

Kol Yisrael Aravim Zeh B'Zeh – All the Jewish People are Responsible One for the Other

Linda Temkin Waltzman | Chair, Woman's Philanthropy; Jewish Long Beach Board



Linda Temkin Waltzman

My name is Linda Temkin Waltzman. I live and have grown up here in Long Beach. I am currently on the Jewish Long Beach board and am delighted to be serving a third year as chair of Women's

Philanthropy. It is a joy to be part of this group of energetic, creative, intelligent, compassionate, generous and diverse women of all ages. We each have strengths. We each have personal stories.

When asked to talk about My Jewish Long Beach story, I have to start with another story that illustrates why I choose to commit my time and energies to Jewish Long Beach.

Once upon a time, far, far away in a land across the sea, a man sat at his desk, pen in hand, and poured out his hopes and dreams in graceful script and perfect English grammar. The year was 1938 and the place was Vienna, Austria. The man with the pen in his hand was Oscar Sternfeld. You've never heard of him. Neither had my grandparents who were living in Los Angeles when they received an envelope with unfamiliar handwriting and foreign postage. They read the enclosed letter.

October 31, 1938

To Mr. Harry Sternfeld [my grandfather],

Dear sir, many years ago, members of our family emigrated to the USA. Now I am compelled to remember this fact. Yet, in spite of all my endeavors, I can find no address of this American relative and



Harry Sternfeld

so I am writing you in the vague hope of getting in touch with the Mr. Sternfeld, who is our relative.

My family and I are in great distress. The political change in our country compels us to leave Austria in order to build up a new existence elsewhere. You may believe me that it is a very bitter fate to apply to strangers. And so, I gathered up all my courage to undertake this step, trusting you will understand the grim necessity . . .

What we most desperately and immediately need is an affidavit to enter the USA. Having neither friends nor acquaintances there to whom to apply, I sincerely trust you will not fail me if you are the Mr. Sternfeld I am seeking. If not, I trust you won't mind this fact and assist us nevertheless. If, for one reason or other, you are unable to do so, will you be kind enough to at least pass this letter onto friends of yours who would help? God will bless you for it.

You may take one thing for granted. We shall never become a burden to you, neither

financially, nor morally. Kindly take this as a formal promise. By the affidavit you would give us the possibility to obtain an immigration visa. As for the rest, we take it upon ourselves to build up a new existence in the USA.

We shall never in our lives forget who granted us a new lease on life.

Believe me to be sincerely yours,
Oscar Sternfeld

On December 2, only 32 days after the writing of the letter, the horrendous Night of Broken Glass (*Krystal Nacht*), exploded. Life for Jews throughout Europe would never be the same. It was the beginning of the end of a rich and glorious people and culture.

Well, my grandparents did respond to this man's plea. Though of no relation, they did not hesitate to help him and his family. Whenever I have revisited this letter over the years, I'm struck by the painful desperation and incredible courage of the writer. He voiced his hope that my grandparents had internalized the teaching, "*Kol Yisrael aravim zeh b'zeh*," All the Jewish people are responsible one for the other.

Well, here we are today. The year is 2020 and the place is Long Beach, California. What stories will we pass on to our precious children and grandchildren? What values will we model for them about giving and sharing, helping people whom we will never meet? What will we, the informed, intelligent, caring Jews of Long Beach do when presented with the opportunity to help people in need?

My parents, my brother, my three adult children and I have benefitted from and contributed to the growth and health of Jewish Long Beach. It is my dream that each of my seven grandchildren will grow to understand and honor the legacy of our family's involvement. It is a rewarding, fulfilling and uplifting endeavor.

In addition to my commitment at Jewish Long Beach, over the years I've been actively involved with the Alpert Jewish Community Center, Camp

Kamoroff, Jewish Family and Children's Service, Hillel, Yom Hashoah, Yom Haatzmaut, Senior Meals,



Linda (2nd from right), at Save a Child's Heart in Tel Aviv as part of the 2013 Community Trip to Poland and Israel.

Jewish Book Festival, Women's Weekends, Alpert Singers, Leadership Development, Days of Discussion, Women's Seders, Missions to Israel, and Jewish Long Beach Board of Directors. I have participated in leadership positions at Temple Israel, Congregation Shir Chadash, Torat Nashim, Hadassah, National Council of Jewish Women, and Early Childhood Education. Beyond the Jewish community I am a member of End Abuse Long Beach, LBUSD Kindergarten Festivals, and Long Beach Human Trafficking Task Force. Beyond these involvements, I am proud to be an advocate for Save A Child's Heart, Jewish Long Beach and Israel. I consciously try to align my life and efforts with causes that

are close to my family as well as community needs and national and international programs.

In the words of the author Sam Levinson, "G-d gave you two hands. One is to help yourself. The other one is to help others."

As my story began with "once upon a time,"

it ends with the sincere hope that each of you lives "happily and safely ever after."

Thank you for letting me share some insight as to why I choose to be involved with Jewish Long Beach. Be well and stay safe. 🌍



Linda, far right, with community members on the 2018 Europe/Israel trip at Pantry Packers in Jerusalem, packaging food for boxes to be delivered to the needy in Israel.

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