

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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FEBRUARY 2021

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visit us at <http://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
SHEVAT/ADAR 5781

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation is a Brit Olam Congregation in covenant with the world – because we seek the world we want, not the world as it is.

JOIN US FOR PRAYER, GOOD DEEDS, CELEBRATION AND STUDY

Zoom links for services are sent out weekly.

Please call the office for information about telephone access to prayer services.

Friday, February 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, February 6	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 12	TOT SHABBAT SERVICE	5:00 PM
	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, February 13	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 19	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, February 20	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 26	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, February 27	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, March 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, March 6	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM

*Unless otherwise noted in the weekly announcements.

Visit <https://reformjudaism.org/learning> for each week's parashah.

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 levels, supporting each other's 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

Rabbi's Message...

This February there comes to mind certain High Holiday themes - that of self-reflection, new beginnings, setting ourselves on the right course and hope for a better year ahead. We can only pray that the new Administration will bring a semblance of order to our nation, that the healing will begin soon and be full, as we say when illness strikes, "May you have a 'refuah shlema um'herah,'" "a full and speedy recovery."

But it will take time for our nation to heal. The political divisions are great, the bitterness strong. We are politically divided and our recovery is intertwined with a health crisis that is causing death and despair.

Our prayers go out to our new President and to all our political leaders. They will need inner strength, and help from God to bring peace and tranquility to our nation. Beginning in Roman times, a prayer was added to our worship, a prayer that acknowledged the government officials, a prayer that beseeched God to give them wisdom. So we read:

**O Guardian of life and liberty,
may our nation always merit Your protection.
Teach us to give thanks for what we have
by sharing it with those who are in need.
Keep our eyes open to the wonders of creation,
and alert to the care of the earth.
May we never be lazy in the work of peace;
may we honor those who have died in defense of our ideals.
Grant our leaders wisdom and forbearance.
May they govern with justice and compassion.
Help us all to appreciate one another,
and to respect the many ways that we may serve You.
May our homes be safe from affliction and strife,
and our country be sound in body and spirit.
(Mishkan T'filah, p. 258)**

There can be no more eloquent words than these. So let us pray for President Biden and for all those who lead our nation, and for ourselves as well, that we may weather the crises we are experiencing and gain strength in the coming years. May God heal us physically, politically and spiritually, upholding us and fortifying our will to do what is right and best for every citizen of our land.

May this be our prayer.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Katz

FROM OUR PRESIDENT...

As I write for the February bulletin, I write in a moment of national crisis that has spanned much of the month of January 2021. Many of us had hoped that the turning of the calendar page would enable us to feel a sense of closure after an exceptionally difficult and painful year, but thus far, 2021 has packed in sufficient anxiety and tragedy in just a few weeks to make many of us feel like enough is really enough.

I would guess that many members of our congregation, like me, spent far too much time worrying and doomscrolling, consuming unhealthy quantities of electronic media about the pandemic and the political situation. As we reflect on this momentous period in American history, however, I'm inclined to consider what a specifically Jewish perspective can bring to my understanding. I offer these thoughts not as a definitive interpretation, but rather as an invitation to all of us to use the tools we have at hand both to make sense of what has happened and to guide our own paths forward.

Legitimate disagreement and debate are healthy

Our tradition is clear here. From Jacob's wrestling match with an angel to Hillel and Shammai to the present day, we have recognized that disagreement and challenge make us better. Within our congregation and our community, there is room for people to advocate fiercely for different policy positions and political figures, and we must respect legitimate disagreements. In order to be legitimate, however, these disagreements must take place within the boundaries of our common political community, as Korah and his followers learned through their destruction.

Each human life is unique and intrinsically valuable and hatred is dangerous

One such boundary is a consistent thread of recognizing the fundamental humanity of all that pervades our traditions. The Torah makes it clear that the obligation to value the humanity of all persons extends beyond the circle of our community, reminding us that we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Our tradition likewise warns us of the dangers of baseless hatred, which our Orthodox friends link to the destruction of the Second Temple.

The rule of law is both necessary and a moral obligation for a society

A central theme of the Exodus is the Jews' transformation from a tribal band of former slaves into a nation. The establishment of law helped to engineer this transformation. We remember Moses for bringing us to Sinai and preparing us to receive the law from the Eternal, but the Torah also painstakingly records Moses' efforts to establish a stable system for resolving disputes and a host of regulations to manage relations among people.

