



# VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY (JGSCV)

Volume 5, Issue 3

December 2009

## President's Message:

JGSCV member Shimon Paskow, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Etz Chaim spoke of his 50+ years of *Searching for Jewish Treasures*. He started his collection after a visit to Israel and the Schocken library in 1958. In creating one of the finest Judaic libraries on the world, Schocken bought tens of thousands of books including many from Monks who had prevented Jewish books from being burned during pogroms as well as from various libraries between 1920-1930. He noted the Nazi's buried some 500,000 books that were eventually shipped to Israel in cases that had been used to transport Luftwaffe ammunition.

Rabbi Paskow's treasures, included a prayer book, from 1850 and a hand printed parchment from a Sephardic family in New Orleans. One of the most interesting books in the Rabbi's collection is a Hagaddah from Venezia

(Venice, Italy) with a page signed by the Grand Inquisitor in 1792. Other "treasures" that were shared included a 350 year old child's prayer book; a Yiddish book on how to become a US citizen and a prayer for Czar Alexander from Vilna in 1873 brought to the U.S. by his grandparents. Rabbi Paskow encouraged the audience to make provisions for any family artifacts in their trusts or wills—bequeathing them to a family member, a Judaica library, or university library—under a signed contract that the depository will care for and not sell, the artifacts.

Hal Bookbinder, chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced the Nominating Committee recommendations for the 5 board positions, and called for nominations from the floor. With no additional nominations, nominations were closed and the Committee's recommendations will stand for election at our December 6 meeting. See page 2 for candidate biographies.

The new "schmoozing session" was a success, and the members chose to continue the sessions—**15 minutes before the scheduled the program begins**. JGSCV Board member Werner Frank will facilitate the December schmoozing session where you can discuss your latest genealogical find or problem. **Plan to arrive by 1:10 PM** to participate!

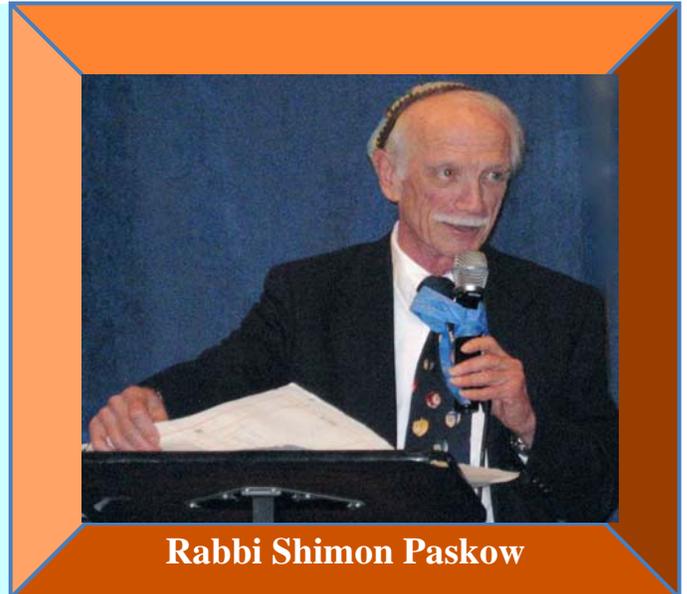
My recent e-mail to members and friends noted the problem between Internet Explorer 8 and JGSCV's program for our website areas with sub-tabs. JGSCV webmaster David Oseas has created a temporary "by-pass": Use the links at the bottom of every page in place of the top menu. This "fix" will continue until David can repair it permanently. Mozilla Firefox and IE6 browsers are not affected.

Looking for a Chanukah gift? A membership in JGSCV comes with a lovely certificate with the donor's name.

Remember to join/rejoin JGSCV for 2010. Dues paid now are good through December 2010 and you will be eligible for our annual Chanukah Party gifts drawing. We have some wonderful genealogical prizes.

