



# *The Star:*

## *Jewish Voices of Central Massachusetts*

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Include your idea, relevant  
experience and any other  
information that may help  
explain your story.

Happy New Year and welcome to *The Star*! In this issue, we take a hard look at some difficult issues facing individuals, our community and our world. We also highlight some of the many shining stars living among us who inspire and encourage us, lighting up the dark times.

We are also delighted to have received contributions from several guest contributors. Allan Schriber writes about his journey to celebrating his second bar mitzvah at the age of 83. Mason Habor writes about his involvement with Dignity not Deportations. Rabbinic Intern and immigration lawyer Doug Hauer-Gilad discusses the Jewish imperative to treat immigrants with respect and fairness. Veterinarian Nancy Alperson gives us a glimpse into the life of a veterinarian helping to euthanize beloved pets. Robbi Rubenstein shares the joy of coming together as a community to celebrate and bless our pets.

In our regular "Community Conversations" feature, we talk with Rabbi Richard Rudnick, exploring his decision to become a rabbi and chaplain after a long career as a practicing physician. As if that's not enough, we have a review of the book, *American Maccabee: Theodore Roosevelt and the Jews*. And of course, there are David Schold-

er's crossword puzzles and pictures of some community events. Sit down, relax, and enjoy. Your comments, questions, contributions and ideas are always welcome.

Please contact us at  
[www.jewishcentralmass.org/star](http://www.jewishcentralmass.org/star).

Your editors,  
Carol Goodman Kaufman  
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# Our Ancestors Could Not Imagine

By: Steven Schimmel, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts

On the fourth night of Hanukkah this year, I had the honor of speaking at the Hanukkah lighting at the Massachusetts State House on Beacon Hill in Boston on the fourth night of Hanukkah this year. That setting, public and august, was not just the backdrop for my message; it was the message itself.

How many generations, across the past twenty-two centuries since the days of the Maccabees, possessed the freedom, security, and stature in their society to light a Hanukkah openly, let alone to do so in the very seat of their society's government? For most of our ancestors, such a moment would have been unimaginable.

Decade after decade, century after century, our people in countless lands were forced to light the hanukkah in hiding. During the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century, Jewish observance was a capital crime. Even during the Enlightenment, Christianity was the cultural default, and Hanukkah was an explicitly private observance, not a civic one. During the Holocaust, only eighty years ago, even the smallest expression of Jewish life could mean death. Days before Hanukkah began a video was released of Israeli hostages held captive in Gaza lighting a makeshift hanukkah. That Hanukkah would be their last. Several months later, they were murdered in Rafah, less than sixty miles from Modi'in, the stronghold of the Maccabees. I would invite those shouting "settler colonialism" to learn a bit about Jewish history. The distance between ancient and modern tragedy is heartbreakingly short.

At no time in the last two thousand years were hanukkiot lit in public places the way they are today. Major credit is due to the Chabad movement, inspired by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who in the late 1970s encouraged such prominent public lightings, and to the Supreme Court ruling in 1989 that affirmed their legality. Communities like ours in Central Massachusetts have embraced this moment, celebrating these powerful occasions with the entire community.

The story of Hanukkah is emblematic of the Jewish people's survival against overwhelming odds. It is an improbable story that should resonate deeply with Americans as we approach the 250th anniversary of our nation's own improbable victory over tyranny, a revolution that, like the Maccabean revolt, defied history's expectations.

Lighting the hanukkah in Boston, the city at the heart of the American Revolution, was especially meaningful. Here in Worcester, we have the privilege of lighting a hanukkah on the Worcester City Hall Common, a prominent place just steps from where America's Declaration of Independence was first read in New England—even before Boston. The hanukkah stands only a few hundred feet from the street Henry Knox traveled as he brought his "Noble Train" of cannons, captured at Fort Ticonderoga, to the hills above Boston to drive out the British. That journey was a feat of resolve reminiscent of the fortitude of the ancient Maccabees, I mention this connection every year at Hanukkah. There is much to be concerned about in our world today. From Bondi Beach

to Be'er, we are all too aware of the violence against our people, and those anxieties are justified. And yet, amid what John Podhoretz once called the "crushing morosity" of modern life, we must also remember just how fortunate we are. Important government buildings and prominent public places across the world, and most importantly in Israel, are brightened with the light of the hanukkah and the inspirational story of Hanukkah. We are, quite literally, the only generation of Jews in 2,200 years to experience this miraculous moment.

