



MA CHADASH! מה חדש!

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

January 2026, Tevet/Shevat 5786

*Come for the Amazing Food!
Come for the Camaraderie!
Come for the Learning!
Come for the Music!
Come for the Fun!
Just Come!*

Shabbat Together!

שבת ביחד!



Saturday, January 17th, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Great food and drink, bonding, playing, studying, hanging out.
Spend the day with your Temple family and fully experience the spirit
of Shabbat.**

Friday, January 30th, 7:00 PM

**Please join us as we celebrate TU B'SHVAT,
The Festival of the Trees.**

***Sip and mix wines and partake of the seven holy species
from the land of Israel, as we explore the secrets of the
ancient Kabbalists!***

Musical, Magical, Mystical



FROM THE RABBI



There was a time when Lisa and I were regularly performing for elementary and middle school assembly programs—often for public schools in the poorest neighborhoods of New York as they seemed to receive the most arts funding. In these schools it was common for children to approach us and start conversations. At first, I kind of brushed them off as it distracted us from doing what we had to do—load in our heavy equipment, set up our sound, pack up, etc. Over time, however, I realized that these children were starved for attention—that they needed someone—an adult—to care enough to listen to them. I noticed that too many of them were too often ignored

by their (overwhelmed or neglectful) parents and their (definitely overworked) teachers. So, I started to make time to listen, to really listen, as they told me about their older sister who had just gotten a guitar or their neighbor's cat who just died, or whatever. And I could clearly see how much it meant to them just to be listened to—how profoundly proud and special it made them feel.

I was recently reminded of these experiences by the New York Times columnist, Tom Friedman, who said:

Remember, I was a little Jewish kid from Minnesota who wanted to cover the Arab Muslim world in the '70s. Not a natural thing. My secret for survival was to learn to be a good listener because I discovered two things happen when you listen. One is what you learn when you listen, because all the stories I got wrong were because I was yapping when I should have been listening. But much more important is what you say when you listen because listening is a sign of respect.

What I learned was if I just listen to people — and I mean deep listening, not just waiting for them to stop talking — it was amazing what they would let me say to and about them. I could go into a room with 30 young Arab students and they've got my columns printed out — some things on Israel. They're ready to carve me up. You spend an hour listening to them, and at the end of the hour, everyone's got their cellphone out and they want a picture with you because so many people are just starved to be respected and heard. That became my survival mechanism. As you know, I'm not out there saying, "You're all great, you're all wonderful, it's all the other guy's fault." I'm in everybody's face. But I will listen. I do it not to get things wrong, but much more importantly, because that's what unlocks a conversation, and it all goes back to respect.

It's becoming increasingly clear to me that the only way that we as a society—of Jews and of Americans—are going to heal is if we commit to really listening to each other—often, fully, deeply. We can't expect to always agree—we won't! But we must respect each other. And we demonstrate that respect through listening.

Listen to the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, O"bm:

There is something profoundly spiritual about listening. It is the most effective form of conflict resolution I know. Many things can create conflict, but what sustains it is the feeling on the part of at least one of the parties that they have not been heard. They have not been listened to. We have not "heard their pain." There has been a failure of empathy. That is why the use of force — or for that matter, boycotts — to resolve conflict is so profoundly self-defeating. It may suppress it for a while, but it will return, often more intense than before. Job, who has suffered unjustly, is unmoved by the arguments of his comforters. It is not that he insists on being right: what he wants is to be heard. Listening does not mean agreeing but it does mean caring. Listening is the climate in which love and respect grow.

(continued next page)

(From the Rabbi continued)

Our central prayer, the “Shema,” begins with the word “Hear” (or, “Listen”) and ends with the words “God is One.” God is found in unity, but listening is the pathway to get to unity.

Lisa and I are proud of the work that we did in the schools. It was important to us to project a positive image of Jews and Judaism as a counter to any negative images the kids may have been (or might in the future be) exposed to. And I believe we were successful. But, as I think back, I am pretty sure that the kids that we made the most impact on were the kids that we listened to.

As I look forward to the new year, 2026, my personal resolution is to listen—to listen more, to listen better.

Rabbi Sruli

P.S. On Sunday, January 18th, at 7:00 p.m., at the Chapel at Bates College, Rabbi Sruli will participate in a panel entitled “The Higher Plane of Dignity:” Interfaith Reflections on Human Dignity. All are invited to attend.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



First of all, Happy New Year. Personally, I’ve been somewhat stressed this past year, being bombarded with so many issues, so much diversity. But I was reading about trees and found a very apt metaphor. Back in the 1990s a group lived in a biosphere in Arizona. (I’ve been there!) There were trees inside as it was supposed to mimic Earth’s environment. But the trees kept collapsing and the scientists figured out that it was because there was no wind. Apparently, trees need a bit of a challenge to strengthen their trunks to make them more resilient. So, I must be on my way to a stronger and more secure future. But I’m still hoping the wind will blow in the other direction.

