

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

420 WHITEHALL RD., ALBANY, NY 12208
E-mail: office@bnaisholomalbany.org
December 2024

Phone: 518-482-5283
Visit us at <https://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
Kislev/Tevet 5785

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 6	KABBALAT SHABBAT	7:00 PM
Saturday, December 7	EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	10:00 AM
Friday, December 13	TOT SHABBAT	5:30 PM
	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:30 PM
Saturday, December 14	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, December 20	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, December 21	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, December 27	SHABBAT CHANUKAH SERVICE with Menorah Lighting	7:00 PM
Saturday, December 28	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, January 3	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 4	EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	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...

In 2013, it was “Thanksgivukah.” Chanukah began on erev Thanksgiving and we added latkes and jelly donuts to the sweet potato casserole and pumpkin pie at our Thanksgiving tables. This year, Chanukah starts on December 25 – making the “Christmukah” cards I’ve seen in stores more relevant than usual – and extends all the way through New Year’s Eve and into January. (Maybe there’s a way to add candles to the decorative 2025 glasses people wear to watch the ball drop?)

In Rabbinic tradition, though, Chanukah is compared to yet another holiday: Sukkot! The holidays are both eight days long and happy. Sukkot is called *z’man simchateinu* (the time of our joy) and in the Talmud¹, the Rabbis remind us that we are not supposed to eulogize the deceased or fast while we are celebrating the miracle of the oil. On both festivals, we also recite *hallel*, the traditional psalms of praise assigned to many of our holidays. Chanukah is the *only* “minor” holiday on which we recite the full *hallel* as we do on the pilgrimage festivals: the beginning of Passover; Shavuot; and Sukkot. When we recite *hallel* on other occasions, like Rosh Chodesh or the middle days of Passover, it is an abridged version. In II Maccabees², the description of the rededication of the Temple on Chanukah also includes the people carrying willow branches and palm fronds, as we would find in our lulav on Sukkot.

There are many other connections between the two holidays, some more obscure or complicated than others. But where I really went down the rabbi(t) hole was in the details of construction. The Talmud teaches that both a Sukkah³ and a chanukiyah⁴ (Chanukah menorah) can have a maximum height of twenty cubits. For the chanukiyah at least, the goal of the height requirement – there’s a minimum as well – is to make sure we accomplish the mission of *pirsum ha’nes* – publicizing the miracle (of Chanukah). If the candles are so high up or low down that we don’t notice the flames, we haven’t fulfilled the commandment. But how tall *is* a 20-cubit menorah? That depends how you measure. It’s estimated to be about 20-30 feet high. But sparing you the intricacies of classical measurements, cubits are based on handbreadths. The Rabbis determine there are two different types of handbreadths – lax handbreadths with fingers spread apart and smaller “sad” handbreadths with tighter fingers together.

In general, I like the idea of expanding our joy and measuring with the biggest handfuls of happiness we can. However, while there’s some wiggle room regarding the height of our outdoor sukkah (now packed away for next year), I would recommend that when we each bring our *chanukiyot* – one per household – to light together in the sanctuary on December 27, we aim for something a little shorter than 20 feet...

L’shalom,
Rabbi Weisbrot

¹ [Shabbat 21b:10](#)

² [II Maccabees 10:8-10](#)

³ [Shabbat 2a](#)

⁴ [Shabbat 22a](#)

From Our President...

An Afternoon with Abe and Sarah

We've been talking at B'nai Sholom lately about safety and security and hospitality. Until recently, it might have been unusual to find all three topics in the same conversation, but not since two efforts got under way: the work of the Inclusivity Collaborative, and the strengthening of safety and security efforts under the Facilities Management Committee. Now safety and security training are offered through an agreement with CSS (the Community Security Service), "the power of hello" is an actual protocol for vetting visitors, and we are beginning to get used to key fobs and closed doors ... emphasis on **beginning**. We're not completely comfortable with Social Hall or Sanctuary doors being closed when functions are underway or attendees being formally checked in when attending events or large services. But we are learning new ways to welcome the stranger, which is the basis for a recent d'var Torah on *Vayeira*, presented by Carol Smith, Sasha Suraski and Howie Stoller. Here is the beginning of their presentation. We hope you enjoy it and perhaps start a conversation of your own about being safe and hospitable at the same time.

Carol: This week's Torah portion is Vayeira, "and he appeared." There are several important stories in it: Isaac's birth and near death at the hands of his father, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the exile of Hagar. The portion starts as Abraham was sitting before his tent, after having [circumcised](#) himself --

Howie: -- We're not going to talk about that.

