

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

420 WHITEHALL RD., ALBANY, NY 12208
E-mail: office@bnaisholomalbany.org
January 2025

Phone: 518-482-5283
Visit us at <https://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
Tevet/Sh'vat 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, January 3 Saturday, January 4	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	7:00 PM 10:00 AM
Friday, January 10 Saturday, January 11	TOT SHABBAT KABBALAT SHABBAT WITH TORAH SERVICE TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	5:30 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 AM
Friday, January 17 Saturday, January 18	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	7:00 PM 10:00 AM
Friday, January 24 Saturday, January 25	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE (ZOOM ONLY) TORAH STUDY (ZOOM) TORAH SERVICE	7:00 PM 9:30 AM 10:30 AM
Friday, January 31 Saturday, February 1	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	7:00 PM 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...

For the past month or so, we've been building up to Chanukah. As our daily allotment of sunshine began to wane, we looked forward to the ever-increasing light brought by the candles on our *chanukiyot* (menorahs). But as we know, in Jewish tradition, candles aren't just for one week per year (yes, Chanukah is eight days long, but that's still a "week" in Beatles lyrics...).

On Friday nights and holidays, we mark the start of holy time by lighting Shabbat or Yom Tov candles. On Saturday nights and at the conclusion of those holidays, we separate the holy from the everyday by lighting a braided *havdallah* (separation) candle. And Jews also kindle flames to remember our loved ones, from the special Yom HaShoah candles that commemorate those killed in the Holocaust to the much more individual *yahrzeit* candles we light on the anniversary of a loved one's death.

Over the last few years, several of you have asked me about our *yahrzeit* traditions here at B'nai Sholom and more generally. So, I thought I'd take this opportunity to shed a little light on the subject. The question most frequently asked is about timing: When do we light the candle? When will my loved one's name be read aloud at services? Can we change the date of either of these customs?

The custom of observing a *yahrzeit* dates back to approximately 16th Century Germany, while the candle lighting tradition is Medieval.¹ Nowadays, a 24-hour candle is lit on the evening of the *yahrzeit* date. Many people choose to go by the Hebrew date, which ties to the Jewish calendar and follows the flow of the Jewish year (e.g. if your parent died the week before Passover, the *yahrzeit* will always fall then). Others choose to follow the secular calendar, often because the date is easier to remember. Here at B'nai, you can let us know which date system you prefer and we'll send out the reminders accordingly (thanks to Lois Gordon and our office manager, Emily Pickering, for making this happen!). In addition to lighting the candle – which you can typically purchase at your local supermarket – it's customary to say the Mourner's Kaddish in memory of your loved one as well. Since the Kaddish is designed to be recited with a *minyán* (a group of 10 or more Jews) at services, and in most Reform congregations there isn't a daily service, we share the names each Shabbat.

The next question becomes, if the *yahrzeit* doesn't fall exactly on Shabbat, *which* service do we use? The week before? The week after? Different congregations make different choices in that regard. The Reform Movement's website offers a date calculator² for option #3 – using whichever Shabbat is closest to the actual date in either direction, though that process is a bit more complicated to track. With help from Rabbi Cashman, I got a little more background on how B'nai Sholom has handled this question over the years. Once upon a time, it was our custom to recite the name on the Shabbat *after* the *yahrzeit* date. During Rabbi Cashman's tenure, it switched to the week *before* the date, as a way of preparing for the upcoming memorial. Most recently, it has been switched back to the *after* date. We'll continue to review the process and will keep you apprised if and when anything changes.

As for the question of changing the date, the official *responsum*³ (determination) from the Reform Movement is that the actual observance should be fixed from year to year, but if you're able to be with your family (or synagogue family) on a different date, that's a great opportunity to remember your loved one on an additional occasion! As always, feel free to reach out to me with specific questions. And may your loved ones' memories always be for a blessing!

L'shalom,
Rabbi Weisbrot

¹ <https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-responsa/arr-393-395/>

² <https://reformjudaism.org/yahrzeit-calculator>

³ <https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-responsa/carr-191/>

From Our President...

