



MA CHADASH!

מה חדש!

What's New! The newsletter of Temple Shalom Synagogue Center, Auburn, Maine ק"ק היכל שלום

November 2025, Cheshvan/Kislev 5786



**BRUNCH AND PROGRAM,
SUNDAY, NOV. 9th, 10 A.M.**

Temple Shalom Synagogue-Center welcomes Bates College faculty members,
Katalin Vecsey and Jakub Kazecki for a talk titled:

**"Memorialization of the Holocaust:
Personal Reflections by Bates College Students"**



THANKSGIVING SHABBAT

Friday, November 28th, 7:00 P.M.

Thanksgiving Kabbalat Shabbat and Oneg
Let's get together for a Musical Shabbat of Gratitude and Dessert
Turn "Black Friday" into "Black Sabbath!"

FROM THE RABBI



This past month, Jews worldwide celebrated the return of all of the living hostages (and, hopefully soon, all of the dead hostages) and the ramping down—if not the end—of the war in Gaza. The celebration was of course incomplete—we still face many fears about the future and the devastation of the past two years hangs heavily in our hearts. Perhaps, worst of all, the divisions in our Jewish community, both here and in Israel—divisions that we hoped would end after October 7—only grow wider.

On a recent Shabbat, an outspoken pro-Trump attendee challenged equally outspoken anti-Trumpers as to whether they can find it in their hearts to express gratitude—to give credit—to President Trump for brokering the deal that brought the hostages home and an end to the war. The reactions were understandably mixed—"but what about the great damage the President is doing to American democracy?" Or, "he only did this for himself—to win a Nobel and to preserve his and his family's Middle East businesses."

What was truly fascinating to me is that we had virtually the same argument about 2,000 years ago during the early Talmudic period when Judea was under the occupation of the oppressive Roman Empire. The Talmud records the following story featuring Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai—the great sage and mystic whom we celebrate each year on Lag B'omer.

Several sages are sitting around shooting the breeze. Rabbi Yehuda expresses his admiration for the occupying Roman Empire: "How pleasant are the actions of this nation—they build beautiful marketplaces, complex networks of bridges, elaborate, state-of-the-art, bathhouses?" Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai angrily responds: "Everything they build is for their own purposes. Marketplaces for prostitution. Bathhouses to indulge their hedonistic pleasures. And bridges? only to collect tolls from us."

So, who was right? Rabbi Yehuda or Rabbi Shimon? Does the Talmud offer us any insights that might help us better navigate our current circumstances? The story continues:

Eagerly listening in on this conversation of the sages is a layman identified as "Yehuda, son of converts." Yehuda excitedly shares this fascinating Rabbinic conversation with his family, who, in turn, tell others, who tell others...Eventually, it is brought to the attention of the local Roman authorities who reward Rabbi Yehuda for his supportive/flattering comments and punish Rabbi Shimon by sentencing him to death. Rabbi Shimon is forced to go into hiding, spending 12 years in a cave with his son. A miracle occurs and a carob tree as well as a spring of water suddenly appear ensuring their survival.

Emerging from his 12 years in hiding (presumably, spent meditating about God and other holy things), Rabbi Shimon is no longer able to relate to ordinary Jews. He uses his newly-charged spiritual energy to burn the fields of Jewish farmers who, from his now elevated, yet bigoted, perspective, are wasting their time on "meaningless" activities like farming, rather than entirely devoting themselves to eternal life. A heavenly voice rebukes Rabbi Shimon and orders him back into his cave for another year. Rabbi Shimon gets the message and when he ultimately returns to society is able to see the good in ordinary people.

A happy ending? Sort of. Here is the conclusion of the story:

Rabbi Shimon, now widely respected and beloved, devotes himself to helping others. Yet...one day Rabbi Shimon runs into "Yehuda the son of converts"—the one whose lack of discretion led to Rabbi Shimon needing to go into hiding in the first place. Does Rabbi Shimon embrace him and forgive him? Quite the contrary, Rabbi Shimon, annoyed at finding Yehuda still alive, uses his powerful spiritual energy to burn Yehuda to a crisp, turning him into a pile of bones.

The Talmud here, as in so many instances, leaves us wondering. Which is preferable? The generous heart of Rabbi Yehuda or the stubborn intransigence of Rabbi Shimon? Is the Talmud approving of Rabbi Shimon's uncompromising, hardline views? On the one hand, Rabbi Shimon is forced to spend 12 years in

hiding. On the other hand, he merits divine intervention ensuring his survival. On the one hand, Rabbi Shimon's long isolation results in him becoming supernaturally holy—yet also intolerant. On the other hand, he ultimately repents his intolerance, mostly.