Carol: (pause) All right, how would *you* like to start?

Howie: You can be Sarah and I'll be Abraham.

Carol: Great (meaning it). [Carol ties a bandana on her head, signifying that she is now Sarah.]

Howie: So, start doing some housework. I'm standing here looking out at my land. No one's coming yet; I'm just looking. I should probably have a robe.

Sarah: Great (not meaning it).

[Sarah exits while Howie comes up onto the bimah to get a better look at the horizon. Sarah comes out and tosses Howie a robe, which he puts on, making him Abraham.]

[Abraham starts to focus on the horizon as if he sees something but is not sure what it is.]

Sarah: [Enters carrying a big pot.] I'm going to the well. [No response from Abraham. She shakes her head and continues crossing to the well.]

[As Sarah is crossing back with the pot, which is now much heavier, it looks like Abraham is going to take it off her hands but instead ...]

Abraham: Get my field glasses. It looks like someone is coming. [He goes back to looking into the horizon.] [Sarah lugs the heavy pot into the house. She reenters dragging two very full CLYNK bags from the house to the recycling area behind their tent. Then she approaches her husband and watches with him.]

Sarah [after a moment]: I hope it's not those people with the pamphlets.

Abraham: No, there are three of them and they look like they've traveled a long way.

Sarah: We live in the desert. What's not a long way [continues looking with him]? Maybe someone is finally going to buy the Levy place. [Sarcastically] It's only been on the market for a year.

Abraham: No. They turned onto our path. And they look very tired from traveling. Kill a fatted calf and make some kugel.

Sarah: You're not inviting them in! We don't even know them. And there are three of them and two of us. I haven't had a chance to sweep the dirt floor today!

Abraham: Someday someone is going to write a commentary about how the first hospitality in the Torah – whatever *that* is – took place today on this property with us. Now get roasting the calf.

Sarah: Someday someone is going to invent fast food so they can say "Want fries with that?" [She exits, exasperated, into the house.]

[Abraham sees that the visitors are getting close enough to see him and waves to them, indicating that they should come to his house.]

Sarah [reentering and standing with him]: Seriously – How do you know they’re safe? Is there some way you can meet them halfway and engage them in conversation, get a feel for whether they’re ... “kosher?” I can wait here with this [picks up a rock] ... panic rock and press it if you signal me that they aren’t OK ... or if they kill you.

Abraham: I just have a feeling that this is an important moment, that someday we may even be strangers in a strange land. Who knows? One day, families may even gather around the dinner table to remember stories about leaving home and traveling a long way to a new land. Anyway, I think God really wants us to welcome them to our home and give them refreshments.

Sarah: I think God wants us to be safe. [Resigned, she walks off right, calling to one of their calves] Here, Bessie. Where are you?

[Abraham remains waving and ushering the visitors toward the house.]

Carol and Howie take off the bandana and robe and rejoin Sasha at the mic for a fuller discussion that includes the coexistence of safety and hospitality.

Light Up Our Pixels this Chanukah

Join your fellow B’nai Sholom congregants as we light candles together for Chanukah on Zoom. We are continuing this lovely tradition and are looking for lighters/leaders for 10 minutes each evening from Wednesday, Dec. 25, to Thursday, Jan. 2, excluding Shabbat Chanukah (Friday, Dec. 27), when we will celebrate with the glow and warmth of all of our candles in the Sanctuary. We would love to have you participate – sing a song, tell a story, play some music or tell us about a custom after you chant the blessing over your own beautiful menorah.

Please contact Mimi Bruce at mbrucemd53@gmail.com if you would be available to lead.

News From the Fundraising Committee

The Election Day Bake Sale was a great success thanks to the many bakers who donated delicious treats and the volunteers who worked two-hour shifts from 6:00 AM to 4:00 PM to sell all of those delectable items. We sold out!

Chilipalooza is coming back! Save the (tentative) date: February 1, 2025! Dig out your chili recipes to enter the contest. More information to come in the January Bulletin.

Homeless in the Cold

The Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless is a growing organization supporting vulnerable people in the community with numerous and varied services, particularly during more difficult periods.

At this time, they are collecting personal care items, in particular those listed below. Please bring what you have or acquire to leave in the box marked "Personal Care Items" in the foyer near the office. To the many travelers among us who have collected sample-sized hotel amenities, this is a great opportunity to clear them out.

Specifically requested are:

Soap	Deodorant
Toothpaste and toothbrushes	Shampoo
Lotion	Towels and washcloths

All sizes are quite useable as small amounts are doled out as needed.