Our December 6<sup>th</sup> meeting speaker is the incomparable Steve Morse. His topic: "A Hodge Podge of Lesser Known Gems" offers the One-Step treasures that were not included in last year's lecture. Looking forward to seeing at the meeting!

*Jan Meisels Allen*



Rabbi Shimon Paskow

Board Nominee Biographies – Page 2  
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## ABOUT JGSCV.....

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County meets once a month, usually on a Sunday. Meetings are oriented to the needs of the novice as well as the more experienced genealogist. Members share materials, research methods and ideas, as well as research success or failures. Members have access to the JGSCV library located on special shelves at the Agoura Hills Public Library. Members also receive our monthly newsletter which is circulated by email.

2009 dues are \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30.00 for a household unit. To join, please send appropriate amount in check made out to JGSCV and addressed to Helene Rosen at 28912 Fountainwood St., Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Obtain the new/renewal membership form on our website at [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) by selecting the membership button.

## BOARD NOMINEE BIOGRAPHIES

JAN MEISELS ALLEN- currently serves as President, JGSCV and a JGSCV founding member. She is a board member of the International Association of the Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) and Chairperson, IAJGS Public Records Access Monitoring Committee and serves as the IAJGS representative on the Records Preservation and Access Committee (FGS/NGS/IAJGS). Jan has made presentations at the JGSCV, local organizations and at the annual IAJGS conferences. She has also coordinated speaking tours for out-of-town speakers on behalf of multiple JGS's. For over five years she has also been assistant to the editor of Annual Jewish Yearbook on Genealogy. Jan served in various administrative capacities for the past three IAJGS conferences. Prior to helping found JGSCV, Jan was a 5-year board member and first vice president-programming of JGS Los Angeles. She began her genealogy research in 1998.

STEWART K. BERNSTEIN- has been involved in genealogy for fifteen years. He is the Co-ordinator of the English Translation Project for the Pultusk, Poland Yizkor Book. Currently retired, after having spent thirty-five years in the Motion Picture and Television Industry, he was recognized with two National Emmy Awards and numerous additional nominations. He provided the original suggestion to Jan Meisels Allen for a JGS serving the Conejo Valley and Ventura County. Stewart currently serves on the JGSCV Board of Directors.

WARREN BLATT- founding member of JGSCV has served on the JGSCV Board for the past four years. Is the JewishGen Editor-in-Chief (2000-date) and Managing Director (2008-date) as well as author of many JewishGen databases. Warren has been involved in genealogy research for thirty-five years. He is a winner of the IAJGS' Lifetime Achievement award. He is a presenter at many JGSCV meetings and an annual presenter at the IAJGS conferences. He is the author of two books and numerous journal articles.

DOROTHY DRILICH- founding member of JGSCV, member and Secretary of the Board for the past four years. Dorothy has had a long time interest in her family history and has started her genealogy research in recent years.

ALLAN LINDERMAN- is a member of JGSCV since 2008 and became JGSCV's newsletter editor in the Spring of 2009. He has been engaged in genealogy for three years. Allan is an advertising and media consultant and is president of The Linderman Media group and brings to his role his writing and editing skills.

## WANTED: AVOTAYNU BACK ISSUES TO COMPLETE THE JGSCV COLLECTION

The JGSCV is seeking donations of the following back issues of Avotaynu to complete the collection in our permanent library: Volumes #1-7 (1985-1991); Vol. XIX #1 (Spring 2003), Vol. XX Winter 2004 #4 (Winter 2004), Vol. XXI #1-4 (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter 2005). Once completed, the Avotaynu collection will be bound for ease of use while freeing up additional shelf space.

If you have any of these issues and are willing to donate them, please contact Jan at [President@jgscv.org](mailto:President@jgscv.org)



## 2010 IAJGS CONFERENCE IN LOS ANGELES

Mark your calendars! July 11-16, 2010 -- the 30th IAJGS Conference will be hosted by JGSLA and held at the JW Marriott Hotel at LA Live near the Staples Center in downtown LA. The JGSLA website is up and running: <http://www.jgsla2010.com> The Call for Papers begins on November 15th and registration will open on January 15th, but hotel reservations can be made now.

