



# MA CHADASH! מה חדש!

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

February 2026, Shevat/Adar 5786



## **Friday, February 27th, 6:00 P.M., at Temple Shalom**

*Purim Pizza, Wine and Hamantashen!*

*Interactive story of Purim told by Rebbetzin Lisa*

*Traditional readings from the Megillah Scroll by Rabbi Sruli*

*Purim Magic with Rabbi Sruli*

*Special Purim Songs*

*Costumes Encouraged!*

*Please bring canned or other non-perishable items to help feed the hungry  
(an important Purim Mitzvah!)*

*Mishloach Manot Swap*



## **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



*On Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, at the Gomes Chapel at Bates College, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I participated in a panel entitled “The Higher Plane of Dignity:” Interfaith Reflections on Human Dignity. Here is what I said:*

First, I would like to say on behalf of the local Jewish community that we stand in solidarity with every resident, immigrant and human being in our beloved community of Lewiston and Auburn and that we stand ready to offer any kind of assistance that may be required. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

About ten days ago, during the Jewish Sabbath, a hater set fire to Temple Beth Israel in Jackson, Mississippi—Mississippi's oldest and largest synagogue. When congregants arrived for Shabbat morning services, they found their beloved Temple burned and unusable.

But this was not the first time that this synagogue was attacked. In 1967, haters, identified as members of the Ku Klux Klan, firebombed the synagogue. The synagogue's Rabbi, Perry Nussbaum, was an outspoken supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. Two months later, the Klan firebombed Rabbi Nussbaum's home.

This synagogue is now a recognized station along the *Mississippi Freedom Trail* memorialized by a plaque in front of the Temple (pictured) which reads:



*Bombings in Jewish Community: Rabbi Perry Nussbaum came to Beth Israel in 1954 and was an important voice for racial justice. Working with diverse ministers, he helped found the Committee of Concern, raising money for black churches burned by the Klan. In 1967, Klan members bombed Beth Israel's new synagogue. Two months later, they bombed the Nussbaum home. Fortunately, no one was hurt in either attack, and Rabbi Nussbaum continued his outspoken leadership.*

As you can imagine, Rabbi Nussbaum's activism made his congregation a little concerned for their own safety, but Rabbi Nussbaum repeatedly told his congregants that as Jews they were obligated to promote justice and defend liberty.

I like to think that Rabbi Nussbaum was inspired by the story of Moses. Moses, as a young prince, becomes aware of the suffering of his people. He witnesses an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave and intervenes by killing the Egyptian. Shortly thereafter, Moses witnesses a family of young Midianite sisters being harassed by the other Midianite shepherds. Once again Moses intervenes and protects the vulnerable women.

We are living through a time of frightening oppression in our own beloved country. Not necessarily for most of us—yet—but for many, many innocent people around us. At the same time, we are living through a time where activism is scarier than it has ever been in my lifetime. At stake is our livelihoods, our job prospects, our careers, our safety, our freedom and, as we have recently seen, even our very lives.

It is in this environment that I recall the story of Moses and the heroism of Rabbi Nussbaum. Moses had much to lose. One day, he was living a cushy life as a prince in the palace of the Pharaoh, the richest and most powerful person of his time. Not long after, he was forced to make his living as a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian. But he stood up for justice anyway. Rabbi Nussbaum endured frightening intimidation and violence, yet he persisted in his fight for racial justice.

**It is my hope and prayer that I, and we, are inspired by these, and countless other, heroes of activism to find our strength—to stand together against oppression—to intervene and protect our most vulnerable friends and neighbors in these scariest of times. And to loudly and proudly declare that this is not the United States of America that we love and believe in.**

**Rabbi Sruli**

**P.S. On Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m., at L/A Arts in Lewiston, Rabbi Sruli and Lisa will join the Casco Bay Tumblers for a concert of Jewish music. Tickets are \$20, and all are encouraged to attend.**

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## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**



Right after New Years I started looking forward to our All-Day Shabbat on January 17<sup>th</sup>. Even though I don't practice it on a weekly basis, I do love the opportunity to gather with fellow Jews and spend the day unplugged. No cell phones. No tablets. No computers. No news of the outside world. Just praying, singing, learning and of course, eating. That's also why I love the Maine Jewish Conference every June as I can enjoy all of that, plus no driving.

