

# B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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December 2013

Kislev/Tevet 5774

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B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation, a Reform Jewish synagogue, is a community that fosters individual, family and congregational spirituality by engaging in worship and prayer, promoting learning on all level, supporting each others' needs, bettering our community and our world, and forging connections with worldwide Jewry.

We take pride in being warm, welcoming, informal, progressive, open-minded, diverse, and participatory.

We strive to create a vibrant Jewish present, linking our ancient traditions with the promise of the future.

## From Our Rabbi

### Pass In – Pass Out

Rabbi Donald P. Cashman, D.D.  
B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation, Albany, N.Y.  
Yom Kippur Eve 5774 / September 13, 2013

Rabbi Kruspedai is only mentioned on four pages of the Talmud, 4 pages out of the 2711 pages, yet he is the one credited with our seasonal imagery of the three ledgers in front of God at Rosh Hashanah: the book of life for those who are entirely righteous, the book of death for those completely wicked, and a third one for the intermediate. That third list lasts only until Yom Kippur, at which time everyone is transferred to one or the other of the two lists. This imagery is significantly older than the 1934 classic song which tells of someone else who makes a list and checks it twice. Interestingly, at least to me, is that this song became famous due to one Izzy Iskowitz, better known as Eddie Cantor, on whose radio show the song debuted, the same Eddie Cantor who turned down the role of Jack Robin in *The Jazz Singer* when negotiations with George Jessel went sour. Eventually, of course, it was Al Jolson who sang Kol Nidrei in that historic film.

Somewhere along the line, I adopted this idea of lists for Yom Kippur, creating what I call my personal Yom Kippur list. Each time during the year when I do something that I realize is a repentable act, I tell myself "that's one for the Yom Kippur list." Then, when this day rolls around, I'm all set to just pass in the list. Are your lists ready? Let's just pass them in right now.

I said on Rosh Hashanah there was no exam for these Days of Awe, nor a term paper. I never said there wasn't homework.

In a few minutes, we shall recite two lists of sins. These confessions of sins are not our personal lists; at least we hope that no one is guilty of all of them. Rather, these two Yom Kippur Confessions are made up of the short phrases:

*ashamnu bagadnu*, which is an alphabetical acrostic, saying in effect "We have committed every possible sin, from A to Z."

*Continued on page 4*

## NEW: Friends and Family Shabbat Potluck

Our initial friends and family Shabbat potluck following 6 pm Kabbalat Shabbat services on November 1 was a great success. There were plenty of dinner choices, desserts and lots of new people to meet. Not only did many member families join in the fun, but several potential members attended and broke challah with us. Be sure to come to the next First Friday service and potluck dinner on December 6 and bring friends or family whether they are local folks or just visiting. Do it without extra effort—some people came straight from work or after school programs and brought pizza. Have a relaxing Shabbat experience and join us on December 6 at 6 pm. RSVP to Mark Silverbush [msilver6@nycap.rr.com](mailto:msilver6@nycap.rr.com)

## JOIN US IN DECEMBER FOR

Friday, Dec. 6	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b> 2nd Annual <i>Banjo Shabbat</i> Shabbat potluck dinner for all following services RSVP: <a href="mailto:msilver6@nycap.rr.com">msilver6@nycap.rr.com</a>	<b>6:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Dec. 7	TEXT STUDY: Prophets Extended study with coffee and bagels	9:30 AM
Friday, Dec. 13	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICE</b> TORAH STUDY: <i>Vayechi</i> Gen. 47.28-50.26	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Dec. 14	<b>SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE</b> Bar Mitzvah of Noah Degroult-Elias	9:30 AM <b>10:30 AM</b>
Friday, Dec. 20	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICE</b> TORAH STUDY: <i>Shemot</i> Ex. 1.1-6.1	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Dec. 21		9:30 AM
Friday, Dec. 27	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICE</b> TORAH STUDY: <i>Vaera</i> Ex. 6.2-9.35	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Dec. 28		9:30 AM
Friday, Jan. 3	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b> Shabbat potluck dinner following services RSVP: <a href="mailto:Sampitzberg@gmail.com">Sampitzberg@gmail.com</a>	<b>6:00 PM</b>

### OFFICE HOURS-Important note!

Please note that during January and February, the office manager will be in on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The office manager will not be in on Wednesday.

### IT'S SNOWING—IS SCHOOL OPEN?

Find out quickly by watching these television stations:  
WNYT, WRGB, WTEN, WXXA.



### DO YOU HAVE A GREEN THUMB?



Our plants need help. If you have the talent....we have the need. Contact the synagogue office if you can help.