## RALPHS COMMUNITY PROGRAM

The Ralphs Community Contribution program helps JGSCV with making contributions to us every quarter, based on the purchases made by participants in the program. Please visit our website under "notices" for the easy step-by-step instructions to register and have JGSCV benefit from your Ralphs purchases.



# Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County\* (JGSCV) (\*and surrounding areas)

The JGSCV will hold a general meeting on Sunday, December 6, 2009  
1:30 to 3:30 PM at Temple Adat Elohim 2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

## "One-Step Webpages: A Hodge Podge of Lesser Known Gems"

This presentation is a sequel to the *Potpourri of Genealogical Search Tools* talk Steve Morse gave to JGSCV last December. You need not have attended the 2008 talk to learn and understand this year's program! There are too many utilities on the One-Step website to be covered in a single talk, so many of them found their way to the cutting room floor when the Potpourri talk was being edited. However, several of those are quite useful. This presentation describes those gems that you might not otherwise be aware of and gives the highlights of each one. They range from problems with genealogical searches to problems with identity theft to problems with DNA.

**Speaker: Stephen Morse** is the creator of the One-Step Website for which he has received both the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Outstanding Contribution Award from the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, Award of Merit from the National Genealogical Society and more. Steve's one-step program has revolutionized how to do genealogical searches in large databases!



Everyone is eligible for the drawing of fantastic genealogical prizes for those who renew their JGSCV membership or join for 2010. You must be present to win! Light refreshments will be served celebrating Chanukah and our membership drive.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County is dedicated to sharing genealogical information, techniques and research tools with anyone interested in Jewish genealogy and family history.

### 2010 JGSCV Meeting Dates

All Meetings are held at Temple Adat Elohim  
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

**Jan. 10 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM**

JGSCV board member Jan Meisels Allen, "How to Begin Your Genealogy"; JGSCV board member Debra Kay Blatt, "An Introduction to JewishGen"

**Feb. 1\* Mon. 7-9 PM**

Ron Arons "Mapping Madness"

**March 7 Sun. 1:30-3:30PM**

Steve Luxenberg, "Annie's Ghosts"

**April 11 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM**

Nat'l Geographic Channel documentary "Hitler's Hidden Holocaust"

**May 2 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM** - TBA

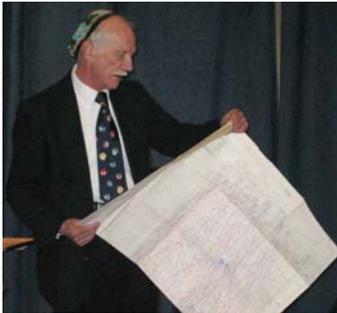
**June 6 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM** - TBA

\*Note: Feb. 1 Meeting is on a Monday Evening

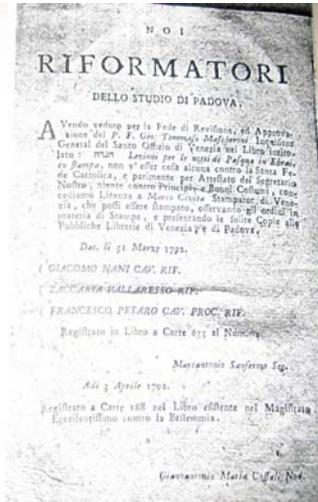
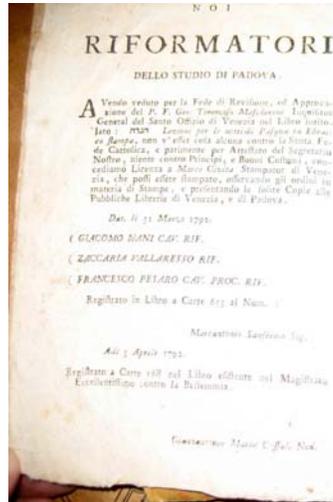
## RABBI PASKOW AT THE NOVEMBER JGSCV MEETING



Top Left: Rabbi Paskow and JGSCV members examining some of his artifacts.