When I ponder these values, I use them to consider the boundaries of legitimate political behavior in the nation I love as both an American and a Jew. I deplore the violent mob's organized attempts to reject the results of the 2020 election and to abandon our lengthy experiment with democracy. I am horrified that elected members of our national government as well as some state elected officials participated in these efforts. Individuals who amplified baseless claims of election fraud and linked them to other conspiracy-fueled lies have done enormous damage to the fabric of our republic. Those who traffic in lies and who sought to overturn the election cannot be empowered to serve as our elected officials. By rebelling instead of raising truth-based objections and arguments, they have stepped outside the boundaries of legitimate disagreement and debate. By rejecting the intrinsic value of human life, they set themselves apart from us. And by abandoning

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the rule of law and democratic values, they have rejected not only Jewish values but also our national foundational political consensus. To protect the rule of law, we the people must impose consequences for these behaviors.

If we can draw these lines bravely, we can make space for better politics. By thinking Jewishly, we have important elements to add to the discussion. As individuals, we can communicate these ideas to our elected officials and we can choose to support candidates who respect and share these values. In doing so, regardless of which party we support, we can nurture a politics with room for vigorous disagreement, but a politics in which we accept the intrinsic humanity of all people and the importance of democracy as the non-negotiable price of entry. Thus, we can contribute to building a political environment in which we search for and value truth over lies, substance over entertainment, and principle over raw power.

L'shalom,

Julie Novkov

IT'S HERE! YOUR "MOMENTS" SURVEY

In our busy lives, giving a moment of our time can be much easier than making a long-term commitment...and what if that moment was tailor-made to your interests and talents? Imagine what we could accomplish together.

That's why we created "Moments," an initiative to identify your skills, talents and aspirations and, only then, to ask for a pledge to donate a few "moments" to B'nai Sholom, as needed.

Please look for your Moments survey in your email inbox and fill it out as soon as you can.

QUESTIONS ABOUT "MOMENTS"? We've scheduled a virtual Info Session on Sunday, Feb. 7, at 11AM to answer them. Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

B'nai Sholom will thrive through the participation of everyone who cares!

News from the Social Action/Social Justice Committee

REDUCE PLASTICS, REDUCE WASTE, DO MORE FOR OUR PLANET

The Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition (CRICCC) was formed in spring 2018 to bring together faith groups in the Capital Region of New York. Currently, there are representatives from 24 different faith communities (on their mailing list) with 22 of those communities regularly active in the meetings. Barry Pendergrass, B'nai Sholom's representative, does a yeoman's job of keeping us apprised, engaged and involved in the activities of this outstanding organization.

"Care of Creation" is a central moral priority for CRICCC, by working in solidarity to mitigate the climate emergency and preserve and restore natural resources and biodiversity for present and future generations; the education of the member faith communities as well as advocating for the environment; reducing our carbon and waste footprints; and adopting behaviors that will ensure the sustainability of life in all its diversity on Earth.

With this in mind, please see the following **Resolutions to Reduce Plastics**. We realize that not all of these suggestions are feasible for everyone at all times of the year. The more we *can* do, the better for our planet:

1. **Bring your own reusable shopping bags.** There are so many great options. Some pack up teeny-tiny to allow you to easily carry one in your backpack or purse. Others are larger sturdy fold-up models that you can stash in your car. You can even [make your own from a T-shirt](#).
2. **Bring your own reusable produce bags.** They are sold online and in some grocery stores. There are tons of options out there – both cotton and plastic, although we'd recommend buying cotton because washing plastic adds micro-plastic particles to our water supply.
3. **Carry a reusable water bottle.** We strongly suggest that you make it either glass or stainless steel to avoid the chemicals in plastic water bottles. There are a lot of options out there, but we look for plastic-free tops. Early research indicates that the plastic tops on plastic water bottles may be the primary source of micro-plastic particles in the water.
4. **Carry your own reusable cutlery.** There are some really nice metal and bamboo kits available or, if you're on a budget, just put a fork, spoon and knife from home in a little bag and you're all set.
5. **Say no to plastic straws,** or carry your own reusable metal or glass straw, or use your lips to drink.
6. **Buy in bulk.** Did you realize you can buy things like oats, beans, grains, flour, sugar, salt, spices, pasta, granola, dried nuts, dried fruits and more foods in bulk using your own reusable bags and containers? See Honest Weight Coop and Whole Foods. It takes a touch more planning but feels great and will lighten your plastic and carbon footprints. Store these things in reusable containers at home. You can also buy cleaning and personal care products in bulk.
7. **Bring your own reusable mug** to fill up with coffee or tea at the café or cafeteria instead of taking a disposable cup.