We also post cancellations for all scheduled events on our web site and change the telephone message. You may go to our website and subscribe to cancellation

## FREE BAGELS!!!!

Really? Is that what makes you read a bulletin article? Free Bagels?

If Paul Tonko or Chris Gibson stopped by and offered you his job, would you take it? Would you accept one of the hardest and least appreciated jobs in the nation – that of U.S. Congressman? After all, neither party in Congress is exactly feeling the love right now. They have the difficult task of trying to do right not only by their constituents, but by the nation as a whole, and all while being true to their own moral compass and trying to keep their jobs. I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with both men, and I believe that while they each hold a slightly different set of values, both men truly care about their constituents first and getting reelected last.

I am here to offer you a much easier job than that of U.S. Congressman, but every bit as important. And, much like the scenario described above, I am offering one of you my job on the Board. After 10 years on the Board of Trustees, I will be retiring from the Board at our next Annual Meeting. Simply

put, it is time for other members to have the opportunity to serve our Congregation as I had. I intend to continue my involvement in the temple at the committee level. I can honestly say that every member of our Board of Trustees is there to serve our Congregation and not their own interests. We don't get paid, we often have very difficult issues to consider and if there is a problem, we are responsible for dealing with it. And yet, I love being a part of it and I will miss it when I am no longer part of it. That said, I will always value the time that I have spent as part of our Congregation's leadership.

The Nominating Committee of B'nai Sholom is looking for a few good women and men to serve as Trustees and Officers on our Board of Directors. The Temple Board consists of fifteen Trustees plus the Rabbi. Trustees are generally elected to three-year terms on the Board. However, the occasional vacancy sometimes permits shorter terms. The Board of Trustees is responsible for management and administration of the affairs, revenues and property of the Congregation and is vested with the powers described our By Laws as well as those codified in the Religious Corporations Law of the State of New York. In addition to the Rabbi, there are six Officers of the Board: President,

President-Elect, Finance Vice President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Ideally, our Board should be a reflection of our Congregation as a whole. There is no one stereotype for service on the Board. You simply need to be a responsible person who cares about the Congregation and its future who is willing to invest a little bit of time and energy to ensure that our Congregation remains the vibrant community and house of worship that it has always been. If you believe that you or someone that you know would be a good fit for the Temple Board or to serve as an Officer of the Board, please contact me at 542-0199 or [douggoldman.bnaisholom@gmail.com](mailto:douggoldman.bnaisholom@gmail.com) no later than January 31, 2014. Sorry, no free bagels, but we often share snacks at our Board Meetings!

Thank you,  
Doug Goldman  
Chair, Nominating Committee  
Immediate Past President



## FREE BAGELS DO EXIST AT B'NAI SHOLOM!

At our monthly Extended Study on Shabbat morning, coffee, bagels, and a whole array of unscheduled foods show up to fuel our study. We've been working our way through the middle part of the Bible for several years, and anticipate finishing the Prophets by June. Our approximate schedule is Habakkuk in December, Zephaniah in January, Haggai in January of February, Zechariah in February and March, and maybe also in April, with Malachi in April or May. After that, it will be onward into the final part of the Bible, the Writings, beginning with Psalms. No previous study required. We have Bibles, but you can bring your own. Extended study is usually, but not always, on the first Shabbat of the month.

## From Our Rabbi (cont.)

We also have the long phrases; the *Al Het* list in our Reform prayer books is abbreviated; the traditional version is a double acrostic: 2 alef sins, 2 bet sins, and so on, for a total of 54. There is a third section in the traditional liturgy, not in our books:

For the sins we owe a sin offering, for the sins we owe a burnt offering, for the sins we deserve corporal punishment, for the sins we deserve lashes, for the sins we deserve death by the hand of God, for the sins we deserve excision.

The idea is that in a large enough group, every possible sin could have been committed. We confess them all, together, possibly to give strength to the sinner who would not confess a particular offense in public, possibly to avoid embarrassment by our public admission, possibly because we committed them unknowingly, and most certainly to remind ourselves from year to year what acts, what deeds, are considered sinful. “Ignorance of the law is no excuse” comes to us from Roman law; the parallel Jewish idea is that Moses read the Ten Commandments to the people before they accepted them, and Ezra read the entire Torah to the people on Rosh Hashanah in the year 444 BCE as a prelude to its canonization.

I thought we could streamline the process by numbering all these sins in our books. Then, I would pass out these Scantron sheets, [hold up one] and we could mark them

- A) did not commit this;
- B) did this, but only a little;
- C) did this, frankly, more than just a little;
- D) did this a quite a bit; and
- E) this one has my picture next to it.