Bottom Left: Rabbi describing a document.



Left: Eighteenth century Hagaddah from Venice, Italy.

### New Additions to the JGSCV Traveling Library

Since we reported in April 2009's newsletter the following books have been added to the JGSCV traveling library. If you have genealogically relevant books that you would like to donate, please contact Jan Meisels Allen at [president@JGSCV.org](mailto:president@JGSCV.org). The books in the traveling library are categorized A, B, or C determining which come to each monthly meeting. All A books come to every meeting. Categories B and C alternate which month they are brought to the meeting. A full list of all of our permanent and traveling library holdings may be found on the website: [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org).

- o A Guide to YIVO's Landmanshaften Archive 1986. Rosaline Schwartz (Category B)
- o A Translation Guide to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Polish-Language Civil-Registration Documents (Including Birth, Marriage and Death Records) Third Ed. Judith Frazin, The JGS of Illinois 2009 (Category B)
- o Genealogical Resources in New York Estelle Guzik ed. 2003 (Category C)
- o I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems From Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944 Schocken Books 1978 (Category B)
- o Jews in Liepāja, Latvia 1941-1945 A Memorial Book Edward Anders and Juris Dubrovskis (Category B)
- o Jewish Vital Records Revision Lists and Other Jewish Holdings in the Lithuanian Archives Harold Rhode and SallyAnn Sack 1996 (Category B)
- o Odessa A History 1794-1914 Patricia Herlihy (Category B)
- o Langenscheidt's Pocket Dictionary Hebrew-English (Category C)
- o Modern Hebrew-English Dictionary Avraham Zilka (Category C)
- o Morton Allen Directory of European Passenger Steamship Arrivals (Category B)
- o The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History 1794-1881 Steven J. Zipperstein (Category B)
- o The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia A History and Guide 1881-1930 Harry Boonin (Category C)
- o Some Archival Sources for Ukrainian-Jewish Genealogy 1997 (Category B)
- o Sources for Sephardic Studies: A Library Research Guide Prepared by Dr. Rachel Simon Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion 2006 (Category C)
- o The Complete Book of Hebrew Baby Names Smader Shir Sidi (Category C)
- o WOWW Companion A Guide to Communities Surrounding Central and Eastern European Towns (companion to 1995 edition of WOWW) (Category B)



Footnote.com announced earlier this fall they were providing their Holocaust Collection free through October. However, due to the popularity of this collection, they have decided to keep the records open free to the public through the rest of this year. This will enable more people to search and

explore the original records from the National Archives. On January 1, 2010 these records will become part of the paid subscription on Footnote.com. These records, however, will remain free to access through any of the National Archives physical locations. Please feel free to inform your audience of this news. The url for the microsite where these records can be accessed is: [http://go.footnote.com/holocaust\\_records/](http://go.footnote.com/holocaust_records/).

## Genealogy Roots Blog

The Genealogy Roots Blog has recently added online Birth and Marriage Records Indexes for 17 states at <http://tinyurl.com/yjsh8r8>

The Genealogy Roots Blog is for finding online genealogy databases, records and resources. The focus is on vital records (birth, marriage, divorce & death records), obituaries, census records, naturalization records, military records and ship passenger lists. The Genealogy Roots Blog is based in the USA, but online European, Canadian, and other records sources are sometimes included.



If you are planning a trip to Washington DC and visiting The National Archives, you will find of interest that they launched a new online reservation system, to make it easier for individuals, families, and large groups alike to visit the National Archives. The convenience fee for online reservations is \$1.50 per person and



admission to all of the National Archives Experience exhibits is free. While reservations are not required to visit the National Archives and admission is free, this new system will eliminate the long lines and often lengthy wait. By simply going online, visitors can

reserve their choice of dates and times based upon their personal preferences in a matter of minutes.

