

# *B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation*

420 WHITEHALL RD., ALBANY, NY 12208

E-mail: [office@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us](mailto:office@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us)

JANUARY 2022

Phone: 518-482-5283

Visit us at <http://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>

TEVET/SH'VAT 5782

***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, MEDITATION, CELEBRATION AND STUDY**

Zoom links for services are sent out weekly.

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

Friday, December 31*	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>
* <b>B'nai Sholom held its first service on this date 50 years ago – in 1971!</b>		
Saturday, January 1	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, January 7	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, January 8	EXTENDED STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, January 14	<b>TOT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>
	<b>SHABBAT SHIRAH SERVICE</b>	<b>7:00 PM</b>
Saturday, January 15	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Sunday, January 16	<b>EREV TU BISHVAT SERVICE – Zoom Seder</b>	<b>6:00 PM</b>
Friday, January 21	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>
Saturday, January 22	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, January 28	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>
Saturday, January 29	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 4	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, February 5	EXTENDED STUDY	10:00 AM

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.***

## **FROM OUR RABBI...**

Shalom, B'nai Sholom!

This year at the B'Yachad religious school, each of the participating congregational rabbis is teaching a series of family programs where students and their parents can learn together. My topic is: the Torah. (I know – a very narrow subject!) My focus, though, is on the physical scroll itself – how it's dressed, what it's made of, how it's written, how to handle it, etc.

One of the topics I make sure to cover is how to navigate the Torah. As you may know, there are no punctuation or cantillation marks in the Torah scroll, so much of it looks like a run-on sentence. There are several tricks and strategies to figure out where you are in the text and find the place you want to be, such as using a special book called a *tikkun*, but at this time of year the process is easier than at almost any other.

As I lead the Hebrew school students to the row of tables on which I've stretched out a long section of a Torah scroll, one or more of them inevitably point to the particular *klaf* (parchment "page") I've made sure was visible. *Shirat HaYam* (The Song of the Sea) tends to stand out in a crowd, so to speak. In the midst of columns of dense text, behold! The sea of words parts and we find two side columns – generally 1-4 words each, alternating in length like waves – surrounding staggered central lines of "Israelites" making their way through the clearing in the middle. Although the Torah scroll is not illustrated or illuminated like a medieval manuscript, we nonetheless get a striking visual representation of this pivotal moment.

I look forward to seeing many of you – whether in person or on Zoom – at our Shabbat Shirah service on January 14, where we will further "illuminate" the text with a variety of music, chanting and congregational participation before holding the text itself aloft during our Torah service, for all to see.

*L'shalom,*

Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot

## **B'nai Sholom's Caring Community**

The Caring Community can call on congregants who are willing and able to mobilize quickly when events such as births, bereavement and accidents make their inevitable way into our lives.

If you or someone you know needs assistance, help and support when:

- ✓ someone is sick or confined
- ✓ a new baby arrives
- ✓ there's been a death in the family
- ✓ there's a tragedy, accident or trauma

please call the office manager and/or Rabbi Weisbrot – 518-482-5283 – to notify us of the situation so we can initiate our support services.

*"On three things does the world stand: On Torah, on worship and on deeds of loving kindness." Pirkei Avot 1:2*

## **FROM OUR PRESIDENT...**

On Monday, January 17, Americans will observe the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Like Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day and other holidays arranged to fall conveniently on Mondays, this day will bring a mix of observances: children will enjoy a day off from school, stores will have sales, federal and state offices will be closed (happily for workers, perhaps less so for those who want to pick up some stamps or do some business at the DMV), a flood of celebratory/commemorative emails from politicians of all stripes who hope you'll be moved to send in a donation, and of course a dollop of history. We will most likely run across some footage of the March on Washington and hear some snippets from Dr. King's famous address there; if we watch TV long enough, we might also hear a little speculation on how Dr. King and the civil rights heroes of the 1950s and 1960s would grapple with our current set of challenges.