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8. **Stop buying certain problem items.** Top offenders include anything packaged in a plastic clamshell — berries, greens, tomatoes, peppers, grapes and other fruits, sandwiches and more. This packaging will NOT ever be recycled. Avoid buying chips and bars packaged in non-recyclable foil and plastic-layered wrappers and bags.
9. **Pack your or your child's lunch in reusable containers.** We recommend metal or glass over plastic because metal is a lot lighter and less breakable than glass.
10. **Bring your own reusable take-out containers.** If you're dining out (or even if you're just buying some coleslaw at the deli), bring your own reusable containers with you to avoid disposable foam, plastic or paper containers. If you forget, try wrapping up your leftovers in a paper napkin or placemat until you get home, as the restaurant is just going to throw those things away anyway.

February - Kibbutzniks

Steven Morse, Brenda Hazard and Family -- In memory of Florence Morse

Robin Belansky -- In celebration of the birthdays of Ann Shapiro and Lois Gordon

Lois Gordon -- In memory of her father, Arthur Katz, and sister, Tobey Katz

Come Outdoors with B'nai Sholom!

Do you find your spirituality in nature? Join us for one or more hour-long programs of sharing prayers and personal reflections, combined with walking or snowshoeing, at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar. Weather permitting, programs will take place at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays, February 14 and 28. Social distancing, masks and limits on group size will all be employed to ensure the safety of participants. Registration is required at least one day in advance so we can limit numbers if necessary and communicate regarding safety protocols and weather accommodations. Register by calling Libby Liebschutz at 518-466-7034 or emailing her at libbyliebschutz@gmail.com.

News from the Communications Committee

B'nai Sholom's Web Team is looking for your assistance.

We're seeking a congregant to help maintain and improve the temple's website. Programming and webmaster experience, or an eagerness to learn, will be helpful.

Is this you? If it is and you're interested, then please contact Bruce Goldstein at 518-765-2893 or wa3afs@arrl.net.

Are You Singing?

In the synagogue it's easy to feel the energy in a Shabbat service. People arrive and hug, kibbitz, sit together or sit slightly away by themselves preparing to pray. By the time the service starts, the enthusiasm and purpose are "there." A number of things can be said about Zoom. Yes, in Zoom we can experience visual and emotional isolation, reminders of the people we miss seeing in person, inconsistent - even ugly - internet, and the distraction of looking at everyone else's home and wishing ours were better organized or more beautifully decorated. BUT, Zoom also gets us to services and home again without ever having to travel in a car, worry about the weather or even get out of our slippers.

The Ritual Committee is wondering whether you are still enjoying singing in Zoomed services. The three soloists work with Rabbi Katz to make sure that our Friday night tunes and song choices fit with each service and offer a combination of mostly familiar and occasionally new songs or tunes. But is it enough? Does being muted through most of the service give you courage to sing with gusto that you might not otherwise bring to a service in the synagogue? Or does the solitary experience of singing alone and having only one other voice to sing with discourage you and push you into the role of a listener? It's hard to tell, when you look around the Gallery View, how many people really want to make a joyful noise.

Early on in our Zoom worship we experimented with everyone being unmuted. Most of our Ritual Committee members found the auditory experience very unpleasant and were glad when the service instructions began to include that congregants should mute themselves until the Mourners' Kaddish. But we have recently reopened the discussion. Would our spirit and energy flow more easily during some of the music if we could hear one another? Would we feel more connected to one another? Or would we enjoy more opportunities to volunteer for "solos" (don't think of it in a stressful way) in verses during the closing song?

We are interested in your thoughts. Send them to committee chair Melissa Putterman Hoffmann at mputtermanhoffmann@gmail.com.

We have also begun a list of those songs people remember from previous congregations or from earlier in our lives and have missed. Please feel free to let us know your thoughts about that too.

