

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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FEBRUARY 2023

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

SH'VAT/ADAR 5783

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, February 3	SHABBAT SHIRAH SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 4	EXTENDED STUDY	10:00 AM
Sunday, February 5	TU BISHVAT SEDER (ZOOM ONLY)	6:00 PM
Friday, February 10	TOT SHABBAT SERVICE	5:30 PM
	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 11	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 17	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 18	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 24	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 25	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, March 3	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, March 4	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!

Those of us who are independent contractors or self-employed in the US likely know the “joy” of paying quarterly estimated taxes. I use quotes around *joy* here because the experience is at best mundane, and at worst stressful or even mildly panic-inducing if you are cutting in close to the deadline. The Jewish calendar also has four tax days, but instead of a plain business transaction, we transform them into outright festivals. (Perhaps the IRS should take notes...)

In the case of Tu BiShvat, the Kabbalists converted the Jewish new year of the trees – the date from which we count new produce for the purposes of tithing – into a more spiritual event. We take a metaphorical journey through the seasons of the year and experience each one both physically and introspectively. For winter, we eat foods with tough outer shells or rinds (e.g. oranges or walnuts), drink purely white juice or wine, and think of the ways in which we have put up our defenses or shut ourselves off from connection. In “spring,” we add a slight blush of red to our white beverage and eat foods with a hard pit or core (e.g. peaches or olives), focusing on the new growth we have made in the past year. Our summer cup is mostly red, accompanied by fruits that are entirely edible (e.g. berries or starfruit) as we open ourselves up to abundance and generosity. And in the final season, fall, our glass is almost fully red and, if we eat anything at all, it is something that gets to the essence of a tree (e.g. cinnamon, maple syrup, or chocolate!) and forces us to be introspective about the essence of ourselves.

I am looking forward not only to celebrating this holiday with you at our Zoom seder on February 5, but shortly thereafter leaving for the CCAR convention in Israel, where this tradition was born and where Tu BiShvat truly represents the beginning of early spring: almond blossoms, new leaves, and warmer temperatures.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot

From Our President...

Back in 2022, I wrote that my goals for B'nai Sholom are to continue offering quality programs, to increase our appeal to existing and new members and to increase the efficiency of our operations. During 2023, I plan to focus my attention on increasing efficiencies.

A careful review of B'nai Sholom's Annual Guide shows that we have 120 member units and 27 separate committees. According to the Union for Reform Judaism's (URJ) most recent survey, the average number of committees in congregations like ours is eight. Having so many different committees at B'nai Sholom is overwhelming for members who are new, confusing for members who want to engage more actively and taxing for members who are active in multiple committees.

URJ's guidebook on Leadership and Governance recommends reducing the number of congregational committees by utilizing a constellation of volunteer groups – including standing committees, working groups and time-bound task forces. Committees meet monthly and exist in perpetuity. Task forces work on strategic and visionary issues and disband when their work is complete. Working groups gather volunteers to complete specific projects or produce specific events; they don't have to meet monthly to get their work done.

Our committee chairs met a few months ago and discussed ideas for reducing the number of committees at B'nai Sholom. Their ideas were incorporated into a draft proposal, which is slowly being reviewed and will eventually be finalized. Please contact me if you have suggestions or would like to be involved in this committee restructuring process. All ideas are welcome!

L'shalom,

Ann Lowenfels
President

A Joyful Noise: Shabbat Shirah — Sabbath of Song — February 3

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 opportunity to join a Jewish tradition by celebrating the Sabbath of Song — Shabbat Shirah — on Friday, February 3, 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.

Rabbi Weisbrot will lead a service for Shabbat Shirah again this year with a Torah reading, singing at least one version of "Mi Chamocho" and reading the translation. 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, so singers and instrumentalists will lead the congregation in a musical celebration for the service once again. An ongoing tradition for B'nai Sholom – be sure not to miss it!

Tu BiShvat is Here – Let’s Celebrate Together on February 5

A joyous “New Year for the Trees” is planned for Sunday, February 5, at 6 p.m. And while we won’t have our seder in person this year, our Zoom event will be a chance for us to celebrate with each other.

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 from home.

Rabbi Weisbrot and others will lead us as we celebrate with music, blessings and stories. And food! This year, in addition to your own shopping list, the Ritual Committee is offering each household a packet of trail mix containing some of the required foods, and — in anticipation of Spring — a packet of parsley seeds. Plant the seeds now indoors and harvest your parsley in April for your Passover seder! Pick up one of each at the synagogue in the week leading up to Tu BiShvat.

Here are suggestions for your home shopping list:

- 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!

B’nai Sholom’s Audacious Hospitality Task Force (soon to be renamed) invites you to URJ’s **Racial Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (REDI) 101**
Monday, February 6, 8-9:30 PM

All are welcome to REDI 101, the core REDI program.