Finding Beauty

Sometimes a place can become so familiar that we don't notice its little changes, improvements, aesthetic upgrades. Not noticing can be good if improvements are happening so gradually so as not to be jarring. But appreciating "the little things" and the people who bring them about can also be, not only good, but affirming for those who work hard behind the scenes. Our Landscaping Team at B'nai Sholom is like that. When we approach from the parking lot and marvel at the flowers in bloom and the healthy plants on the way in and on the Bima, we arrive rejuvenated. And just this past week, one of the plants along the breezeway walk was glistening with ice in such a beautiful way that a fellow appreciator was taking a picture as I was leaving. Unfortunately, our Landscaping Team members usually are not on hand when we come in just having smelled the roses. So now is a perfect time to say "THANK YOU" for the beauty you provide.

We don't often use safety and security and beauty in the same sentence. But over the last few months, you might have noticed a new look in the greeting area just outside the Sanctuary. A small group of Innovators wanted to make the area more welcoming and at the same time, easier to monitor for security. Volunteers rearranged the furniture in the hall, decluttered the sign-in table and made space in the greeting area for people to sit. In addition, a table just inside the vestibule doors is now available to highlight information about what is happening at B'nai Sholom and in the Jewish community. I have heard congregants express appreciation for the new look and the feel of having comfortable chairs to sit on when they first come in. Thank you to our Innovators, who weren't afraid to try and retry new arrangements of furniture in order to arrive at a more welcoming safe entrance into B'nai Sholom.

A flooring project will be underway (and under foot) soon. Our House Team has been busy working with a flooring company, who will install new flooring throughout much of the building. Gone will be the wrinkled carpet and water-damaged tiles. In their place will be new and attractive carpet and floor tiles. We will keep you apprised as best we can about any temporary changes that may be needed for traffic flow, such as routing all entrances through the door by the office or through the door by the Sanctuary as each section is being completed. The volunteers working on this project have looked at many samples many times and continue to have problem-solving conversations with those whose work may be affected by the installation. We are grateful to them for planning this project and considering all the facets involved.

There may be a new look and feel in the Sanctuary in the next months as we experiment to find a seating arrangement that is not only more inclusive with easy access, but that elevates the worship experience. And in case you are shouting "hold on, enough change, don't potschke!" don't worry. As with flower beds, furniture arrangements and seats in the Sanctuary – everything is a process capable of further evolution or a return to its original state. Nothing says we can't change it back ... unless it's flooring.

May your Chanukah be filled with light and a seating arrangement you like.

L'shalom,
Melissa Putterman Hoffmann
President

B'nai Sholom Receives Another State Grant to Further Protect Congregation

The Safety and Security Team is pleased to announce that B'nai Sholom has received a \$116,400 "2024-25 Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes" grant, administered by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services. The grant provides funds to strengthen safety and security measures at our building.

This grant proposal calls for: completing our outdoor security lighting project by installing additional lights in the parking lot (\$51,800); installing a public address system (\$40,000); and improving our cybersecurity (\$24,600).

Prior to this grant, we received two other grants of \$50,000 each, which enabled us to: install lighting around the building and in the driveway; cover all our glass surfaces with blast-resistant film; improve our intrusion detection system; install a camera system that covers the entire exterior and interior of the building; install an access control system; and upgrade our door hardware to enable us to lock our doors from the inside and fix hard-to-close exit doors.

We believe we have been successful in our grant applications because B'nai Sholom has a good story to tell as we have a robust social action program, host community organizations, serve as an election polling place, have a unique Ark, and have on permanent loan a Torah scroll rescued from the Holocaust. These provide great justification for our funding requests, which when combined with exponential increases in worldwide antisemitism make it easy to approve our grant applications.

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night...