IT'S TIME FOR THE B'NAI SHOLOM REFORM CONGREGATION ANNUAL PURIM BASKET EXTRAVAGANZA!

Therefore do the Jews of the villages that dwell in the unwalled town, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of gladness and feasting and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

Esther 9:19

Purim is a day of taking and giving pleasure. For years, we have rejoiced in our deliverance from Haman by sending gifts of special foods to friends and relatives. *Tzedakah* is performed by donating food or money and *Mishloach Manot* by sending sweet treats to friends. Once again, our congregation would like to provide you with the opportunity to fulfill two of the *mitzvot* of Purim – the giving of *Tzedakah* and *Mishloach Manot* (*Shalachmones*).

You can honor your fellow B'nai Sholom friends and support the congregation's fundraising efforts while participating in this wonderful tradition. A package generally contains hamantashen, fruit juice, fruits, nuts and other sweets.

Historically the B'nai Sholom Fundraising Committee has offered congregants the option to identify to whom they wish to send Purim cheer when submitting their Mishloach Manot order forms. Donation options have ranged from \$18 to \$118. \$118 sends your wish to the entire congregation.

This year warrants a new vision. The 5781/2021 Mishloach Manot will be brought to you by the entire B'nai Sholom Family. This is a significant fundraiser for B'nai Sholom and we hope you will participate by donating what you can. Also new this year: we will deliver the Mishloach Manot to your home.

Please use the form below to make your donation by February 21, 2021.

Mishloach Manot Contribution

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____ **Email** _____

Amount _____

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO B'NAI SHOLOM SEND TO OR DROP OFF AT:

**B'NAI SHOLOM REFORM CONGREGATION, ATTN: FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE,
420 WHITEHALL ROAD, ALBANY, NY 12208**

Rabbinic Search Committee Update

The Rabbinic Search Committee's work is now starting to heat up as we have (as of mid-January) seven active candidates for the three-quarter time position that we posted with the Placement Commission in November. Two of these candidates are experienced congregational rabbis, and both have had at least one interview already with committee members. The remaining five are fifth-year rabbinic students from the various campuses of the HUC-JIR and will have initial screening interviews with the committee during the proscribed interview period of January 31-February 2. Students whose candidacies we want to pursue further will be interviewed by a larger group of committee members and congregants starting later in February, with any potential tentative offers being extended in March.

The search committee will be reaching out to committee chairs and board members about meetings (via Zoom) as we narrow the field to the best fit for our needs so that we can get as much input as we can before making a recommendation to the board about the best candidate.

Thanks in advance for your continued support and engagement in this process that's vitally important for the future of our synagogue.

As always, please contact the committee co-chairs, David Liebschutz and Carol Smith, at rabsearch@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us with any questions or comments.

News from the Ritual Committee

This is a busy time of year: after the "breather" following the High Holidays, the Ritual Committee swings into Chanukah, then Tu B'shevat, then Purim and finally into Passover. Thank you to Deb Adler and Joseph DeFronzo for assembling Tu B'shevat seder supplies.

And welcome newest member Linda Finkle. Stay tuned: two people have already volunteered to visualize the sukkah, and we will hope to find other volunteers for that project as well as other initiatives pending the fruits of the Moments survey.

MAZAL TOV TO...

Harvey Strum, whose article, "Jews of Troy, 1850-1950," was published online in the January 2021 *New York History Review* and can be accessed by searching the online journal.

THANK YOU TO...

...Lois Gordon, who completed various office projects for the office manager.

...the Bulletin Brigade – Joe DeFronzo, Jim Savitt, Joan Savitt, Rema Goldstein, Mark and Cheryl Reeder, Anita Stein and Anne Hausgaard – who helped fold and stuff the January Bulletin.

Mifgash Fundraising 2021

Mifgash - "Shabbat With Love" Delivered To Your Door!

Your beautifully packaged bag will include: 2 Delicious Homemade Challahs, Wine of your choice, Beautiful Flower Bouquet, Chocolate Treat, Delicious Dessert, 2 Shabbat Candles.

