

Events of the Month

Shabbat services at de Toledo High School

Saturday, February 6 - 10:30 am
Birthday Shabbat

Saturday, February 20 - 10:30 am
Anniversary Shabbat

Around the Rabbi's Tisch Thursdays, Feb. 11, 18, & 25 7:30 pm at the Vorspans'

Our 5776 season of Rabbi's weekly discussion continues. Call Rabbi at (818) 888-9817 or see flyer.

Torah and Shabbat Study Saturday, Feb. 13, 10:30 am at Schroeder home (change)

Stan Schroeder leads our monthly study and discussion session. Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 or see flyer.

Cindy Paley: Musical Tribute to Debbie Friedman Sunday, Feb. 28, 1:30 pm de Toledo High School

You won't want to miss this special program featuring one of our foremost musical educators and performers singing the familiar songs of our generation's most loved Jewish songwriters. See the article on page 2 or flyer to sign up.



President's Day
Monday, February 15
See article on page 8.

Visit our website:
www.shirami.com

Rabbi's Column



I'm a big football fan. I'll be an even bigger fan with a local professional team to root for.

With the Superbowl being held soon, I'm reminded that Temple Beth Ami once had a member who was on the Los Angeles Rams at one time.

But if you asked him if he would like to toss a football around, his answer might be "no."

Why not? Because he never tossed a football around as a professional football player! How could that be? Because he was a member of the offensive line! They practically never touch the football!

I've always been intrigued by this. How many other team sports are like this? That you can play the sport, but never throw or catch the central object? Your job is only to protect those who carry or throw the ball!

Do we have this in Judaism? Expectations that are not realized?

I've been thinking of some examples. It's like the observant Jew who wears a tallit but never prays. Or the Jew who keeps strictly kosher at home but eats pork in restaurants. Or the Zionist who never supports Israel. Or the *Shomer Shabbat* Jew who smokes on Saturday. Or the dedicated and loyal Jew who can't read Hebrew.

Can you think of other examples? Let me know: dvorspan@dths.org.

Are you such a Jew? You don't have to let me know—so long as you know.

Rabbi David Vorspan

Sponsored Kiddush Lunch February 6 for Esther Perez' 80th

The family of Member of the Board and former Membership Vice President **Esther Perez** is sponsoring a kiddush lunch following our **Birthday Shabbat service February 6** at de Toledo High School. Esther, who joined Temple Beth Ami shortly after she moved from Brooklyn to Northridge in the early 60s, has been one of our hardest working volunteers. For many years she purchased the food for our Shabbat onegs and kiddushes and coordinated the setup and cleanup at services and Shir Ami events. Please join us in honoring Esther and celebrating her 80th birthday.



Special Tribute to Debbie Friedman Featuring Cindy Paley

Congregation Shir Ami is proud to present renowned musical educator and performer **Cindy Paley** in a musical tribute to the great songwriter and performer of Jewish music, **Debbie Friedman**. The program will be at de Toledo High School **Sunday, February 28 at 1:30 pm (Note new time)**. See article on page 2 and flyer.



President's Report



Last month I had two opportunities to “*shep nachas*,” once from my nephew, Buck, and from niece, Rachel. First, on January 16, Buck became a “*Bar Mitzvah*.” And, simply put, he “rocked it.” He participated in Friday night service, led the *Shacharit* service, read the Torah for several *Aliyot* (plus his own), delivered a *D’var Torah*, chanted his *haftarah* and led the *Musaf* Service. The following Shabbat, Rachel became a *Bat Mitzvah*, also participating in the services and showed her stamina by chanting the *haftarah*, *Beshalach*, which is the longest *haftarah* of the weekly readings. More importantly, both Buck and Rachel are committed to continuing their Jewish education and community involvement through their congregation’s programs.

As wonderful as it is to see young people beginning their commitment to Judaism, it is every bit as wonderful to see not-so-young people who remained committed to Jewish principles including, not only the religious principles but also the cultural ones and involvement in the community. Every day we see that commitment in Congregation Shir Ami and its members, who to this day are both “rocking it” and showing incredible stamina.

This month, are continuing programs of **Shabbat services, Torah Study sessions**, and “**Around the Rabbi’s Tisch** (and on the Rebbitzen’s Chairs)” are a veritable feeding frenzy of commitment. In addition to those programs we are having **musical tribute to Debbie Friedman**.

