

# VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE CONEJO  
VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY



# JGSCV

January 2024

Volume 19 Issue 4

## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**

We hope this finds you well and safe.

As I am writing this column, it is day 78 of the hostages taken from Israel on October 7. We continue to be horrified by barbarous attacks ravaged by Hamas. For those murdered, may their memories be a blessing. For those remaining 129 hostages, may they return home safely to their families. IDF troops in central and southern Gaza have uncovered rocket launchers in residences, caches of weapons in homes and schools, and significant intelligence materials that further show Hamas' corruption in diverting humanitarian funds for terror use. We also hope for the safety of the innocent civilians in Gaza. In Northern Israel we hope for return of normality due to cessation of Hezbollah attacks.

We met in person on December 3 for our annual meeting. We thank our genealogical companies for providing excellent gifts for our prizes. Those who renewed by or at the meeting and were in attendance had their names in a "bowl" and were selected by Hal Bookbinder first, and then each of the succeeding prize winners. Congratulations to: Abby Clark, Jerry Escover, Barbara Finsten, Janet Fishman, and Paula Poll. See Page 11 for the prizes.

Thank you for those who have renewed for 2024. We are ending 2023 with 109 members. This is down from our pre-pandemic high of 189 members, and we hope that more renew/join shortly.

We are in membership renewal mode. A renewal/membership form is on page 12. You can send in a check made out to JGSCV and send it to Helene, our membership vice president whose address is on the form. If you want to pay by cash, you can contact me and make an appointment to drop it off at my home if you are concerned about sending cash through the mail. Thank you to those who have already renewed!

We held our election by acclamation—nominations and their bios were shared in our December 2023 newsletter. Welcome to our new -- Steve Feldman and Diane Goldin and returning board members: Barbara Finsten, Andrea Massion and Issie Perel. All have a two-year term. Half of the board is elected every two years. Board members whose terms did not expire in 2023 are: Jan Meisels Allen, Janet Fishman, Helene Rosen and Debra Wenkart. Per JGSCV's bylaws, the board will decide who holds which position at the board's January meeting. Our bylaws require the board to determine the positions, therefore the membership voted for the person not the specific responsibility.

(Cont'd next page)

## **NEXT MEETING**

**Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**2:30 PM – 4:30 PM**

via **Zoom**

*"The Mysterious John Jones"*



*Presented by  
Dr. Janette Silverman*

More info page 8

## **FEBRUARY MEETING**

*"HOW A RECORD MATCH ALMOST LED ME TO AN  
INSANE ASYLUM"*

WITH

*DANIEL HOROWITZ OF  
MyHERITAGE*

[WWW.JGSCV.ORG](http://WWW.JGSCV.ORG)

6052 Hackers Lane  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301  
818-889-6616

## 2024 JGSCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jan Meisels Allen, President and  
Program Chairman**  
[president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org)

**Helene Rosen, VP Membership,  
Zoom Coordinator**  
[membership@jgscv.org](mailto:membership@jgscv.org)

**Janet Fishman, Treasurer**  
[treasurer@jgscv.org](mailto:treasurer@jgscv.org)

**Debra Wenkart, Secretary**  
[secretary@jgscv.org](mailto:secretary@jgscv.org)

**Steve Feldman, DVM  
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[steve@jgscv.org](mailto:steve@jgscv.org)

**Barbara Finsten,  
Member at Large**  
[Barbaraf@jgscv.org](mailto:Barbaraf@jgscv.org)

**Diane Goldin,  
Member at Large  
& Newsletter Editor**  
[newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org)

**Andrea Massion  
Member at Large**  
[Andrea@jgscv.org](mailto:Andrea@jgscv.org)

**Israel Perel, Librarian**  
[librarian@jgscv.org](mailto:librarian@jgscv.org)

**Nancy Goldberg, temp FSL**  
[Nancy@jgscv.org](mailto:Nancy@jgscv.org)

**Pat Fuller, Publicity**  
[publicity@jgscv.org](mailto:publicity@jgscv.org)

**David Oseas, Webmaster**  
[webmaster@jgscv.org](mailto:webmaster@jgscv.org)

### Mission Statement:

JGSCV is a non-profit organization run by enthusiastic volunteers dedicated to the sharing of genealogical information, techniques, and research tools with those interested in Jewish genealogy and family history. Members include beginners and experienced genealogists who share with each other.