Reservations will be handled through the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS). Visitors to the National Archives Experience can make reservations online <http://tinyurl.com/d4by4o> from the NRRS web site at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Reservations can also be made through the NRRS Call Center: 1-877-444-6777, Group Sales Reservations: 1-877-559-6777, or TDD: 1-877-833-6777.

### A CHANUKAH GIFT FROM AVOTAYNU

Here is a chance to get discounts from Avotaynu. For the rest of November only, Avotaynu is offering a Chanukah present to readers of *Nu? What's Nu?* who are subscribers to Avotaynu: Discounts on various genealogy products for Jewish family history research. For example:

- 20% discount on AVOTAYNU on CD-ROM
- 15% discount on *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy, Where Once We Walked* and *Every Family Has a Story*
- 10% discount on all other books

You must use the special website set aside for this offer:

<http://tinyurl.com/yl2q7wj>

## JGSCV WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

**NORA CARMAN**

**LAURIE WALKER**

**VALERIE KNIGHT**

**STEPHEN WEINSTEIN**

**JUDY and JIM ROSENBLUM**

## COLUMBUS' ISLAND: JAMAICA FOR THE JEWS

By Ed Kritzler

Google "Christopher Columbus" and you find more than three million entries. Thousands of towns and cities bear his name. Yet, the wayward sailor, honored this week on the anniversary of his discovery of a New World, remains a mysterious figure. Italy, Spain and Portugal each claim his birthright, and much about him is debated. However, beyond dispute is a previously unreported relationship involving the Great Explorer and his family, and the Jews of Jamaica. From 1536 to 1655 (when England conquered Jamaica), the island was ruled by Columbus' family who provided a haven for Iberian Jews on the run from the Inquisition.

Columbus' close relationship with Jews began before his voyage of discovery. It was in the spring of 1492. Columbus was meeting with King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. They agreed to sponsor his voyage but balked at his demand for hereditary rights to any land he might discover. Columbus, disheartened, was leaving the royal quarters when the king's financial advisor Luis de Santangel caught up with him. "Hold firm to your demand" he urged the explorer, explaining that he would try to get the royal couple to reverse their decision.

Santangel, a covert Jew, knew what was at stake. As the king's counselor, he was aware that soon, town criers throughout Spain would proclaim the Expulsion Order of the Inquisition that mandated all Jews under penalty of death must leave. If Santangel could persuade the royal couple to accede to the explorer's demand, Columbus, as ruler of a new land, would be in a position to provide a haven for banished brethren.

Granted an audience, the counselor addressed the monarchs. Columbus' demand should not trouble them, he said. He and his crew could not possibly subdue one of the powerful Asian nations. However, if he was allowed to rule over a few islands he captured in the course of his voyage, Spain would gain strategic way-stations for her trading ships plying the shortcut passage to Asia. Ferdinand relented, and Columbus set sail, having gained hereditary rights over any newly discovered lands – to be "enjoyed forever by his heirs."

With Santangel (not Isabella's jewels) paying for the voyage, Columbus – on the same day that Jews were expelled from Spain – set sail with a hidden agenda. Along with his stated goal to gain the riches of the East, he hoped to acquire a land where Sephardi could live free from the Inquisition. It was not to be. He never reached Asia. Nor did he secure hereditary rule over any land in his lifetime. However, his promise to provide a homeland for covert Jews was kept by his family in the one "new land" the Crown eventually ceded his heirs – the island of Jamaica

It's been theorized that Columbus' pledge to Santangel was reinforced in 1504, when, marooned on Jamaica for one year, he rewarded the young sailors who, led by his brother Bartholomew, defeated a mutinous uprising by older members of his crew. One may ask the reasons for the youths' allegiance. First, they had a fiscal interest in the voyage, as their fathers helped finance it. Second, their families, being wealthy conversos (Jews who converted to the Catholic faith), were suspect and therefore targeted by the Inquisition. To keep their sons safe, Columbus agreed to take them along.