You would pass in your answer sheet, we’d have them analyzed, and each one of us would get back a personally designed Repentance Plan: What kind of sacrifices we’d be liable for if the Temple were standing; how many lashes, or stones thrown at us we deserve; and possibly, God forbid, how many different ways we deserve to be executed. It could include the ways we could pass out of these punishments; remember, it says *Teshuvah, u-Tefillah u-tzedakah ma’avirin et ro’a ha-g’zerah*: Repentance,

Prayer and Charity will cause the passing over of the evil decree. How much and what kind of repentance? How much prayer? How much tzedakah? What’s the exchange rate between say, prayer and tzedakah? How much is repentance worth in prayer time, or in fervency?

In reality, none of us wants to pass in our list of sins. The liturgy suggests that God knows our thoughts; lately we’ve learned that the NSA probably knows them too, but we don’t need to make a written record. We know in our hearts what we’re sorry about, ashamed of, and embarrassed by; we know what we regret. We have a good idea what we wouldn’t want shared with our parents, our children, our spouses and partners, our friends and co-workers. If the truth were ever to get out, we would pass out from mortification. We also know that many of our memories from the past year have passed out of our minds.

Over the last couple of years I’ve been thinking and studying about the Kol Nidrei ceremony. In June, the Central Conference of American Rabbis published in its quarterly *Journal of Reform Judaism* my article about our Kol Nidrei sing-along and the writings over the last 800 years which support it, and it became clear to me that some of the motivating factors of the Kol Nidrei formula go back more than a thousand years before that. Simply put, the Torah has no way for us to get out of our oaths and promises. Nullification of vows became something if not necessary, at least desirable, and various limitations were imposed so that people would a) not vow rashly, and b) take their vows seriously. Yet Kol Nidrei does not and cannot nullify the vows we make.

The first part of the ceremony is the removal of one or more or all of the scrolls from the Ark. The recitation of Kol Nidrei itself is the last part. In the middle there’s this one sentence that’s unique in form and content in Jewish liturgy, introduced into the liturgy by Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, one of the most significant Talmudic scholars in Ashkenaz, and one with lasting influence, who died in the year 1293, while being held 7 years for a ransom he didn’t want paid, lest other rabbis be kidnapped for ransom.

*Continued on page 5*

## From Our Rabbi(cont.)

With the [authority of the] Academy on High, and the Academy on earth, with the knowledge of the Omnipresent, and the knowledge of the congregation, we are permitted to pray with the *avaryanim*.

First, the summoning of the authority of the Academies is not found in prayer. On the other hand, Kol Nidrei itself is sort of a legal formula, not a prayer, which is why it belongs before the service proper. What interests me is this word *Ha-avaryanim*. At its root are the Hebrew letters 'ayin-Bet-Resh, which means "to pass, or to cross." We use this verb to cross the street, or to cross over the river Jordan. It also means "past," as in time that has gone by. In grammar, the past tense is the 'avar. From this root we also get the word 'aveirah, which, using the idea of passing over or crossing over, should be translated as "transgression." "*Mitzvah goreret mitzvah, aveirah goreret aveirah*" we learn in the Mishnah: One mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one transgression leads to another. The word "*avaryan*" thus means "one who commits an *aveirah*; a transgressor, a sinner" with *avaryanim* being the plural. The formula before Kol Nidre gives us permission to pray with them.

Cyrus Herzl Gordon, one of the leading scholars of Semitic languages in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with whom I had the privilege of studying with very briefly, found conceptual and linguistic parallels between Kol Nidre and Babylonian magic bowl incantation texts. These were bowls written in the Talmudic era to keep away demons. They would be buried upside down, to trap demons and protect one's house and family.

The prelude text by Meir of Rothenberg, summoning Divine authority to our here and now, combined with the Kol Nidrei as understood by Prof. Gordon, hints to us that we are at what perhaps we can see as a magic moment. At this juncture of time, the holiest day of the year, when, in ancient times, the holiest person went, in a state of purity. And God forbid we don't repent every-

thing we need to! The only way we can be sure of doing that is by keeping a list. But Gevult! We didn't all keep Yom Kippur lists. Thank God we have these two confessionals in the book, so we can confess to what maybe we did.

Our ancestors in ancient Jerusalem believed in the importance and the efficacy of the rituals. We are less inclined to superstition, not believing in scapegoats, or the burying of demon-catchers, or putting our sins on roosters and chickens. Undoubtedly, we have our own more modern *mishegoss*. One of the more practical pieces of the ancient ritual, according to the *Zohar*, was that they tied a chain around the High Priest's ankle before he went into the Holy of Holies, so that he if passed out, they could pull him out of the place where no one else could go.