No it wasn't...but it was a dark and cold night when Anita Stein and I went shopping for Albany Street Soldiers. In the evening crowd shopping on the way home from work, we filled two carts with yogurt, cheese sticks, a variety of milk and milk substitutes, butter, eggs, Lunchables, fresh produce and so much more. Then we made a detour to Stewart's for more quarts of milk before heading to Academy Park across from Albany City Hall. Our car was greeted by smiling volunteers who also happened to be Street Soldiers customers. Bags were toted to tables, unpacked and arranged; egg cartons were divided into half-dozen containers and everyone was helping.

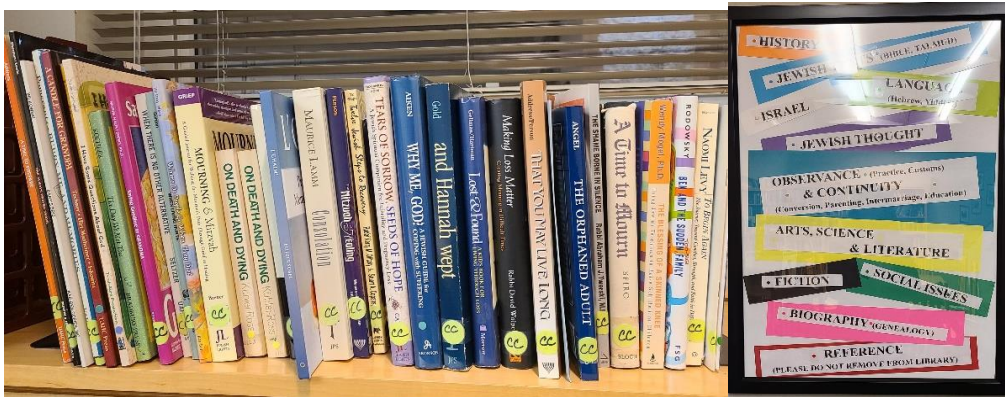
The atmosphere was similar to going to my local farmers' market...old friends greeted each other and welcomed newcomers, food was arranged for selection and everyone seemed to be enjoying this monthly community event. I know I did.

Becky Marvin

The generosity of our congregants makes it possible for B'nai Sholom to participate in feeding our neighbors through programs such as Street Soldiers and Free Food Fridges. Online contributions or checks should be noted as Fresh Food for Families.

Caring Community Offers Resources for Coping with Challenges

Did you know there are books in the B'nai Shalom library that may help you cope with loss, grief or other challenges? The library is open for your use whenever the temple is open. Look for books with "CC" on the spine. While you are there, we encourage you to peruse the shelves. The section on Observance and Continuity includes books on parenting, intermarriage and education. You may find other books of interest – from books for children and young adults, to cookbooks, history, Jewish thought and more.



The Caring Community is in the process of gathering other materials including online sources and websites that may offer information and support to our B'nai Shalom family. As a start, here are some online resources:

- **Jewish Family Services of Northeastern NY** <https://jfsneny.org/>
Services include counseling and guidance for aging in place, assistance for individuals or families facing food or financial insecurity, health care advocacy and social programs.
- **Keshet** <https://www.keshetonline.org/>
Advocacy organization promoting equality for LGBTQ individuals and families in Jewish life. Additional resources are available on the Keshet website.
- **Anti-Defamation League** <https://www.adl.org/>
The ADL's mission is "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all." Resources and tools for addressing, confronting and educating about antisemitism are available on the website.
- **MedlinePlus** <http://www.medlineplus.gov>
MedlinePlus is a comprehensive online health information resource containing authenticated information on just about any health and wellness topic. Check out the "site map." You can link to information on various conditions, diseases and wellness issues, as well as health videos and health information in easy to read, understand and use format.
- **NYS Office for the Aging** <http://aging.ny.gov/innovations-aging>
The mission of this Office is to help older New Yorkers to be as independent as possible for as long as possible. They provide advocacy, information and a variety of programs and services. Innovations videos highlight public-private partnerships to support older adults.

We would like your help in identifying additional resources – books, organizations and online resources to assist members of the B'nai Sholom community. If there is anything you have found to be especially useful in times of stress, please let us know so that we may update our list and share as appropriate.