While the Jewish boys may have looked to Columbus as their Moses (as he himself did), Jamaica was no Promised Land. Still, after leading underground lives in Spain, a year's idyll on a tropical island was likely no hardship. How much their support played in fulfilling Columbus' early promise to Santangel cannot be quantified. When rescued from Jamaica, Columbus and his crew

were first taken to Hispaniola before departing for Spain. But the young Jews, rather than go back to the dreaded Land of the Inquisition, remained in Hispaniola and in 1509 returned to Jamaica as the island's first settlers.

For more than a century, Columbus' heirs kept Jamaica – alone in the Spanish Empire – off-limits to the tentacles of the Holy Inquisition that had spread over the New World. As far as Jamaica's proprietors were concerned, as long as their Jewish settlers wore a Christian mask, no one in power might question the sincerity of their religious beliefs. Protected by the Columbus family, Jamaica's Jews posed as New Christians from Portugal (known as Portugals), the only category of settlers that did not require proof of Catholic ancestry. The family in partnership with Jewish traders and merchants ran Jamaica as a major smuggling port. This was revealed in 1568 when the Crown accused the current heir, Don Luis Colon, of "blocking an investigation into charges [he] used his private jurisdiction on Jamaica to cover illegal trade." This violated Spain's trade policy that required all goods to and from the New World to go via Seville.

Given that the Columbus family owned every inch of the island, Jamaica attracted few Spanish settlers. No matter how prosperous they were, Spanish ranchers were little more than legalized squatters. To gain title to their estates, they needed the king to reclaim the island. Their means was the Inquisition. If they could expose Jamaica as a heretic island, it would give the Crown a reason to oust the Columbus family. In 1654, the opportunity arose when a Dutch ship carrying Jewish and Calvinist refugees from Brazil (after Portugal re-conquered the colony), was blown off course and forced to land in Jamaica. Local hidalgos thereupon invited Inquisitors from Columbia to investigate these "suspect heretics." Jamaica's covert Jews, fearing the inquiry could lead to their own exposure, sent a note to Oliver Cromwell's agent: Jamaica could be conquered with little resistance, and pledged their assistance.

The following year, a Jewish pilot led 36 English ships into the harbor, and two local Portugals negotiated the treaty that surrendered the island. The Spanish were exiled, and Cromwell invited the Portugals to stay on as openly practicing Jews. Welcomed by the English, covert Jews throughout the New World shed their Christian cloaks and immigrated to Jamaica. Until the 19th century, when its role as sanctuary was sup- planted by the land of the free and home of the brave, Columbus' island served as the principal haven for Jews in the New World.

In September, America's Jews celebrated their New Year in freedom, thanks in part to the Discoverer and his family's mitzvah in providing a sanctuary in Jamaica for Jews on the run from the Inquisition.

Author's note: Ed Kritzler, author "Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean" (Doubleday 2008), lives in Jamaica where he researched the island's extraordinary Jewish history. He may be contacted as [edkritzler@yahoo.com](mailto:edkritzler@yahoo.com)

### **JGSCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**2010 Membership/Renewal Form**  
**Jewish Genealogical Society of the**  
**Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV)\***

\*Member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)

[www.JGSCV.org](http://www.JGSCV.org)

**Dues paid now are good through December 2010**

Check one:

This is a New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Single \$ 25.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$1.00\*\* Family\* \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$2.00\*\*

\*Family defined as two people living in the same household

\*\* \$1 per person is a voluntary donation to the IAJGS Stern Award, granted annually when it recognizes institutions for outstanding work in the creation and availability of resources for Jewish Genealogy.

**Additional voluntary contributions:**

Library Acquisition Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Programs Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Suggested minimum voluntary contribution for either fund: \$5.00)

**Make check payable to JGSCV and send along with application to:**

Helene Rosen  
28912 Fountainwood St.  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

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Talents that you have to share (language skills, computer skills, translation, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Give a JGSCV Membership as a Chanukah Gift**