No one else can go into your mind, your heart, your soul, to atone for you. No one else knows your list. No one else can take advantage of this magic moment on your behalf. You are the *avaryan*; we are the *avaryanim*, and we have permission to do this.

In about 22 hours we shall complete our task here, after about 8 hours of services. I have usually found Yom Kippur to be a moving, and fulfilling day. May we not pass out from hunger or thirst; may we not pass out from fright, that we are not forgiven and therefore, God forbid, not inscribed in the book of life. May we focus on the confessions, so that the lists we end up keeping in our heads during the coming year is not one of our aveirot, our transgressions, but of all the opportunities we have to do mitzvot, to perform the sacred and hallowed customs, practices, and obligations of our tradition. May this be our mission in 5774: to remember what we're supposed to do right, instead of regretting what we do wrong.

xxx

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In January 1964, "I Want to Hold Your Hand" landed on American radio and changed the world's music forever. "She Loves You" followed, and three new words entered the American lingo: "Yeah, yeah, yeah!"



For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Beatles arrival in America, The Shushan National Touring Company will celebrate Purim by presenting once again "Whitehall Road: A Beatles Megillah," perhaps B'nai Sholom's most popular shpiel.

Erev Purim is Saturday, March 15. Join in the fun! Watch next month's bulletin for details and casting call!

## ADULT EDUCATION

THE TRUE STORY OF HANUKKAH, IN THREE THEORIES presented by Rabbi Cashman

Thursday, December 5, 7:30 pm Professor Java's Coffeehouse, Wolf Rd., Albany

Can we explain Hanukkah without resorting to supernatural tales of oil? The Talmudic story of the little jar of oil that miraculously burned for eight days may be the best-known story, but it's not the oldest, nor the most sensible, not the most convincing. It doesn't even originate near the actual events. Come to learn of a rational explanation (or two) that still permits us to celebrate Hanukkah for eight days with candles. *Please refer to the Adult Education Brochure for more details.*

## BITS AND PIECES

**DO YOU BAKE?** Judy Fruiterman has 2 Hanukkah cake pans up for adoption. Call 439-8077 if you can give them a good home.

CHECK OUT THE TU BISH'VAT FLYER, then mark your calendar and send in your reservation!



**Mazel Tov!**

To **Lincoln Frasca** who was named to the Dean's List for spring semester at the University of Vermont

## THANK YOU

-to the paper-cut brigade who prepared the November Bulletin: **Sandy Rosner, Marty Teumim, Paula Philo, Carol Smith and family, Anne and Sonny Hausgaard**



-to the following congregants who provided us with a sweet Shabbat: **Brenda Hazard and Steve Morse, Sam and Heather Spitzberg, Janet Strominger**, the families of our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and the Adult Education Committee

-to **Richard Propp** and **Phil and Marty Teumim** for the beautiful new plantings of trees and shrubs



**I am Marcia.  
I am...**

- Grieving
- A mother
- Disabled
- Losing my mother to cancer
- Scared
- Inundated with medical bills

**JFS helps people like Marcia.**

Our **Norek/Modes Transitions Program** supports individuals and families with issues surrounding terminal illness, including medical advocacy, access to benefits and bereavement.

Please contact us to learn more or to schedule an appointment.  
518-482-8856 | [info@jfsneny.org](mailto:info@jfsneny.org)



**Jewish FAMILY Services**

**jfsneny.org** Supported by the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York.

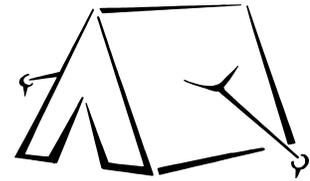
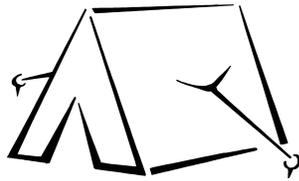
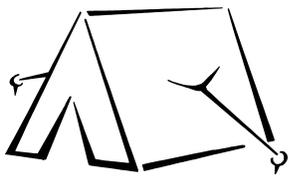


## Social Action

**New Date: OUR WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 9-NOON**

Please sort your donations twice! Sort for gender (male, female, unisex) and sort again for age (infant, child, youth, adult)

Each summer, children and teens from our congregation attend Jewish summer camps and tour Israel, strengthening their ties to Judaism and to the land of Israel. B'nai Sholom offers scholarships which are funded by the interest from the synagogue's Israel Bonds



#### From Hugh Smith

This past summer I went to Crane Lake Camp for four weeks. It was the most fun I had all year. I still talk about my experiences and friends from camp at school to share how much I enjoyed my summer.

