

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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JANUARY 2023

Phone: 518-482-5283
Visit us at <http://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
SH'VAT/TEVET 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, January 6	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 7	Synagogue Scholar Book Talk with Martha Rozett EXTENDED STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, January 13	TOT SHABBAT SERVICE	5:30 PM
Saturday, January 14	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE TORAH STUDY	7:00 PM 10:00 AM
Friday, January 20	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 21	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, January 27	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 28	TORAH STUDY SATURDAY MORNING TORAH SERVICE	9:30 AM 10:30 AM
Friday, February 3	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 4	TORAH 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!

As we usher in the first month of the new secular year, we also conclude the first book of the Torah and prepare to dive into the second. As you may know, each book has two names: a Hebrew name, taken from the first significant word in the book, and a Latin/Greek name, which identifies it by a main theme.

In the case of the book we're concluding this month, both names feel pretty appropriate. "Genesis" and "B'reishit" both refer to beginnings, and it is indeed our origin story – the tale of how the world, then humanity, and then our ancestors came to be. In the new book we're turning to, however, there's a little more dissonance. The word "Exodus" means departure and summarizes the book as the story of the Israelites' escape from slavery in the land of Egypt. The Hebrew title, Shemot, means "names"; yet, while it may seem to be randomly chosen by virtue of where the word falls in the text, it could be an even more fitting title.

Shemot does indeed include the story of Moses and Pharaoh and the plagues and the Red Sea (really the *Reed* Sea), but all of that is over in the first four *parshiot* (weekly portions). Shemot is the book in which we leave Egypt, arrive at Mt. Sinai, build the Golden Calf, receive the Ten Commandments, wander the desert and build the Tabernacle. It's where we learn – albeit with some difficulty – how to exist as a people. So, if the book of Genesis is our origin story, then the book of Exodus is the source of our identity. It lays out who we are as a community and what guides us: the laws handed down by Moses as well as the experience of having been freed from slavery, and therefore responsible for protecting others who are vulnerable. We learn more about the Eternal and the covenantal relationship we share. And we organize ourselves as a society with leaders, judges and priests. We learn – or rather we *become* – who we are, slowly building a new identity as a free people. We make a new "name" for ourselves... with a little divine assistance.

Chazak chazak v'nitchazeik – May we feel strong in our identity as a Jewish community, even – or especially – when we encounter ignorance and hatred; and may we be blessed to continue sharing our strength with all those who do not yet feel free.

L'shalom and Happy New Year,

Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot

Tech Volunteers Keep Our Services Multi-Access

We currently have several openings for tech support volunteers on Friday nights – no experience needed! If you (or someone you know) is interested in learning how to operate our new sound and video equipment, please contact Ann Lowenfels AnnLowenfels@gmail.com.

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*

Annual Synagogue Scholars Book Talk with Martha Rozett Set for January 6, 2023

Book Talk Selection: *PEOPLE LOVE DEAD JEWS*, by Dara Horn

Dara Horn's essay collection, *PEOPLE LOVE DEAD JEWS*, has a title that seems designed to offend or challenge the reader. Most of the 12 essays were published elsewhere in recent years and some have been the subjects of a podcast on Tablet. Horn is a terrific novelist (*The World to Come*, *All Other Nights*) with a doctorate in Hebrew and Yiddish literature. In the course of her reading, she realized that Jewish literature often lacks the kinds of happy endings, or resolutions, that we expect from fiction. She is troubled by the way readers expect “uplifting” stories about Jews and their rescuers that emphasize redemption, arguing that such stories minimize the suffering experienced by the Jewish people throughout history. Hence, her premise that people who are moved by dead Jews – Anne Frank is the preeminent example – are uncomfortable with living ones. This is a provocative book, but a timely one, for we live in a world in which anti-Semitism, both subtle and violent, continues to be widespread.

In her annual book talk, a tradition begun about 15 years ago, Martha Rozett, professor emerita at UAlbany, will examine four of the essays in *PEOPLE LOVE DEAD JEWS*, leaving time for discussion: “Everyone's (Second) Favorite Dead Jew,” “Frozen Jews,” “Legends of Dead Jews” and “Commuting with Shylock.” The program will begin following the conclusion of our Shabbat service.

Tu BiShvat Is Almost Here!

Our “New Year for the Trees” celebration takes place on February 5. Come join in!