As a young, charismatic elected official from Massachusetts once observed, "I don't believe any of us would change places with any other people in any other generation." That sentiment, spoken by John F. Kennedy, reflects a profound truth. Not complacency, but perspective. Our responsibility now is to ensure that this moment is not one in which our best days are behind us. Let us work to make certain that the high-water mark of Jewish life in America and around the world still lies ahead, not in the past. Let us ensure that better days are to come, and that the light of the Hanukkah continues to grow stronger, brighter, and more secure for generations to follow.

# The Need for Tikkun Olam in Immigration Law Reform

By: Douglas (Dov) Hauer-Gilad

The US has more than thirteen million unauthorized or undocumented immigrants. This is about twice as many people as live in Massachusetts. The number is astonishing. Even though there is not any conclusive or reliable data, a sizable percentage of these people (if not the majority) will not be able to secure legal status under our current legal system. And most of them might not be able to fight deportation without the money and legal help they need to get fair process.

Millions of people are stuck in limbo, and their fear of immigration round-ups is growing. Images of random violence during immigration arrests are taking over social media. This situation is not acceptable. It is bad for democracy in the United States. It hurts Americans. But we are all just watching, as bystanders, unless we tell Congress to adopt fair laws for immigration reform. Being undocumented is a kind of partial enslavement since it makes you less important in legal, social, and economic terms. The only way to end this kind of enslavement is to pass fair laws that give people dignity, not simply deportation. Being partially enslaved means that you are both a part of and not a part of all parts of life in America, no matter how long you have lived here.

And this has implications for all as-

pects of life. Undocumented workers are more likely to be taken advantage of by bad employers, like those who break the law by paying them less than they should, or making them work too many hours. Immigrant women are less likely to report sexual violence because they are afraid that calling the police will imply that immigration authorities will know about them and their children. Parents are scared to send their kids to school or the hospital. The list keeps on. This is not freedom; it is servitude that flies in the face of American values. And it should make all Americans who care about justice act. We cannot let millions of people be in a position of semi slavery for the rest of their lives. We need to say something. Our sages of the Mishnah, the code of Jewish law, taught that a just society does not let people be half free and half enslaved. This situation limits freedom. Instead of accepting this injustice, our rabbis legislated changes to the law. They took it on themselves to correct any injustices for "half slaves," to repair the world, or *tikkun olam*, by enacting changes to outdated laws.

The early rabbis made an imperative of correcting the injustices of partial slavery. Why? Because freedom is important and a basic requirement for human dignity, a preeminent value in Judaism. The rabbis teach us that hu-

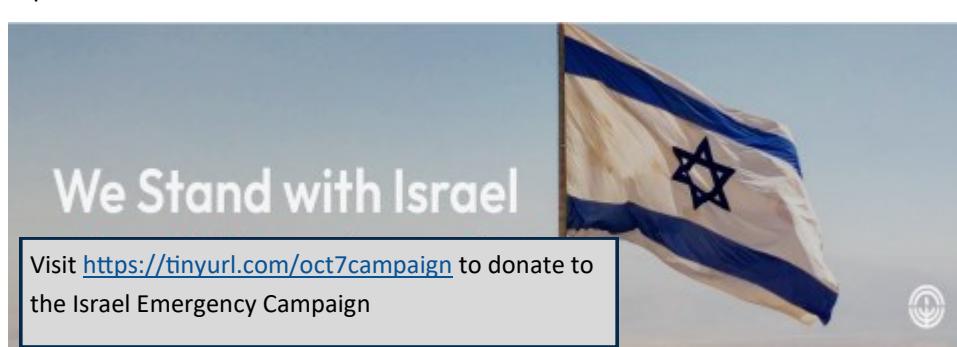
man dignity stands above all other considerations, and that to get there, you sometimes need to change laws.

Our leaders today need to be as brave as our sages in changing laws when justice so requires. Americans are up to the challenge of bringing dignity back into immigration- which can be accomplished by legal reform.

We did it before, in the 1980s, when the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 gave amnesty to 2.7 million people who were living in the country without permission. This program was a success, helping thousands of farm workers and their family members to get green cards.

