

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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May 2015

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visit us at www.bnaisholomalbany.org

IYAR/SIVAN 5775

JOIN US FOR THESE SERVICES AND STUDY SESSIONS

Friday, May 1	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:00 PM
Saturday, May 2	TORAH STUDY: <i>Emor</i> Lev. 21-24.23	9:30 AM
	SHABBAT SERVICE	10:30 AM
	Bar Mitzvah of Luca Negris	
Friday, May 8	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE	8:00 PM
Saturday, May 9	TORAH STUDY: <i>Be-har</i> Lev. 25.1-26.2	9:30 AM
Friday, May 15	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE - Longevity Shabbat	8:00 PM
Saturday, May 16	PSALMS STUDY	
	Extended study with coffee and bagels	9:30 AM
Friday, May 22	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE	8:00 PM
Saturday, May 23	TORAH STUDY: <i>Be-midbar</i> Num. 1.1-4.20	9:30 AM
	EREV SHAVUOT SERVICE	
	The Ten Commandments: Yizkor	7:30 PM
Friday, May 29	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE	8:00 PM
Saturday, May 30	TORAH STUDY: <i>Naso'</i> Num. 4.21-7.89	9:30 AM
Friday, June 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:00 PM
Saturday, June 6	PSALMS STUDY	
	Extended study with coffee and bagels	9:30 AM

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 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....

Wherever it is held, the annual Founders' Day Service is always a lot of fun for the rabbis. Being together for joyous communal worship and learning on Shabbat is a great pleasure and privilege for us, and we're delighted that for over a generation we've been doing this. It's been fascinating to see the evolution of the service over the years and the different formats that planners have tried.

The guest speakers always represent some aspect of Reform Judaism. We've heard from professionals at the Union for Reform Judaism, from faculty at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and from a distinguished musician. At B'nai Sholom, we've tended to bring in scholars (Rabbi Joan Friedman on Rabbi Solomon Freehof, Rabbi Donna Berman on new liturgy, Rabbi Dana Kaplan on changes in Reform, and Prof. Mark Raider on Stephen S. Wise). This year, we were privileged to have as our scholar-in-residence for Founders' Day and the Shabbaton Rabbi Mary L. Zamore, who taught us about the ethics of eating.

Rabbi Zamore's main thesis is that Reform Judaism can, and should, take possession of and reinterpret the concept of *kashrut* (that which is kosher). The basic idea in Judaism is that some food is kosher, that is, "fit for eating." Our task as Reform Jews is to determine for ourselves what is fit or suitable. Biblical and rabbinic law, as is well known, have their own ideas about what makes food "fit." In our own time, many of us believe that aside from (or instead of) the traditional ideas of *ritual* fitness, we need to consider ideas of *ethical* fitness. In the book she edited, *The Sacred Table: Creating a Jewish Food Ethic*, Rabbi Zamore shares several dozen short essays on issues such as concern for the environment, genetic engineering, fish farming, concern for animals, concern for workers, wine, ritual slaughter, allergies, personal health, eating disorders, food justice, and issues such as challah, blessings and fasting.

What is kosher may have begun in the Bible with Leviticus 11 (what we are reading at the time of this writing) and its list of permitted and prohibited animals, but as Reform Jews who are committed to the evolution of Judaism - a historic notion which began 2000 years ago with the Mishnah - it is our duty to bring the wisdom of our time to our tables.

Reform Judaism has always looked to the past for inspiration, hoping to find meaning for today in the ideas of previous generations. What we've discovered is that what lacks meaning for one generation becomes filled with new promise for another generation. The early Reformers may have closed the door on the religio-ethical connection with what they ate; now, that door is opening.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Don Cashman

Mazel Tov!

to Lee Brice on the birth of her grandson, Abraham David Clark, son of Sojourner Brice and Lateef Clark.

to Benjamin Kindlon who graduated from the State University of New York at New Paltz.

to Rich and Barbara Nussbaum on the birth of their grandson, Warren Henry Albright, son of Liz and Laura Albright.