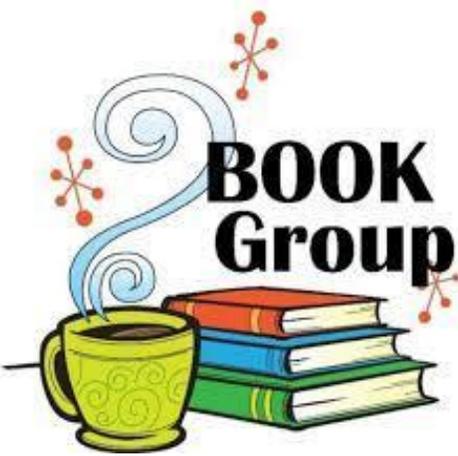
So I decided that was what I was going to write my article on this month. Then a week ago I got my Hadassah Magazine in the mail, and lo and behold, printed was a commentary called "Dialing Up Holiness: The case for unplugging on Shabbat" by Alan Morinis, the founder of the Mussar Institute. Apparently there has been a growing trend to spend a day shut off from our chaotic world, looking inward, seeking spirituality and enjoying time with our friends.

We're becoming more aware that technology has become an addiction and that Shabbat is the perfect time to extricate ourselves from its draw. Just one day a week. Is that too much to ask? It's really quite refreshing. But will I practice this every week? Highly unlikely. But when I do, I can feel how special it is. So maybe if I do this more than twice a year it will become more of a habit. (Oh no! Did I just set, in print, a New Year's resolution?) Who knows?!

Lesli Weiner  
President



!!BOOK GROUP NEWS!!

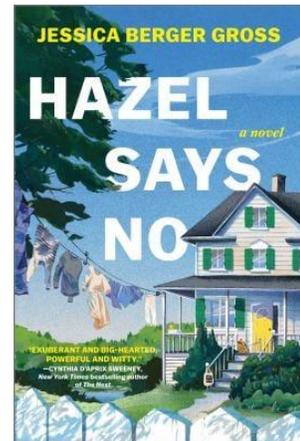


January 12th was the first meeting in the New Year, discussing "The Muralist" by B.A. Shapiro. Attending were Babs Shapiro (no relation!), Deb Katz, Heather Berube, Judy Abromson, Marsha Auster, Karen Calloway and me, Lesli Weiner. We all agreed that this novel was well-written, very interesting and gave us much to talk about. We gained lots of insight into abstract expressionism, Eleanor Roosevelt and the WPA. The Jewish connection was that one of the artists, Alizee, was Jewish and still had family in Europe in 1939. She implored Eleanor Roosevelt to help get her family visas to the US, but they were up against Breckinridge Long and FDR's policies. We

noted the similarities to today's immigration policies and the rise of anti-semitism. And we concluded that art, such as political cartoons, does have the power to affect history. Highly recommended!!

Our next book is "Hazel Says No" by Jessica Berger Gross, which takes place in Maine:

"When a tight-knit family moves from Brooklyn to Maine, their lives are upended by an event that will alter their new community forever in this "exuberant and big-hearted" (Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney) debut for fans of Sandwich, Pineapple Street, and Schitt's Creek



When Hazel Blum's father gets a tenured job at a prestigious college, she and her family relocate from Brooklyn to a middle-of-nowhere town in Maine. With her mother, Claire, a clothing designer, and her father, Gus, an American Studies professor, Hazel and her eleven-year-old brother, Wolf, slowly acclimate to their new lives and connect with the town's sprawling community. That is, until a dramatic fallout on the very first day of her senior year tips the fickle balance of idyllic Riverburg and impacts everyone in her family.

Tracking through the perspectives of each member of the Blum family, this relatable fish-out-of-water story handles big issues with great empathy and humor, capturing the love that unites one unforgettable family and the essence of life in small-town Maine. Emotionally deft, authentic, and compulsively readable, Hazel Says No is a debut novel not to be missed."

I can't wait to read it and discuss it with you via zoom on MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9th at 4PM. See you then.....lesli

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO

Gladys Garcia & Benjamin Crocker Feb. 9



## #14. Jews and Their Genes: The ATCGs of Genetics

By Labish Kurtz (Richard Kurtz)