The results will be announced in the February issue of *Venturing Into Our Past*, on our website, and in a president's email. At the first board meeting of 2024 the board will determine which person serves in which role.

While we rely on your dues to operate, we also need additional revenue to keep up with what we do. This is an opportunity to further assist your society. By shopping at Ralph's or Food for Less and listing JGSCV as your charity of choice. Even if you only shop at Ralphs/Food for Less occasionally - it helps our society. This opportunity does not cost you any additional money and results in contributions to JGSCV. See "noteworthy" on our website <https://www.jgscv.org/noteworthy.html> for more information.

Temple Adat Elohim is unable to accommodate JGSCV for its first Sunday in the month meetings due to other functions— their annual play, holiday scheduling, etc. Therefore, the JGSCV board has decided we will continue to meet via Zoom through August 2024. The Board will review in the later part of the summer/early fall if we return to in-person meetings or continue to meet via Zoom. Recently, we have had a better attendance when we meet by Zoom.

Hal Bookbinder continues his interesting column on *Practicing Safe Computing* on page 6. This month's article is "Password Managers, a 2024 update" and is the 98<sup>th</sup> article in his series!

We have had several resignations from the Publicity Committee. We have several members who help us email our meeting notice to local libraries, senior centers, synagogues, etc. It takes less than 2 hours a month. We will provide you with the meeting announcement and the list of places to email it to. If you are willing to help, please contact me at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org).

Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates starts its 10th season on January 2, 2024. Check with your local internet provider for station. In the greater Los Angeles area, it should be on Tuesdays starting at 8PM.

<https://www.pbs.org/weta/finding-your-roots/watch/seasons/season-10>

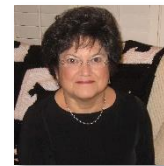
Celebrities include: Ciara, Alanis Morissette, Valerie Bertinelli, Michael Douglas, Lena Dunham, Brendan Fraser, LaVar Burton, Wes Studi, Sammy Haga, Ed O'Neill, Bob Odenkirk, Illiza Shlesnger, Sunny Hostin, Jesse Williams, Danielle Brooks, Dionne Warwick, Tracy Morgan and Anthony Ramos. The series will include three "non-celebrities" as well.

Remember that the Auschwitz exhibit at the Reagan Museum has been extended through January 28th. It is in our backyard so everyone should take advantage of this opportunity. See: <https://tinyurl.com/mtvh238n>

Looking forward to "virtually" seeing you on 7 January 2024 with Janette Silverman talking about "The Mysterious John Jones!"

Have a happy, healthy and safe 2024!

*Jan Meisels Allen*



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# Highlights from “Practicing Safe Computing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)”

By Andrea Massion



Hal Bookbinder,  
December’s speaker

Throughout the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and now 21<sup>st</sup> century, the entire genealogy community has benefited from the participation of Hal Bookbinder. A former president of the Jewish

Genealogy Society, Los Angeles (JGSLA) and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), Hal has used his leadership skills in at least nine international IAJGS conferences, and speaks to societies on a number of topics.

Here in Ventura County, we benefit from Hal’s series of articles on Technology originating in this publication, *Venturing Into Our Past*. While his articles are available on our website, [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org), this was an opportunity to listen as Hal presented live at the December 2023 meeting at Temple Adat Elohim in Thousand Oaks.

Hal began his technology journey by earning his bachelor’s degree from New York University majoring in Math and Physics, followed by a master’s degree in operations research. He then spent four years on active duty with the U.S. Air Force,

as a programmer for Space Division

(later part of “Space Command” and now “Space Force”) in the Cheyenne Mountain Complex in Colorado Springs. (See the November 2016 issue of *Venturing into Our Past* for an article on Hal’s experience there during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.)

While on active duty, he earned his second master’s degree in business, from the University of Northern Colorado. After active duty, Hal remained in the USAF Reserves, achieving the grade of major. On leaving active duty, Hal settled in Los Angeles, first working as an IT professional for ARCO and then for UCLA Health. His final position at UCLA Health before his retirement in July 2020 was as Director of IT Strategic Finance. He remains on the faculty of the University of Phoenix, teaching courses in business, project management and information technology.

