



Shir Notes

The Official Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 24, Number 6, June 2026. Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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Events of the Month

Shabbat services at de Toledo and via Zoom and Livestream

Saturday, June 13 - 10:30 am
Birthday Shabbat
Saturday, June 27 - 10:30 am
Anniversary Shabbat
Last Shabbat service
Catered Kiddush lunch
28 years of Congregation Shir Ami Celebration program
Call **Sheilah Hart** at (818) 884-2342 to indicate your attendance.

Walk Around Leon & Andrea Nachenberg's House

Sunday, June 7 - 10:00 am
Walk and Brunch to raise money for the Alzheimer's Association. See article starting on page 4 and flyer for more information .

Torah and Shabbat Study Saturday, June 20, 10:30 am at Schroeder home & Zoom

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



Flag Day
Sunday,
June 14
See page 4.



Sunday,
June 21
See Biblical Verses for Father's Day on page 2

Visit our website:
www.shirami.com

Rabbi's Column



To rephrase **Shimon HaZadik** from Pirkei Avot: On three pillars does Congregation Shir Ami stand: on Torah, on Worship and on Acts of Lovingkindness.

For twenty-eight years, we have studied Torah together, we have prayed together, and we have shared lovingkindness with each other.

But, as Chaucer wrote in the 13th century: *"But at the laste, as every thing hath ende..."* Or, to rephrase, *all good things must come to an end.* We've had a wonderful run! Who knew that we would last this long! I remember the time at the close of High Holy Day services that I encouraged members to take the prayerbooks home because we wouldn't need them the following year. And that was around 12 years ago

But when one door closes, others open. In our case, there are wonderful congregations with doors wide open ready for our entrances.

But while doors to Shir Ami will be closing, the doors to our homes and hearts will remain open and inviting. The "Around the Rabbi's Virtual Tisch" will resume this Fall. I will invite you all to join me in Shabbat services from time to time. Stan Schroeder will continue his study sessions as well as producing a newsletter to keep us all informed of our comings and goings.

But let's end on a high note! After our last Shabbat service on June 27 (which will be held in the school's auditorium/sanctuary), we will have a wonderful luncheon where we can toast the Shabbat and our enduring friendships. We just need your rsvp to help us properly plan.

Let me conclude with the traditional Hebrew word *L'hitraot*.

Until we see each other again!

Rabbi David Vorspan

Congregation Shir Ami, Celebrate 28 years, remain a community.

by Stan Schroeder,
Ritual Vice President and Shir Notes Editor/Publisher

Phyllis and I joined Congregation Shir Ami for the High Holy Days of 2002 and became a member soon after. At the time we met at Kol Tikvah in Woodland Hills. We started attending Shabbat weekly Shabbat services, then either Friday night or Saturday morning. I was impressed by the Contemporary format and, especially the thankfulness sharing before the Torah service. Before long I told **Rabbi Vorspan** that what I was thankful for was the people who came before me who made the world I live in the world I enjoy today.

At the time I distributed a monthly "newsletter" to family and close friends that contained a short bio of someone who achieved significance in our history. Rabbi Vorspan allowed me to share a Jewish personality at the end of our sharing. I also sent a monthly bio to **Mariana Stark**, then *Shir Notes* editor. (continued on page 3)

President's Report

Shalom,



Here it is. My last President's Message for the Shir Notes. I'm really going to miss Stan Schroeder calling me up, asking where my President's Message is, just before he gets the Shir Notes published. I apologize to you Stan, for causing you so much *schpilkes* and *mishegas* over the past 15 years.

Even as we reach the closing of the doors Congregation Shir Ami we will not go gentle into that good night. This month we begin with our last **"Walk Around the Nachenberg Neighborhood"** (formerly known as the Walk Around Lake Balboa) as a final tribute to our Social Action agenda as we raise funds for research and treatment of Alzheimer's.

We have our penultimate and ultimate Shabbat Services this month. As you already know, we will be having a catered luncheon for our last Shabbat Services. While we are expecting a large turnout, we would also remind you if you want to experience our more intimate Shabbat Services for the last time, you should come to the penultimate Service, that is, the first Service of the Month June 13.

Plus, this month will be our last Shabbat Torah Study Session (as a Congregation). Sessions will continue as a "community"

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as your President for the past 15 years. Fifteen years of Shabbat Announcements, fifteen years of board meetings, fifteen years of President's Messages and, my personal favorite, fifteen years of High Holy Days pledge appeals. Being President was never a burden when I had the support of a great congregation. When I had a small heart attack, I was deluged with recommendations for good cardiologists!