For Jews, however, MLK Day can and should have a special significance. This year, the holiday partially overlaps with our New Year for the Trees, Tu BiShvat, a conjunction that invites us to integrate the themes. While Tu BiShvat was traditionally a minor holiday that lost much of its significance as Jews left their agricultural lives, in recent years it has been reinfused with meaning. The Jewish environmental movement has embraced the holiday and its spirit of stewardship of the earth, highlighting its connection to *tikkun olam*. *Tikkun olam*, our sacred obligation to repair the world, finds its roots in the words of our prophets – words that Dr. King consciously echoed in “I Have a Dream,” telling the crowd that “we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.” (Amos 5:24)

At the end of his life, Dr. King focused sharply on the conjunction of race and poverty, highlighting the need to empower Black workers in dangerous occupations and supporting striking Memphis sanitation workers. In the years since his death, we have seen some federal and state efforts to protect the environment, strengthen racial justice and defend workers' rights, but major problems remain at this juncture. This past November, the investigative journalism outlet ProPublica published a devastating report on toxic air blooms around industrial facilities across the United States. The report, using advanced mapping techniques and data from the EPA, identified “more than a thousand hot spots of cancer-causing air,” many located in Black and brown communities. Indeed, the study found that “In predominantly Black census tracts, the estimated cancer risk from toxic air pollution is more than double that of majority-white tracts.” While not all areas with higher levels of risk are in or near communities populated more heavily by racial minorities – the closest to us is in Hoosick Falls – the correlation is striking and deeply troubling.

Also in November, a Michigan judge approved a \$626 million dollar settlement in a class-action lawsuit brought on behalf of residents of Flint, Michigan, who were exposed to lead-contaminated water. While the settlement brings some legal and financial closure, the effects of the years of silent, deadly poisoning are permanent and devastating, especially for the exposed children. Despite the government's responsibility to provide access to safe, clean water, Native American tribes in the Colorado River Basin continue to struggle.

*(Continued on page 4.)*

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They demand redress in the face of years of critical infrastructure neglect, an inability to employ internal taxing power to improve the situation, and heightened contamination problems relating to longstanding drought conditions tied to water overuse and climate change. The recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Law finally begins to address some of these longstanding injustices and inequities, but we still have far to go.

Just as we do not have concrete, readily enforceable rights to clean air and clean water, paving the way for differential distribution of these privileges, poor communities and communities of color face heightened risk in the face of climate change. Assistance to rebuild and recover after climate disasters is much easier for wealthy, insured corporations to access than for individuals, especially those who were already under-resourced. The disasters themselves may strike some harder than others, especially if they occupy land and housing that is more at risk from destructive storms. As summer temperatures rise, so too does the threat posed by power grid failures. Such failures will be more common in neighborhoods without the political pull to demand upgrades, and the residents in these communities will be far less likely to be able just to flip a switch and have a generator run life-saving air conditioners.

Our tradition calls on us to be stewards of the earth and also to care for each other. One of the first wrongs we encounter in the Torah is Cain's murder of Abel, a wrong that the Eternal recognizes when Abel's blood cries out from the earth that the murder has sullied. The encounter between G-d and Cain reveals that the sin is not just the murder, but also Cain's callous refusal to acknowledge or take responsibility for his brother's loss. In his last speech, just before his death, Dr. King called upon us – all of us – to embrace “a kind of dangerous unselfishness.” He asked, “Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation.” As we recognize the importance of these two holidays, one secular and one Jewish, hopefully we can come together to protect our most vulnerable communities against environmental wrongs and the most dangerous and deadly effects of climate change.

*L'shalom,*

Julie Novkov

## Shabbat Shirah — Sabbath of Song — A January Observance

If you have never delved into one of the oldest parts of the Torah — the Song of the Sea — Rabbi Weisbrot is giving B'nai Sholom the chance to join a Jewish tradition by celebrating the Sabbath of Song — Shabbat Shirah — on **Friday, January 14 at 7 p.m.** Shabbat Shirah is named for Moses' and Miriam's song of praise to God after the parting of the Reed Sea during the Hebrews' escape from bondage in Egypt.

**This is the first time Rabbi Weisbrot will hold a Friday evening Torah service with us.** It will include reading from the Torah, singing at least one version of “Mi Chamocha” and reading the translation as part of Shabbat services that evening. There is a special thrill to knowing we are looking at such an ancient text, which is even set apart in the Torah by its “brick-on-brick” layout on the page, mimicking two walls of water with rows of Israelites marching between them.

Making a joyful noise on Shabbat Shirah is a beloved Jewish tradition. We have asked singers and instrumentalists to lead the congregation in a musical celebration before and during services. A new tradition for B'nai Sholom!