This is also the month that we make our commitment to participate in **Jewish World Watch’s Walk to End Genocide** which takes place in March.

So, what I learned from Buck and Rachel is that commitment is not just a decision to do a particular thing, but it is a decision to follow a way of life. What I have learned from Congregation Shir Ami is that the decision to follow a way of life is what maintains a congregation and makes Shir Ami “**the little schul that does.**”

As always, if you have any questions or want to provide your input, please feel free to email me at **JDPistol@aol.com**.

Thank you.
Jordan Pistol, President

Special Event: Tribute to Debbie Friedman Featuring Cindy Paley, Sunday, February 28

by Stan Schroeder



Congregation Shir Ami is proud to present renowned musical educator and performer **Cindy Paley** in a musical tribute to the great songwriter and performer of Jewish music, **Debbie Friedman**, at de Toledo High School. See flyer with this *Shir Notes*.

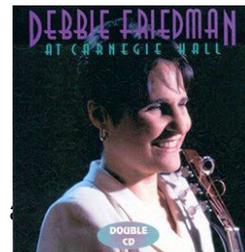
For over 30 years, Cindy Paley has delighted Jewish communities across the country with her “*ruach*” and rich repertoire of Jewish music. As a Cantorial Soloist, Cindy is the soul of “*Lev Eisha*” and the Valley Beth Shalom “*N’shama Minyan*”, both creative Shabbat women’s services in Los Angeles and Encino. She has also served as the High Holiday cantorial soloist at numerous synagogues and is currently singing at Temple Shalom of the South Bay in Hermosa Beach.

As a performer, she invites audiences to experience her beautiful renditions of Yiddish folk songs, Ladino love songs, and exuberant melodies of modern Israel. Cindy now hopes to bring the joys of Yiddish song to a new generation with her latest release, a Yiddish holiday songbook and CD. Cindy served as the Judaic music specialist at the Harold M. Schulweis Day School for 33 years and continues to lead weekly preschool Shabbat and family services at Valley Beth Shalom.

Many of us have been listening to and singing Debbie Friedman’s songs since the early 70s. Debbie, who reshaped Jewish liturgical music into a more prayerful and participatory experience for the Reform and Conservative movements, was born in February, 1951.

Her career encompassed songwriting, recording, performing, teaching, and promoting her Jewish feminist values. Her compositions ranged from children’s songs such as *Aleph Bet* to her last release, *As You Go on Your Way* in 2008. She was loved from camps to concert halls.

Her most memorable performance January 7, 1996 at a sold-out historic Carnegie Hall was filled with the warmth and excitement of Debbie’s 25th Anniversary concert, song.



You won’t want to miss this special Shir Ami event. Come and bring family and friends.



DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

Yahrzeits

- Rose Chaplan for Ronye Chaplan
- Lynn Cherney for Miriam Forman
- Stan Goodman for Gloria Goodman
- Gerry and Sam Hochberg for Tova Hochberg
- Fran and Sam Kobulnick for Rose Suckman
- Jack Kutcher for Lou Kutcher
- Paula and Lou Loomis for Roy Loomis
- Ed and Lorraine Orens for David Orens and Irving Zelenitz
- Esther Perez for Samantha Perez and Jacob Meyer Paparo
- Elizabeth and David Raider
- Clara and Stan Rosenbluth for Helen Wolf
- Ed Schackman for Belle Schackman and Harry Schackman
- Lew and Claire Silverman for Milton Silverman
- Irving Strassner for Mabel Mann, Max Perlmutter, and Peggy Seletsky
- Linda and Harvey Tapper for Nathan Josephy, Gertrude Josephy, and Ruth Tapper
- Fiona Taylor for Grace Konrad
- Ethel Granik for Sarah Golberg
- Bonnie and Rabbi David Vorspan for Sime and Leonard Meshul

Birthdays

- Jerry Gort
- Rabbi Ahud Sela

Anniversaries

- Gale and Jay Cohen
- Gerry and Sam Hochberg

Get Well Wishes for Stan Schroeder

Laura and Al Simon

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- Nancy Scharf..... 2/1
- Carol Koransky..... 2/2
- Michael Easley..... 2/5
- Esther Perez..... 2/7
- Bette Delman..... 2/9
- Lorraine Simansky..... 2/10
- Karen Kroop..... 2/10
- Sherry Dollins..... 2/12
- Sima Schuster..... 2/13
- Elizabeth Raider..... 2/17
- Frances Black..... 2/21