Cost for the "Shabbat With Love Bag" \$72

**Order deadline: February 8th
Delivery on Friday, February 12th**

All "Shabbat With Love" bags will be delivered to your home (within 15-mile range)

All information and registration can be found at the Mifgash Community High School website:

www.mifgashcommunity.org

Mifgash - Purim/Passover Wine Sale

Mifgash is having a Purim/Passover Wine Sale in conjunction with University Wine and Liquor, 1225 Western Avenue, Albany, NY

Orders must be received by Monday, March 15

Completed order forms can be sent to:

Mifgash Passover Wine
c/o Wendy Schaffer
44 Carstead Drive
Slingerlands, NY 12159

Printable order forms with more information can be found at the Mifgash Community High School website:

www.mifgashcommunity.org

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In memory of **Sarah Renée Whiting** by Shari Whiting.

In memory of **Alfred Watman** by Linda Finkle.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Libby and David Liebashutz.

In memory of **Judy Dobris** by the Family of Judy Dobris.

In honor of **Rabbi Katz with gratitude for his support during Jesse's hospitalizations and throughout his current rehabilitation process** by Valerie Tabak and Jesse Dinkin.

In appreciation of **Rabbi Katz; the voices of Libby Liebschutz, Melissa Putterman Hoffmann and Lenora Pfeffer; and the Caring Community** by Marcia, Samantha and Daniel Tress.

In memory of **Emery and Ida Sennesh** by Amy Vastola.

In memory of **Jack Pendergrass** by Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass.

In honor of **Ellie and Randy Davis** by Amy Sternstein.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Ben and Becky Marvin.

In memory of **Eleanor Marvin** by Ben and Becky Marvin.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Marlene D. Glass.

In memory of **Irene Swiwcz** by Ruth and Herb Swift.

In memory of **Benjamin Sacks** by Paula Philo.

In memory of **Michael Kramer** by Mindy Kramer.

Seth Edelman

Social Action Fund

In honor of the **Social Action Committee** by Stephen and Jeanette Gottlieb.

In honor of **Gail Volk, for her commitment to the New York Chapter of the League of Women Voters and for all of her hard work in organizing B'nai Sholom's participation in the "Redeem Our Vote" postcard writing initiative** by Valerie Tabak and Jesse Dinkin.

In appreciation of **Lois Gordon** by Marcia Tress.

Vera Propp "Books For Babies" Fund

In memory of **Adah and Theron Vosburg** by Mari Vosburgh.

In memory of **Norman Rosenthal** by Mari Vosburgh.

Religious School Fund and the Vera Propp Books for Babies Fund

In memory of **Irma and Harry Weiss** by Lisa, John and Joe Razanousky.

Caring Community Fund

In appreciation of **the Caring Community** by Ruth and Herb Swift.

The following Yahrtzeits will be observed in February:

2/5 Lillian Dinkin; Milton Kesler; Sarah Koblenz Pock*; Eleanor Newman Blum; Morris Cohen

2/12 Sherryl Pflanz; Helen Rehr; Rose Goldberg; Ida Goldstein; Benjamin L. Dubb*; Barbara Sternstein; Chay Soon Boon; Paul Goldstein; Irma Bruce; Frederic Neuburger; Irma Weiss

2/19 Joyce Epstein*; Augusta Lichtenfels*; Leah Altmayer; Pearl Ronay; Sophie Scholl Small; Arlan Walker*; Ruth Warshaw*; Samuel Strohl; Lena Semelisky*; Morris Wagner*; Helen Goldfarb*; Edith Watnick

2/26 Frances K. Singer*; Ida Roth*; Eugene Tuck; Jerome Flax; Avi Ezra; Paul Rosenthal; Jonas Bernstein*; Stanley Levy; Shirley Dean; Murray Maurer; Jerome Morse; Abe Rudman; Alfred Cohen*; Elsie Meer; Julie Lawrence*; Adele C. Blumenthal; Donald A. Wexler

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

RABBI: David Katz can be reached at rabbidavidkatz18@gmail.com

RABBI EMERITUS: Donald P. Cashman

PRESIDENT: Julie Novkov can be reached at julienovkov@hotmail.com

OFFICE MANAGER: Christine Blackman can be reached at
christine@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us

BOOKKEEPER: Jean Dashnaw can be reached at bookbnaisholom@gmail.com

OFFICE HOURS: TUE/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM–3:30 PM

Articles and news received after the deadline are subject to omission.

As a rule, the Bulletin deadline is the 2nd Wednesday of every month. Adherence to the deadline is critical to ensuring that the Bulletin is sent out in a timely manner.

Period Covered

March.....

Deadline

February 10

April.....

March 10