to the shelters in time for Hanukkah. The women and children were truly appreciative of our kindness during this difficult time in their life. As you probably know, the shelters have expanded and the need is greater than ever for even more shelters. Thanks to social media and the great work done by JFS Domestic Violence Project, more victims are given the inspiration and resources to leave their violent life behind and try to rebuild a better life in the future.

We will be having our annual **Linen Shabbat** to benefit these shelters on Saturday, January 17 at NCJHS. See the flyer in this newsletter for the list of **new linens** which are needed now. We are thrilled to have **Ms. Kitty Glass**, Outreach Coordinator for the **JFS Domestic Violence Project** as our guest speaker. Kitty will bring us all up to date on the Project. See the flyer for more information and let us know if you need help shopping for linens. We look forward to a huge turnout for this special event.

Our Committee went to **West Valley Healthcare Center** on Friday, December 19 to celebrate **Shabbat and Hanukkah** with all the residents. We had a large turnout of about 55-60 alert residents who were patiently awaiting our arrival.

Special thanks go to **Laura Simon** for buying gifts for the residents and **Claire Silverman** for conducting over 2 1/2 hours of prayers and sing-along for all. Everyone was given dreidls and bags of chocolate gelt at the beginning of



our service. We heard many thanks from the residents who said that they would be able to share these with their family when they spent Hanukkah with them. **Ellie Zatz** and **Becky Finlay** went to each resident's room to deliver their holiday gifts and to make a personal connection. On behalf of all who were there, it was such a moving and emotional experience for everyone!

We have finally made arrangements for a **SOVA barrel** at our future Shabbat services. Save the dates for the **Jewish World Watch Walk on Sunday, April 12** and our annual **Walk Around Lake Balboa on Sunday June 7**.

We thank our members, family, and friends for their continued emotional, physical, and financial support of our Mitzvah Projects. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming mitzvah projects.

**Fran Kobulnick**, Social Action Vice President

### Operation Gratitude and Project MOT

by Charlene Kazel

Capricorn, the goat, packed up his attributes and crossed those moat in search of greener pastures.



Now we've crossed over, as well, leaving 2014 behind. For all our Social Action events and gifts to **Operation Gratitude**, it was a very good year. As we leap into 2015 my prayers for everyone is a year of peace and good health. May it be a year when all the members of our military can come home.

But, no matter what the future may bring we will continue our heartfelt support of Operation Gratitude and Project MOT. I wish everyone a blessed and wonderful New Year.



## My Memory of Rabbi Schulweis

by Rabbi David Vorspan

The year that I was ordained, Valley Beth Shalom had an opening for an assistant Rabbi, and I was intrigued enough to interview for it. Which meant a sit-down with **Rabbi Harold Schulweis**.

Little did I know it would be a sit down in his car!

When I entered his office, he told me he had to run an errand, and would it be O.K. if we had a conversation on the way, to which I agreed.

And so on the way to wherever, I was interviewed by Rabbi Schulweis.

I remember him asking me questions about my concept of God, who my favorite theologians were ("You, Rabbi Schulweis!" I remember responding) and other issues a Rabbi had to respond to.

But my memories of that afternoon are of a person who had already developed a national reputation, but who was so approachable and casual. I think he would have asked questions about my beliefs and feelings even if it weren't for a job interview. He was interested in what others thought, on what others were doing, how others were changing the world for the better.

I took a position with a different congregation, but I was enthralled every time I heard Rabbi Schulweis speak, because it was always thoughtful and thought provoking. But my lasting memory will always be of that afternoon, of a man caught up in the task of maneuvering a car through the streets of Encino, but whose attention was also on a young Rabbi struggling to answer life's most intriguing questions while hoping to arrive at the destination in one piece!

**Rabbi Harold Kushner**, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* :

"**Harold Schulweis** was always my role model of what a rabbi could aspire to be and do, even as I realized I could never match his energy, his boundless compassion and his ability to see challenges where the rest of us only saw problems. He never let me forget whom we as individuals and as a Jewish community were obliged to care about, and he taught me what I needed to do for them. I am proud to think of him as my mentor, my inspiration, my friend."