This is the holiday when we sample a wide variety of fruits and nuts, and sing songs, and typically eat a dairy meal. Over the years, we have had Tu BiShvat seders at the synagogue or — in accordance with COVID policy — in our own homes. This coming year's celebration will depend on current COVID protocols, so watch for updates. And get set to wave your arms and sing!

PURIM CASTING CALL

When someone mentions the name “Esther,” do you feel the earth move under your feet...or an urge to do the locomotion?

Then you’re perfect for our next Purim shpiel!

We’re planning a new musical revue based on the songs of Carole King, the most prolific songwriter ever.

And we need SONGWRITERS, SINGERS (on-key optional) and MEGILLAH READERS for a multi-access, in-the-Sanctuary shpiel written by YOU.

Want to join in? Here’s what to do:

- Sign up with a firm commitment by email to Ben Marvin bamarvin4574@gmail.com right away. Indicate whether you want to write a song (or two), perform in the shpiel, or both.
- If you’ll write a song, we will send you a list of the ones used in the musical *Beautiful: The Carole King Story*. Or if you’re up for a challenge, pick from Carole’s enormous catalog – we’ll supply her complete discography.
- Send us the name of the song you’ll parody by Monday, January 9, and your finished masterwork by Monday, January 16. Be sure to note which Megillah chapter your song will illustrate.
- If you’ll perform, rehearsals in the Sanctuary will start in January, and you’ll need to be available to rehearse a few evenings as needed.

Erev Purim is Monday, March 6, 2023.

Remember the fun of our pre-COVID shpiels? Then you know we take our silliness seriously. Why not be part of it this year?!

Contact Ben Marvin for more information:
bamarvin4574@gmail.com or 518-439-4574

SAVE THE DATE!

Please mark your calendars!

Please join us for B’nai Sholom’s Biannual Progressive Dinner on Saturday, 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 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. If you’d like to host a dinner for up to eight or dessert for 16, or to bring an appetizer for eight, please contact Bettina Stoller at bfstoller@gmail.com or 518-489-8636. We need your help to make this the enjoyable event it has been in the past!

Social Action/Social Justice

If You Stock Them, They Will Eat

Snow and ice did not stop the dynamic team of Steve Klein and Becky Marvin from grocery shopping at Hannaford and stocking Free Food Fridges located at 8 Elm Street, 275 Lark Street and 21 Delaware Avenue in Albany on Sunday, December 11.

Because of the generous donations of Hannaford gift cards from you – our congregants – fresh produce, dairy items, fresh and frozen fruit, bread, water, granola bars and other assorted nutritious foods made their way into the refrigerators of our neighbors who are desperate for healthy food.

Thank you for your continuing support of this project. When you refill your own Hannaford or ShopRite cards, please consider adding a card for this program. Those who benefit from your generosity get more nutritious food to prepare for themselves and their families thanks to your act of Tikkun Olam.

Take 2

Just as voter postcard writers were able to uncurl their fingers, it was time for a second round of writing. Non-partisan cards were written to registered Georgia voters with information on where and when voting would take place for the special Senate runoff. Thanks and ice packs go out to: Anita Stein, Martha Rozett, Lois Gordon, Shari Whiting, Steve Gottlieb, Marilyn Spencer, Dayle Zatlin, Cheryl Reeder, Valerie Tabak, Bea Fox, Barry Pendergrass, Ann Shapiro, Jaimie Miller, Amy Sternstein, Amy Vastola, Gail Volk, Julie Friedman and Becky Marvin.

Moving Forward

Thanks to the 25 volunteers who came out on November 20 to remove our old furniture and many no-longer-used or needed items and help set up the new furniture. Classrooms 4, 5 and 6 will now be re-purposed into community space, committee space and youth space, so our rooms will better reflect how we use the building. The former religious school office is now set up as our fiscal office, a place for the bookkeeper, finance vice-president and treasurer to work. “Tamuz” has come back to being a meeting room with a conference table, chairs and whiteboard. Special thanks to Office Manager Christine Blackman and Bookkeeper Maryann Wygel for their time in preparing, re-organizing, and coping with the general inconvenience. We look forward to continuing to organize and revitalize our offices and workspaces. If you have questions or are interested in helping, contact Lois Gordon (rgordon1@nycap.rr.com) or Maggie Tabak (Tabak.smith@gmail.com).