Anniversaries

- Elizabeth and David Raider..... 2/5 55th

Additions and corrections to our roster:

New members:

Bill and Cheryl Niesen
 18239 Septo St.
 Northridge, CA 91325
 Phone: (818) 349-7584
 Email: crn42@aol.com



Continuing Associate member:

Mariana Stark
 23731 Sandalwood St.
 West Hills, CA 91307
 Phone: (818) 348-3244
 Email: mstark91307@earthlink.net

New email:

Frank Locascio
 Email: mrfranklo@twc.com

Please write into your roster.

Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

- Gloria Weinstein**
- Phyllis Robinson**
- Gerry Hochberg**



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

Our Condolences

We regret to inform the congregational family of the passing of: longtime member **Lee Stark**.



May God comfort his wife **Mariana** and the Stark family at this time of their bereavement.

Social Action Committee

Special thanks to **Sheilah Hart** and **Laura Simon**, co-chairs for our annual **Linen Shabbat** for the domestic violence shelters we help sponsor. And thanks to all who donated the much needed new linens for the women and children in the domestic violence shelters. We are truly blessed to have **Ms. Kitty Glass**, Outreach Coordinator for Jewish Family Service Family Violence Project as our guest speaker. Kitty brings years of experience and dedication to teaching everyone about domestic violence, and how to get the immediate help needed if this violence has become part of your life.



SOVA needs our help all year to help feed the needy and hungry in our community. **Please bring your non-perishable and non-breakable food donations to all services and events at de Toledo** and place them in the SOVA barrel in the lobby. We are beginning our Passover 2016 Kosher Food and Matzah drive in February. We will again be collecting **Five Pound Packages of Kosher-for-Passover 2016 Matzah**. We are arranging for drop off and pick up points as well, as at services and events. Please contact Fran or a member of our Committee to help you with your bulk donations.



Looking ahead, we will again be going to the West Valley Healthcare Center for our annual **Mothers/Fathers Day Shabbat celebration** on Friday, May 6 at 1:00 pm. We are in need of some extra volunteers this year to help us with this special community mitzvah project. Come join us for one of our most rewarding Community Mitzvah Projects. We will also be collecting **Target \$10 gift cards** for the women and children in the domestic violence shelters we help sponsor for Mother's Day. These cards are used by the families to buy something they personally need. Contact Fran for more information.



It is with much sadness that the Social Action Committee mourns the loss of **Lee Stark**, former Board member and a very devoted and dedicated Committee supporter. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mariana and the family.

Thanks for your emotional, physical, and financial support for our community mitzvah projects on behalf of Shir Ami. We always welcome new members to our Committee and our events.

Shalom,
Fran Kobulnick, Social Action Vice President

Operation Gratitude and Project MOT

by Charlene Kazel

Operation Gratitude and Project MOT have moved to our new "temporary" location at 21100 Lassen St. in Chatsworth (between Canoga and De Soto). Weekday volunteer hours are 9 am to 2 pm. February assembly hours are Sunday, the 22nd from 9 am to noon, and Friday, the 26th from 9 am to noon. Hours are subject to change. Latest information is available at www.operationgratitude.com; then select **volunteer-information**.

I have begun 2016 by delivering 100 books to Operation Gratitude and 7 books, a deck of cards, and 8 greeting cards to Project MOT.



Jewish World Watch

by Rae Wazana



Our congregation will again participate in the annual JWW Walk to End Genocide. This Walk takes place in the Conejo Valley on Sunday, March 13th at Temple Etz Chaim on Janss Rd. east of Moorpark Rd. in Thousand Oaks. Our **Shir Ami Walk Team** is participating for the 8th consecutive year. So far, we have more than 14 people who have registered on-line and committed to walk including **Rabbi and Bonnie**. We are more than a third of the way toward reaching our goal of raising \$1000

Please consider registering to join our Walk Team or help sponsor us in reaching our Team goal. JWW, created almost 14 years ago by **Rabbi Harold Schulweis**, is an activist and advocacy organization that funds humanitarian and educational projects to help end violence and atrocities against groups of people, especially women and children in places such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Chad.