## My Experience with Rabbi Schulweis

by Stan Schroeder

**Rabbi Vorspan** wrote in his accompanying article about his interview with **Rabbi Schulweis** while a much younger Rabbi Schulweis was driving his car through the streets of Encino. I had a parallel experience in 2010 (almost 40 years later), but I was doing the driving. I went to a Simchat Torah program at Valley Beth Shalom. I have attended many classes, programs, and services there as they have so many wonderful events open to the public.

The Simchat Torah program included a book auction of autographed books by the five VBS rabbis who were there. The book by Rabbi Schulweis was the last to be auctioned, I had made up my mind I was going to bid whatever I needed, regardless of which book they had selected. It turned out to be *Evil and the Morality of God*, one of his first books published in 1984. It is an academic dissertation of a single complex argument for a theology Schulweis calls "predicate theology". I was the only bidder.

After the auction I spoke to Rabbi Schulweis and told him I purchased the book hoping to be able to discuss it with him after I read it. He readily agreed. A few weeks later I called him and we arranged to meet. He no longer drove, but still maintained an office at VBS. We agreed that I would pick him up at his home in MountainGate, a beautiful community in the hills on the west side of the Sepulveda Pass. I had sent him something about myself and some of my writing at his request.

So I drove him to VBS and we talked in the car about my interests and involvement in Reconstructionism. He had been a student of **Mordecai Kaplan** at the Jewish Theological Seminary and adapted many of Kaplan's ideas into his theology. Then we talked for a while in his office. I don't really understand *Evil and the Morality of God*, but I understood the author - a brilliant man of principle who brought God's qualities to the world and brought out the best in those he touched.

**Rabbi "Yitz" Greenberg**, eminent Modern Orthodox rabbi who promotes Jewish - Christian relations:

"**Harold** was a prophet. By this I mean that he saw ahead of his time and of his generation and prescribed what the Jewish people needed to do in this moment of transformation. This was a crossroads where much could be gained or all could be lost. Harold showed us the way."

## Biography of the Month: Rabbi Harold Schulweis

by Stan Schroeder

**Harold Schulweis** was born in the Bronx, NY April 14, 1925 to secular parents who respected Zionism and Jewish traditions. His father was an editor of *The Jewish Daily Forward*. His early Jewish education was influenced by his grandfather, **Rabbi Avraham Rezak**, who introduced him to the Talmud. In 1945, Schulweis graduated Yeshiva University with a degree in philosophy. Later he enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he studied under **Mordecai Kaplan** and **Abraham Joshua Heschel**.



Schulweis's first pulpit was Temple Beth Abraham, a Conservative congregation in Oakland in 1952. Among the innovations he introduced was the inclusion of women in *minyanim* and *bat mitzvah* ceremonies for girls. Instead of sermons, he used the allotted time for questions and answers. He became the senior Rabbi at Valley Beth Shalom in Encino in 1970. Under his leadership, VBS grew into one of the largest Conservative congregations in the western US. Responding to the loneliness and isolation of suburban life, Schulweis introduced synagogue-based "*Chavurot*" in 1971.

Schulweis is considered to be among the most influential rabbis of his generation in a career spanning his work not only as a religious leader, but also as a social activist and prolific author. When people would ask how they could believe in God after the horrors of the Holocaust, Schulweis would point to the moral courage shown by gentiles who saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis, such as **Oskar Schindler**. That attitude led him to establish what became the **Jewish Foundation for the Righteous** in 1986, providing financial support for 600 gentiles in 20 countries who had helped save Jews.

Not quite 20 years later, he founded **Jewish World Watch**, which raises about \$2 million a year to fight genocide in Africa and improve the lives of survivors.

On December 18, Rabbi Schulweis died in his home in Reseda following a long battle with heart disease. Since then there has been an outpouring of memories and laudatory statements from across the Jewish and civic communities.

The current senior rabbi at VBS, **Ed Feinstein**, said, "He gave us the capacity to be believing Jews because he offered a kind of theology that moved the center of responsibility from God in heaven to us. When humans take responsibility for one another, that's an expression of God's presence in the world."