Is it any wonder that he was drawn to genealogy, especially the tech side? And now in his retirement, he’s combined his info tech with genealogy and shares it all. So here are some highlights and important preventative measures in this AI milieu from Hal’s presentation.

Hal noted that the iPhone NameDrop feature now defaults to automatic sharing. He suggested turning this off and only

## 10 Commandments to Avoid AI Scams

	<u>Thou shalt not</u>	<u>Thou shalt</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Succumb to pressure to act now.</li><li>2 Share personal data when contacted.</li><li>3 Pursue unsolicited opportunities.</li><li>4 Download unverified AI utilities.</li><li>5 Try to outsmart AI.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6 Keep up with the news.</li><li>7 Limit sharing in social media.</li><li>8 Remain aware, remain vigilant.</li><li>9 Independently verify before acting.</li><li>10 Trust your gut.</li></ul>

turning it on when you intend to share your contact info.

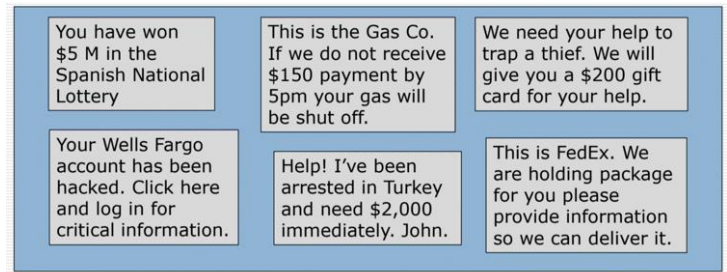
On to cyber-attacks: They are real. We were reminded that records were hacked from *23 & Me*, and you do not have 20 million relatives. Yes, Russia invaded U.S. infostructure prior to the last presidential election. Sony Pictures computers and data were infiltrated by a North Korean tech team in reaction to the release of the comedy film, "The Interview," and California Blue Shield was compromised in the spring of 2023.

In case of any future temporary outages of service due to these kinds of cyber-attacks, Hal suggests some preventative measures:

- Always have cash on hand as online banking may be compromised for a while.
- Back up your computer files BOTH in the cloud and on a disk in your home. If either is lost, you will still have access to backups.
- Use STRONG passwords, the kind you can't remember. Make a hard copy of your passwords and put them in a safe place in your home.
- Practice finding and using the HOTSPOT that your smart phone provides. This can replace your normal WiFi if it goes down.
- Chose multi-factor authentication (MFA) where you are sent a security number by text or email to verify.
- Continue to monitor your bills, accounts, and Amazon purchases, as well as credit reports for anything that you did not authorize.

Hal included warnings about data breach readiness, especially in emails and text messages. We all get phished these days. Oxford Dictionary defines it as the fraudulent practice of sending emails or texts purporting to be from reputable

companies to induce you to reveal personal information such as passwords or credit card numbers. Some examples appear in the photo below:



Another is the email saying, "**Critical Error: call this number.**" Wrong! Do Not Call and do NOT reply. The same holds true with an email saying that your Amazon account has been suspended.

Here are additional red flags to look out for:

- Do not run unknown software. If it's not from your App Store, do the research.
- PC users: Do not allow folks you don't know to access remote control on your computer.
- Any link may be false: check the origins of suspicious email to realize that the email address is not from the company it claims to represent.

The following are just good practice, always:

- Log off on membership sites.
- Do not insert unknown USB sticks into your computer.
- Don't share passwords with outsiders.
- Close unneeded windows.

Occasionally the following may be ways to resolve problems:

- Clear the cache and clear your cookies.
- Reinstall an application that is acting funky.

Another Hal recommended resource: <https://haveibeenpwned.com/>. This site

lets you know if your passwords or email addresses are for sale on the dark web.

Hal discussed Artificial Intelligence (AI) with a quote from Sam Altman, of *Open AI* and Time Magazine's CEO of 2023.