Now, we need a similar effort to reform the law, a push for *tikkun olam*, as we enter 2026. Americans have wandered in the desert on immigration laws being stagnant for close to 40 years. For the dignity of our undocumented friends, colleagues, and family members, we have to effectuate change.

*Douglas (Dov) Hauer-Gilad is an immigration lawyer who has been an activist for the rights of immigrants throughout the world. He is currently a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College and a doctoral student at Jewish Theological Seminary. Congregation B'nai Shalom is thrilled to learn from him and with him as he completes a year-long part-time rabbinic internship under the tutelage of Rabbi Rachel Gurevitz.*



# Community Conversations

## Rabbi Richard Rudnick, M.D.

In this issue *The Star* editor Carol Goodman Kaufman spoke with Rabbi Richard Rudnick about his journey from active practice in family medicine to a new form of service: the chaplaincy.

### **When did you decide you wanted to go into medicine?**

I had always been into math and science, so I studied physics, but I didn't want to spend the rest of my life interacting primarily with, in those days, a blackboard or a computer terminal. I ended up graduating with a degree in political science, but in my junior year, I became diabetic. I ended up admitted to the Joslin Clinic. In those days you would live in the hospital and spend the days learning about diabetes and how to care for it while they got your regimen figured out.

While I was there my Uncle Phil took me to a hockey game. He had been in the army and had lost soldiers under his command. He told me I was smart and I could do something with that. And you know, the more I thought about it, the more it seemed to fit because medicine involves both science and person-to-person contact.

From the beginning, I noted that my interactions in medical school had been largely with specialists who never seemed to have significant relationships with the patient. They were much more concerned with diagnosis and the literature related to the diagnosis. Since then, I've come to know wonderful specialists who have very deep relationships with the patients they care for, but that was my young

experience. I wanted to do primary care. In those days family medicine was just getting started. It made sense to me that caring for a person really included their interpersonal and family relations or community relations.

### **Where did you train?**

We were at Cook County hospital in Chicago when the county ran out of money. I was rotating in pediatrics when the hospital ran out of amoxicillin, so it was very difficult. From there we went to San Francisco General. While we (with wife Dr. Sheila Trugman) were at San Francisco General, we got involved with the house staff organization. We were in leadership positions that started the San Francisco Interns and Residence Association. We left after one year, and ultimately came back to Worcester. I moonlighted in emergency rooms through the year and then the Director of the family medicine program, Dr. Dan Lasser, accepted us back into the residency program here. In 1985 we opened our practice at Hahnemann. I left in 2005.

### **So you were practicing family medicine and suddenly you decided to become a rabbi? Was there an "aha" moment for you?**

I'd been studying with (Rabbi) Alan Ullman and really got into it. I wanted to learn more about Judaism, so I did *Meah* (a 100-hour program of study) at Hebrew College.

### **That involves a totally different part of the brain than science, no?**

Not by any means. The logic is the

same. You start with a differential diagnosis and you rule things out based on the facts you develop until you get down to an answer.

But it became clear to me that studying in translation doesn't work because there are multiple ways to translate. The nuances required more language skills so I started doing Hebrew. I'm really not good at languages but the stuff that I wanted to study was the curriculum.

It took quite a while. I started in 1985 and finished in 2011.

### **Were you practicing medicine at the same time?**

I tried that, but my primary care practice meant that I had to be available to my patients 24/7. I couldn't do both.

### **When did you start chaplaincy work? Were you in rabbinical school then?**

There's something called Clinical Pastoral Education—CPE. I did a unit here at Saint Vincent's one summer term. I really liked the concepts, so I did another unit. It was a lot of work.

### **Does everybody in rabbinical school have that as a requirement?**

At least most schools require one unit. It takes four to be certified.

### **Had you already decided that you wanted to be a chaplain at that point?**

I didn't want to be a congregational

# The Bar Mitzvah Boy Turns 83

By: Allan Shriber

A few years ago, I consulted Rabbi Google to learn when *Chaye Sarah* would be read in 2025, the year I would turn 83. To my surprise and delight, it would be on my 83d birthday. I asked our rabbi, Valerie Cohen, to reserve the date for me. In 1955, I had chanted *Chaye Sarah* in my family's shul in Milton, MA and if I would ever have a second bar mitzvah, that, for sure, would be the date. Obviously physical and mental health would have to hold up for me to be able to pull it off.