In that spirit we will move into June, not with tears, but with treasured memories of what we did and justifiable pride in what we have accomplished.

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

Shalom,

Jordan Pistol, President

**Biblical Verses for Father's Day**

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, in order that your days be lengthened on the land that the Lord, your God, is giving you."

Proverbs 1:8: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching."

Proverbs 4:11-12: "I will guide you in the way of wisdom and I will lead you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered, and when you run, you will not stumble."

Proverbs 22:6: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."

Proverbs 23:22: "Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

Proverbs 23:24: "The father of a righteous child has great joy; a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him."

Psalms 103:13: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him."

2 Samuel 7:14-15: "I will be a father to him, and he'll be a son to me. When he does wrong, I'll discipline him in the usual ways, the pitfalls and obstacles of this mortal life. But I'll never remove my gracious love from him."

Deuteronomy 1:31: "There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

Malachi 4:6: "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."



DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

Yahrzeits

- Dov and Stepanie Landau for Nathan Silk
- Stan Rosenbluth for Brandon Gribin
- Rae and Armand Wazana for Isaac Wazana

Congregation Shir Ami, Celebrate 28 years, remain a community. (continued)

I read the first poem I wrote for Shir Ami Sunday morning October 24, 2004 in the parking lot behind Kol Tikvah. **Barbara Tober z”l**, then Social Action created a “bring your pet dog or cat or ??? and **Rabbi Vorspan** gave some Jewish context and someone talked about dogs. Barbara asked me if I would do something and I agreed to write a poem about a cat. It was World Series season and I decided to write a takeoff on Dr. Seuss the *Cat in the Hat*. I wrote and read *The Cat with the Bat*. See page 9. Since then I have written dozens of poems about Judaism, our holidays, Torah, Congregation Shir Ami, and Israel. Many of them have been published in *Shir Notes* and/or read at services, *tisches*, and Shir Ami events.

I decided to join a Committee. At the time our committees met one night a month at a member’s home. I selected the Ritual Committee because it met the night during the week that was most convenient for me. And the Ritual VP was **Harvey Cohen z”l**. After a year or two, Harvey asked if I would become the VP and I agreed. Soon there were so few members of the Ritual Committee that it basically and I became the Committee. My first proclamation was to entitle our website Ritual Page Reverence Inspiration Torah Understanding Appreciation Learning. I write an article for the page monthly. And I have been able to influence our services toward that view of ritual.

When we downsized our Shabbat services to twice monthly I created a Shabbat Torah study for one of the remaining Saturdays. For many years we held the sessions at the rec room of the Northridge Mobile Home Park on Nordhoff. One or more of our members lived there. When the **Silvermans** moved from there I moved the sessions to our home in Winnetka.

My goal from the start of my involvement with Shir Ami has been creating Community. I intend to continue our monthly Shabbat Torah studies in its present and the *Shir Notes* and website in a format and with a name still TBD. During June I will collect Shir Notes articles and poems into topics and distribute them in some way.

I invite suggestions and comments emailed to stanpacbell@gmail.com

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- Corrine Geller..... 5/7 (omitted in May)
- Wayne Geffen..... 6/3
- Gary Finlay..... 6/10
- Stan Rosenbluth..... 6/14
- Irwin Koransky..... 6/15
- Helga Unkeless..... 6/26
- David Lipman..... 6/29

Anniversaries

- Janet and Richard Kirshbaum..... 6/10 64th
- Marcie and Steve Spetner..... 6/10 47th
- Becky and Gary Finlay..... 6/13 27th
- Paula and Paul Frankel..... 6/16 36th
- Bonnie and Rabbi David Vorspan. 6/20 55th

Our Condolences

We regret to inform the congregational family of the passing of our member **Janet Acquaro**, sister of **Stan Schroeder**. May God comfort Stan and his family during this time of their bereavement.



Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

- Phyllis Schroeder**
- Neil Hattem**
- Sima Schuster**

May they be blessed with a complete body and spirit.



Congregation Shir Ami Tribute Cards

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

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

Minimum donation of \$5 per card is appreciated.

Flag Day Saturday, June 14

by Stan Schroeder

June 14 we celebrate Flag Day as a national holiday. It is the day in 1777 that the Second Continental Congress adopted the design as the official flag of the United States of America. It is also the date in 1775 that Congress created the "American continental army" after reaching a consensus position in the Committee of the Whole on June 14. The U.S. Army celebrates this date as the Army birthday. In 1916, **President Woodrow Wilson** issued a proclamation that officially established June 14 as Flag Day; in August 1949, National Flag Day was established by an Act of Congress.