Evidently, We Have a Reputation...

THANK YOU to everyone who responded to the call for luggage and backpacks for asylum seekers who were forced to move from the hotels and motels where they had been placed more than a year ago. We were puzzled by the initial phone call for assistance from a local attorney. Was she calling all the synagogues and churches as well? Nope. She reached out to us because, she said, "B'nai Sholom has a reputation for social justice work and the ability to respond quickly." And respond you did! From the moment the request was first included in the weekly e-blast, I heard from one or more congregants every day for the next two weeks (including Thanksgiving) asking where to take their unwanted luggage. So, thank you for responding quickly to a sudden need and continuing to support the values of our congregation.

Becky Marvin

20s & 30s Group

Pottery Painting Event

Please join our 20s and 30s group for a fun evening at The Pottery Place in Stuyvesant Plaza on **Saturday, Jan. 11, from 4 to 6 PM**. \$25 covers the cost of painting a piece of your choice. Advance registration and payment are required for this event. Look for information for pre-registration in a separate email. Please get in touch with Hailey Hanoufa via email haillepski@gmail.com with any questions; contact Rabbi Weisbrot rabbi@bnaisholomalbany.org if you'd like to attend but the cost is a challenge. We hope to see you there!

Save The Date!

Please mark your calendars!

Please join us for B'nai Sholom's Biannual Progressive Dinner on **Saturday, March 15, 2025**, sponsored by the Member Events Team. These dinners have been great successes in the past, and we assume that this one will be too.

The evening will begin with appetizers at B'nai Sholom at 6 PM. Participants will then go to one of the hosts' homes for dinner at 7 PM and continue on to another home for dessert at 8:30 PM. It will be a night filled with adult conversation and companionship, so no kids, please. You will receive an Evite in February.

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 bring an appetizer for eight, please contact Bettina Stoller at bfstoller@gmail.com. We need your help to make this the enjoyable event it has been in the past.

Treasures in the Trash Bags

You did it! Once again, our amazing congregation came through. Despite some snafus surrounding the clothing drive collection dates, the extension of the deadline proved to be what was needed because the end result was the filling of three SUVs.

Off we drove to Grassroots Givers where, at our appointed time, their amazing group of volunteers met us and rapidly helped to unload our vehicles.

It's fascinating to me how people form attachments to their clothing. A sweater, a pair of jeans, a tee shirt may hold memories of the when, where and why they were worn. Who were you with when you wore that dress? That tie?

I have a gorgeous blue gown that I wore to my nephew's 2010 wedding in California. Just this past summer, I tried it on and had Jesse take a picture of me modeling said beloved frock. I then returned the dress to the closet it has occupied since that summer. Will I ever wear this again? Why am I holding on to this? It's the memories of that family time on the West Coast...in a blue gown.

So as we assessed the piles of bags and brought them to the cars, I thought of the picnics, parties, school days, work days, beach vacations and hikes contained in them and hoped that as was the case for the bags I donated, they were filled with shared times with friends and family.

Here's hoping the folks who will benefit from our donations create their own special memories while being enveloped in ours. Perhaps the dress will go to a gown collection this spring; I have a few months to think about that.

Valerie Tabak



Win Bragging Rights for the Best Chili!

Chilipalooza, B'nai Sholom's chili competition, is back! Come join us Saturday, Feb. 1, at 6 PM. Enter your best meat or vegan chili recipe or be a taster and enjoy some delicious offerings. Either way, it promises to be a fun evening! Watch for an email in early January to sign up.

PURIM CASTING CALL

And now for something a little different...

By special arrangement with NBC – the Nebuchadnezzar Broadcasting Company – in honor of *Saturday Night Live's* 50th season, B'nai Sholom will present:

SNL: Shushan Night Live!

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

Some ideas to get you thinking about sketches to write:

- Cold Open, with King A and Vashti
- Weekend (Chapter) Updates
- Game Show: *Family Feud* with the sons of Haman; *The Dating Game* with Esther and the harem
- Commercials: Gallows-R-Us; Esther's Diet (fasting)
- Characters: The Cohenheads; Killer (Macca)bees

Or use your imagination and come up with your own sketch!