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

Howard Domfort In memory of the birthdays of my parents, Julius and Anita Domfort

David and Libby Liebschutz In memory of David’s father, Sandford Liebschutz, on his 22nd yahrzeit

LONG AWAITED “SHALOM” TO RABBI WEISBROT

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation installed Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot as our fifth settled rabbi at Shabbat morning services on October 29, 2022 (Cheshvan 4, 5783). In addition to the almost 100 people in attendance, we were joined via Zoom by many of the Rabbi's friends, including from her “home” congregation, Temple Tikvah in New Hyde Park, NY. Rabbi Randy Sheinberg of Temple Tikvah led part of the in-person services including the formal installation ceremony. Rabbi Sheinberg told us that she always knew that Rabbi Weisbrot had a long-smoldering rabbinical “spark” and that she felt a huge level of pride in Rabbi Weisbrot's accomplishments.

In addition to Rabbi Sheinberg, Rabbi Nomi Manon, Executive Director of Hillel at the University at Albany, and Rabbi Debra Gordon of Congregation Berith Sholom, representing the Capital District Board of Rabbis and Cantors, also joined in the service and bestowed the priestly blessing on Rabbi Weisbrot. A delicious kiddush buffet was held outside on a beautiful, sunny day with over 80 people enjoying the opportunity to socialize and celebrate the occasion.

Our thanks to the many people who helped usher, set up, serve and clean up, as well as the Communications and Ritual committees and our Office Manager, Christine Blackman. Special thanks to the Installation Committee: Maggie Tabak (chair), David Liebschutz (co-chair), Deb Adler, Joe DeFronzo, Katelyn Ouellette DiPaola, Maxine Goldberg, Melissa Putterman Hoffmann, Ann Shapiro and Phil Teumim.

A FEW MINUTES WITH THE TORAH

EDITOR'S NOTE: A new feature spotlighting the outstanding d'verei Torah written by congregants. This month, we present two: Nitzavim, written by Roy Fruiterman and delivered by Roy at a September Board meeting; and a sermon written by David Liebschutz and delivered by David at the November 18 Shabbat service.

D'var Torah for September Board Meeting: Nitzavim – “One's Standing”
by
Roy Fruiterman

Several years ago, in the time of Rabbi Cashman, I did one of my first d'var Torahs ever (a total newbie). I picked a topic on which to elaborate, from the parasha of the week, sitting around the table in the social hall (ah, for the days of in-person meetings and brownies). And Rabbi Cashman started to look uneasy – he later explained that he thought I was going to go down the same thread that he was planning to go down, for his sermon that Shabbat.

Now, this week's Torah portion is the portion that is going to be read this weekend, and ALSO on Yom Kippur morning. So, in deference to Rabbi Weisbrot, I promised myself I would find a very narrow thread, one she would probably never use, and I'd make it short and sweet, and hope that I chose the thread into which she has no plans of looking.

This parasha is considered so important, that it is read not only this Shabbat, which is in the cycle, but again on Yom Kippur - maybe because if there's ever a day when everyone is around to hear it, it's that morning.

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And most ironically, the thread I am choosing to explain is the very portion that I am chanting on Yom Kippur morning. This was an accident. When I learned to chant this Torah portion before, I did not know what I was saying; I truly just memorize the melody, which helps get one through the words (by the way, this is not singular to me; ask any of us chanters who don't know fluent Hebrew). But this year, thanks to this d'var Torah research that I have done, I'll actually know what I am saying as I'm chanting.

In this week's Torah portion, Nitzavim, Moses is nearing the end of his speech to the Israelites, urging them to live righteously when they move across the Jordan River without him.

Moses starts with a grand declaration:

"You are all standing this day before the Lord, your God, the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel, your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp, both your woodcutters and your water drawers, that you may enter the covenant of the Lord, your God, and His oath, which the Lord, your God, is making with you this day, in order to establish you this day as His people, and that He will be your God, as He spoke to you, and as He swore to your forefathers to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

He's including everyone! – but not **really** everyone.

These are not the same people that accepted the covenant before – this population was **born** into it, in the desert.

And God takes it further: those who are not here with us today (implied: not yet born). In other words, all of their future descendants. God places obligations on those who are **not even born yet**.

God gives the Israelites a choice:

See, I set before you this day life and prosperity, death and adversity (Deut. 30:15).

רָאָה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַרָעַ וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַרָעַ:

Life and good...death and evil...pretty heavy stuff.