I started working with Rabbi Valerie last Spring. She introduced me to "Trope Trainer", a web-based program that helps one learn to chant Torah and Haftarah. What a change from the 78 rpm record I used 70 years ago!!

Thanks to Rabbi Valerie's pushing, prodding and help, combined with practice, practice, practice, I was able to chant the *maftir Aliyah* and a portion of the Haftarah. While I was certain that I would never even attempt to read the Haftarah from a scroll, Rabbi Valerie showed me that I could! And I did! I was able to lead much of the worship service.

Together, we were able to design elements of the service to include family in a very meaningful way. The Torah passing *I'dor vador* that is part of our temple's

*b'nai mitzvah* services was done in reverse, passing the Torah from the youngest to the oldest, signifying how we teach but we also learn. Members of my family also participated in the service. My wife Judy, our grandson Theo, and our nephew Ian all read from the Torah. Our children and grandchildren led parts of the service. Everyone welcomed the opportunity to be part of the day! Judy gave me a very meaningful and lovely 'charge.' Judy and nephew Rick Gansler put together an amazing book of tributes from family and dear friends that I will cherish always.

What are the take-aways from this amazing experience?

- I pushed myself to achieve what I never thought I could. That's not something we expect as we enter our 80's.
- I was able to express my thoughts about the lessons of *Chaye Sarah* and how they translate into our lives.
- It was a wonderful opportunity to gather family and community in a way for a joyous *simcha*.
- I learned, once again, what a wonderful, supportive community I have in Temple Emanuel Sinai and the Worcester Jewish community.



· I am truly blessed to be part of this family and this community.

*Allan Shriber is a retired CPA and a long-time member of Temple Emanuel Sinai. He and his wife Judy are well known for their decades of philanthropic and volunteer involvement in many aspects of our Central Massachusetts Jewish Community.*



# Book Review

## *American Maccabee: Theodore Roosevelt and the Jews*

By Andrew Porwancher

Review By: Mike Smith

With his new book published last spring, Andrew Porwancher, professor of history at Arizona State University, has added to the canon of historical works about the life and political times of Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president (1901-1909.)

Porwancher's book is a perceptive, well-researched, and very readable account of Roosevelt's surprisingly close alliance with the American Jewish community. Roosevelt, who to this date is the youngest man to serve as president, won overwhelming support from American Jews during his administration. This relationship was fostered well before Roosevelt ascended from vice president to the presidency after William McKinley's assassination in 1901.

The book traces Roosevelt's rapid rise in New York politics when the former state assemblyman first won Jewish support as President of the Board of Commissioners of the New York City Police Department. Porwancher devotes an early chapter to the notoriously unsanitary living conditions in which many poor East European Jewish immigrants lived in New York City at the turn of the century. The slums of the city's Lower East Side (known pejoratively as "Jewtown") were subsequently profiled by muckraking author Jacob Riis in his seminal 1890 book *How the Other Half Lives*.

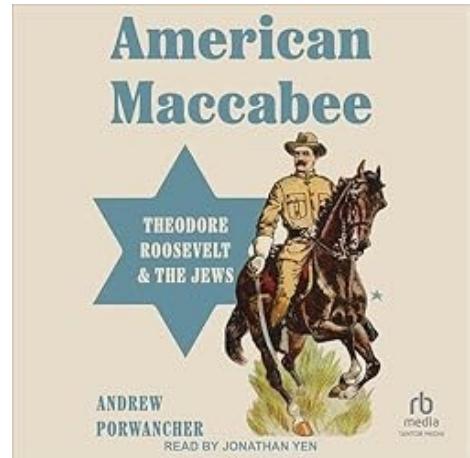
Porwancher points out that Roosevelt, a Protestant blueblood who attended Harvard University, always felt sympathy for the Jewish people. The author recounts that when the future president was in his twenties, he threat-

ened to terminate his membership in an exclusive Republican club when it considered banning Jewish members.

As a progressive reformer, Roosevelt, as head of New York City's police department, delighted in recruiting Jews to the force. Porwancher describes how Roosevelt once made a powerful political statement by recruiting 30 Jewish policemen to provide security for a notorious antisemite invited to speak in New York City. As a candidate for governor, Roosevelt courted the Jewish vote by pledging to reform the dangerous sweat shops of the Lower East Side. As a famed Rough Rider during the Spanish-American War in 1898, Roosevelt went out of his way to recruit Jewish soldiers to his ranks.