Where the Talmud comes down on all of this remains unclear. And that is, I think, as it should be. What is helpful (and astonishing), is seeing how we continue to face the same dilemmas, time and time again, across thousands of years. At the end of the day, what we really learn from the Talmud is that despite the fierceness of the argument and the passionately held feelings on both sides, we are asked to honor and respect each of the participants—their views, their characters, their intentions, their motivations. As the Talmud frequently reminds us, both sides represent the words of the living God.

Rabbi Sruli

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Ah! It's autumn. And I'd much rather be writing about the beautiful orange and red leafed maple tree outside my window. But then I start to worry about health insurance - the higher cost to some and the total unaffordability to others. Wait! Out the window I see a variety of birds feeding at my feeders. But then I think of the food banks that are getting overwhelmed from the thousands of Federal workers that have been fired or furloughed, with no pay. Oh! The crisp weather - it's perfect for doing yard work or going on a hike. Yet there are immigrants who won't go to work or school for fear of being kidnapped and deported. The mums and the Montauk daisies are still flowering and flourishing, while people are dying overseas because we won't give them the medicine to keep them alive. Oh, the sun is shining and shimmering off the lake, which is too cold to swim in but too warm to ice over. Will there be more homelessness as the cost of building skyrockets and people can't afford to buy, or even rent, a home, or to make good on their mortgage? November is Thanksgiving time when we gather with friends and family and enjoy a feast. But will the cost of that bounty shock us all? I can stare out my window and try to daydream but the image of the demolition being done to a wing of the White House, (the Peoples' house!) just makes me shudder.

You may not like my politics, and I may not like yours. But November is also election time. This is when, as an individual, as a US citizen, we have our chance to perpetuate and defend the Constitution, our Democracy, and everything else that comes with that. So go out and exercise your right to vote on November 4th. We should be dancing in the streets to celebrate that right.

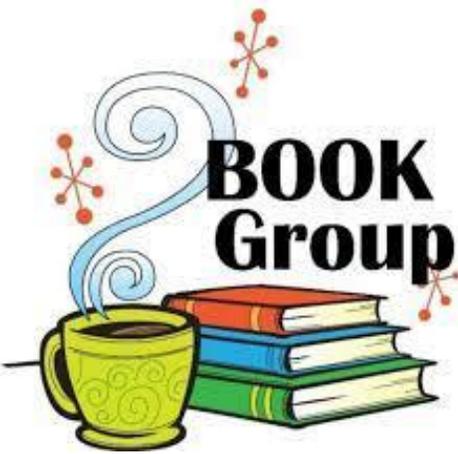
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO

Amy & Scott Nussinow

Nov. 28



!!BOOK GROUP NEWS!!



Okay, so you don't have to read "The Singer Sisters" by Sarah Seltzer unless you want a lot of family drama and an overdose of the 70's drug scene. Personally, I felt it was pretty realistic view of the times especially when it came to touring musicians.

Anyways, Marsha Auster, Babs Shapiro, Mitch Ross and me, Lesli Weiner met on October 20th. Then we chose new books, which you'll find at the end.

Our next book is "The Book of Two Ways" by Jodi Picoult. Here is the synopsis:

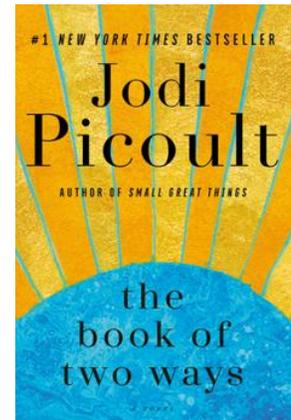
"Everything changes in a single moment for Dawn Edelstein. She's on a plane when the flight attendant makes an announcement: Prepare for a crash landing. She braces herself as thoughts flash through her mind. The shocking thing is, the thoughts are not of her husband but of a man she last saw fifteen years ago: Wyatt Armstrong.

Dawn, miraculously, survives the crash, but so do all the doubts that have suddenly been raised. She has led a good life. Back in Boston, there is her husband, Brian, their beloved daughter, and her work as a death doula, in which she helps ease the transition between life and death for her clients.

But somewhere in Egypt is Wyatt Armstrong, who works as an archaeologist unearthing ancient burial sites, a career Dawn once studied for but was forced to abandon when life suddenly intervened. And now, when it seems that fate is offering her second chances, she is not as sure of the choice she once made.