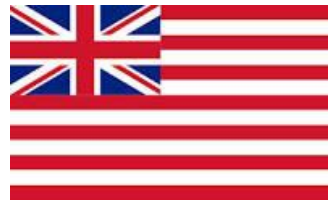
The original flag was made in June 1776, when a small committee—including **George Washington, Robert Morris** and relative **George Ross**—visited **Betsy Ross** and discussed the need for a new American flag. Betsy accepted the job to manufacture the flag, altering the committee's design by replacing the six-pointed (Star of David?) stars with five-pointed stars.

Actually, the first flag representing the Continental Army had thirteen alternating red and white stripes and a British Union Jack (one horizontal, one vertical, and two diagonal red stripes with white borders in a blue background) in the upper left hand corner. January 1, 1776, the Continental Army was reorganized in accordance with a Congressional resolution which placed American forces under **George Washington's** control. On that New Year's Day the Continental Army was laying siege to Boston which had been taken over by the British Army. Washington ordered the Grand Union flag hoisted above his base at Prospect Hill.

The U.S. flag is a strong symbol of American identity and national pride. Stars are a symbol of the heavens and the goals to which humankind aspires; stripes are symbolic of rays of light from the sun. Thirteen stripes represent the original thirteen colonies that declared independence from England; fifty stars symbolize the current 50 United States.

The most popular American flag song is **George M. Cohan's** *You're a Grand Old Flag* written for his Broadway musical *George Washington, Jr.* in 1906. The song was first sung at the play's opening performance February 6 at the Herald Square Theater in New York City. The song was first titled *You're a Grand Old Rag* and the chorus began "You're a grand old rag / You're a high-flying flag", but Cohan changed the title due to public pressure.

Let us celebrate Flag Day June 14 and remember those who worked to make our country the greatest nation for freedom in the world.



Grand Union flag 1776



our American flag

You're a Grand Old Flag
You're a High Flying Flag
And forever, in peace, may you wave!
You're the emblem of the land I love,
The home of the free and the brave!

George M. Cohan 1906

"**You're a Grand Old Flag**" is an American patriotic march. The song, a spirited march written by George M. Cohan, is a tribute to the U.S. flag. In addition to obvious references to the flag, it incorporates snippets of other popular songs, including one of his own. Cohan wrote it in 1906 for his stage musical **George Washington, Jr.**

The song was first publicly performed on February 6, the play's opening night, at Herald Square Theater in New York City. "You're a Grand Old Flag" quickly became the first song from a musical to sell over a million copies of sheet music. The title and first lyric comes from someone Cohan once met; the Library of Congress website notes. "You're a Grand Old Flag" would go on to become one of the most popular U.S. marching-band pieces of all time.

The original lyric for this perennial George M. Cohan favorite came, as Cohan later explained, from an encounter he had with a Civil War veteran who fought at Gettysburg. The two men found themselves next to each other and Cohan noticed the vet held a carefully folded but ragged old flag.

Walk Around the Nachenbergs'

by Leon Nachenberg

Each year our Social Action Committee sponsors a fund-raising event to support some



alzheimer's association®

worthwhile charity. This year the proceeds of the event will be donated to the **Alzheimer's Association**. As we all get older, many of us sadly know a friend or relative who has or has been diagnosed with, Alzheimer's or other dementia disease. (continued on page 9)

Biography of the Month: Irving Berlin

by Stan Schroeder

*Editor's Note: I have been Editor and Publisher of the Shir Notes since November 2008. For several years before that I contributed biographies of Jews as a writer. In recent years I have republished earlier bios for various reasons. I am including one my earliest, **Irving Berlin**, again because Rabbi Meir Soloveichik spoke at a Rededicate 250 Christian rally May 17: antisemitism and Irving Berlin's contribution to US*

Irving Berlin was born **Israel Baline**

May 11, 1888 in eastern Russia. He was one of eight children born to **Leah** and **Moses Baline**. Moses was a *shochet* and the cantor at his synagogue. His family immigrated to New York in 1893 to escape the pogroms in Russia. His father died when he was 13 and he took to the streets of the Lower East Side to help support his family. He worked various jobs as a busker (street musician) singing for pennies, and then as a singing waiter in a Chinatown cafe. He was a singing waiter in many restaurants and starting writing songs. His first published hit was *Marie from Sunny Italy* in 1907. By 1911 he had his first international hit, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*. Irving married for the first time in 1913 to **Dorothy Goetz**, who died a year later from typhoid contracted on their honeymoon in Cuba.



