

Simply said, we are not sure how the Gellers can say a collective “Thank you” to the Temple Emunah community, for all that you have given us. We are extremely grateful that you are all part of our lives.

I’m not exactly sure what we did to deserve this acknowledgement, and to us, this is a very big deal. If we have done anything that is deemed special in your eyes – we do thank you for feeling that way. I have some basic “rules” for life. One is hang out with someone who is more fun than you are – since that will usually ensure that you will have a good time. I would apply that rule to this congregation: Surround yourselves with truly good people – and that will elevate you, to be an even better person.

Years ago, when I would talk with others about my personal religious practices, I would often lead my part of the conversation with “...and my father was a Rabbi.” It seemed to be an appropriate way for me to give someone an idea on my religious background. And it also gave me, what I thought, was some credibility.

After Jen and I were married, when talking to someone about how we were leading our religious lives and how we were raising our girls, I often would

still lead that conversation with "...and my father was a Rabbi," but I would also weave into it "...and my wife isn't Jewish."

When a football player scores a touchdown, or a baseball player crosses the plate after a home run – they often point up to the heavens, thanking a higher power for their accomplishments. I feel the need to point in many directions for the many blessings our family has. I too, would acknowledge God's presence in our lives. We truly are a blessed family. I would additionally point upward in the same direction, since I do believe that my father, *alav ha-shalom*, is up there. And I can also luckily acknowledge my mother, who is right here.

And importantly, I would also thank Jen's parents who wholeheartedly supported our decision and journey as a family. As well as thanking our daughters: Hannah, Jocelyn and Maddie and all of our extended family and friends.

My father knew Jen very well, and Jen knew him. That has always been important to me – and I am lucky that they had a close relationship. Jen

knew where I was from, and my father ultimately knew where, and with whom, I was going.

My father and I had many conversations about Jen and my future together. Some of those discussions were very difficult. Honestly, he very strongly tried to dissuade me from pursuing a life with Jen. One piece of his persuasive advice was that Judaism starts in the home, and that even with a supportive and knowledgeable spouse, it would be difficult. He wasn't short-changing Jen, just trying to be honest about how difficult our choice could be. He loved Jen, but he grew up in a different time, when there were not many options to pursuing Jewish life, as he knew it. He was right, but he was also wrong, since Jen has done, and continues to do, everything in her power to ensure that our home has a solid foundation for our family's spiritual life. Our family is truly special because of Jen. So, to Jen – I thank you.

My father believed it would be a difficult path for us, an interfaith couple, trying to raise a family that would practice Conservative Judaism. But what my father could not imagine was a place such as Temple Emunah: a Temple with a truly wonderful community. A Temple with amazing, passionate

Rabbinical leadership. A Temple where we would be welcomed and supported, as would any other family.

From the day we set foot in Temple Emunah, we have always felt comfortable. This congregation continues to give, and to give us more.

When Madison came into our lives, 40 minutes after we received the original phone call, Jen and I did not know what to do...about anything.

What do you feed a toddler? Where will she sleep? Do we need covers for the electrical outlets? We had to immediately think about what we were going to do and how we would do it. But, what we did not have to do is to explain to others what we were doing: taking a child into our home spontaneously. We truly did not anticipate the unending support nor did we expect the shared joy that we would receive from this community – when we walked into Temple Emunah 6 days later for Talya's Bat Mitzvah. That moment will be frozen in my mind – and it has become one of many meaningful memories related to Madison.

I can't tell you how excited we are to once again raise another child here, at Temple Emunah. And, if I could, I would point to each and every one of you to let you know how much we appreciate what you have done for us. I

would like you all to know this. And please also know that when I now have those conversations with others about our family's religious life, I've changed my approach. I now lead the conversation with "...and we are members at Temple Emunah...."