Retired Los Angeles County Supervisor and longtime political heavyweight **Zev Yaroslavsky** remembered how, as a college student, he became the Los Angeles co-founder of the movement to pressure the Soviet Union into allowing refuseniks and other Jews to leave for Israel and other countries. At the time, most Jewish establishment organizations looked askance at the efforts and tactics of the young protesters, but Schulweis backed them from the beginning.

**John Fishel**, former president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, sought out Schulweis for advice when he arrived in this city in 1992 and, in turn, Schulweis drafted Fishel to serve on the board of Jewish World Watch. "Harold always took on causes and projects others didn't want to wade into. His knack was to recruit people of stature and then keep them focused on the job."

**Rabbi Uri Herscher**, founding president and CEO of the Skirball Cultural Center, was a freshman at UC Berkeley when he first heard Schulweis speak at a Rosh Hashanah service, and became a friend and admirer for life. On a later occasion, Herscher introduced Schulweis to an audience, saying in part, "Harold Schulweis is a rabbi. This is a little like saying, a **Rembrandt** is a painting. Or a **Stradivarius** is a violin...He is a rabbi of rabbis...He has, as much as any rabbi in our time, given Judaism meaning, relevance and renewed purpose."

I consider Rabbi Schulweis to be the bridge between Reconstructionist Judaism as espoused by his teacher Mordecai Kaplan (and the source of my theology) and Conservative Judaism that Kaplan strove to influence (with limited success). Schulweis, through his book *For Those Who Can't Believe: Overcoming Obstacles to Faith*, and his teachings gave voice to a realistic and inspiring Judaism.



## Spotlight on our Member Claire Silverstein

By special request I am reviving the *Shir Notes* tradition of featuring a member we can get to know better by learning a little about his/her life.



**Claire Silverman** was born in L.A. and grew up in Eagle Rock. After graduating high school she attended LACC and UCLA, but dropped out to work as a secretary. She met her husband **Lew** when he was discharged from the Navy in 1955 and they were engaged 11 days later. Son **Jay** was born a year later and son **Joel** two years after that. When Joel entered the first grade, Claire resumed her education at Pierce College. Daughter **Jessica** came along to bring another pause. When Jessica turned three, Claire enrolled at CSUN with a major in Spanish and a minor in English and English as a Second Language (ESL). She went on to earn a Master's in Bilingual Education in Secondary School.

After substitute teaching for about three years, Claire was hired by Cleveland High School in Reseda where Lew was the basketball coach. She taught Spanish, English, and ESL classes. It was Claire who set up their ESL program. Claire and Lew both retired in 1992.

While her children were young Claire became interested in guitar and folk singing. She learned guitar mainly based on her piano playing background. She played both by ear. She joined an organization called Song-makers that encourages musicians and singers to improve their craft while having fun. She also taught basic guitar while attending CSUN. Claire now uses her skills and enthusiasm with Shir Ami leading sing-alongs with our Social Action Committee at the West Valley Healthcare Center at their semiannual parties there.

Soon after they retired (shortly before the Northridge earthquake), the Silvermans moved to Camarillo. Two years later Claire, like many of us, became a very involved grandparent. She was available for the joys and responsibilities of grandparenting grandchildren **Shelby**, **Petra**, and **Zack** in Thousand Oaks.

When the Silvermans moved back to Woodland Hills they joined our congregation to reconnect with **Rabbi Vorspan**. They had belonged to Temple Beth Ami before, but left when Beth Ami merged with Beth Kodesh. We are indeed fortunate to have them as part of the Congregation Shir Ami family.

## Stan Schroeder's February Trip to Israel

As my regular readers may know, I went to Israel with a group from Stephen S. Wise Temple last June. I wouldn't go again so soon, except **Rabbi Feinstein** of Valley Beth Shalom is leading a group from VBS, and I don't want to miss this unique opportunity.



Each day of the tour has a theme. Here is a sample of the itinerary.

### Tuesday, February 17: **Under Fire**

Meet **Dr. Uzi Arad**, former head of Israel's National Security Council. Discussion of the background to this summer's fighting in Gaza. Visit the IAF Base on Palmachim to meet **Colonel P.**, Commander of a Drone Squadron. He trains Israeli Air Force pilots on the laws and ethics of combat in the IDF. Visit cities that surround Gaza to learn how a city functions under bombardment.