Porwancher is careful to portray Roosevelt as an ally to Jews though not one morally beyond reproach. For instance, Roosevelt once called one of his political enemies a "graceless sheeny" (an anti-semitic expression.) Porwancher depicts Roosevelt as always solicitous of the Jewish vote and explains that the president's longtime support for Jewish causes was often subject to his own personal political circumstances. As president, however, Roosevelt appointed Jews to prominent positions in his administration.

Porwancher writes several chapters on actions taken by the administration to denounce cruel and inhumane treatment of the Jews in Eastern Europe. The Roosevelt administration issued formal protests to the Romanian government in 1902 (the "Romanian Note") and a strongly worded criticism of a shocking pogrom in the Russian village of Kishi-



nev in 1903 (the "Kishinev Petition.") Roosevelt welcomed Eastern European refugees to America. He stood up again for Jews' international human rights when he chastised Russian Czar Nicholas II's refusal to guarantee entrance to Jews who held American passports. His administration's iron-clad support for American Jews and Eastern European Jews certainly helped Roosevelt clinch a landslide win in the 1904 presidential election.

Porwancher theorizes that Roosevelt, himself a man of uncommon energy and courage, saw himself as something of a Judah Maccabee, a name many recognize from the Hanukkah story and who was in fact an actual warrior who fought against the Seleucid Empire (a Greek state) in 164 BC.

Porwancher's book is rich reading for those interested in political history and Jewish history, and readers will come to understand why Roosevelt once told a friend before he was president, "I wish I had a little Jew in me."

Andrew Porwancher is a graduate of Brown University and Northwestern University who completed his PhD in history at University of Cambridge. *American Maccabee: Theodore Roosevelt and the Jews* (Princeton University Press, 2025) is his fifth book.

# From a Veterinarian's Perspective: Difficult Decisions About Beloved Pets

By: Dr. Nancy Alperson

I absolutely love being a veterinarian. I was already a mom when I went through vet school. I was so excited to call our sons' schools to tell them that I had passed my veterinary board exam!

Winter holidays are a rough time for veterinarians and the rest of our support staff since we are often called to perform euthanasia during the holidays. When we see our beloved pets every day it may be hard to notice significant changes. Sometimes family and friends who haven't seen our pet for a while will notice that they are not looking good or have aged a lot.

Pet owners often think about how they want to celebrate and remember upcoming holidays with their pets. Do they have plans to go away? If their pet is very ill, can they bring their pet with them? Do they want to spend one last holiday with them? If so, we'll likely be seeing their pet right after the holidays. If not, it might be right before them. Finances play a role too at this very expensive time of year. Also, vets know that pets often become sicker and/or pass near holidays.

How do I deal with this as a vet? When a client comes to me with a beloved elderly or very ill pet and has decided on euthanasia, we discuss timing. If they need one more holiday together I will help them however I can to make this happen. However, when I think the pet is suffering, I will always be upfront and tell their owners to consider. These difficult discussions are a regular part of any vet's practice.

Vets are occasionally faced with people who want to euthanize perfectly healthy pets that they no longer want. Veterinarians have and will exercise their right to refuse to euthanize an animal. There are also pet behaviors that are so terrible that the family makes a decision to euthanize. These are awful situations and always make me very sad.

I recently saw a Facebook post allegedly written by a veterinarian that was about how essential it was for the owners to be present for euthanasia. This upset me, because I believe this decision requires a discussion between the vet and the client. Deciding to euthanize your beloved pet is a very difficult and personal experience, and we all handle

death and grief differently. Pets pick up on our emotions and I believe pets understand that their owners love them. When owners wish to be present when their pet is euthanized, we encourage it. When an owner feels too distraught to be present for euthanasia, veterinarians and veterinary staff will provide a peaceful passing for our four-legged, feathered, or scaled family members. Like other veterinarians, I'm always thinking about ways to make each pet feel safe and let them pass on without pain or anxiety.

Be kind to your veterinarian and your veterinary staff, especially during holidays! Remember that each time a pet is euthanized, however lovingly, it is difficult for us as well as for pet owners.