**Longevity Shabbat and Potluck Dinner
Honoring "Chai Plus" Members
Set for May 15**

The Membership Committee invites you to join us for our biannual Longevity Shabbat service and potluck dinner on May 15, 2015, to honor those who have been members of B'nai Sholom for 18 years and beyond. We gratefully dedicate this Shabbat to our longstanding members, acknowledging their contributions of continuity to our synagogue family.

Potluck dinner at 6:30, followed by 8 p.m. service. RSVP for the potluck by May 8th to Liz Gingrich at 456-3366 or fiddlinliz7@gmail.com and please include your meal contribution with your RSVP. You'll need to supply beverages and place settings for your family.

While this event specifically honors longtime members, all are welcome to attend the dinner and, of course, the service.

Register for Reform Jewish Voice Advocacy Day - May 4

Advocacy Day is RJV's flagship event, held every year in May in Albany, NY. Join RJV and numerous social justice leaders from across the state (including rabbis and social action chairs) to learn about key issues and what Reform Jewish values can teach us about those issues.

You will also have the opportunity to meet with your State Assembly member and Senator's offices to speak with them about those issues. Whether you have been to Advocacy Day before, or this is your first time, it is a wonderful, exciting experience to interact with our elected officials and speak to them about important issues from a Reform Jewish perspective.

Please contact Sarah Greenberg at (202) 387-2800 with any questions.

B'nai Sholom is holding a Red Cross blood drive on Sunday, May 3

We need donors and non-donors to make our drive a success!!!

The Blood Drive will be held in the temple social hall on Sunday, **May 3** from 9 AM to 2 PM.

If you are a regular donor, please note that March 8 is the last day you can donate prior to our drive. If you can't donate blood, there are many ways you can help, either before or during the drive. Please call the temple office any time for an appointment or to volunteer.

NEW: You may also schedule your appointment by calling 1-800-Red Cross, or by using online scheduling at redcross.org (our drive won't be available online until closer to the event).

***** REMEMBER !!! 16 YEAR-OLDS ARE ELIGIBLE TO DONATE!!! *****



Make a Promise to Family Promise

The Social Action Committee launched its new initiative to be a support congregation for Family Promise of the Capital Region at the April 24 Social Action Shabbat.

What is Family Promise?

Family Promise of the Capital Region (FPCR) is a new chapter of a national organization that for over 25 years has provided help getting homeless families back on their feet, with an 80% success rate. FPCR is a network of faith communities providing a local response for homeless children and their families. B'nai Sholom is the only synagogue participating in this local interfaith initiative.

Who is served by Family Promise?

FPCR serves families who have lost their housing due to a variety of reasons including loss of job, reduction of working hours, rising rents. Existing social service agencies refer families to FPCR and continue to provide services as necessary. Families are screened to meet FPCR standards: no active drug/alcohol abuse or mental illness. Adults continue to work or seek better employment, children continue to attend their home schools.

Why is this program needed?

When a family loses their housing suddenly, often the only option is to use shelters. However, shelters are usually segregated by gender. A single mother with a 14 year old son and an 8 year old son may be told that she and the younger son can go to the women's shelter but the 14 year old boy will have to go to the men's shelter by himself. Family Promise keeps the family together. There are currently more than 180 affiliates across the country.

How will B'nai Sholom participate?

Delmar Presbyterian is one of the host congregations, and they will provide meals and overnight accommodations to three to four families for one week at a time, four times a year. B'nai Sholom will be a support congregation to Delmar Presbyterian Church during the four weeks that they will host.

What will B'nai Sholom volunteers do?

As a support congregation we have pledged to provide dinner and companionship from 5:00 to 10:00 pm for two nights each of the four weeks that Delmar Presbyterian Church is the host site. Depending on how many families are being served, two to three B'nai Sholom volunteers will be needed each night. Volunteers cook and transport dinner to the church, share dinner with guests, clean up, and then are available to read to children, provide homework assistance or have a companionable conversation. Volunteers will be trained and all members of a family are welcome to volunteer!

***Our scheduled dates this year are: Monday, June 8 and Wednesday, June 10;
Monday, August 24 and Wednesday, August 26; and
Monday, November 2 and Wednesday, November 4***

How can you help?