The U.S. entered World War I in April 1917. By then Irving was the hottest young songwriter in the country. Not an American citizen at the time, he completed the process in February 1918. As an unexpected byproduct Irving was drafted into the army and assigned to Camp Upton in Yaphank, Long Island. He was not used to the life of a private, getting up early, physical drills, etc. His hatred of reveille led to his writing the now famous ***Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning***.

He persuaded the commanding general of the camp that he should authorize Irving to write a lavish musical revue to run at a Broadway theater. The result was *Yip Yip Yaphank* that previewed at Camp Upton's little Liberty Theater in July 1918. A private train brought 70 celebrities including **Will Rogers** and **Fanny Brice** from New York City to the show. On August 19th a company of 300 soldier performers and stagehands opened the show at the huge Century Theater on Central Park West. The show was such a success that the original eight-day run was extended to a month and then moved to the Lexington Theater when a previously booked show moved to the Century

The show raised more than \$150,000 to build a community house at Upton that was never built because the war ended. Berlin, himself, reaped vast goodwill and tremendous personal publicity.

In 1926 Berlin married **Ellin Mckay**, a journalist and daughter of the president of Postal Telegraph Co. and a leading Catholic layman. They had three daughters and the marriage lasted until her death in 1988.

Berlin was a prolific songwriter with more than 900 songs, 19 musicals, and the scores of 18 movies to his credit. He had no musical education and could not read or write music. He composed using a piano with a lever to transpose to different musical keys. He had an assistant transcribe the music to paper. Among his songs that have become classics are ***There's No Business Like Show Business, White Christmas, Easter Parade, Always, Cheek to Cheek, Blue Skies, and Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better***. He wrote ***God Bless America***, introduced by **Kate Smith** on Armistice Day 1939. The song was originally written for *Yip Yip Yaphank*, but Irving felt it didn't fit the show's upbeat mood. His biggest hit show was ***Annie Get Your Gun*** that opened on Broadway in May 1946.

Irving Berlin was 53 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered World War II. He wanted to create an all-soldier show like his World War I hit, only bigger and better. He called General George Marshall in Washington who supported the idea of a morale-boosting revue on Broadway and ***This is the Army*** production began. Besides being a huge artistic and financial success, the show was noteworthy because Berlin insisted on black performers in the show and the unit integrated. In those days the U.S. armed services were segregated. Rehearsals started in the spring of 1942 at Camp Upton, the home of *Yip Yip Yaphank*.



Opening night on Broadway at the Broadway Theater July 4 brought together a combination of Broadway excitement and war fever. Berlin managed to inject human touches that brought military life home to civilian audiences. His title song, *This is the Army*, *Mr. Jones* became an immediate hit and the show was a great success. The one-month engagement was extended to the end of the summer and a national tour followed. A special performance was scheduled October 18th in Washington, D.C. so the president could attend. (continued on page 10)



It's June! Time for summer vacations, family visits, and the start of a new era for Shir Ami. We are a family, and healthy functional families stay in touch while offering each other support. Instead of anxiety about where to go for services, this year, it looks like we will be able to expand, not contract, our Shul-going. We'll be able to have holiday celebrations and prayer minyans in new surroundings, perhaps with newly-made friends, and like the Girl Scout song goes: **Make new friends, keep the old; one is silver, the other gold.** In short, we'll have new opportunities to expand our Judaic experiences, not just take advantage of an easy way out. Yes, it's change, but it doesn't have to be difficult and it can be for the better.

Let's be story tellers. Let's release our inner Maggid.

A Maggid is a Jewish **story teller**. Throughout Jewish history, the Maggid was known as the one who at the Passover table would recall and explain the story of the Passover. The Maggid was also a wandering preacher (not a rabbi) who, through the art of storytelling would illuminate the Torah teachings when the local rabbi was not available. The interesting thing is that story telling is natural to Jewish culture. We all have stories to tell, not just one. Many. These truthful stories are from our own lives; they are interesting, sometimes humorous and usually helpful. It comes from the very essence of Jewish tradition.

Jewish culture has remained coherent and cohesive, despite extreme historical events, for several good reasons, and one reason that bears stands out is our ability to remember through **storytelling**. Jews remember by recalling personal struggles. It's healthy. The tradition of sharing honestly of our history, both the good times and those that weren't so "ay ay" has given us almost superhuman strength and resilience. In books and film, recalling heartbreaks and success reminds us not only how humanly imperfect we really are, how connected we all are and also how important our Jewish values are to our continuation...