*Dr. Nancy Alperson is a small animal veterinarian who sees dogs, cats, small exotic companion mammals, birds and reptiles. She and her husband are members of Congregation B'nai Shalom and live in Shrewsbury with their many pets.*

**Share your event with us!**

HAVE A COMMUNITY  
EVENT YOU WOULD LIKE  
FEATURED?

Contact us at [Star@jfcm.org](mailto:Star@jfcm.org)



# Doing “The Work”: Tikkun Olam in Challenging Times

By: Mason Haber

*It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to neglect it.* (Pirkei Avot 2:16, attributed to Rabbi Tarfon)

*The day is short, the work is plentiful, the laborers are indolent, the reward is great, and the master of the house is insistent* (Pirke Avot 2:15, attributed to Rabbi Tarfon)

I recently returned from the Consultation on Conscience, a gathering of Jewish activists from across the U.S. and from Israel organized by the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism, which is a sixty-year-old organization within the Reform Movement that helps us hear about, discuss, and plan action to engage in Tikkun Olam. During that same week, which included the attack on Bondi Beach at a celebration of Hanukah, the violent killings at Brown and MIT, and a Jewish cultural icon, Rob Reiner, I felt affirmation and renewed inspiration to fight for justice.

Everyone grapples in their own way with such events and the problems that may be driving them. My job in social justice work and my volunteer work with Congregation B'nai Shalom and with the RAC help keep me grounded.

Over the years, I have worked on education or advocacy related to racism, gun violence, homelessness, poverty, and access to affordable housing. My current social justice work focuses supporting rights of

immigrants and asylum seekers in the United States. Regardless of one's views on how best to manage immigration, the injustice and brutality of the mass deportations that we are currently witnessing are an affront to Jewish laws and values. The Torah calls upon us dozens of times to care for strangers. Currently, the Massachusetts legislature is considering bills that would help us and other like-minded residents of the state to fulfill this obligation. The bills under consideration would not stop deportations but rather require them to be conducted in a manner that respects the rights of immigrants and would limit assistance of deportations by government authorities.

Current mass deportation efforts are being conducted unacceptably. Our media includes many accounts of the violence and intimidation associated with deportation efforts by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. Immigrants are often not given access to representation; they may be required to attend hearings they can't understand and are not informed of their rights in a consistent manner. Conditions of detention are poor in Massachusetts and elsewhere around the country, violating the law and in some cases ICE's own standards. One of the worst aspects of the deportations taking place recently is their apparent indiscriminateness. ICE detains anyone they believe may be “removable” from the country, striking fear in entire communities, including people who may be working toward acquir-

ing legal status (e.g., ICE has detained individuals who voluntarily appear for immigration hearings). Even people who have a legal right to be in the country – including citizens – worry that they will be detained due to racial or ethnic profiling. Many feel compelled to always carry passports and/or avoid areas where ICE may be active.

Following a research process involving representatives from member Jewish congregations across the state, the Massachusetts chapter of the RAC, on whose leadership team I serve, decided to support bill a designed to end cooperation of state and local authorities with ICE's deportation efforts: the Dignity not Deportations act. Currently, Massachusetts allows local or state entities to rent detention space and sign contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to assist with deportations. The Dignity not Deportations Act would halt these and prevent future contracts.

In the Dignity not Deportations campaign, I work with other members of the leadership team of RAC-MA to provide RAC-MA congregations across the state with opportunities to learn about the issues with current ICE mass detention efforts. We show support for immigrant rights legislation and persuade their representatives and senators to advance it through the legislative process. Many congregations have held programs to pro-