Please help us answer the mitzvah of **NOT STANDING IDLY BY** by registering online at www.conejovalley.walktoendgenocide.org to join the Shir Ami Walk Team or to make a donation to support the team. You can also register or donate by calling the JWW office at (818) 501-1836. If you have further questions, please call me at (818) 881-5549.

Thank you for your continued support!

Rae Wazana and Fiona Taylor
Walk Team co-captains

Flirting with the Dark Side

by Owen Delman

When I was little, around ten or so, I would listen wide-eyed to lurid stories of my Dad's youth in Chicago during the "Roaring 20's and 30's". According to him, Chicago was a wide-open town reminiscent of Tombstone, Arizona, before Wyatt Earp and his brothers restored law and order.



"Everybody knew someone who was 'connected' to the mob." Our side of town knew all the Jewish gangsters, speakeasy owners and importers of illegal whiskey and such from Canada."

"Weren't you afraid?" I asked, images of gangster movies running through my head.

"Nah, they didn't bother us as long as we stayed out of their business and didn't know too much. We were the customers."

"You mean, you and Mom went to the...the gangster places?"

"Everyone did!"

At this point, a voice came out of the kitchen. "Phil, what are you telling him. We only went a few times. One, it was too expensive and who had the money and two, everyone was smoking too much, drinking too much and gambling too much."

Dad smiled, "And dancing."

From the kitchen, "I did like the dancing, though."

I remembered an old sepia tinted, photo album picture of my mother in her early twenties, dressed in a short dress with fringe on the bottom, close fitted hat and a cigarette in hand. I had always thought it was from a costume party. Maybe it wasn't. I kept my mouth shut.



From the kitchen, "His mother made gin in the bathtub and *mead* for the holidays!"

"Like the *mead* we drink at Passover?" I asked..

"She still makes a little," Dad answered. (At this time, Bubbe was well over eighty.)

"I like it. It's good," I said.

Kitchen: "Strudel and *mead*. She's always been good with those."

My mother had a sometimes dicey relationship with my Dad's mother. In many ways, they were two of a kind though Mom only put water in the bathtub, I think.

So, that was the tenor and flavor of historical Chicago that I got from my father's stories when I was ten. I always tried to picture myself back in those days.

Fast forward a few years to high school and girls.

I met Rochelle through Monica, a mutual friend, whose wealthy family owned a string of mortuaries. She had a great big house with a garage, expansive backyard, and lots of records. On weekends, a bunch of us often would hang out in her finished basement (knotty pine, of course) and listen to music and dance. I mostly listened. I don't dance. One Friday night party, amongst lots of dancing and nuzzling couples, I met Rochelle who asked me to dance. I immediately acquiesced. She was that type of girl.

She too had a big house, even bigger than Monica's, with all the trimmings -- two car garage, backyard with a fish pond, arbors and, of course, a knotty pine finished basement. We spent a lot of time talking and listening to music in that basement. One day, she asked if I could keep a secret?

Who ever says 'no' to that question?

She took my hand and led me to a secret door whose outline was hidden by the pine panels of the wall. If you pressed on the lower left corner of the barely discernible entrance the door magically opened. Revealed was a hallway wrapped around three sides of the basement between the finished room and the foundation of the house.



One side was lined with nickel, dime and dollar slot machines. Though it wasn't illegal to own a working coin operated slot machine for personal use, it was definitely against the law to possess the 25 or 30 machines I saw. Opposite the slots were plump chairs, couches, two small refrigerators, tables and a cabinet full of glassware and liquors. This was a business!

How could I keep this from my friends? I considered the status I would gain if they knew what I had been made privy to! Unfortunately, as it turned out, when I did give in the next day, it didn't really matter. They all knew about Rochelle's father and his extra special basement.

"Dummy, don't you know who her father is?"

(continued on page 7)

Biography of the Month: Debbie Friedman

by Stan Schroeder

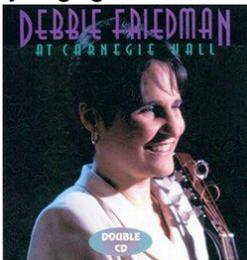
*Note: Shir Ami is presenting **Cindy Paley** in a tribute to Debbie Friedman, Sunday, February 28. See article on page 2 and flyer. I am republishing my August 2011 bio of Debbie below.*



Debbie Friedman, who reshaped Jewish liturgical music into a more prayerful and participatory experience for the Reform and Conservative movements, was born February 23, 1951 in Utica, New York to parents **Freda** and **Gabriel**. They belonged variously to Conservative and Reform synagogues. When Debbie was five, the family moved to Minnesota, and she grew up in St. Paul, graduating from Highland Park High School in 1969. Instead of attending college, she moved to Israel after graduating from high school and lived on a kibbutz for six months.