And at services during Chanukah we were talking about the symbolism of the menorah. We all discussed various ideas, but I feel it’s like a family tree with 8 diverse branches, all solidifying into one solid base. A metaphor for all peoples coming together in peace.

Peace on earth.

Lesli Weiner
President



#13. Jews and Their Genes: Overview

Linking Generations:

By Labish Kurtz (Richard Kurtz)

“All Israel is bound up with one another.” (Talmud, Tractate Shevuot 39a)

There are countless genetic tests available today, and like many people, I decided to try one. I chose a saliva DNA test through Ancestry.com to see what stories my genes might tell about me and to see if I have DNA matches with unknown relatives. The results confirmed that I am 100% Ashkenazi Jewish, with genetic roots broken down as 69% Central and Southeastern Europe and 31% Eastern Europe and Russia. Ancestry listed **10,533 DNA matches** for me. My closest match is a first cousin once removed (or possibly a half first cousin), someone with whom I share about 8% of my DNA. At the other end of the list is a stranger listed as a fourth cousin—or a half third cousin once removed—sharing less than 1% of my DNA. But what do these numbers really mean? And how do they know who is related to whom? The test works by analyzing hundreds of thousands of small DNA markers from your saliva. These markers sit on the 22 pairs of chromosomes we inherit from our parents (Ancestry.com does not look at the X or Y chromosomes). Ancestry then compares your DNA pattern to every other person in their database. If two people share long, identical stretches, it signals that they inherited that piece from a shared ancestor. The more DNA you share, the closer the relationship. In my case, nothing surprising surfaced. I recognized some of the cousins who appeared on my list. I’m not adopted, my father is my father, and my mother is my mother the same parents I’ve always known. Some companies also offer optional health-related reports. Ancestry can estimate traits such as whether you’re more or less likely to smell asparagus, experience hair loss, be bitten by mosquitoes, or even have certain artistic tendencies. These are fun add-ons, based on statistical associations rather than definitive predictions. In the end, DNA testing is a fascinating tool but like everything in genealogy, it’s only one piece of the story. There is also some controversy about its use, especially related to privacy. In the next few columns, I hope to explore the DNA and Jewish genealogy connection.

Resources

<https://www.ancestry.com/c/dna/bundle> - Ancestry.com

<https://www.23andme.com/> - DNA Kits: 23andMe

<https://www.myheritage.com/dna/> - DNA Kits: MyHeritage



Any questions about Jewish Genealogy: asklabish@gmail.com

Blessings for a New Year

May you be blessed with sudden insights and inspiration

May you be graced with quiet moments of simplicity and reflection

May you be supported by your loved ones when you need them

May you be a source of strength to those around you

May you receive embraces from parents, children, and long-lost friends.

May you cry at a good movie with a person you love

May you read a newspaper and react to injustice-both in mind and deed

May you pick up a hobby that you have always wanted to do

May you say goodbye to habits and thoughts that have become a burden for you

May you forgive those who have hurt you, and

May you have the courage to make amends when needed

May you take a long-awaited trip, maybe to Israel

May you travel to new places inside yourself

May you win the lottery! And then...

May you build the world you have always wanted for yourself and others

May you have late mornings with a good cup of coffee, and enjoy the fresh air, and

May you feel healthy-physically, emotionally, and spiritually

May you hear the joy and the sorrow of this great universe in which we live ...

And may you –and us all-be blessed with peace.

-Rabbi Frederick L Klein



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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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.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

Marlene Groman	Jan.	1
Sarah Olstein		1
Henry Meyer		3
Darren McGinley		6
Becca Platz		9
Cynthia Hart		10
Jennifer Ann Cohen		10
Elyse Bodenheimer		14
Rachel Fakhery		16
Elliott Levy		17
Adrienne Rau		17
Jennifer Greven		18
Casey Paige		19
Gillian Schair		20
Kristine Rausch		23
Behzad Fakhery		25
Sandra Traister		25
Graham Mitchell		26
Gerry Blumenthal		30



YAHRZEITEN

Patti Levenson	Jan.	2
Ruth Weiner		4
Shirley Isaacson		5
Peter Olejer		7
Pauline Cohen		7
Michael Shain		9
Chaim Binstock		10
Walter Jaeger		10
Sylvia Kutzen		11
Ruth S. Williams		11
Jayne Wilner		12
Doreen Plavin		13
Elsie Goodman		13
Jackie Laskoff		16
Ida Perlman		17
Ida Finks		19
Augusta Olstein		19
Marie Rau Stern		21
Celia Suovitz		22
Bernard Marcus		23
Lois Barr		24
Reevan I. Levine		24
Ernest B. Williams		25
Max Salenson		25
Harry Supovitz		26
Martin Miller		27
John A. Platz		28
Jennie Krasner		30
Maxwell Passerman		30
Arthur Fishman		31



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In appreciation

Philip Laine

In memory of Renee Laine

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In honor of the birth of Sruli & Lisa's
granddaughter

In memory of Bernard Marcus

Lesli Weiner

To Sruli & Lisa in honor of becoming
Bubbe & Zaydah

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In honor of the birth of Sruli & Lisa's
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