Please join URJ’s Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team (REDI) for Beyond Welcoming: Addressing Racism, Homophobia, Ableism, & More. Start building stronger communities and transform the ways in which you can create meaningful Jewish experiences for people of all backgrounds.

Note: This will be a level-setting REDI session, which will provide information and resources to learn more about REDI practices that you can incorporate into your communities.

For registration & more detail, please use the link in the website edition of this Bulletin.

Once you complete the registration, you will receive a confirmation e-mail including the Zoom link.

WON'T YOU JOIN US?

Please mark your calendars!

Please join us for B'nai Sholom's Biannual Progressive Dinner on March 11, 2023, sponsored by the Member Events Committee. These dinners have been great successes in the past, and we haven't held one in almost four years!

The evening will begin with appetizers at B'nai Sholom. Participants will then go to one of the hosts' homes for dinner and continue on to another home for dessert. It will be a night filled with adult conversation and companionship.

Whether you've joined us before or not, we hope you will this time. Our dinner and dessert hosts are all set, so please sign up to come and bring an appetizer for eight by contacting Bettina at bfstoller@gmail.com or by phone at 518-489-8636. We need your help to make this the enjoyable event it has been in the past.

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 lovingkindness.” Pirkei Avot 1:2



When someone mentions the name “Esther”

do you feel the earth move under your feet...
or get an urge to do the locomotion...
or wish you could send Haman so far away???

B’nai Sholom
and the
Shushan National Touring Company and CPAs

Present

“JEW-TIFUL: A CAROLE KING MEGILLAH”

Featuring our favorite Bible love story set to tunes written by Carole King or
used in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*

A totally un-Orthodox (really!) musical revue written by B’nai Sholom’s own Brill
Building brood of award-whining songwriters

MONDAY, MARCH 6, 7 P.M.

Giggle as a gaggle of crazy congregants deftly delivers
delightfully deranged ditties

Continuous revelry

Multi-access – Live in the Sanctuary and at home via Zoom

DON’T LOSE THAT LOVING FEELING!!

**CELEBRATE PURIM WITH B’NAI SHOLOM AND
YOU’LL STILL LOVE US TOMORROW – GUARANTEED!!**

A FEW MINUTES WITH THE TORAH

Spotlighting the outstanding d'vrei Torah written by congregants. This month, we present Vayigash, written by Julie Novkov and delivered by Julie at Kabbalat Shabbat service December 30, 2022.

D'var Torah for December 30 Kabbalat Shabbat Service: Vayigash By Julie Novkov

This week's parashah, Vayigash, provides the dramatic climax of the story arc around Joseph and his brothers. The despised child abandoned in slavery reveals himself as the second most powerful man in Egypt, in possession of the resources that the Israelites need to survive. Judah, the proud patriarch who plotted to destroy Joseph, is reduced to begging Joseph for mercy, offering himself in place of his youngest brother (and Joseph's only full sibling) Benjamin as a hostage.

For his part, Joseph at first seemed fully committed to paying back his brothers for their cruelty, but the game goes too far and, either deeply moved by the news that his father is still alive, by Judah's description of the closeness between Benjamin and Jacob, or by Judah's offer to serve as his slave in place of his brother, reveals himself to be their long-lost brother. He assures them that all of this was part of the Eternal's plan to rescue them from the famine. He arranges for the Israelites to come and take possession of the land of Goshen, and Jacob makes the long journey to reunite with his beloved son. Joseph advises his brothers to present themselves to Pharaoh as shepherds ready to manage his livestock.

The parashah then turns Joseph's further dealings to address the famine, which still has five years to go. His dream enabled him to prepare, and now he reaps the benefit. The desperate Egyptians first give him all their silver, and then their livestock, and finally themselves and their land in exchange for food and seeds to plant. Reduced to serfdom, they must deliver a fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh, but they are so desperate that they thank him for giving them life and accept their servitude willingly.

On the surface, it seems like we are expected to praise Joseph for his generosity toward his brothers after their drastic intervention in his life's course and applaud the reversal of fortune that renders Judah the importuner. While Joseph doesn't explicitly forgive them, he reassures them by reinforcing his exalted condition as Pharaoh's chief counselor. But have the family dynamics really changed? Who is Joseph and what lessons does his life have for us about family trauma and character?

When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, his first act is to ask them to confirm again that his father is really alive. Despite the fact that he describes himself as "a ruler of the whole land of Egypt," he still needs his father's approval and recognition. His first instructions to his brothers are to "hurry back up to my father" and tell him that "God has made me a lord of all Egypt!" Later, he instructs them to "tell my father how they honor me in Egypt." Even with the favoritism he had from his father in his early life and the long course of his rise to enormous power, he needs for his brothers to acknowledge his might and superiority to his father and longs for his father to see his glory.