As a teenager, Debbie taught herself the guitar to **Peter, Paul, and Mary** records. She was interested in folk and Jewish music. Her work was inspired by **Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell** and other folk music artists. Her earliest songs were written at Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute camp in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin where she worked as a song leader in the early 70s.

Her career encompassed songwriting, recording, performing, teaching, and promoting her Jewish feminist values. Her compositions ranged from children's songs such as *Aleph Bet* to her last release, *As You Go on Your Way: Shacharit the Morning Prayers in 2008*. Debbie Friedman performed in camps, synagogues, conferences, and concert halls.



The epitome of her performance career was on January 7, 1996 when sold-out historic Carnegie Hall was filled with the warmth and excitement of Debbie Friedman's 25th Anniversary concert, a celebration of song.

In 2007, Debbie accepted an appointment to the faculty of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's School of Sacred Music in New York where she instructed both rabbinic and cantorial students. She moved back to California in the summer of 2010 to be near her family and was teaching at the Hebrew Union College Los Angeles campus.

She had suffered since the 1990s from a neurological condition, with effects apparently similar to multiple sclerosis. She died from complications of pneumonia on January 9, 2011.

Deborah Lipstadt, the Holocaust scholar and a close friend of Friedman's for more than 30 years expressed her legacy, "She gave non-traditional Jews the tools with which to open up a part of their spiritual selves that most of them didn't know existed. Her concerts were turned into services. People might have gone for entertainment, but came out having had a profound experience. She taught so many people that Judaism has a deep, abiding soul that can speak to you."

I have been inspired by her music and by the courage she has shown throughout her life. I identify with her philosophy of self responsibility as expressed in her songs. The song **L'chi Lach** is an interpretation of the biblical passage *Lech Lecha*, Abraham's call to go out. The key phrase is "**and you shall be a blessing**" is the commandment to each of us to live a life based on Jewish Torah values.

Her upbeat melody of **Miriam's Song** is a must at our Passover seder. It is a joyous song celebrating our crossing at the miraculous parting of the Sea.

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history.

With every strand and every thread she crafted her delight!

A woman touched with spirit, she dances toward the light.

Debbie reminds us of the unique place women have in our Jewish history and culture as she was active in empowering Jewish women.

And, finally, perhaps Debbie's best known and widely sung song is her **Mi Shebeirach**, a prayer for healing. This song was written for a friend who was struggling to adjust to getting older.

May the source of strength,

Who blessed the ones before us,

**Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,
and let us say, Amen. ...**

Bless those in need of healing with *r'fuah sh'leimah*,
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,
And let us say, Amen

Again she is beseeching God to enable us to make our lives a blessing, as well as a source of healing. Debbie showed us by example how to do this. I'll remember her example when I sing her songs.

Note: Now that you have read about Debbie, you certainly won't want to miss Cindy's musical tribute February 28. I look forward to seeing you there. Stan

Flirting with the Dark Side

by Owen Delman (continued)

It turned out I was completely out of the loop when it came to Rochelle and her slightly less than respectable father. In the manner of teenage boys, my friends not too gently told me the truth -- the *emmis*.

“Doofus, Rochelle Goldstein! Goldstein! Her dad is Bullethead Goldstein!”

I’m shamed to say, I still had a blank face. Among fifteen year old boys, my innocence was not a valuable nor helpful characteristic for status building.

“God! Haven’t you heard the stories?”

“What stories?”

“Bullethead is being investigated by the cops. He’s connected with the mob!”

The mob! It was a lot to take in. The mob? Rochelle, the girl I was dating? And, now that I knew of the secret slot machines, would the mob want me rubbed out in the best Edward G. Robinson tradition? My imagination ran amuck!

Luckily, within days of my basement slot machine tour, the world quickly changed and I was spared. Bullethead packed up his family and relocated to Florida. At least that’s what the newspapers suggested, others said maybe he wasn’t in Florida at all but somewhere the Feds protected gangsters like him.

Thus ended my brief connection with the dark side. Hey, it wasn’t speakeasies and bathtub gin, but it was enough for me. I figured I probably wouldn’t have done so well in the Roaring 20’s.