### Wednesday, February 18: **Recovery**

Meet with Palestinian peace activist **Issam Issa**, who grew up in a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza and was placed on the Hamas hit list. Travel to the Wadi Ara Region; tour Umm El Fahum and meet with local Arab-Israeli residents. Meet with **Avi Issacharoff**, former Middle East Bureau Chief of *Ha'aretz* and currently a writer for the *Times of Israel*. He is one of Israel's leading experts on the Hamas and Palestinian political culture.

### Thursday, February 19: **Defendable Borders**

View on the Israeli heartland from **Alfei Menashe**, a secular settlement built along the '49-'67 "Green Line"; meet with **Uzi Dayan**, General (Res.) in the IDF and former Head of the National Security Council, leading opponent of a peace settlement based on a withdrawal to the '67 line.

### Friday, February 20: **70 Faces of Torah**

Join the **Women of the Wall** for their monthly egalitarian prayers followed by breakfast. Tour the City of David with archaeologist **Gabi Barkai**, meet with representatives of Elad, the main group responsible for Jews moving back to the City of David. Meet **Yehudit Oppenheimer** of "Ir Amim", a political advocacy group that backs the division of Jerusalem and opposes Jews living in the City of David. Kabbalat Shabbat at Kotel or local synagogue; festive Shabbat dinner at the hotel.

Last day of the tour is Monday, February 23.

## Mailbox

**Fran Kobulnick** and Congregation,

On behalf of Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles (JFS) and our Board of Directors, we thank you for your recent participation in our High Holiday Food Drive supporting the SOVA Community Food and Resource Program. Your collection of 573 pounds of food helps ensure that hungry members of our community will have enough to eat.



The **JFS{SOVA Community Food and Resource Program}** responds to hunger and poverty in our community by providing individuals and families with the resources they need to regain self sufficiency and independence including free groceries, case management, counseling, legal and job assistance, and other supportive services.

Because of caring community members like you, SOVA was able to distribute more than 3.2 million pounds of food last year. The three SOVA pantries now serve an average of 12,000 people each month, almost 3 times as many as before the economic crisis began. We don't know how many more people will turn to SOVA for help in the near future.

JFS{SOVA is a community program in all respects. We serve the diverse Los Angeles community; we depend on community volunteers; and we rely on community supporters who donate food and money. We are grateful to you for being part of the SOVA community.

Jewish Family Service is committed to improving and enhancing the lives of our neighbors, regardless of their religion, age, or ethnicity, as we strive to uphold the highest standard of service while adapting to the changing needs of those we serve. For nearly 160 years JFS programs and services have enriched the quality of life for family and individuals and have helped to make our community strong and whole. We could not do this without your support and we thank you.



With sincere appreciation,

**Deborah Barak**  
Chair of the Board

**Paul S. Castro, JD**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Mailbox

Congregation Shir Ami,

The Officers and the Board of **Temple Judea** extend their sincere appreciation for your contribution to the **Social Justice Fund** in appreciation of **Michael Opel** for **Mitzvah Day**. Your support ensures the continuation of the great heritage of our People.



## Greetings from the Armory!

On behalf of **Operation Gratitude** and the Military who receive our care packages, I thank you for your generous donation. Your contribution will enable us to send over **100,000 'chock full' Care Packages** this year to tens of thousands of brave men and women still deployed overseas in harsh and remote areas; to their children anxiously awaiting their return; and to New Recruits, Veterans, First Responders, Wounded Warriors, and their caregivers.

With the help of supporters nationwide since 2003, we have sent more than **1.1 Million Operation Gratitude Care Packages** containing snacks, hygiene products, entertainment and hand-made items, and personal letters from appreciative Americans. These expressions of love and concern from fellow citizens offer our Military and Veterans a much-deserved "**Thank You for Your Service**" and are always greeted with enthusiasm and great appreciation.