Becky Marvin and Gail Volk are B'nai Sholom's Co-Coordinators. To volunteer to sign up or if you have questions, **please contact Gail at gailrvolk@aol.com**. Or, contact Gail to find out about other ways you can help.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING SESSION: Wednesday, May 13, at 6:30 PM - Delmar Presbyterian Church, 585 Delaware Ave. (at the corner of Cherry). Please let Gail know if you plan to attend.

Founders' Day Shabbaton Explores Meaning in Food

More than 100 worshipers from all the area Reform congregations gathered at B'nai Sholom on Friday evening, March 27, for the annual joint service to honor the memories of Isaac Mayer Wise and Stephen S. Wise, the founders of the major institutions of Reform Judaism in America. The highlight of the service, led jointly by Rabbi Cashman and the other area rabbis, was a sermon by our special guest scholar, Rabbi Mary Zamore, editor of *The Sacred Table: Creating a Jewish Food Ethic*. Rabbi Zamore urged us to embrace the concept of kashrut but to define it on our own terms, much as Reform Jews have created modern, meaningful ways to observe Shabbat.



On Saturday, March 28, our special Shabbat program continued with Torah study, morning worship services, a potluck lunch, text study led by Rabbi Zamore, a choice of three early afternoon workshops, and a final closing celebration. Rabbi Zamore's text study focused on the Exodus story, appropriate for the Shabbat before Passover and for a program focused on food. Rabbi Zamore pointed out the foods consumed by the Israelites while in Egyptian captivity were fish, melons, cucumbers, leeks, onions, and garlic – pretty tasty, actually – while matzah and manna, while perhaps less appetizing, were the true foods of liberation. She suggested that leavened bread of the ancient world invariably tasted of the locale in which it was made, because the wild yeast used as leavening varied in flavor from place to place. Eating matzah, devoid of that unique taste of “home,” or at least of a familiar past, symbolizes our ability to break free from old habits or traditions or enslavements.

The afternoon workshops were engaging and wide-ranging. Yelp restaurant blogger Daniel Berman led a discussion of the Capital Region's restaurant offerings, with an exhortation that we become more discriminating in our standards and more specific in how we discuss restaurants in social media. Participants in Rabbi Cashman's session on wine enjoyed tasting several varieties while the rabbi explained the sources and history of kosher wine. In Amy Koren-Roth's session, each participant was given a written statement relative to food production and consumption and their impacts on the lives of communities throughout the world. Participants read their statements aloud to the group, which discussed the pros and cons of the issues raised. The day concluded with all participants reuniting in the social hall for an array of fruit and cookies before disbanding at about 3:00 p.m.

Thanks and congratulations go out to co-chairs Barbara Devore and Ann Shapiro for spearheading such a successful event, and to Linda Strohl for ensuring the potluck lunch was worthy of an event highlighting the meaning of food!

Clothing Drive!



The Social Action Committee will hold its spring/summer clothing drive on Sunday, May 3 from 9 to 1. Please bring ONLY clothing that is clean and gently used. Be sure to sort twice: once for gender (male, female, unisex) and again for size (adult, teens, children, infants).

B'nai Sholom Adult Education Teacher Finds Inspiration in *Noah*

When director Darren Aronofsky's film, *Noah*, was released in March 2014, it provoked a wide range of reactions, from praise to outrage. Moviegoers were puzzled, and many were offended, by what seemed to be bizarre additions to the story, particularly the digitally created monsters. For long-time B'nai Sholom adult education teacher Steven Stark-Riemer, however, *Noah* represented the perfect storm.

First of all, Steve was suffering from the teacher's equivalent of writer's block. Having developed and taught eight different courses on Judaism and Early Christianity, he was stumped to come up with a ninth new course topic. "I walked out of the movie theater," says Steve, "totally excited about what I had just witnessed and doubly excited to know that I had the theme for my next course."

Stark-Riemer is a bit of a phenom in the world of Capital Region adult education. From a modest start of a single course at B'nai Sholom in 2007, Steve has developed a catalogue of eight different courses, each consisting of about eight weekly classes. Although each course premieres at B'nai Sholom, he has repeated them at four other synagogues in Albany and Schenectady, the Schenectady JCC, SUNY Albany's OASIS program, the Avila retirement community, Empire State College's Academy for Lifelong Learning in Saratoga, and the Massry Residence in Albany. Next fall, he will teach for the Bethlehem School District's HILL program. Since 2007, by his calculations, he has offered courses 41 times to over 900 students.