After the crash landing, the airline ensures that the survivors are seen by a doctor, then offers transportation to wherever they want to go. The obvious destination is to fly home, but she could take another path: return to the archaeological site she left years before, reconnect with Wyatt and their unresolved history, and maybe even complete her research on The Book of Two Ways—the first known map of the afterlife.

As the story unfolds, Dawn's two possible futures unspool side by side, as do the secrets and doubts long buried with them. Dawn must confront the questions she's never truly asked: What does a life well lived look like? When we leave this earth, what do we leave behind? Do we make choices . . . or do our choices make us? And who would you be if you hadn't turned out to be the person you are right now?"



We'll meet on zoom on MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10th at 4PM. So get reading!! And here's our next book choices:

- Dec 8.....'Typewriter Beach' by Meg Waite Clayton
- Jan 12.....'The Muralist' by B.A. Shapiro
- Feb 9.....'Hazel Says No' by Jessica Berger Gross
- Mar 9.....'The Stolen Life of Colette Marceau by Kristin Harme

Bates College Professors discuss the memorialization of the Holocaust

BRUNCH AND PROGRAM, SUNDAY, NOV. 9, AT 10 a.m.

Temple Shalom Synagogue-Center welcomes Bates College faculty members Katalin Vecsey and Jakub Kazecki for a talk titled **“Memorialization of the Holocaust: Personal Reflections by Bates College Students.”**

Please join us at 10 a.m. on Nov. 9, for a delicious brunch catered by the men of Temple Shalom. The meal will be followed by Vecsey’s and Kazecki’s talk at 11 a.m. Admission is \$15. Those planning to attend should RSVP by emailing the synagogue at Temple6359@aol.com no later than Tuesday, Nov. 4. The meal will be followed by the 11 a.m. talk. You may attend the talk at no cost without partaking of the meal.

This talk represents Temple Shalom’s observance for “Kristallnacht,” held on or around Nov. 9 each year to commemorate the “Night of Broken Glass,” the 1938 Nazi pogrom against Germany’s Jewish population.

As part of the Central European Theater and Film Short-Term course to Budapest, Hungary and Kraków, Poland, in the spring of 2025, Professors Vecsey and Kazecki took Bates students to visit the The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum located in Oświęcim, Poland, on the site of the former German concentration and extermination camps, Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau.



Their talk will discuss in detail both the preparation of students for the visit, as well as the collective and individual process of the experience afterward by utilizing written reflections from students on the memorialization and the representation of tragedy.

Katalin Vecsey is a Senior Lecturer in Theater and Vocal Director for Theatrical Productions at Bates. She is experienced in teaching advanced and introductory voice and speech courses, text analysis, stage dialects and voice-over techniques. She has also served as a vocal director for academic and professional theater productions both in the United States and in her native Hungary.

Jakub Kazecki joined the Bates faculty in German & Russian Studies in 2012 after teaching German language, literature and film courses at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Conn., and McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. His research interests include 20th-century German literature (especially literature about the First World War), images of German-Polish relationships in literature, film and visual arts, and laughter and comedy in different media.

Linking Generations: By Labish Kurtz (Richard Kurtz)

#11. Obituaries: Revealing So Much

"The memory of the righteous is a blessing." — Proverbs 10:7

There is so much to love about Temple Shalom, the music, our rabbi and rebbetzin, the community, and the many meaningful programs. As someone passionate about genealogy, I've also come to appreciate how our relatively small community makes it easier, compared to large cities, to uncover stories about the pioneers, leaders, and remarkable Jewish personalities who shaped Auburn and Lewiston.

One particularly rich resource for exploring our local Jewish history and really, any community's history is obituaries, most often found in newspapers. They capture not only the facts of a life but also the spirit of a time and place. Among the many local obituaries that stood out to me were those of Judith Magyar Isaacson and Israel Alpren, two extraordinary individuals to whom some of our members are related.

Resources

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Obituaries

<https://www.nypl.org/node/5617>

<https://www.theuswillregistry.org/estate-articles/finding-an-obituary-for-a-specific-person/>

Israel Alpren

LEWISTON — The Honorable Israel Alpren, 87, of 16 Poulin Ave., died suddenly Sunday afternoon at his home.

He was born in Auburn, Nov. 25, 1905, the son of Morris Isaac and Sadie (Margolin) Alpren. Educated in Auburn schools, he was a graduate of Edward Little High School, and also a graduate of Bates College in



Lewiston. He attended and was a graduate of Georgetown Law School in Washington, D.C., where he received his law degree.