To read all the current letters of thanks from our troops and to see their photos with their Operation Gratitude care packages, please "**Like**" us on **Facebook**: [www.facebook.com/OperationGratitude](http://www.facebook.com/OperationGratitude) and "**follow**" us on **Twitter**: [www.twitter.com/OperationGratitude](http://www.twitter.com/OperationGratitude) and **Pinterest**: <http://pinterest.com/opgratitude>.

I hope you saw the coverage of our **One Millionth Care Package** celebration and delivery - all made possible by your support. Please join us on the March to the 2nd Million Care Packages!

Thank you again for your thoughtfulness and wonderful patriotic spirit. Every single donation we receive furthers our mission of saying "Thank You" to those who serve. The recipients of your generosity will remember your kindness forever. And I will always be appreciative of your support and encouragement for **Operation Gratitude**.

**Carolyn Blashek**, President



### TREE OF LIFE

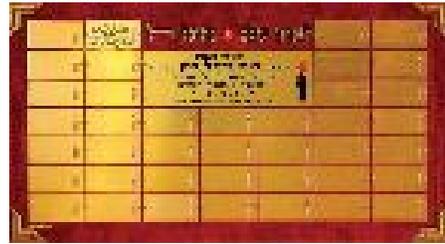


This beautiful Tree of Life, with leaves priced at \$100 and rocks at \$250 (one remaining), makes a perfect way to celebrate family occasions and support Congregation Shir Ami.

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

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

### Congregation Shir Ami Memorial Board



If you would like to honor the memory of your loved ones by dedicating plaques on our new Memorial Board, please call Clara Rosenbluth at (818) 348-1498 so she may mail you an order form. The cost of each plaque is \$36.

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

## An experienced, professional and trusted Realtor is closer than you think...

- 15 years of multimillion dollar sales
- Valley resident for nearly 35 years
- Focused, local expertise
- Competitive commissions
- Always at no charge:  
Buyer's Home Warranty / Seller's Pest Inspection



5959 Topanga Canyon Blvd. Suite 220  
Woodland Hills, CA 91367



**Owen Delman**  
Vice President and Realtor®  
c. 818.645.7606 / w. 818.887.4518

## Shop at Ralphs - Earn Money for Shir Ami

by Maralyn Soifer

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



**Congregation Shir Ami  
Invites you to partake at**



**Breakfast with the rabBi**  
**A “Delectable Delight” including hot & cold items**  
**On Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM**  
**At Northridge Mobile Home Park – 19120 Nordhoff Street, Northridge**  
**in the recreation room**

**Our own Rabbi David Vorspan will enlighten us with  
a topic of relevant interest and concern to all.**



**\$10.00 per person or \$18.00 to help sponsor this event  
(sponsors will be acknowledged at the event)**

**Please R.S.V.P. by January 3<sup>rd</sup> – this will allow our food shoppers  
and preparers plenty of time so you won’t be disappointed!  
**ADVANCED RESERVATIONS A MUST!!****

-----  
**Cut off and mail with check to Congregation Shir Ami  
PO Box 6353  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365**

**NAME \_\_\_\_\_**

**PHONE \_\_\_\_\_**

**# ATTENDING \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$10 EACH = \_\_\_\_\_ ENCLOSED.**

**# ATTENDING \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$18 EACH = \_\_\_\_\_ ENCLOSED.**

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

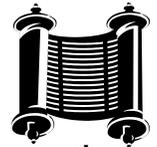


This popular Shir Ami educational series concludes its first half of the 5775 season. Come join us for our weekly discussion of Rabbi Vorspan’s selected topics of Jewish interest. We discuss Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This is a unique opportunity to learn and share in an informal way around the Vorspans’ dining room table.

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

## Saturday January 24, 10:30 am New Event: Torah/ Shabbat Study at Northridge Mobile Home Park

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



Our fourth session will be January 24. The Torah reading will be parsha *Bo* (Exodus 10:1 - 13:16), starting with the eighth plague and concluding with the exodus from Egypt. We are commanded “*la asok b’divre torah*” (to engage in the study of Torah). Join us and fulfill the mitzvah.