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Perhaps then it is not so surprising that the boy who dreamed of his brothers' subjugation takes advantage of the Egyptians' life-threatening plight. He methodically strips them of their silver, their livestock, their lands and their bodily autonomy, imposing each increasingly stringent demand as they face starvation. We know that the tables will turn, of course, and we bear the Egyptians little love, but the harshness of this treatment still grates. Reading between the lines, it seems that at least some of the expropriated livestock are put under the Israelites' management as well.

New years are moments of reflection and renewal for many of us across both religious and secular traditions. Hopefully we started off 5783 with a relatively clean slate after atoning for our wrongs. But the secular new year is more a time for looking ahead and trying to change for the better. The story of Joseph for me encourages me to think about what I carry with me as I think about how I want the next year to go. It is enormously hard to walk away from past traumas and to break generational cycles of harm. Even Joseph, the ambitious and accomplished man who rose from slavery to unimaginable power, remained in some ways a child demanding his father's attention and love, and he never learned to help others without extracting a price.

Judah's arc may provide us with more hope. Initially just as jealous of Joseph as his brothers, he plots with some of them to remove Joseph. When he re-encounters him as an adult, however, he is transformed. His father Jacob has made his strong preferment of Benjamin, Rachel's only other son, known, but Judah has grown beyond envy and honors the bond between Jacob and Benjamin. He offers himself as a slave in Benjamin's place, "For how can I go home to my father without the lad, and thus see the harm my father will suffer?" Judah has become a man in his own right, driven by his compassion and love for his father, despite his father's lifelong history of favoritism and no longer in need of his father's approval for his own validation. After the revelation, when the brothers are returning to Egypt with their father, Judah goes ahead to Joseph and helps to engineer their reunion. Judah, the fourth-born son of unloved Leah, has become a man and a leader in his own right, in some ways escaping the damaging family history of the past.

In our tradition, Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim become princes of tribes, but it is Judah's line that produces King David. Joseph's descendants are lost to history as Jews while Judah's patriarchal legacy survives. Perhaps this is a good reminder to all of us that letting go of the past can sometimes be our best way of reclaiming the future. Shabbat shalom!

ADULT ED NEWS

- Upcoming courses – details to follow

- ✓ Siblings, Second Temple Judaism and the Development of Early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, taught by Steve Stark-Riemer
Tuesdays, May 9 -June 13.

This is the first six weeks of a two-part course focusing on the archaeology, history and religion of Ancient Israel during the Second Temple Period.

- ✓ Topics in Jewish History, taught by Professor Paul Finkelman
Mondays, May 1-15.

Dr. Finkelman is a noted legal scholar and a specialist in American Jewish history. The topics for this course are to be determined.

- Our thanks to Martha Rozett, our January 6 synagogue scholar, for leading the discussion following services last month over the Dara Horn book, *People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Past*. We can't wait for next year's selection.
- As we go forward exploring Judaism from a variety of perspectives and platforms, Adult Ed is always looking for new committee members as well as suggestions for future programs. Contact Barney Horowitz for more information.

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

The Tabak-Smith/Dinkin Family

In honor of Hannah Tabak, mother of Derek, Valerie and Maggie Tabak

The Tabak-Smiths

In honor of the birthdays of Valerie Tabak and Ann Shapiro

Lois Gordon

In memory of my sister, Tobey Katz

Becky and Ben Marvin

In memory of Ben's stepmother, Eleanor Marvin, on her yahrtzeit

Social Action/Social Justice

Kick Off Shabbat with a Mitzvah: B'nai Sholom is Holding a Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, March 10
9 AM to 1 PM

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



The Blood Drive will be held in the social hall. If you are a regular donor, please note that January 13 was the last day you could donate prior to our drive. If you can't donate blood, there are many ways you can help, either before or during the drive.

While walk-in appointments are welcomed, you can schedule your appointment by calling
1-800-RED CROSS

or by using online scheduling at www.redcross.org keyword: Bnai Sholom

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

(with signed parental permission)

Mitzvah Alert

Have you ever sorted produce at the Regional Food Bank in Latham? If not, here is your opportunity to join us on Sunday, March 19, from 10:30 a.m. until noon.

Children whose parents feel they can participate are more than welcome to join us! Please contact Valerie Tabak (518-428-8547) or Becky Marvin (518-439-4574) for more information or if interested.

A few hours of your time will help to feed our friends and neighbors in Northeastern New York.

Dear Congregation...

Thank you very much for, once again, coming through for our neighbors residing at the Schuyler Inn in Menands, where families live while experiencing housing insecurity. Jesse Dinkin and Valerie Tabak delivered cartons of new books, which were an important addition to the Christmas presents that were distributed to the children. The previously loved books helped to replenish the library we had refreshed prior to the Pandemic.