Returning to Auburn, attorney Alpren began practicing law, and would spend a period of 28 years in private practice. He served the city of Auburn as City Solicitor, resigning that position when he was appointed by former Gov. John Reed as the first judge to sit on the bench of the newly created District Court System, replacing the old municipal court system. The New District Court System was instituted by the Legislature in 1965.

Died: April 11, 1993

Judith Magyar Isaacson, 90

AUBURN - Judith Magyar Isaacson, Holocaust survivor, advocate for women's education, teacher and memoirist, died on Nov. 10, 2015 at the age of 90. Judith was born in Kaposvar, Hungary on July 3, 1925. Her extraordinary voyage took her from this small provincial city in southeastern Hungary, to concentration camps in Poland and Germany, to Auburn, where she lived with her husband, Irving Isaacson for 70 years. An eager student and valedictorian of her high school class, Judith planned to write poetry and study at the Sorbonne until her dreams were crushed by the Nazi occupation.

In June 1944 she was transported to Auschwitz, the notorious annihilation camp. Herded into a selection line for the gas chambers with her mother, Rose, and her aunt Magda, Jutka defied the infamous Dr. Mengele, risking death so they could stay together. Thanks to her optimism, judgment, and fluent German, Judith made a number of other bold decisions that, along with extraordinary luck, allowed all three women to survive, even as they went on to endure horrific conditions as slave laborers in an underground munitions factory in Hesisch Lichtenau, Germany. After being liberated by American troops in 1945, they were waiting to be transported back to Hungary when Judith met Irving Isaacson, an intelligence officer in the OSS, the WWII-era predecessor to the CIA. He fell in love with her on the spot. They were married at the Nuremberg city hall on December 24, 1945. Shortly after, Ike brought Judith, her mother and aunt to America. In 1960, when their third child went to kindergarten, Judith began to watch mathematics lessons broadcast on PBS. Her distance learning led her to Bates College, where she received a B.A. in mathematics in 1965, the same year her daughter graduated from high school.

Judith taught mathematics at Lewiston High School and then, at Bates College, where she became the first computer science teacher. In 1969 she earned a Masters in Mathematics, one of the very first women to earn a Bowdoin degree. In 1975, the Bates College president asked her to apply for a position as Dean of Women. One skeptical member of the hiring committee asked her whether she'd ever lived in a dormitory. "Yes," she said, "at Auschwitz." She got the job. In 1975 she became Bates' first Dean of Students. As dean, Isaacson fought fearlessly for women students' right to a fully equal education. The college later recognized her efforts on behalf of women when awarding her an honorary degree. Many Holocaust survivors bury the past, but Judith shared her experiences with her young children, their friends, classmates, and youth groups. Compelled to bear witness in the hope that history would not repeat the horrors she experienced, she began speaking to schools and community groups throughout Maine. On one such occasion, a Bowdoin student asked, "Dean Isaacson, after all you've been through, how can you smile so freely, so often?" To answer this question she decided to write her memoirs. Returning to her hometown to research her book, thirty-three years after being shipped out in a cattle car, she sat next to a man who confessed that he had been a conductor on the trains that transported Jews to concentration camps. He asked if she could forgive him. She said, "It's not for me to forgive you. You have to forgive yourself." Written in English, her fifth language, *Seed of Sarah* has been hailed as a triumph of elegant, restrained prose and powerful storytelling. The book's happy ending, Judith's marriage to "my American Captain," combined with her ability to stare down evil and survive with her idealism and generosity of spirit intact, has made *Seed of Sarah* a classic of Holocaust literature that is widely taught in schools and colleges. In 1987 the city of Hesisch Lichtenau, where she did forced labor in a munitions factory three decades earlier, invited her and her former comrades to witness the dedication a monument to victims of the Holocaust, and by commemorating the past to promote the reconciliation of the German and Jewish people.

Having faced starvation and death at the age of 19, Judith cherished life-cooking exquisite Hungarian pastries, reading voraciously, playing with her grandchildren, swimming, kayaking, running, and gardening.

Isaacson served as a member of the Bowdoin College Board of Overseers from 1984-1996. She also sat on the boards of the Auburn Public Library, Central Maine Medical Center, and the medical center's School of Nursing and Health Professions. Colby College and the University of New England also awarded her honorary degrees that recognized her accomplishments as an educator and Holocaust writer and highlighted her extraordinary optimism and capacity for forgiveness even after suffering profound loss and unspeakable horror. Her other honors include the University of New England's Deborah Morton Award for outstanding women, the Hargraves

Preservation of Freedom Prize at Bowdoin College, and the University of Southern Maine's Maryann Hartman Award for distinguished Maine women. In 2004 she was inducted into the Maine Women's Hall of Fame, and this past summer she received the Maine Healthcare Association's Remember Me award.