*People always make the mistake of calling an idea small or stupid because they don't understand how it's going to evolve.*

The Times article on Sam Altman includes why some are worried about the use of AI as it grows into its next stage, artificial general intelligence (AGI). If realized, an AGI could learn to accomplish any intellectual task that human beings or animals can perform:

*To many, the rapid rise in AI's capabilities over the past year is deeply alarming. Computer scientists have not solved what's known in the industry as the "alignment problem"—the task of ensuring that AGI conforms to human values. Few agree on who should determine those values.*

Hal seems enthused by the future of AI. With his background in medical care systems, he hopes to see great strides in Science, Research and Information access. In genealogy, AI may contribute to improved and correct records and translations.

Hal's handout is available on JGSCV's website. You can learn more about his life experiences and how he as arrived at this moment: his degrees, Air Force service, the technical jobs, and his love for genealogy – all coming together for his research and as a priceless resource for our community.

### **3 BIGGEST BREACHES** **October 2023**

Oct 2

*23andMe*

20,000,000 records

Oct 9

*Indian Council of Medical Research*

815,000,000 records

Oct 25

*Redcliffe Labs*

12,347,297 records

For a current list of Data Breaches and Cyber Attacks in 2023:

<http://tinyurl.com/mr7b8wdn>

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*Hal is a retired information systems professional who has been actively researching his genealogy for more than three decades. He has identified over 4,000 relatives and traced two lines to the mid-1700s in modern Ukraine. He is a past president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles (JGSLA) and of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS). Hal publishes a series of monthly articles on safe computing which are freely available on the JGSCV website: <http://tinyurl.com/3etijnac>*

# Practicing Safe Computing Article #98: “Password Managers, a 2024 update”

LastPass...I®

&

bitwarden

By Hal Bookbinder

When I speak on “Safe Computing”, I typically ask the audience whether they use a password manager. About two-thirds respond that they do. So, about one in three rely on memory or a printed list. If you can remember a password, a hacker can figure it out, and lists can fall into the wrong hands.

Hackers may discover your password by compromising a system in which that password is used. They may discover your password by trial-and-error, using information they uncover about you, like your child’s name, your birthday month, or favorite color. If you reuse the same password, or variations of it, once a hacker discovers it on one site, all other sites where you use it are not at risk.

Steps that you can take to reduce the risk include (1) using a different password for each site that you visit, (2) [strong passwords](#), and (3) [multifactor authentication](#). In the age of artificial intelligence and superfast computing, you are more at risk than ever. So, wherever you can do so, use all three of these techniques to best protect yourself.

As there is no way any of us can remember dozens of strong passwords, we need a password manager to remember them. Password managers can typically enter your ID and password when you are logging in, create strong passwords on request, warn you of weak or potentially compromised passwords, and automatically record passwords that you create or update.

Browsers, like Chrome and Firefox, offer password management. You see this when you are asked by your browser whether you would like it to remember your password. I do not recommend browser-based password management as passwords stored directly in your browser are more easily hacked than those stored in the cloud. See [Dangers of saving passwords in your browser](#). (The article is on page #10)

Many password managers offer a free version along with fee-based versions including additional features. About ten years ago, after evaluating various password managers, I selected LastPass. I found that the free version was easy to use, rich in functionality, and did not constantly dun me to upgrade to a paid version. Recently, LastPass has experienced several breaches, the most serious one in August 2022.

Articles, like this one in [Forbes](#), and LastPass’s own [blog](#), sufficiently concerned me so that I decided that I would no longer use it. After evaluating several free alternatives, I recently switched to Bitwarden, which PC Magazine rates as the “Best Overall” free password manager. Here are links to PC Magazine’s current “best-rated” [free](#) and [fee-based](#) password managers.

Bitwarden has some catching up to fully compare with LastPass. For example, LastPass recognizes when a new password has been created or an existing one updated. Bitwarden does not and so such updates must be manually entered. I expect that Bitwarden will add this important feature as it matures. Review the best-rated password managers and select one that works for you. Don’t delay until you are hacked.

*This is the ninety-eighth in a series of articles by JGSCV founding member Hal Bookbinder. Hal is also a Past President of JGSLA and IAJS. He is the 2010 recipient of the IAJS Lifetime Achievement Award, and his online skills are well documented. All the Safe Computing articles by Hal Bookbinder are available on the JGSCV website <https://www.jgscv.org/noteworthy.html>.*

# JGSCV Updates



## Publicity Committee Needs you!

We have had several resignations from the Publicity Committee. We need assistance emailing our meeting notice to local libraries, senior centers, synagogues, etc. It takes less than 2 hours a month. We will provide the meeting announcement and the list of places to email it to. If you are willing to help, please contact me at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org).