Knowing that we can always count on the B'nai Sholom community for help reinvigorates the members of the Social Action/Social Justice Committee.

Spotlight on New Members: Melissa Browne and Mary Warrener

Editor's Note: One of a series of articles from the Membership Committee to introduce those who have recently joined B'nai Sholom. This month we welcome Melissa Browne and Mary Warrener.



Melissa and Mary moved to Albany in February 2022 from Orange County, N.Y., to be closer to their daughter, Rachel, and granddaughter, Lola. They are both passionate about their four two-legged children (and now grandchild) and their multiple four-legged ones. After finally settling into their new house, they were encouraged by B'nai Sholom's welcoming website to visit and were immediately won over by Rabbi Weisbrot and the community.

Mary and Melissa were married in 2016 by Rabbi Yael Romer at Congregation Emanuel in Kingston, where Mary was a long-time member. Melissa, a long-time member at the Monroe Temple of Liberal Judaism, also taught Hebrew school there for many years and became an adult bat mitzvah.

Both professors of English at Orange County Community College, Melissa retired last spring but continues to teach part-time. Apart from work, Mary is an avid runner and leads Torah study with two of their four children, while Melissa enjoys reading and spends most of her time babysitting Lola. They look forward to meeting more congregants and participating in the life of the B'nai Sholom community!

BE ON GUARD AGAINST EMAIL SPOOFING SCAM

STAY ALERT! If you see a suspicious email that claims to come from Rabbi Weisbrot or someone else at B'nai Sholom, double-check the email address of the sender – it may be a scam. When in doubt, **do not click on any links or attachments** and **do not reply** to the message. Send a fresh email to the correct address for the supposed sender or call them directly to confirm.

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In honor of **Rabbi Weisbrot's Installation** by Barbara and Jack Devore
In memory of **Alfred Waxman** by Linda Finkle
In honor of **Becky Marvin and her marvelous baking** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman
In memory of **William Schwartz** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman
In honor of **Rabbi Weisbrot** by Jeanette and Stephen Gottlieb
In memory of **Michael Kramer** by Mindy Kramer
In memory of **Seymour Schwartzman** by Mindy Kramer
In memory of **Hortense Youngelman** by Donna and Dennis Rhodes
In memory of **Hortense Youngelman** by Nina and Robert Sax
In memory of **Hortense Youngelman** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman
In memory of **Grace Fruiterman** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman
In memory of **Avraham Koren** by Amy and Yossi Koren-Roth
In honor of **Bruce and Edith Goldstein for Chanukah 2022** by Lorrie Van Akkeren
In honor of **Edith Goldstein's birthday** by Lorrie Van Akkeren
In memory of **Benjamin Sacks** by Paula Philo
A donation from Jonathan Riven and Francesca Sidoti

Social Action Committee – Fresh Food Fund

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

Social Action Committee – Vera Propp Literacy Fund

In memory of **Irma and Harry Weiss** by Lisa and John Razanousky
In memory of **Barbara Sternstein** by Amy Sternstein

Golden Anniversary Fundraising Appeal: Celebrating 50 Years and Beyond

Annual Maintenance and Operations

Gary and Melissa Putterman Hoffmann
Mark and Cheryl Reeder
Jeffrey and Teresa Weisbrot

Circle of Life Capital Projects

Jeffrey and Teresa Weisbrot

Endowment

Ann Lowenfels and Steve Redler
Gail Volk
Jeffrey and Teresa Weisbrot

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In honor of **Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot's installation as B'nai Sholom's spiritual leader and moral guide** by Becky and Ben Marvin

The following Yahrzeits will be observed in February:

2/3 Harvey S. Schwartz*; Morris Alowitz*; Roz Walker*; Jack Jarett; Arthur Katz; Bernard Royne; Ethel Strohl; Lillian Dinkin; Eleanor Newman Blum; Irving Watnick; Merle Schaffer Sperber*

2/10 Morris Cohen; Sherryl Pflanz; Helen Rehr; Rose Goldberg; Ida Goldstein; Barbara Sternstein; Paul Goldstein; George Raderman

2/17 Irma Bruce; Frederic Neuburger; Leah Altmayer; Pearl Ronay; Sophie Scholl Small; Arlan Walker*; Muriel Rosenthal; Samuel Strohl

2/24 Samuel Joseph Zuckerman; Eugene Tuck; Shirley Dean; Avi Ezra; Paul Rosenthal

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

RABBI: Danielle Weisbrot can be reached at rabiweisbrot@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us

RABBI EMERITUS: Donald P. Cashman

PRESIDENT: Ann Lowenfels can be reached at annlowenfels@gmail.com

OFFICE MANAGER: Christine Blackman can be reached at christine@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 2nd 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>
April.....	March 8
May.....	April 12