Also, this is reminiscent of two things earlier in the Torah:

- Sodom and Gomorrah: they pay the price for your actions;
- Adam and Eve: taking fruit from the tree, pay the price.

So, if the Israelites keep the covenant (or reject the Sodom lifestyle, or not eat of the Tree of Life), God will grant you Life and Goodness.

Also, we are supposed to learn that we are all responsible for each other's actions and decisions. Choose the wrong one? (Sodom) – it won't only rain stones down **on you alone** – but on **everyone**. So when we make a decision – ethical, moral, behavioral – we need to consider others when we make that decision. Our choice will have outcomes for others as well.

Practical example: *choose to not volunteer for an event at B'nai Sholom – the responsibilities will fall on fewer – or, the event may be cancelled.*

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One other point God might be making:

We also need to **make up** for any of those who do not make the right decision. What's implied here: yes, there are those who may **deliberately** not follow God's commandments – but there are also those who don't have the *ability* / the *resources* / the *knowledge* to make the good decisions. Example: those with physical or cognitive disabilities.

So it is **our responsibility** to act on their behalf...from where, one could argue, we get Judaism's investment in Social Action.

A FEW MINUTES WITH THE TORAH

Shabbat Sermon for November 18, 2022: "Gratitude"

by
David Liebschutz

One of the many things that Rabbi Weisbrot has brought to our congregation is her weekly "moment of gratitude" as part of the Tefilah. This is a time where we get to share the good things in our life that we are grateful for over the past week.

This practice, which she saw modeled at her home synagogue with her mentor Rabbi Randy Sheinberg, clearly made an impression on her and has likewise, I hope, made an impression upon us.

Given that this is the Shabbat before Thanksgiving, I thought I would take a few minutes to "unpack" why showing gratitude might be a more important practice than just once a week at Shabbat services or once a year at the Thanksgiving table.

In other words, why does gratitude matter and how do we make it a regular part of our lives?

I am quoting from Character Lab, an organization founded about 10 years ago by the social psychologist Angela Duckworth and others to help instill positive character traits in children (and by extension in adults).

When you feel gratitude, you feel a sense of abundance. When you express gratitude — especially when it's heartfelt — you strengthen your relationships with others. Grateful people are happier and more fulfilled. And gratitude leads you to be nicer to other people: more cooperative, patient and trusting.

Think about how your day or week is going. How many of these things did you do?

- You said "thank you" to someone.
- You did something nice to show your appreciation.
- You can list lots of people and things that you're lucky to have in your life.
- You noticed when someone helped you.
- You felt a sense of thankfulness.

So, even if I did all of the above, how do we encourage "the attitude of gratitude" in others?

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Model it. Talk about the good things that happen to you: “I love this gorgeous sunny day!” Reframe difficulties by highlighting positive aspects: “Work has been stressful lately, but I’m grateful that my boss trusts me with important responsibilities.”

Celebrate it. Acknowledge when someone demonstrates gratitude: “It makes me feel really great when you thank me for what I am doing.” Display thank you notes you’ve received where others can see them. Post Three Good Things on social media.

Enable it. Keep stationery handy for writing thank you notes. At dinner, make it a habit to begin by sharing one good thing that happened that day. Establish a birthday ritual to write notes of appreciation.

And while the Character Lab formula is on its face not especially religious or spiritual or Jewish, I would argue that all of these values are very Jewish and in fact are part of all of our daily practice.

To cite just a few examples even beyond Modim Anachnu Lach that we just recited:

From Modeh Ani in the morning service to the aforementioned Modim Anachnu Lach, to saying the Birkat Hamazon, we are constantly thanking God. Although we are constantly praising God through daily prayers, songs and more, as Jews we must “exercise our gratitude muscles” so that we can become conscious of all the blessings that we have in our lives and their source.

So, on this Shabbat and in the days ahead leading to our national holiday of Thanksgiving, let’s model, celebrate and enable gratitude as Jews and as Americans for all the blessings that we have.

So as promised, what are you grateful for this Shabbat and this Thanksgiving season? Let’s do some “modeling”!

Shabbat Shalom!