She is survived by her husband, Irving Isaacson; her three children, John Isaacson, Ilona Bell and Mark Isaacson, their spouses, Consuelo Isaacson, Robert Bell, and Karen Herold; her grandchildren Peter Isaacson, Tess Goode, Anna Isaacson and Noah Isaacson, Kaitlin Barnett and Amanda Bell, Max Isaacson and Morgan Faust. Her great desire for great-grandchildren was fulfilled this summer: the sight of baby Nora and the expectation of baby Jack brightened her beautiful, smiling face.

The Nazis sought to exterminate all the seed of Sarah. Judith's seed lives on.
Services will be held at Temple Shalom on Nov. 13, at 11 a.m.

Ma Chadash/What's New is published monthly by Temple Shalom, Synagogue-Center. Temple Shalom is an independent congregation and a member of the Lewiston-Auburn Jewish Federation.

The mission of Temple Shalom, Synagogue-Center is to foster a strong Jewish identity and an active Jewish Community.

Rabbi Sruli Dresdner

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Our Community Needs Our Help

There is a great need for blood in Androscoggin County. Here is a list of blood drives in our area. Please strongly consider donating.

**Central Maine Community College
1250 Turner St
Auburn, ME 04210
10/31/2025 09:00 AM - 01:30 PM**

**Lisbon United Methodist Church
14 School St. Lisbon Falls, ME 04252
11/14/2025 | 12:00 PM - 05:00 PM**

**Twin Cities Blood Donation Center
245 Center Street Suite 5 Auburn, ME 04210
01/19/2026 | 11:00 AM - 07:15 PM**



Please also be aware that people who rely on SNAP for their groceries will not be receiving their benefits in the month of November due to the government shutdown. Any way that you can help will be a Mitzvah!

SPEEDY RECOVERY

We pray for refuah sh'leimah – the full and speedy recovery of **Valci Braga, Rachel Corvi, Lee Jay Feldman, Sara Graf, Robert Galumbeck, Ariella Green, Sharon Hemond, Alison Jaeger, Suzan Katzir, Michael Kendall, Linda Koskela, Henry Lefkowitz, Lee Leveille, Carolyn Marshal, Bruce Meyer, Alice Richman, Sandy Traister**, and all others who are not well at this time. *We like to hear good news! Whenever you request that a name be put on this list, please let Temple Shalom know when it can be removed.*



Rabbi Sruli is always happy to speak with and meet with members or our Temple. Please call or text his cell phone at 914-980-9509 if you would like to speak with him or to arrange a time for a meeting. You can also call or leave a message at the Temple office and Rabbi Sruli will get back to you.



Sincere thanks to our "mystery donor" for the beautiful new chairs in our library. We respect your decision to remain anonymous, and are grateful for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

Today Rabah and L'Shanah Tova

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

Shana Platz	Nov	2
Rebecca Thomas		4
Jillian Penan		8
Michael Shapiro		10
Jeff Stern		10
Mitchell Auster		18
Philip Laine		18
Asher Platz		19
Lauren Traister		19
Nancy Levinsky		20
Carolyn Traister		20
Pepper Robillard		21
Samuel Cohen		23
Anne Allen		24
Scott Nussinow		24
Michael Traister		24
Shelah Horvitz		25
Harriet Fakhery		26
Jocelyn Weiner Mitchell		27
Lillian Lockard		28
Aaron Burke		29
Allison Penan		29

Yahrzeiten

Ruth Burke	Nov.	1
Adele Silverman		1
Richelle Cohen Levoy		4
Samuel Cohen		5
Marie Jaeger		5
Abraham H. Miller		6
Martin Burke		7
Elizabeth Lee Johnson		7
Edith Nussinow		8
Hyman Rubinstein		8
Sadie Baker		12
Reva Finks Roth		13
Sina Amstel		15
Irving Bell		18
John H. Scott		19
Allen Bean		21
Marilyn Isaacson		21
Abraham Krasner		24
Leah Applebaum		27
Rose P. Marcus		27
Chaim Applebaum		28
Leroy Bieringer		28
Michael Abromson		29
Max Lezberg		29
Philip Rosen		30

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In appreciation

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To Mike & Babs Shapiro in honor of
the births of 2 great grandsons

To Jamie Rothfus in honor of the
births of 2 grandsons

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In appreciation

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