For more information on this wonderful organization that is doing so much to help those less fortunate among us, visit www.iphny.org.

Donate Online Easily with the DONATE Button

There's a great, convenient and secure way to donate to B'nai Sholom: through the DONATE button on the website. It's a safe alternative to sending checks through the mail, and you can use this feature for all your donations, including but not limited to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, Endowment Fund, Social Action Fund and tributes (but not temple dues – at least not yet). We're excited to offer this alternative and hope you explore it and the new website at <https://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>.

Mazal tov!

... to Amy and Yossi Koren-Roth on the birth of their granddaughter, Talia Chloe Bendriem, to Hadar and Raph Bendriem in November.

... to Bettina and Howie Stoller, honored as Menschen for 2024 by Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York at the annual Mensches & Mimosas event.

Thank You!

... to the fantastic Bulletin Brigade who fold and stuff the monthly Bulletins: Jim and Joan Savitt, Martha Rozett, Martie Teumim, Rema Goldstein, Anita Stein, Barbara Devore, Joe DeFronzo, Amy Sternstein, Deb Adler and Cheryl and Mark Reeder.

... to the following congregants who recently hosted an oneg Shabbat or kiddush lunch: Shari Whiting, in memory of Sarah Whiting; Social Action/Social Justice Committee; Membership Team and those who contributed to the New Member Potluck; Susan Radosh.

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

Shari Whiting In memory of Sarah Whiting

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In Memory of **Adrian Goldman** by Nancy Newman and Matt Malsky

In Memory of **Adrian Goldman** by Carol and Douglas Smith

In Memory of **Frank Wind** by Leah Taub

Free Food Fridge

In Memory of **Phillip Zatin, Adele Blumenthal and Edward Blumenthal** by Dayle Zatin and Joel Blumenthal

Lori Stuart

Susan Aron and Joe DeFronzo

Annual Fundraising Appeal

Susan Aron and Joe DeFronzo

Howard Domfort

Ann Lowenfels and Steve Redler

Please note, some donations will be recorded a month after they are received due to technical issues.

The congregation mourns the recent passing of

Frank Wind,
Husband of Dee Wind

Greer Spicer,
Sister of Gwen Spicer

May their memories forever be for a blessing.

The following Yahrtzeits will be observed in December:

12/6

Simon Semelisky*; Elihu Propp*; Frances Rudinger; Ray Stephany; Richard L. Brower*; David Cohen*; Bertha Markstein Peckerman*; Paul B Blum; Seymour Schwartzman*

12/13

Albert J. Abrams*; David Gottlieb; Jack Pendergrass; Donald Tannen; Jacob Lichtenfels*; Grace Fruiterman; Rita Binenkorb Ray; Florence Levion Levin; Abraham Cogen; Emery Sennesh

12/20

Sadie Cohen*; Hannah R. Jaffe*; Alexandr Levitski*; Franklin Steinhardt*; Marvin Millens; Erwin Winston*; Jacob Lazoroff*; Freda Kussack; Harry Cohen*; Ruth Aronson*; Estera Fiks; Adah Vosburgh; Norma Belle Singer Beatman*; Albert Marcus*; Sylvia Goldstein Marcus*; Ida Sennesh

12/27

Samuel Link; Saul Mouchly Small; Hannah Tabak; Adele Broch Krochmal; Morris Adler*; Lillian Tannen; Cornelius Epstein*; Waldamar Knieling; Florence Morse; Alfred Waxman

1/3

Judith S. Dobris*; Anita Dubb*

Be On Guard Against Email/Text Spoofing Scams

STAY ALERT! If you see a suspicious email or text message that claims to come from Rabbi Weisbrot or someone else at B'nai Sholom, double-check the email address or phone number 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 message to the correct address or number for the supposed sender or call them directly to confirm.

RABBI: Danielle Weisbrot can be reached at rabbi@bnaisholomalbany.org

RABBI EMERITUS: Donald P. Cashman

PRESIDENT: Melissa Putterman Hoffmann can be reached at president@bnaisholomalbany.org

OFFICE MANAGER: Emily Pickering can be reached at office@bnaisholomalbany.org

OFFICE HOURS: TUE/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM–4:00 PM

Articles and news received after the deadline are subject to omission. As a rule, the Bulletin deadline is the 2nd Wednesday of every month. Adherence to the deadline is critical to ensuring that the Bulletin is sent out in a timely manner.

Period Covered

Deadline

January

December 11

February

January 8