“Most sons resemble the mother’s brothers” Bava Batra 110a

Let’s go back to high school biology for a moment (circa 2026). To understand how modern genetics can help illuminate Jewish ancestry, we first need a foundation in DNA and inheritance, what scientists call *molecular genetics*. This groundwork will help explain how genetics and genealogy intersect, and why DNA testing can reveal meaningful patterns about our ancestral past, even when it cannot define identity on its own. For most people, every single cell in the body about 35 trillion of them can trace its lineage back to a single moment in time: the fertilization of one egg by one sperm. That fertilized egg divided repeatedly, eventually giving rise to all the cells that make up your body today. With a few exceptions (such as sperm and egg cells, mature red blood cells), every cell carries the same genetic blueprint. In humans, most cells contain 46 chromosomes. Forty-four of these are called *autosomes*. The remaining two are the sex chromosomes: XX in females and XY in males. We inherit 23 chromosomes from our mother and 23 from our father. Everyone receives an X chromosome from their mother; females receive a second X from their father, while males receive a paternal Y chromosome. These chromosomes are made of DNA, which carries the instructions for building, maintaining, and running the human body. DNA is often described as a twisted ladder (a double helix) composed of four chemical “letters”: A, T, C, and G. Each of us carries roughly 6 billion of these letters in every cell, and about 3 billion in each sperm or egg cell. Segments of DNA that contain instructions for making proteins are called genes. Humans have about 20,000 genes, but surprisingly, genes make up only 1–2% of our DNA. The rest of the A, T, C, and G letters play important roles in regulating when and how genes are used. Every person shares more than 99% of their DNA. Only a very small fraction of about 3 million paired DNA letters accounts for our individual differences. It is within this small but powerful fraction that genetic genealogy finds its clues.

Here’s an important point for Jewish genealogy: there is no single “Jewish gene.” You cannot determine whether someone is Jewish simply by looking at their DNA. However, genetic research has shown that certain DNA patterns are more common within specific Jewish populations such as Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jews due to shared history, migration, and long-standing community boundaries.

In future columns, I will explore how these genetic patterns emerged, how they are passed down through generations, and how modern DNA tools can help us better understand our shared and divergent Jewish ancestral stories.

Resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hywRdDVR76Ae> – Short simple video about chromosomes, DNA and Genes



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

Office Manager Julie Waite

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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

Richard Abromson	Feb. 4
Gary Shapiro	5
Scott Kaplan	6
Corinne Weiner Mockler	9
Nicholas Mitchell	11
Gabrielle Wolfe	13
Gavriella King	14
Nancy Levenson	22
Andrew Casares	24
Lawrence Mohr	26
Cathy Tetenman	27
Joel Goodman	28



## Yahrzeiten

Shirley Asher	Feb. 4
Hyman Auster	7
Morris L. Cohen	11
Michael Steinman	11
Elinor Goldblatt	12
Meyer Ross	12
Marion Goldstein	13
Jennie Rubinstein	13
Bashi Elyeshmerni	14
Jacques Renard	14
Helene Reeves	17
George Rosenberg	18
Bert Bodenheimer	18
Philip Renard	19
David Danziger	20
Jean Brown	21
Estelle Pennamacoor	21
Saul Supovitz	24
Jacob Olstein	24
Hillel Passerman	26



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### **GENERAL FUND**

The following made donations

In memory of Bertha Bodenheimer  
Harriet & Behzad Fakhery  
Elaine Markas  
Tom Reeves  
Herb, Peter, Linda Grosser & Families  
Marcia Plavin

Cathy & Stan Tetenman

To Jerry & Jennifer Cohen to wish them  
well in their new home

In honor of Behzad Fakhery's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday

In honor of Sruli & Lisa's new  
granddaughter

Philip Laine

In memory of Ruth Ann Kravetz

Debbie & Andy Cohen

In memory of Dorothy Fishman

Donald Isaacson

In memory of Shirley Isaacson

John & Consuelo Isaacson

In appreciation

Babs & Michael Shapiro

In memory of Elsie Goodman

In honor of Behzad Fakhery's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday

Lewis Perry

In memory of Michael Allen

Barbara Legate

In memory of Martin Miller

Ellen & Aaron Burke

In honor of Behzad Fakhery's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday

Lesli Weiner

To honor her cousins Michael & Valerie

Iseman on their wedding day

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Judy Abromson

In memory of Ruth S. Williams

In memory of Ernest B. Williams

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In memory of Shirley Isaacson

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In memory of Sherman Shapiro

Nancy & Ken Levinsky

In memory of Morris Silverman

Steve Passerman

In memory of Maxwell Passerman

In memory of Harriet Passerman

Fredda & Kenneth Wolf

In honor of Behzad Fakhery's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday

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**Casco Bay  
Tumblers** with  
Sruli Dresdner and Lisa Mayer

Selections from across the  
spectrum of Jewish music:  
horas, folksongs, original  
compositions and jazzy  
improvisations.

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TICKETS \$20  
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