# BIBLICAL RULES & REGS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

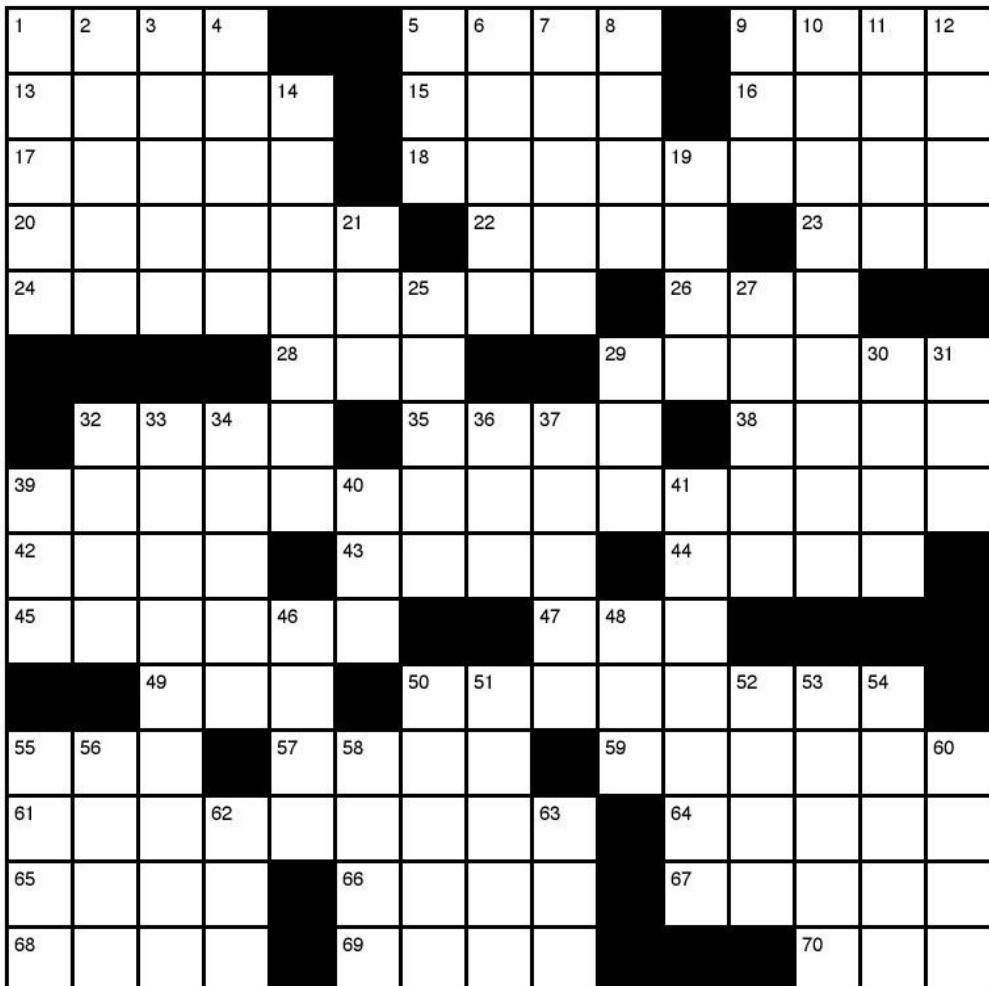
## January 2026

### ACROSS

- A desert in Utah
- They've got mail (acronym)
- Included on an email
- Genus of sea snails
- A unit of the perceived loudness of sounds
- Words said after making a mistake
- Passover ritual service and meal
- Days of rest for many Jews
- List of corrected errors in a book
- Country bumpkin
- Letters on a jug of motor oil
- They can be moral, ethical, legal, or jazz?
- Plant container
- Opposite of WNW
- How you may feel when you are alone
- Campus military org.
- Not on dry land
- Bon \_\_\_\_.
- They are the core of Jewish law
- Words of acknowledgement
- Concerning
- "Suits me to \_\_\_\_."
- Cocktail made with vodka and lime
- Actor Chaney
- Unwell
- Tiny cosmic particles
- Rustic accommodation
- High male singing voice
- Mode of transport for baby Moses
- Sinai and others
- Sierra \_\_\_\_, country in West Africa
- Buy-in at a poker table
- Part of a Venetian blind
- An old saw?
- See
- Bad thing to have at a poker table
- Was ahead

### DOWN

- He worked with tablets
- Openly
- Actress/Singer McDonald
- A village in Canterbury, England
- 5-across competitor
- Sharp pieces
- How some refer to our Prez?
- Rebuff
- Atlantic food fish
- Unlikely seventh Commandment offender?
- Irish New Age singer/composer