Paula and I had moved to the Valley from West LA and with our first daughter, looked for a good preschool which we found in Van Nuys, not far from our house. It was a Presbyterian pre-school but completely secular. Even though we were both ex-hippies and ex-Buddhist, we really wanted a Jewish environment for our growing family since that was our background.

When our youngest daughter was old enough, we enrolled her in the nearby Temple Maarev preschool in Encino. We were befriended by the two co-preschool directors and found ourselves in the parents' preschool havurah. Having friends our own age and background was a joy, until a couple of years later, when the Temple had a bit of turmoil.

Eventually, many of us ended up placing our children in the preschool of a nearby synagogue: Temple Beth Ami. We loved the TBA Rabbi and Rebbetzin, the Cantor, and the teachers, who were excellent. Our older daughter also thrived in the TBA youth group. Paula and I were later invited to be in a great havurah, the Vovniks. The Vovnik havurah was composed of couples with children of about the same age. We all celebrated family simchas and retreats together. Yes, it was very good. Until:

The Valley began to change. Nothing lasts forever; Temple membership numbers began to shrink, at all Valley synagogues. Still, we managed to continue the Vovnik havurah friendships, simchas and other life events. Thanks to **Rabbi Vorspan**, the events were wonderful and relatively problem free, regardless of what name our synagogue became.

Time doesn't stand still and the San Fernando Valley underwent massive demographic change. People move away for all kinds of reasons. And even though it's not personal, when they do move away, they leave behind a painful hole in our hearts. Our Vovnik havurah once had 12 families, but today is down to three couples with some singles. Who is it that said "Time is a bitch?" (I just did).

And you know what? Whoever expected that our ever-youthful Rabbi Vorspan would one day retire? I mean, if you can't count on Rabbi Vorspan never getting on in years, what can you count on? (True disclosure: I am one week older than Rabbi Vorspan).

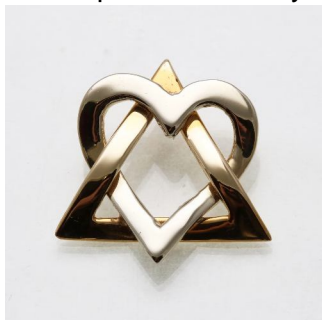
I am grateful to Temple Beth Ami/Shomrei Torah/The Ami Havurah and Congregation Shir Ami (did I get it right?). I might've remained a hippie-Buddhist if I hadn't experienced being a husband, father, grandfather, and Temple member. I am truly blessed.

A big plus: Our Shir Ami membership is of a size that I now actually know most of you, either casually-socially, or closely. As with a family, I don't regret knowing any of you. We were pretty lucky to be this close for as long as it lasted.

Let's not get maudlin, nor let this be the end of our associations. As long as we have breath, let's keep trying to see each other. And as long as we have breath, let's **keep telling our stories**.

(continued on page 7)

I have a couple of nuggets you haven't yet heard that I'd like to share with others. I'll bet the bank that those of you reading this also have some goodies you'd like to share. It would be so nice to swap tales in person. Don't you think so?



Editor's Notes: Lou Loomis selected this symbol of a Jewish star formed intertwined with a heart because it was the symbol of former Temple Beth Ami. Our Congregation Shir Ami symbol/logo is a Jewish star with four embedded dancers. The Hebrew ayin in the spelling of Shir Ami is enlarged and forms the bottom of the 6-point star.



Symbols are important. According to the great Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, the letter vav contained in a nun. The nun represents humility and the vav signifies Torah. The logo design was a collaboration between Rabbi Vorspan and congregant Debbie Sipos. Stan Schroeder

Paula Loomis on Congregation Shir Ami

We joined Temple Beth Ami when our youngest daughter was in her last year of preschool, probably 1981 or 1982. Almost immediately after joining, we got a call about joining a havurah. We became members of the Vovniks and became close friends with many of the other families, some of whom we are still close.

Both of our daughters became a bat mitzvah at TBA, as did I. Our daughters were also confirmed at TBA Rabbi Vorspan officiated at the wedding of our daughter Michelle, as well as the funerals of Lou's mother, my brother, Jay; and both of my parents. My parents, Ann and Izzy Goldfarb became members of TBA as well.

I've taken Israeli dance classes taught by Bonnie, B'nai Mitzvah classes taught by Cantor Moses, and countless other classes.

It's been over 40 years of mergers, moving, and the ups and downs of life, but I don't think we could have found a closer "family" than the people we have known at TBA in all of its incarnations.