Joan Adler, our June 2020 speaker, suggested our members write up memories and genealogical discoveries to publish in our newsletter.

We would love to include more of these personal, unique, and fascinating memories.

We are eager to help you!

Please send to Diane at [newslettereditor@JGSCV.org](mailto:newslettereditor@JGSCV.org) and Jan at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org)

## Community Contribution Program

Whether you are a friend or member we appreciate your support and hope you will sign up for Ralphs and Food-for-Less community programs.

These programs give donations to JGSCV when you shop.

For more information and signing up go to JGSCV's website under Noteworthy <https://jgscv.org/noteworthy.html>.



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

will hold a **Zoom meeting**

**Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> from 2:30-4:30PM**

**Ask the Experts/Schmoozing Corner begins at 2:10 PM**

*Zoom link will be sent out the Friday before the meeting.*



**JANUARY PROGRAM**

***“The Mysterious John Jones”***



*Dr. Janette Silverman*

**The Program:**

John Jones was Jewish and went from Eastern Europe to England, to Australia before finally settling in California in the 1800s. It's a fascinating story about contradictory facts and how to resolve the and discover the truth about a person's history.

**The Speaker**

Dr. Janette Silverman is a professional genealogist, heading up a team of 11 researchers specializing in Eastern European and Jewish genealogy at AncestryProGenealogists® the division of *Ancestry.com* that does private client research. She is a long-time (AZ) Valley resident. What began as a hobby turned into an obsession and ultimately led to a shift in her career from Jewish education to genealogy. Her doctoral dissertation, "In Living Memory" was based on her genealogical research into four branches of her own family, putting into historical context their experiences as they made their way from Eastern Europe to settle in the U.S. from the 1880s until the 1920s. She was previously the chair of the Phoenix (Arizona) JGS, lead co-chair of the 2016 IAJGS conference in Seattle, Washington, and a JewishGen volunteer. She speaks virtually and in-person at conferences and for smaller groups all over the world and has been published in different genealogical publications.

**Zoom meetings are open to JGSCV members only. Anyone may join JGSCV. Annual dues are \$30 for an individual and \$35 for a family.**

**<https://www.jgscv.org/membership.html>**

**For more information contact: [information@JGSCV.org](mailto:information@JGSCV.org) or call  
Jan Meisels Allen@ 818-889-6616 See: [www.JGSCV.org](http://www.JGSCV.org)**



## 2024 JGSCV Meeting Dates

### NEXT MEETING:

Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**\*\*2:30-4:30PM\*\* on Zoom**

January 7 <b>Zoom</b>	Dr. Janette Silverman	<i>"The Mysterious John Jones"</i>
February 4 <b>Zoom</b>	Daniel Horowitz, Genealogy Expert, MyHeritage	<i>"How a Record Match Almost Led Me to an Insane Asylum"</i>
March 3 <b>Zoom</b>	TBA	
April 7 <b>Zoom</b>	TBA	
May 5 <b>Zoom</b>	TBA	
June 2 <b>Zoom</b>	TBA	
July 14 <b>Zoom</b>	TBA	
August	NO Meeting (IAJGS conference)	<i>The 2024 International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) annual conference will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from August 1-3, 2024.</i>
September	TBA	
October	TBA	
November	TBA	
December	TBA	

# Genealogy Odds and Ends



## LA County Library Mobile App

Download the New and Improved Mobile App and make using the library seamless and convenient.

<https://lacountylibrary.org/library-app/>

## JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

EST 1917

'Life is Beautiful' hit US theaters 25 years ago. The film's Holocaust humor raised issues that linger today.