I never told my parents about Rochelle’s parentage or the slot machines, though I’m not sure they hadn’t put two and two together knowing her last name and the efficiency of communication within the Jewish community. However, they never said anything to me.

I also wanted to talk to Bubbe about it, figuring she would appreciate the story, her being an illegal *mead* maker and bathtub gin maker and all. But, I didn’t. Maybe I felt I would be putting her in danger also.

So, I kept the memories of my tenuous encounter with the Chicago mob to myself. At least, until now. But, just to be on the safe side, don’t tell anyone. You never know who’s listening.

Mailbox

Congregation Shir Ami
Social Action Committee
Dearest Friends,



On behalf of the women and child victims of domestic violence served at the Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles Family Violence Project, I would like to thank you all so very much for your contribution of gift cards to our program. Your generosity will enable us to provide much needed items for our shelter residents and they, too, will be most appreciative. All of our clients are always overwhelmed by the “kindness of strangers” and they will be again as they receive such joy during the holiday season.

We are so deeply grateful for your ongoing commitment to our program. Over the many years you have worked with us, you’ve succeeded in not only supporting the work we do but directly contributing to the happiness of our shelter residents. If they could thank you personally, they certainly would.

As you know we feel passionate that all women and children deserve to live in violence-free homes and we thank you for joining us in that mission.

The staff joins me in wishing you and yours a joyful Hanukah and a New Year filled with health, blessings and joy.

Warmly,
Kitty Glass
Community Outreach Coordinator

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.

We need a new Tribute Card Chair

Please call Phyllis at (818) 718-7466 if you are interested.

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

by Stan Schroeder

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



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

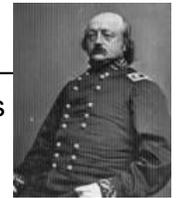
Gaunse's contributions to English bronze manufacture were monumental. Before his innovations, English smelters required a minimum of 16 weeks to purify a batch of copper ore. Gaunse's process reduced that time to just 4 days. As an added bonus, Gaunse found a way to use the impurities removed from the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

"We hear much these days about our 'Judeo-Christian' heritage and its early and enduring influence on our culture," says the *Jewish Press*. But given that only about 2,500 Jews lived in the American colonies in 1776, it continues, "usually those of us who speak of that early dual influence are referring to the Christian Bible with its Jewish roots." Turns out, however, there was at least one influential Jew at the time of the first official Thanksgiving in 1789. **Gershom Mendes Seixas** was the cantor and spiritual leader of New York City's only synagogue, Congregation Shearith Israel, until it shut down operations during the Revolution, and he became the leader of a synagogue in Philadelphia, where he used his pulpit to speak out in support of **General George Washington**. When Washington was inaugurated as president, Seixas was one of the presiding clergy. "This was certainly an act of gratitude by Washington for the preacher's stalwart support during the war," says the *Press*. "It was also, though, an expression of Washington's thinking about the



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

TREE OF LIFE

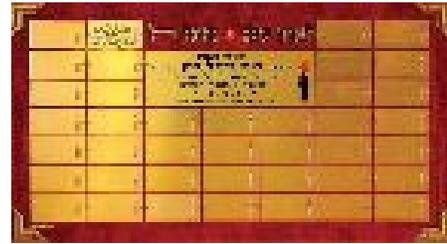


This beautiful Tree of Life, with leaves priced at \$100 and rocks at \$250 (one remaining), makes a perfect way to celebrate family occasions and support Congregation Shir Ami.

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

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

Congregation Shir Ami Memorial Board



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

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

An Inspiring Poem

Editor's Note: Thanks to **Helga Unkeless** for sending this poem. She states that it is one of her mottos. I encourage readers to submit their favorite poems or stories: stan101@pacbell.net
Stan Schroeder

Is anybody happier because you passed this way?
Does anyone remember that you spoke to them today?
The day is almost over, and its toiling time is through:
Is there anyone to utter now a kindly word of you?

Can you say tonight in parting with the day that's slipping fast,
That you helped a single person of the many that you passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?
Does the one whose hopes were fading now with courage look ahead?

Did you waste the day or use it? Was it well or sorely spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness, or a scar of discontent?
As you close your eyes in slumber, do you think that God will say:
"You have earned one more tomorrow by what you did today"?