Melody Goodman on Congregation Shir Ami

I share in the sense of sadness and loss as Shir Ami closes its doors. I hope the poignancy of this ending is also accompanied with a smile of satisfaction by every person who has ever been involved with Shir Ami – at all that this temple has accomplished year in and year out. We know how hard the Board has worked tirelessly to keep it running smoothly; over how many people have been touched by Shir Ami's care for its members and its far-reaching community involvement.

How fortunate the congregation has been to have the David and Bonnie Vorspan as our gifted, cherished rabbi and rebbetzin. There are so many memories to hold in our hearts, of this special synagogue where my husband Roger z"l had the honor of being High Holiday cantor for many years. With much gratitude, I'm sending best wishes and love from my whole family.

From Cantor Roger Goodman 2017 (5777)

I am looking forward to the High Holy Days at Shir Ami, and I hope to greet each and every one of you. Melody, Joshua and Julia and Jacob, Jeffrey, Kenny, Daniel, and my Dad Milton join me in wishing all of you a year of peace, good health, joy, and harmony. Penina Moise's poem, "With smiles again fond kindred meet, with hopes revived, the New Year greet!"



*L'Shanah Tovah uM'tukah,
A joyous and sweet New Year*

New Year by Penina Moise

Into the tomb of ages past
Another year hath now been cast:
Shall time, unheeded, take its flight,
Nor leave one ray of moral light,
That one man's pilgrimage may shine,
And lead his soul to spheres divine.

Peace to the house of Israel!
May joy within it ever dwell!
May sorrow on the opening year,
Forgetting its unaccustomed tear,
With smiles again fond kindred meet,
With hopes revived the festal greet!



Penina (Nina) Moise (1797 – 1880), from Charleston, South Carolina, was an American poet who made important contributions to the canon of hymns in Jewish services in America.

Stan Schroeder's 2nd Bar Mitzvah Talk

Saturday, August 10, 2013 Temple Ramat Zion

A Bar Mitzvah is an important right of passage in Judaism. Traditionally, a boy accepts the responsibility of mitzvot, he is responsible for his own actions. I remember very little of my actual Bar Mitzvah at Temple Rodef Shalom in Los Angeles. I remember I had gone to Hebrew school from an early age and had learned to read Hebrew without understanding one word. Looking back the only words I remember that were ever translated were "*ma nishtana ha-laila hazeh ...*" Why is this night different...? I remember that another boy and I shared the Bar Mitzvah date and that I did most of the reading, being a better student.

Now, 70 years and a "lifetime" later much has changed. I know a few words of Hebrew, although I know I read Hebrew better then. More importantly, much has changed in the world around me since August, 1943. World War II came to an end and we learned the horrors of the Holocaust. The War in the Pacific ended due to the development and use of the atomic bomb – we entered the atomic/nuclear age. The television became a household center of entertainment – we entered the electronic age. Digital computers were invented and improved and have kept on improving to this day – we entered the computer age.

As for me, I graduated from L.A. High School and UCLA. I married three times, hitting the jackpot when I met Phyllis over 35 years ago and we married at Orcutt Ranch Park October 18, 1987. I had two children by my first marriage and have three grandchildren, all young adults. I became a computer programmer in 1957, 56 years ago, and had a successful career in the field for over 50 years. I lived through the 60s and 70s, getting into various **New Age** philosophies and lifestyles, and now I am approaching what many would classify as **Old Age**.

Judaism wasn't an important part of my life until I met Phyllis, and we have increased our involvement since our marriage. We joined Havurah Olam, a Reconstructionist havurah, over 20 years ago because we learned about Reconstructionism, the movement started by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, and it resonated with our Jewish values and beliefs. We joined Congregation Shir Ami over ten years ago because we wanted a synagogue that held services on a weekly basis. We came to know the members and felt the Shir Ami family warmth. We started attending Shabbat services regularly and fell under the Vorspan spell.

I started sharing stories of Jewish personalities and events during our expression of personal thanks

before the *Amidah* prayer. I also started writing monthly biographies of well-known Jewish men and women for *Shir Notes*, our monthly newsletter. After I retired in 2008, I started editing and publishing *Shir Notes* on my computer at home. I also became our Ritual Vice President and have planned and organized several educational and entertainment events. Our community is a central part of my everyday life.

I have enhanced my life through attending educational programs at other Valley synagogues, and lectures and services at Jewish institutions throughout the Southern California area. My passion for Israel has increased through the years. I have made eight trips there in the last ten years and have worked to promote our Jewish state.

In today's Torah portion *Shoftim* Moses is relating God's instructions to the Israelites about the powers and responsibilities of judges and other officials. It starts by demanding impartiality and honesty. Then it emphasizes the seeking of justice – *tzedek tzedek teerdof* – justice, justice shall you pursue. This means justice, and only justice, should be the pursuit of the judicial system. This can be applied to today's judicial system: not to create social policy, but insure that the social policies determined by legislatures and citizens are applied justly to all citizens.