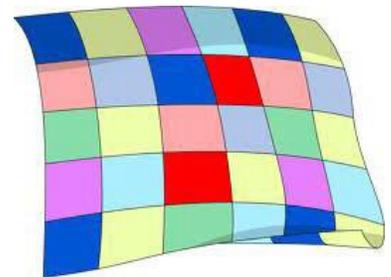
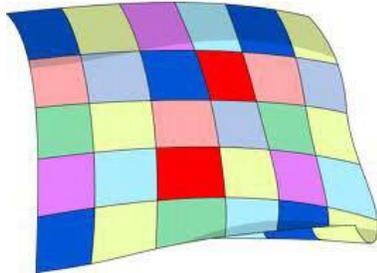
Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 for more information.

Please join Congregation Shir Ami  
on Saturday, January 17 at 10:15 am  
(Service starts at 10:30 am)



at New Community Jewish 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 mattress pads, **NEW** pillow cases, and **NEW** bath towels and washcloths to Shabbat services on **Saturday, January 17th**. 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 food donation to the service.

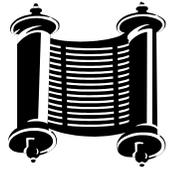


For more information, please call  
**Fran Kobulnick** at (818) 345-2405  
or **Laura Simon** at (818) 883-1765.





# Special Shabbat Service and Lunch and Learn Saturday, February 7



## ***Creating a Just Pluralistic Society in Israel***



Saturday, February 7, we will have a kiddush lunch sponsored by our member **Gloria Weinstein** followed by a presentation by her son-in-law **Mark Abelson** entitled ***Creating a Just Pluralistic Society in Israel***. Mark is active in the **Jewish Community Federation**, a Bay area organization that funds projects in Israel that address Israel's most pressing social needs.

Among the projects that Mark will describe in his illustrated presentation is the company **Ravtech**. Haredim make up 20% of the population of Israel. There is great sentiment against the Haredim amongst the "secular" Israelis because most Haredim do not serve in the IDF, they study all day, they do not work, do not pay taxes and receive government subsidies. Ravtech is a software company that hires only ultra-religious men who have spent their entire lives studying.



This working opportunity gives them their own studying community, with real scholars and allows them to work, learn new skills and financially provide for their families.

Another project that focuses on employment for minority Israelis is **Collective Impact**. Many Israeli NGOs are working to improve employment opportunities for Arab Israelis. Building on existing networks, **Yifat Ovdia**, the founder of *Olim B'Yachad* (a program that integrates Ethiopian Israeli university graduates into Israel's business, academic, and public sectors) has decided to put her experience toward addressing the employment problem for Arab professionals. This approach brings together a variety of players in the sector to solve a specific social problem. The primary aim of the initiative is to propel Arab Israelis into the workforce to become a significant growth engine for the Israeli economy.



This program is free and open to the community. However, we would appreciate an RSVP to Clara Rosenbluth at (818) 348-1498 or email [clara.rosenbluth@att.net](mailto:clara.rosenbluth@att.net) so that we can prepare food for the lunch.

**Congregation Shir Ami Schedule of Shabbat Services 2015**  
**Conducted by Rabbi David Vorspan at**  
**New Community Jewish High School, 22622 Vanowen St., West Hills**  
**Services held in library near the front entrance**

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



**January 2015**

Saturday, January 3 - Birthday  
Consecration of Officers  
Saturday, January 17 - Anniversary  
Social Action Linen Shabbat

**February 2015**

Saturday, February 7 - Birthday  
Presentation by **Mark Abelson**, son-in-law of **Gloria Weinstein**  
*Creating a Just Pluralistic Society in Israel*  
Kiddush lunch sponsored by Gloria  
Saturday, February 21 - Anniversary

**March 2015**

Saturday, March 14 - Birthday  
Saturday, March 28 - Anniversary

**April 2015**

Saturday, April 18 - Birthday  
Saturday, April 25 - Anniversary

**May 2015**

Saturday, May 2 - Birthday  
Saturday, May 16 - Anniversary

**June 2015**

Saturday, June 6 - Birthday  
Saturday, June 20 - Anniversary



David Vorspan  
Rabbi



Jordan Pistol  
President

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