**Note** the different start time for the service due to the Torah reading. The Ritual Committee is preparing a brief survey to help determine the start time for future Shabbat services. Please watch for the survey, coming soon to an inbox near you.

## Tu BiShvat: Celebrate Together on January 16

A joyous “New Year for the Trees” is planned for Sunday evening, January 16, at 6 p.m. And while we can't have our seder in person this year, our Zoom event will be a chance for us to celebrate with each other and with Rabbi Weisbrot.

Held in the month of Shevat, Tu BiShvat marks the time when trees in Israel begin their yearly cycle. We eat fruits and nuts mentioned in the Torah (and some that aren't!), and trees are planted in Israel. It's a special seder in which you can participate at home with your family.

Rabbi Weisbrot will lead us as we celebrate with music and blessings and stories. And food! Here are her suggestions for a shopping list:

Participants will need:

- White grape juice or wine (about 2 cups/servings per person)
- Red grape juice or wine (about 2 cups/servings per person)
- Fruit with a tough outside and edible inside (e.g. almonds, oranges, bananas, durian, pineapple, papaya)
- Fruit with an edible exterior and hard core (e.g. apricots, avocados, cherries, olives, plums)
- Fruit that is entirely edible (e.g. apples, blueberries, figs, grapes, star fruit)
- Edible tree products (e.g., cinnamon, maple syrup, carob chips... or **chocolate!**)

Prepare the fruits and nuts to be blessed – and your dinner to follow – and tune in! Rabbi Weisbrot looks forward to a happy celebration with you.

## SOCIAL ACTION / SOCIAL JUSTICE

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, ***“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”***

As we continue to explore ways that B'nai Sholom can be supportive in the current civil rights and racial justice movement, we can all take time to educate ourselves and learn more. One source that our congregants might find useful is an article published by *Sojourners: Faith in Action for Social Justice*: “For Our White Friends Desiring to Be Allies” by Courtney Ariel, August 16, 2017.

The article is a great in-depth discussion, but two points stood out as a good way to begin:

- Being an ally is different than simply wanting not to be racist (thank you for that, by the way). Being an ally requires you to educate yourself about systemic racism in this country. Read Michelle Alexander’s [The New Jim Crow](#) and Ta-Nehisi Coates’ [Between the World and Me](#) and Claudia Rankine’s [Citizen](#) and so many other great [books](#) and [articles](#) that illuminate oppression and structures of white supremacy and white privilege. Use your voice and influence to direct the folks that walk alongside you in real life (or follow you on the internet) toward the voice of someone that is living a marginalized/disenfranchised experience.
- Ask when you don’t know — but do the work first. This is nuanced. Some marginalized/disenfranchised folks will tell you not to ask them anything; don’t be offended by that. Folks are tired, and that is understandable because it is exhausting to be a marginalized person in this world. However, there is something special that happens within human connections and relationships. In a nutshell, don’t expect for people to educate you. Do the work to educate yourself. Ask questions within relationships that feel safe, and do so respectfully.

You can read the entire article here:

<https://sojo.net/articles/our-white-friends-desiring-be-allies>

### **Mitzvah Alert: Help Stock a Free Food Fridge!**

***Do you like to grocery shop? Are fresh produce and dairy items easy for you to select?*** Well then, here’s a rewarding task for you, or perhaps for you and your children, or a friend.

Thanks to the generosity of our congregants, we are ready to stock one of the Free Food Fridges in Albany. After purchasing the food with the money we have collected, stocking the refrigerator would complete the task. The date and location of the specific refrigerator would be coordinated between you and either Jammella Andersen, founder of Free Fridge Albany, or Valerie and Becky can help to get the date and location secured. Please contact Valerie Tabak ([walksing53@gmail.com](mailto:walksing53@gmail.com)) or Becky Marvin ([beckymarvin4574@gmail.com](mailto:beckymarvin4574@gmail.com)) as soon as possible.

Thank you for continuing to support this most worthwhile cause. Winter is upon us, and fresh food insecurity is a reality for many in our immediate community.

## **SOCIAL ACTION / SOCIAL JUSTICE (Continued)**

### **LITTLE FREE PANTRIES FOOD DRIVE**

Once again, B'nai Sholom and Delmar Presbyterian Church, our partner congregation in Family Promise, will collect non-perishable food to stock the "little free food pantries" established in Albany by Openworld Relief. During the pandemic, the Family Promise van driver, Ish, has been stocking these pantries so that those in need of food have free 24-hour access to it. We will also share our collection with the little free pantry run by Bellevue Reformed Church in Schenectady.