I consider this second Bar Mitzvah a symbolic commitment to my continued evolution in Judaism. I think each of us has a purpose in this life. I think Judaism provides a framework for achieving this purpose. The first process is discovery. Study of Torah (*la-a-sok b'divrei torah*) is a pathway to inner discovery. The second process is *tikkun olam* (making the world a better place.) For me this is using my capability within my family, my community, and society. And the third is perpetuation (*l'dor v'dor*). What can I pass on to the next generation?

Congregation Shir Ami has provided me with a community to serve and an extended family to share the journey. I thank **Rabbi Vorspan** for providing me with the opportunity to participate in our weekly services. I think bringing awareness of real people and what they have done to make this world a better place for all of us inspires us to each use our God-given talents to do the same.

I thank my fellow congregants, my Reconstructionist *havurot*, and my family and other friends who have helped me celebrate today. Shabbat shalom.

Walk Around the Nachenbergs' (continued)

Our event commencing at the Nachenbergs' home will be at **10 am on Sunday, June 7th**. We will hear comments from our President and a representative from the Alzheimer's Association. Our event in the past has been called the "Walk Around Lake Balboa". Last year the Social Action Committee met to discuss that year's charity event and decided it was time to come up with a different venue to hold our event. We considered several alternatives but did not like any of them.

That is when **Andrea** and I offered to use our home and back yard for this year's fund raiser. We live in a relatively nice neighborhood and we would replace the walk around Lake Balboa with a walk around the Nachenberg's neighborhood. The walk would be scheduled for about a half hour, and we would start by walking by a unique set of gardens, maintained by a small group of ladies, on a public median that divides Superior Street. We will share a fun story how this group of ladies started their "public" gardens. And I will share with you how I get some credit for the establishment of these gardens.

If you are not up for a walk, you can participate in our alternate mitzvah project which is writing thank-you letters to men and women who serve in our military. Or, if you would just like to sit and kibbitz with other members of our temple, that would be nice too.

When the walkers return from their walk, we will have a pot-luck lunch. A vegetarian entree will be provided as a main course for the lunch. Please fill out the attached flyer sign-up sheet and mail it, with your donation, to Shir Ami.

The walk will continue through a few more streets that contain large homes with beautiful landscapes. One home we will see seems to span across the width of two large lots. If the walk gets to be too much effort for some of you, you can peel off any time and return to our home easily.

Speaking of landscapes and gardens, I love to garden and get special pleasure out of propagating my own plants that you will see in my garden. If you like to garden too, and you donate \$25 or more to the Alzheimer's Association, you can pick from one of the many succulents, bulbs (amaryllis) or flowering plants that I have and I like to share.

If you have any questions regarding this event, please call **Becky** (747-998-3804) or **Leon** (818-885-6736) or email at becky21922@outlook.com

Leon and Andrea Nachenberg
19533 Citronia St., Northridge

Speaking of landscapes and gardens, I love to garden and get special pleasure out of propagating my own plants that you will see in my garden. If you like to garden too, and you donate \$25 or more to the Alzheimer's Association, you can pick from one of the many succulents, bulbs (amaryllis) or flowering plants that I have and I like to share.

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Leon and Andrea Nachenberg
19533 Citronia St., Northridge
(Just a few blocks north of the Northridge Mall)

THE CAT WITH THE BAT by Stan Schroeder

I'm sure you've heard of *The Cat in the Hat*
Of Dr. Seuss poetic fame.

Let me introduce The Cat with the Bat
Who played in a baseball game.

At three to three the score was tied

When the Cat came to the plate;

"Please give me some fish, I like it fried;

Yes, that would be just great."

The pitcher threw a perfect strike,
The Cat just stood his ground.

"Make the fish a golden pike,
About three-quarters of a pound."

The next pitch was slightly wide,

The umpire called "Ball One".

"Please put some gravy on the side,

And I like my fish well done."

The pitcher threw the next pitch low,
The umpire called "Ball Two".

"Fry the pike nice and slow,

I want it cooked completely through."

The next pitch was in the strike zone,

The count was two and two.,

"Filet the fish around the bone

So that it is tender when I chew."

The next pitch was high by just an inch,
The umpire called "Ball Three".

"Add salt and pepper, just a pinch.

And milk with cream for me."

The pitcher threw with all his might,

The Cat swung, the ball went soaring

Out of the ballpark into the night,

The crowd on their feet was roaring.