I was in the unit Lower Chaverim which is the youngest unit in the older half of camp, called Upper Camp. In Upper Camp you get a lot more freedom and privileges like staying up later, having only free swim in the pool, and so much more.

At camp, it is always a party. There is always an extremely fun activity to do whether it be swimming in the lake, playing roof ball, or playing any sport. At Crane Lake we have pretty much every sport imaginable.

Every day we learn about Jewish values and history in Limud. When you are in Upper Camp you can choose your Limud activity. I chose Jewish cooking where we made yummy food and learned a ton of Hebrew. I did an environmental activity where we learning about composting.

My last activity was learning about why so many people wanted to take over Israel from ancient times until now.

Shabbat at camp is the best. At dinner you can sit with anyone you want and not your few assigned tables. We have a fun service full of fun songs and dances. Afterwards we have an amazing song session where we jam out to our favorite camp tunes and rock out to Israeli dances.

On trip day we went to a really fun outdoorsy type place. We spent a day zip lining down a mountain on an awesome zip line trail. We camped out and the next day we went whitewater rafting. Next year, I will go to New York City.

Crane Lake Camp is the funnest place on earth. It's my home away from home. I always countdown the days until I see my camp friends from around the Northeast. Next year I am going the full summer and I can't wait! My 2013 Crane Lake Camp experience was amazing and I will definitely go back!

**SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2014** Scholarship forms for camp and Israel trips for the summer of 2014 are now available for pick-up at B'nai Sholom. You will find them on the table outside the offices.

This past summer I attended three and a half weeks of camp at Machane Tel Yehudah, a sleep-away camp for Jewish youth run by Young Judaea. My summer could not have been better spent, between doing fun activities, meeting new people from around the world, and learning about Israel and what it means to be a Jew, my favorite part of camp was the 123 mile biking trip that I took part in along with about 29 other campers. During the course of four days we biked a circle through the Catskill Mountains, stopping once or twice a day until we reached camp. While we were biking, we passed the time by singing songs and telling stories. Everyone bonded over things like the dreadful up-hills and the amazing down-hills, or the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches we ate for lunch every day. I made so many new friends on the biking trip, and at camp in general. it was a great experience and I am so thankful that I was given the opportunity to attend for another year. *Marni Libby*

**THE CONGREGATION NOTES WITH THANKS THESE CONTRIBUTIONS...**

**General Fund**

In memory of **Sarah Renee Whiting** by Shari Whiting

In memory of **Gustave Heart** by Stan Bergman

In memory of **Julie Fiks, Gertrude Slotnick and Herman Schoenbach** by Howard and Bettina Stoller

In honor of **Harvey Tress** by Phil and Marty Teumim

In honor of the **Smith-Tabak Family** by the Kerper-Rethemeyer Family

**Books For Babies**

In appreciation by Lew Sperber

**YAHRTZEITS**

The following Yahrtszeits will be observed in December:

- 6 Albert Abrams\*, Ida Stone, David Gottlieb, Wanda Rockefeller, Jack Pendergrass, Jacob Lichtenfels\*, Ben Dietchman, Rita Ray, Raymond Karlson
- 13 Bernard Fleischer\*, Sadie Cohen\*, Hannah R. Jaffe\*, Marvin Millens, Erwin Winston\*, Freda Kussack, Jacob Lazoroff\*, Adah Vosburgh, Harry Cohen\*, Estera Fiks, Ruth Aronson\*, Norma Belle Singer Beatman\*
- 20 Julian Wager, Samuel Link, Hannah Tabak, Adele Broch Krochmal, Waldamar Knieling, Cornelius Epstein\*, Florence Morse
- 27 Janice Kerper, Bertha Ginsburg\*, Allan B. Cashman, Judy Dobris\*, Rick Friedman, Anita Dubb\*

*\*denotes that a Perpetual Memorial has been established*

We note with sorrow the deaths of

**ABRAHAM COGEN**

Uncle of Julie Friedman

**ELENORE MORSE**

Stepmother of Steve Morse

<b>AS A RULE, THE BULLETIN DEADLINE IS THE SECOND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH</b>	
<b>PERIOD COVERED</b>	<b>DEADLINE</b>
January	December 11
February	January 8
<i>Articles and news received after deadline are subject to omission</i>	

RABBI: **Donald P. Cashman**  
 PRESIDENT: **Jodi Kerper**  
 OFFICE MANAGER: **Rebecca S. Marvin**  
 RELIGIOUS SCHOOL DIRECTOR: **Elizabeth Alowitz**  
 OFFICE HOURS: **MON/WEDS/THU/FRI 9:15 AM – 3:00 PM**



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