Helen Van Blair, Walnut Creek, CA



Shop at Ralphs - Earn Money for Shir Ami

by Maralyn Soifer

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Congregation Shir Ami proudly presents

Cindy Paley

in a Musical Tribute to **Debbie Friedman**

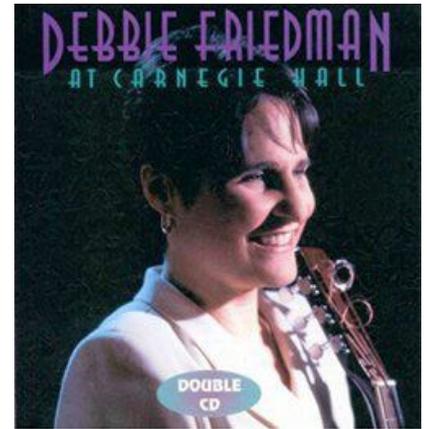
Sunday, February 28 at 1:30 pm (Note new time.)

at de Toledo High School, 22622 Vanowen St., West Hills

One of our leading Jewish music educators and performers, Cindy, will honor the memory of one of the foremost Jewish songwriters and performers, Debbie with a program of her music and her spirit. Cindy and her guitar will help us relive Debbie's liturgical melodies that are now part of Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist services.

For over 30 years, Cindy Paley has delighted Jewish communities across the country with her "*ruach*" and rich repertoire of Jewish music. As a Cantorial Soloist, Cindy is the soul of "*Lev Eisha*" and the Valley Beth Shalom "*N'shama Minyan*", both creative Shabbat women's services in Los Angeles and Encino. She has also served as the High Holiday cantorial soloist at numerous synagogues and is currently singing at Temple Shalom of the South Bay in Hermosa Beach.

Tickets are priced at \$10 each. Refreshments will be served following the performance. Please send completed tearoff below with check by February 20. For more information call Stan Schroeder at (818) 718-7466 or email him at stan101@pacbell.net.



Debbie Friedman Tribute Program

Name: _____

Phone no. _____

No. of tickets @ \$10 _____

Send by February 20 to

Congregation Shir Ami

P.O. Box 6353

Woodland Hills, CA 91365

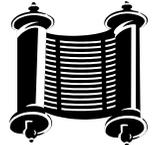
Thursdays February 11, 18, and 25, 7:30 - 8:30 pm “Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” at the Vorspans’



This popular Shir Ami educational series starts the second half of its 5776 season. Come join us for our weekly discussion of Rabbi Vorspan’s selected topics of Jewish interest. We discuss Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This is a unique opportunity to learn and share in an informal format around the Vorspans’ dining room table.

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

Saturday February 13, 10:30 am: Torah/Shabbat Study at Schroeders’ home (note change)



Stan Schroeder leads a Shabbat study session one Saturday morning a month. This month we will be meeting at the Schroeders’ home, 8450 Winnetka Ave. #14 in Winnetka. The condo complex is located two blocks north of Roscoe across from Winnetka Park. There is a walkway to their unit near a fire hydrant, half a block south of Chase. Parking is available on Winnetka and Chase and a parking area entered from Chase. 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 13. The Torah reading will be parsha *Terumah* (Exodus:25.1 - 27.19). We will also discuss Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln (holiday coming up), the Jews, and Jews in America, then and now. We are commanded “*la asok b’divrei torah*” (to engage in the study of Torah). Join us and fulfill the mitzvah.

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

Congregation Shir Ami Schedule of Shabbat Services 2016
Conducted by Rabbi David Vorspan at
de Toledo High School, 22622 Vanowen St., West Hills
Services held in library near the front entrance

Saturday 10:30 am (unless otherwise noted)



January 2016

Saturday, January 9 - Birthday
Consecration of Officers
Saturday, January 23 - Anniversary
Social Action Linen Shabbat

February 2016

Saturday, February 6 - Birthday
Saturday, February 20 - Anniversary

March 2016

Saturday, March 5 - Birthday
Saturday, March 19 - Anniversary

April 2016

Saturday, April 2 - Birthday
Saturday, April 16 - Anniversary

May 2016

Saturday, May 7 - Birthday
Saturday, May 21 - Anniversary

June 2016

Saturday, June 4 - Birthday
Saturday, June 18 - Anniversary



David Vorspan
Rabbi



Jordan Pistol
President

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