The Cat circled the bases amid the din
And tipped his cap in a greeting.

Then left the field with a Cheshire grin

For the table where he was eating!

Biography of the Month: Irving Berlin

(continued)

The movie rights were sold to Warner Brothers and the whole company went to Hollywood to make the movie version starring Lieutenant **Ronald Reagan**. The movie made almost \$10 million for Army Emergency Relief.

The musical review was performed throughout England, and eventually for troops in Europe and Asia until the end of the war, finally closing October 22, 1945 on Maui.

At the final performance Berlin, himself, sang *Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning*. He stated after the show he hoped he would never have to write another war song. And he never did.

In 1924 fellow songwriter **Jerome Kern** said "Irving Berlin has no **place** in American music. He **is** American music." His observation remained true throughout most of the century.

Following a gala 100th birthday celebration concert at Carnegie Hall in 1988, the great American composer **Morton Gould** said "Irving Berlin's music will last **not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but always!**"

Following the announcement of his death at the age of 101, the marquee lights of Broadway playhouses were dimmed before curtain time in his memory..

>>>>>>>>

"While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer. "

God Bless America,

Land that I love.

Stand beside her, and guide her

Thru the night with a light from above.

From the mountains, to the prairies,

To the oceans, white with foam

God bless America, My home sweet home.

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



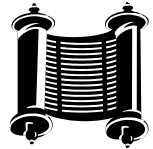
“Around the Rabbi’s Tisch”

This popular Shir Ami educational series concluded its Spring season via Zoom. We discussed Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This was a unique opportunity to learn and share in an informal format. We look forward to this fall when we will again “gather around the Vorspan’s dining room table” via Zoom.

Call Rabbi Vorspan at (818) 888-9817 for more information.

Shabbat Torah study at the Schroeder home and on Zoom Saturday, June 20 10:30 am

Stan Schroeder is completing his 12th year of Shabbat study sessions one Saturday morning a month at 10:30. We discuss the weekly Torah portion, the Shabbat prayers that are included in our Contemporary service, and various subjects relevant to Conservative Judaism.



Parsha Korach (Numbers 16.1 - 18.32) contains the story of Korach who leads a rebellion of 250 distinguished members of the community against Moses and Aaron.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9IVzhwVWVSRGgraEFJdz09>

Meeting ID: 864 4008 2040 Password: 677588

Let's go for a walk around the Nachenberg's neighborhood (or Northridge Mall if it is too hot)

Join Congregation Shir Ami's Social Action Committee
Sunday, June 7th at 10:00 am.

**All Proceeds go to the Alzheimer's Association
A speaker from the Association will speak.**

Minimum donation: \$10 per person, NO MAXIMUM! Following the walk, a brunch will be served by our Social Action Committee at the Nachenbergs'. A vegetarian main dish will be provided by the Committee. Please bring a vegetarian salad, side dish, or dessert to share. And remember to wear your Mitzvah Patrol shirt.

Andrea & Leon Nachenberg
19533 Citronia St.
Northridge, CA 91324
Phone (818) 885-6736

The Alzheimer's Association was founded in 1980 by Jerome J. Stone and family. 100 % of our donations will go to this worthy charity.



Sit-down activities are available for those who don't walk. Call **Becky Finlay** at (747) 998-3804. Sign up by returning this tear-off with your check for \$10 (or more) per person to Congregation Shir Ami, P.O. Box 6353, Woodland Hills, CA 91365. Make check payable to **Congregation Shir Ami.**

Total Donation \$ _____

Walker Names: Brunch (y/n)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Donation Amount: \$10 [] \$18 [] \$36 []
\$72 [] Other []

Phone no. _____

Number of participants _____

**Congregation Shir Ami Schedule of Shabbat Services 2026
at de Toledo High School, Zoom, and Livestream www.shirami.com**

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

Saturday 10:30 am unless otherwise noted

January 2026

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

February 2026

Saturday, February 7 - Birthday
Saturday, February 21 - Anniversary

March 2026

Saturday, March 7 - Birthday
Saturday, March 21 - Anniversary

April 2026

Saturday, April 11 - Birthday
Saturday, April 25 - Anniversary

May 2026

Saturday, May 16 - Birthday
Saturday, May 30 - Anniversary

June 2026

Saturday, June 13 - Birthday
Saturday, June 27 - Anniversary



David Vorspan
Rabbi



Jordan Pistol
President

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86440082040?pwd=bG4venRKTW9IVzhwVWVSRGgraEFJdz09>

Meeting ID: 864 4008 2040 Password: 677588

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