WHEN: SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 2022 – NOON TO 2 PM

WHERE: B'NAI SHOLOM REFORM CONGREGATION  
420 WHITEHALL RD., ALBANY

DELMAR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
CORNER OF DELAWARE AVE. & CHERRY AVE., DELMAR

SUGGESTED ITEMS: rice - beans - pasta and sauce - instant rice meals - peanut butter - cereal - instant oatmeal - granola bars - canned chicken - Cup 'o Soup - ramen noodles - canned meat - small bottles of vegetable oil - tea - canned soups/stews - tuna

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! CONTACT: [beckymarvin4574@gmail.com](mailto:beckymarvin4574@gmail.com) 518-439-4574**

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### **Fundraising Committee Thanks for Support, Looks to the Future**

We would like to thank those who participated in the Virtual Fair Trade and Vendor Sale and hope that you are enjoying your purchases. Our partners in this event, Mayan Hands, the Women's Peace Collection and Eeema's Beads, are very grateful for your support.

The Fundraising Committee continues to brainstorm ideas to raise funds for the synagogue in a virtual environment. We welcome suggestions from members of the congregation. Looking ahead, we will again be assembling Mishloach Manot bags for Purim. More information to come in the February Bulletin.

### **B'nai Sholom Needs a Refrigerator (or Two)**

When it's cold outside, we like it to be warm inside... except in one particular space in the kitchen, where cold is good.

In the before times, we had two full-size refrigerators in the kitchen to keep our needs for onegs, festivals and other gatherings. Yes, Jews like to eat.

Since the pandemic began, one of our refrigerators has ceased to be and was sent to the recyclers. The second is operating at half capacity because of broken or damaged shelves. So, we are in need of at least one, and ideally two, refrigerators in good operating condition to be able to resume our normal functions as soon as health authorities advise us accordingly.

If you have one you are willing to donate, please contact Linda Strohl ([lstrohl3772@gmail.com](mailto:lstrohl3772@gmail.com)) or Phil Teumim ([philteumim@gmail.com](mailto:philteumim@gmail.com)). We will arrange transportation. Todah rabah! And stay warm!

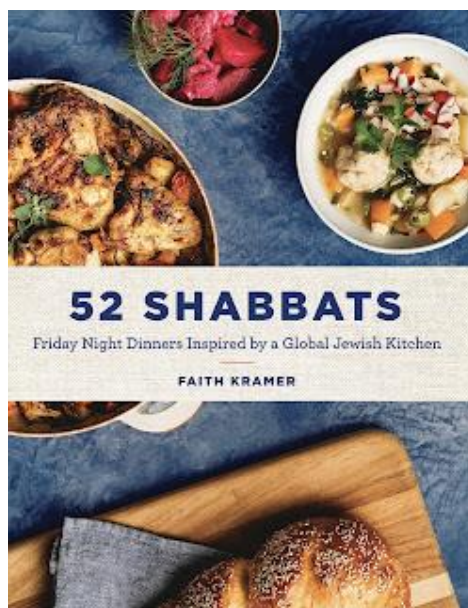
## **Annual Synagogue Scholars Book Talk Returns February 25**

The Adult Education Committee is resuming its Synagogue Scholars series, beginning with Martha Rozett's annual book talk and discussion Friday, February 25, following the evening service. This year's book is *Outwitting History: The Amazing Adventures of a Man Who Rescued Millions of Yiddish Books* by Aaron Lansky, the founder and president of the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Mass.

Lansky's 2004 account of his adventures, which began when he was 23, is a wonderful collection of tales about a rag-tag group of young people who saved Yiddish books from extinction, one trip at a time, with borrowed cars and rented trucks, last-minute phone calls and a growing circle of supporters. Lansky and his volunteers visited with elderly Jews who had no one to pass their books on to, and in the process forged a community and preserved a history and language that was in danger of being forgotten. The book is often hilarious, always heartwarming, and above all a record of the way the Yiddish language and culture – once thought to be dead – outwitted history by surviving and flourishing.

Interested in reading *Outwitting History*? Copies are available in the Albany Public Library system and at your favorite bookstore. We will acquire a copy for the B'nai Sholom library for congregants to sign out and return promptly so that others can borrow it.