<http://tinyurl.com/4cr95fuf>



## American Ancestors

by NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

*The following are free lectures:*

January 4, 2024 3:00-4:00PM Eastern Time

### Using AI In Family History Research

*Presented by Melanie McComb*

Senior Genealogist Melanie McComb will discuss exciting possibilities for using AI to support your research—including assistance with report writing, digitally restoring family photos, and more. She will also address aspects of AI that genealogists should be cautious of, such as accuracy and copyright concerns. <https://hubs.americanancestors.org/using-ai-in-family-research?>

Thursday, January 11, 3:00-4:00 p.m. Eastern Time

### Lithuanian Research: Back to the Old Country

*Presented by James Heffernan*

In this webinar, Genealogist of the Newbury Street Press, James Heffernan, will detail the types of records that can be found in Lithuanian archives, how to access them, and tips for deciphering the languages (Lithuanian, Russian, Polish) that you are likely to encounter. The webinar will also include information for finding a researcher based in Lithuania to access record sets that have not yet been digitized.

<https://hubs.americanancestors.org/back-to-the-old-country?>

<https://www.americanancestors.org/>



## JewishGen

מרכז עולמי לגנאלוגיה יהודית

The Global Home for Jewish Genealogy

## New Directors of the French Research Division #JewishGenUpdates

JewishGen is pleased to welcome **Bernard Flam** as the new Director of the French Research Division, alongside **Claire Weill** who will serve as general coordinator. They are both extremely familiar with both public and private archives - in France and internationally and have been active within the French Jewish Genealogical community for many years (Claire is also a board member of the Cercle de Généalogie Juive).



## 2024 IAJGS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JEWISH GENEALOGY

### *CALL FOR PROPOSALS*

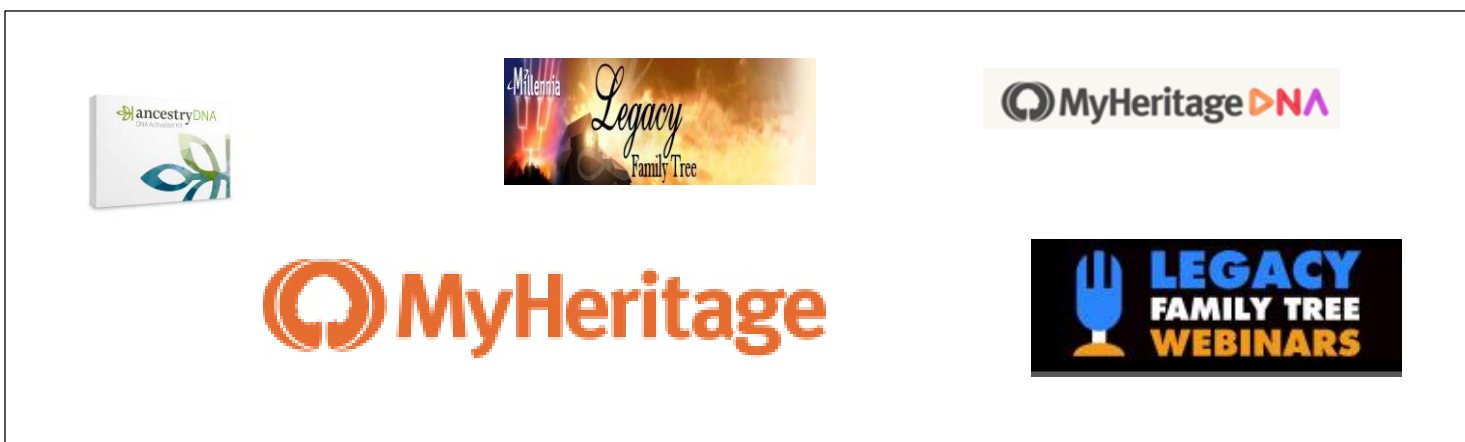
The Call for Proposals is open. We are publicizing the Call for Proposals far and wide.

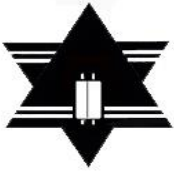
The link to the Call for Proposals:

[https://jgasgp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-Call-for-Proposals\\_JGASGP-website.pdf](https://jgasgp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-Call-for-Proposals_JGASGP-website.pdf)

Thank you in advance. Hope to see you in August 2024 in Philly.

Mark Halpern  
Program Chair





# 2024 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 2024**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:

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

Single \$ 30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$1.00\*\* Family\* \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Security Fee Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(suggested minimum voluntary contribution for any fund \$5.00)

Make check out to: JGSCV Mail application to: Helene Rosen,  
28912 Fountainwood St.  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zipcode + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_