"As I watched *Noah*," Stark-Riemer explains, "I knew most people would not understand that much of it was inspired by ancient interpretations of the Biblical Flood. Only a nut like me knows all this stuff!" Then the reviews started rolling in. Muslims banned it. Christians complained that it didn't follow the Biblical story. All kinds of reviewers accused the moviemakers of making up weird material to fill out the slim story presented in the Bible.

Steve, on the other hand, explains that the movie is actually carefully researched and well grounded in Jewish literature written roughly between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E. that did not make it into the Hebrew Bible. "Part of why these books were never canonized," he posits, "is because they were so bizarre. They reflect what was, at the time, a rising apocalyptic world view that was trying to explain why there is evil in the world."

Steve majored in anthropology, specializing in archaeology, as an undergraduate and fully anticipated that he would go on for a PhD and an academic career as an archaeologist. Instead, a series of events pushed his life along a different course, such that he ended up with a law degree and a career as an attorney for New York State, the last 25 years with the Office of Mental Health. Nevertheless, he maintained his subscription to *The Biblical Archaeology Review* and his interest in archaeology as an avid amateur.

Steve was eagerly awaiting *Noah*'s release because of his life-long fascination with Bible stories and the many films they have inspired. "My grandmother gave me a Bible when I was about four, and I read those stories over and over throughout my childhood," he says. "Then I saw *The Ten Commandments*, and I was totally hooked on Biblical movies from there. I saw them all, from *Samson and Delilah* to *Ben Hur*."

"What the Bible gave to me, early on, and what archaeology opened my eyes to later, was the history of everyday life and ordinary people. As I read the Bible, I envisioned my ancestors, not as Moses or Joshua, but as the people in the crowd, following them." As an adult, Steve's interests led him to more in-depth research, including that of other ancient writings that attempt to explain or fill in the details of the Biblical stories. Such writings in later periods are formally classified as

New Class Draws Inspiration from *Noah*, cont'd from p. 6

“Midrash,” but Steve refers to similar narratives from this ancient period – as well as from our modern era – as “midrash with a small ‘m’.”

Steve began participating in Saturday morning Torah study at B'nai Sholom in 2005. He contributed both his knowledge of archaeological research and his other Biblical studies to the discussion. The Saturday morning regulars loved it, and clamored for more.

In appreciation, Steve developed his first class, "Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel," offered at B'nai Sholom in the fall of 2007. Following its enthusiastic reception, Steve began developing one or two new courses a year, covering topics such as the ancient origins of anti-Semitism, who wrote the Hebrew Bible, the contemporaneous development of early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism, and the East-West split in the Jewish Diaspora. As the course catalog grew, so did word of mouth about the high quality of his classes, and he began to receive offers to repeat the courses in other venues.

Steve's loyal following is now a bit of a beast that demands constant feeding. By the 2013-14 program year, "I was feeling a lot of pressure to come up with a new class," he admits, "and I just wasn't feeling inspired." He headed out to see *Noah* motivated solely by his love for Biblical movies, not thinking of the evening as research for the next class. Nevertheless, it turned out to be just the spark of inspiration he needed.

The result is his new course, "Unlocking *Noah*: Bible, Midrash, and Moviemaking." It will begin Thursday, May 7 at B'nai Sholom and continue for a total of six sessions.

The course will begin with a screening of *Noah* at 7 p.m. The next four classes will meet from 7:15 p.m. to 9 p.m., examining the ancient Jewish apocryphal and midrashic literature that was used by the film's creators to fill in the gaps in the Noah story, as well as to a discussion of the parts that were indeed modern contributions by the moviemakers. The final session will feature a second screening of *Noah* at 7 p.m. "I'm hoping that the repeat showing will be an entirely different experience for the students," Steve says, "because they will then approach it with a solid grounding in all the sources that contribute to this cinematic midrash."

Steve hopes to repeat his *Noah* class, probably as a daytime offering, in the fall at B'nai Sholom. To our great disappointment, Steve and his wife Dorit intend to spend next winter in warmer climes, limiting Steve's teaching availability to early fall and late spring. In response, B'nai Sholom is considering summer classes, says adult education committee chair Barney Horowitz. "Steve is a great teacher and a great asset to our program," Barney says. "We will find a way to keep offering Steve's courses as long and as often as we can arrange for him to teach them."