## **New in the Library**



### ***52 Shabbats: Friday Night Dinners Inspired by a Global Jewish Kitchen***

By Faith Kramer

Published by Collective Book Studio

Pomegranate Molasses Brisket! Challah Fritters! Tahini Mashed Potatoes!

Check out this and other great Jewish cookbooks from the B'nai Sholom Library. Cookbooks are over by the window.



## The following Yahrzeits will be observed in January.

1/7 Walter L. Hock, Jr.; Eleanor Marvin; Kitty Lazoroff\*; Sylvia Brownstein; Mortimer Henry Englander; Ethel Horowitz; Avraham Koren\*; Minnie Edel\*; Martin Loeb\*; Tobey Katz

1/14 Theron Vosburgh; Leo Cabelly; Rena Bach\*; Harold M. Smuckler\*; Irving Watnick; Merle Schaffer Sperber\*

1/21 Bertha Friedman; Marion Hock\*; William Smith; Bernard Smith; Elizabeth Nelson Mutschler\*; Ronald Weisdorffer; George Raderman

1/28 Allen Heffler; Aaron David Stoller\*; Max Fiks; Ida Shapiro Jaffe\*; Leonard Samuels; Sandra Samuels; Irving Schwartz; Sylvia Schwartz; Isaac Adels\*; Ethel Hesch Berke\*; Lillian Hammer\*; Frank Weinberg\*; Morris Alowitz\*; Roz Walker\*; Jack Jarett; Arthur Katz

## The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

### General Fund

In memory of **Alfred Watnick** by Linda Finkle

A donation to be put toward **the redecoration – furniture, etc. for Rabbi Weisbrot's office** by Eric and Maxine Goldberg

In honor of **attending services on October 1 with the new Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot** by Gloria Ferreras and Lawrence Konstan

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

In memory of **Judith Dobris** by Jan Dobris

In honor of **Isadora Lucy Woodland and Jesse's special birthday** by Jesse Dinkin and Valerie Tabak

In memory of **Olaf "Sonny" Hausgaard** by Anne Hausgaard

In honor of **Bruce and Edith Goldstein for Chanukah 2021 and Edith Goldstein's birthday on December 20, 2021**, by Lorrie Van Akkeren

### Vera Propp – Books for Babies Fund

Jesse Dinkin and Valerie Tabak

Klamka Family

In honor of **the birth of Isadora Lucy, granddaughter of Valerie Tabak and Jesse Dinkin**  
Ellen Rubin

In memory of **Barbara Sternstein** by Amy Sternstein  
Gail and Larry Volk

### Social Action – Fresh Food for Families Fund

Ruth Burkowsky

Jesse Dinkin and Valerie Tabak

Klamka Family

Marsha Piccolo

Ellen Rubin

Amy Sternstein

Gail and Larry Volk

## **Our Recent Kibbutzniks**

Amy Sternstein – In memory of Marshall, the sweetest, most loving cat you could ever know

David and Libby Liebschutz – In honor of Chanukah

David and Libby Liebschutz – In memory of my father, Sanford Liebschutz

Valerie Tabak and Jesse Dinkin – In honor of the birth of our granddaughter, Isadora Lucy Woodland, and in celebration of Jesse’s special birthday

## **Mazal Tov!**

...To Valerie Tabak and Jesse Dinkin on the birth of their granddaughter, Isadora Lucy Woodland, and in celebration of Jesse’s special birthday.

...To Katelyn Ouellette and David DiPaola on the birth of their daughter, Paige Eloise Ouellette DiPaola, born August 30.

**RABBI:** Danielle Weisbrot can be reached at [rabiweisbrot@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us](mailto:rabiweisbrot@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us)

**RABBI EMERITUS:** Donald P. Cashman

**PRESIDENT:** Julie Novkov can be reached at [julienovkov@hotmail.com](mailto:julienovkov@hotmail.com)

**OFFICE MANAGER:** Christine Blackman can be reached at [christine@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us](mailto:christine@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us)

**BOOKKEEPER:** Maryann Wygel can be reached at [bookkeeper@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us](mailto:bookkeeper@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us)

**OFFICE HOURS:** TUE/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM–4:30 PM

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

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

<u>Period Covered</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
February 2022.....	January 12
March 2022.....	February 9