The following Yahrtzeits will be observed in January:

1/6 Walter L. Hock, Jr; Eleanor Marvin; Sylvia Brownstein; Kitty Lazoroff*; Avraham Koren*; Bernard Fleischer*; Julian Wager

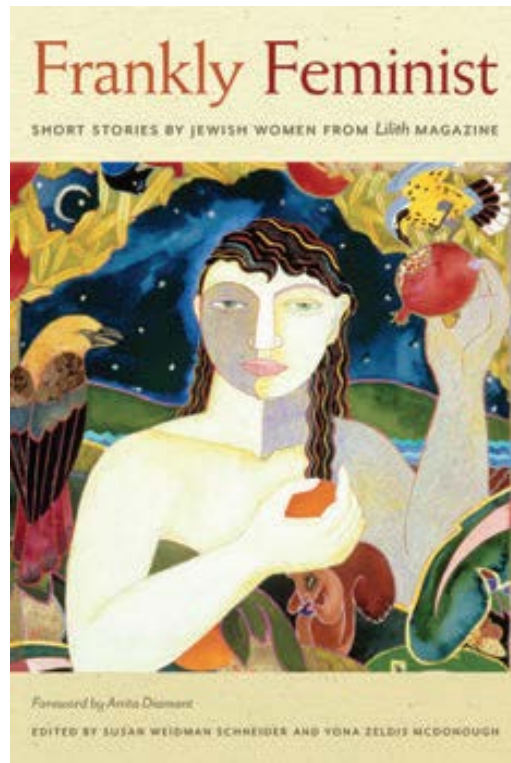
1/13 Tobey Katz; Theron Vosburgh; Leo Cabelly

1/20 Bertha Friedman; Marian Hock*; William Smith; Bernard Smith; Allan B. Cashman

1/27 Leonard Samuels; Ronald Weisdorffer; Allen Heffler; Aaron David Stoller*; Hilda Smith; Sandra Samuels; Irving Schwartz; Sylvia Schwartz; Ethel Hesch Berke*; Lillian Hammer*; Bertye Balin

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

New in the Library



Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women from Lilith Magazine **Edited by Susan Weidman Schneider and Yona Zeldis McDonough**

Lilith Magazine was founded in 1976, just five years after B'nai Sholom, so the editors had a wonderful store of work to choose from. The 44 stories in the book are divided into six sections: Transitions, Intimacies, Transgressions, War, Body and Soul, and To Belong. Although many stories are recent (one reviewer counted 31 as being published in or after 2010), the collection covers a great deal of historical and thematic ground. Dare we suggest, something for everyone?

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 memory of **Daniel Heymsfeld** by Ben and Becky Marvin
In memory of **Hortense Youngelman** by Ben and Becky Marvin
In memory of **Judy Dobris** by the family of Judy Dobris
In memory of **Michael Kramer** by Mindy Kramer
In memory of **Jack Pendergrass** by Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass
In memory of **Bill Schwartz** by Mari Vosburgh
In memory of **Adele Broch Krochmal** by Ruth Swift
In memory of **Herbert Lawrence Swift** by Ruth Swift
In appreciation for **being able to share in the streaming and discussion of The Ritchie Boys** by Sylvia Lampert
In appreciation for **being able to share in the streaming and discussion of The Ritchie Boys** by Melissa Browne
In appreciation for **being able to share in B'nai Sholom's High Holy Days' services**
Barbara Aronson; Zachary and Kathleen Assael; Daniel and Rona Goldstein; Hedy Lowenheim; Brenda Rosenbaum; Philip Rosenberg and Meredith Savitt; Irving and Rosalind Tauss

Social Action Committee -- Fresh Food Fund

In memory of **Lillian Golderman** by Gail Golderman
In support: Jesse Dinkin and Valerie Tabak, Laurie Shanks and Terence Kindlon, Amy and Yossi Koren Roth, Amy Sternstein, Lois Gordon, Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass

Social Action Committee – Vera Propp Literacy Fund

Mari Vosburgh

Golden Anniversary Fundraising Appeal: Celebrating 50 Years and Beyond

Annual Maintenance and Operations

Elizabeth Alowitz
Katelyn Ouellette DiPaola
Ben and Becky Marvin
Steven and Debra Nozik
Dawn and Scott Wallant

The congregation mourns the passing of these congregants or family members whose deaths occurred in recent months:

- William Schwartz, husband of Sheila and father of David and Jennifer
- Hortense Youngelman, mother of Debbie Youngelman

May their memories forever be for a blessing.

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>
February.....	January 11
March.....	February 8