- Amount of medicine
- Style for Erte and de Lempicka
- A type of loan seizure
- Common battery size for TV remotes
- Large quantities of paper
- Beginning
- Young fellow
- Low fat?
- How a life is measured (abbr.)
- \_\_\_\_ dental (relating to where we live)
- Sixty seconds
- Key ingredient in blood for immunity
- Didn't stand
- \_\_\_\_ Gay, noted WWII aircraft
- Type of welding (acronym)
- There's one by the door
- Hindu or Buddhist geometric figure representing the Universe
- Israeli city on the Red Sea
- The Earth, to the Bard
- Part of a door or window
- Relating to conventional musical keys
- Put to work
- Common drinking toast
- Basic monetary unit of Kazakhstan
- Muslim religious leader
- Opposite of "some"
- What many consumer products fail to do anymore?
- Prepared to drive?
- It can help catch fish or butterflies
- Cardinals on a scoreboard

David Scholder is a crossword puzzle enthusiast, traveler and lover of a good pun. He is a long-serving Board member of the Maine Jewish Film Festival. He currently lives with his wife and two cats in the small town of Denmark, Maine.

Answer Keys can be found here: [Jewish Crossword Answer Key - January 2026](#)

# A Blessing of Paws and Hearts

By: Robbi Rubenstein

Fellow B'nai Shalom board member Pat Rosenthal and I were invited to create fun and engaging mini-fundraisers for our congregation. After brainstorming, we quickly concluded that our first event should be a pet blessing.

Our goal was to design an experience that was inclusive, joyful, affordable, and modestly profitable for the temple. Most importantly, we wanted the event to bring people together in a meaningful way while celebrating the simple joys that unite our community.

We collaborated closely with all who would be involved to select a date, a location, and established a few basic guidelines. Once those details were in place, the planning moved quickly. The event was open to all congregants and was publicized to our congregants through our weekly temple email up-

dates. Pre-registration was required.

We were blessed with a picture-perfect November day - filled with sunshine, smiles, and an abundance of happy animals. Pet blessings were offered for all companions, whether they arrived on four legs, two legs, or as cherished stuffed best friends.

Rabbis Rachel and Joe, joined by our intern Rabbi Doug, opened the gathering with a song and a communal blessing, which we recited together:

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
שְׁכַח לֹא בְעוֹלָמָנוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha'olam, sh'kachah lo b'olamo.*  
Praised be the Eternal, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has made such beautiful creatures in the world.

Each pet then received an individual prayer from the Rabbis, and the for-

mal ceremony concluded with another joyful song.

All pets and humans were on their very best behavior, and a good time was truly had by all. Participants received blessing certificates along with a special blessing sticker - a small keepsake from a day filled with connection, gratitude, and delight. Based on the success of our first CBS Pet Blessing, we hope this beloved event becomes an annual tradition.

*Robbi Rubenstein and Pat Rosenthal are both long-term members of Congregation B'nai Shalom and currently serve on the Board of Directors there. Robbi is a well-respected realtor with RE/MAX Executive Realty. Pat Rosenthal is a retired data analyst and now spends time with her family and volunteering actively at the temple and in the local community.*



# Life & Legacy™

## ASSURE JEWISH TOMORROWS

The Jewish Federation of Central Mass would like to honor our local community members who have committed to leaving a legacy gift as part of our LIFE & LEGACY program.

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Continued from Page 4

rabbi. I still wanted to work with people, but I didn't want to deal with boards and congregants.

#### Do you see any intersection between your work in medicine and your work as a chaplain?

My medical practice was all about the relationships with patients I developed. I took care of four generations of some families. I really knew people and I still get that. That's my job in a much shorter time frame.

#### Is hospice care part of chaplaincy?

Yes. The government requires a chaplain for hospice. If a patient isn't religious, they say so.

#### What is a typical day in a chaplain's life?

At Eisenberg Assisted Living, there's a meeting of leadership in the morning, going through what's going on with people in the house. I make sure to visit those people who are having difficulty. Over time, I've developed relationships with people I've visited regularly. I also visit anybody new because the transition is spiritually difficult. It's a chance to go in and get to know people and find ways to help them.

#### Spiritually difficult?

When we pray for healing "re'fuat ha nefesh, re'fuat haguf" (healing of the spirit, healing of the body), the spirit comes first, right?

#### What are the most common misconceptions people have about rabbis and chaplains?

I think people think that I'm going to make them religious somehow. All of the training is for people, not for a particular religion.

# Events Around the Community



Thank you to Bruce Wahle for taking these photos



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