Registration Form for "Unlocking Noah" is included in this Bulletin.

The following Yahrzeits will be observed in May.

- 5/1 Fay Levinn, George Rudinger, Cecelia Zimmelman*, Hyman Ikler, Brion Black*, Evelyn Davis, Lieselotte Weiner
- 5/8 Louis Samuel Harris, Mac Kashdan, Gordan Goldstein, Mel Lee, Anna Liff*, Samuel Bach*, Meyer Pogoda
- 5/15 Dorothy Lazoroff*, Glory Swartz, Hyman Tress, Henry Kramer, Edgar Altmayer, Morris Alowitz*, Renee Stoller, Louis Rosenblatt*, Alan Berke*, Sol Goldstein*, Herbert Horowitz
- 5/22 Meyer Tabak, Marvin Kerper, Elaine H. Neuburger, George Singer*
- 5/29 Frances Dobris*, Hyman Zima*, Kenneth Rockefeller, Irving Englander*, Rose Rogers Singer*, Dorothy Raderman, Jack Raderman, Sam Rauch, Leo Levin, Jerome Hoffmann*

**denotes that a Perpetual Memorial has been established*

In the Community...

The **Ne'imah Jewish Community Chorus** will present its 23rd Annual Concert "**Modern Traditions – A Salute to Contemporary Jewish Music**" with Guest Artist Noah Aronson on Sunday, June 7, 2015 at 7:30 PM at the Linda, WAMC's Performing Arts Studio, 339 Central Avenue, Albany, NY. Parking will be available. General Admission \$15, Seniors and Students \$10 Tickets will be available at the door, or by calling 438-9561, or by email at neimahchorus@gmail.com



Bet Shraga Hebrew Academy of the Capital District Graduated Tuition Plan for New Families:

Beginning with the 2015-2016 academic year, even more families will be able to experience Hebrew Academy's dual curriculum, dedicated teachers, and student-focused learning. Our Graduated Tuition Plan allows families new to HACD to take advantage of greatly reduced tuition rates for K-5th grade. Tuition starts at \$2750 for incoming Kindergarteners. Visit www.hacdalbany.com for more information or contact Rachael Woren at rworen@hacdalbany.com or 518-482-0464 x.114

THE CONGREGATION NOTES WITH THANKS THESE CONTRIBUTIONS...

In memory of **David Fiks** by Howard, Bettina and Jeremy Stoller

In memory of **Sidney Devore** by Jack and Barbara Devore

In memory of **Irma Schwartzman** by Mindy Kramer

In memory of **Rhoda Green** by Randy and Ellie Davis

In memory of **Caleb Reeder and Judy Reeder** by Mark and Cheryl Reeder

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In honor of **Gary Hoffmann's** promotion to the rank of Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve by Gary and Melissa Hoffmann

THANK YOU

to the following congregants who recently hosted an Oneg Shabbat: Sharona Wachs, the Adult Education Committee and the Social Action Committee.

to the Bulletin Brigade who helped fold, insert and stuff envelopes to get the April Bulletin out: Mark Reeder, Rema Goldstein, Marilyn and Richard Strassberg, Paula Philo, Joan Savitt and Terry Royne.

RABBI: Donald P. Cashman

PRESIDENT: Melody Bruce

OFFICE MANAGER: Christine Blackman

BOOKKEEPER: Lisa Allendorph

OFFICE HOURS: MON/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM

Helping Families



Haven at JFS was there for me and my family after my husband's death. I am grateful to their social workers for ensuring that we were not alone in our grief.

Haven at JFS provides counseling and support for people who are dealing with loss of a loved one and struggling with major life transitions. We offer individual, family and group support.

Please contact us to learn more or to make a referral.
518-370-1666 | jstraussman@jfsnyny.org

jfsnyny.org/haven  **Haven**

As a rule, the BULLETIN DEADLINE is the second Wednesday of each month.

Period Covered

June

July

Deadline

May 13

June 17

Articles and news received after deadline are subject to omission.