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 sketch or song, perform in the shpiel, or both.
- If writing a sketch or song, let us know which Megillah chapter you prefer to cover.
- If you'll perform, rehearsals in the Sanctuary will start in February, and you'll need to be available to rehearse a few evenings as needed.

Erev Purim is Thursday, March 13, 2025.

You know we take our silliness seriously. Why not be part of it this year?!

Contact Ben Marvin for more information: bamarvin4574@gmail.com

Adult Ed – Winter 2025

Movie Night

“The Catskills”

Saturday, January 25, at 7:30 PM (in-person only)

“The Catskills” is a documentary on the rise and fall of the Borscht Belt. With a treasure trove of lost-and-found archival footage and a cast of characters endowed with the gift of gab, “The Catskills” journeys into the storied mountain getaway that served as refuge for Jewish immigrants fleeing poverty as well as a lavish playground for affluent Jewish families. Stand-up comedians share their best shtick while former waiters, entertainers and dancers recount tales of the family-run resorts and bungalows that inspired films like “Dirty Dancing.” From lox to herring, this celebration of Jewish-American life is all you can eat.

An area premiere. There will be a \$5 admission fee. Non-members are requested to pre-register via the website link.

Zoom with Best-Selling Author of Historical Fiction

Shelly Sanders

Thursday, February 6, at 7:30 PM (via Zoom)

Join us as we Zoom with author Shelly Sanders to discuss her book *Daughters of the Occupation*. Inspired by true events in World War II Latvia, this is an emotionally charged novel of sacrifice, trauma, resilience and survival, as witnessed by three generations of women. Whereas her previous works focused on Russian Jewry, this book explores Jewish life in Latvia and the American diaspora. Although it is a work of fiction, it’s deeply rooted in Sanders’ own family history and in her efforts to retrace the lost stories of relatives and historical events. With its emotional whirlwind of trauma and survival, *Daughters of the Occupation* is definitely a story that will stay with readers long after they’ve closed the book.

Shelly Sanders is a Canadian journalist and writer of historical fiction, this being her fourth book. Her upcoming novel, *The Night Sparrow*, is to be released later this year on Harper Paperbacks.

This special event is open to members of the B’nai Sholom community and friends. Multiple copies of this book can be found in the local library system and at the synagogue or, of course, your favorite bookstore.

And Upcoming in our Zoom with the Author Series:

(Dates To Be Announced)

David Bezmozgis *The Betrayers*, A New York Times Editors Choice

Jonathan Eig *King, A Life*, the 2024 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Dr. Martin Luther King

Mazal tov!

... to Arthur and Rita Alowitz on the engagement of their daughter, Elizabeth C. Alowitz, to Steven Kielty.

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: David and Libby Liebschutz, Caring Community Team, Steve and Jeanette Gottlieb.

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

Maxine Goldberg In appreciation for all those who baked and assisted with the Election Day bake sale

Barry Pendergrass and Ann Shapiro In memory of Jack Pendergrass

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In Memory of **Frank Wind, Adrian Goldman, Cecily Redler Jacobs and Richard Pickering** by Melissa Putterman Hoffmann and Gary Hoffmann

In Appreciation of **B'nai Sholom for nominating us as Menschen for 2024** by Howie and Bettina Stoller

In Memory of **Donald and Lillian Tannen** by Ken Tannen

In Memory of **Alexander Levitski** by Lyudmila Levitski

In Memory of **Judy Dobris** by Jan Dobris

In Memory of **Frank Wind** by Ben and Becky Marvin
Barney Horowitz

Free Food Fridge

Laurie Shanks

Ellie and Randy Davis

Books for Babies

In Honor of **Talia Bendreim, granddaughter of Amy and Yossi Koren-Roth**, by Becky and Ben Marvin

Annual Fundraising Appeal

Anne Hausgaard

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In Appreciation of **Rabbi Weisbrot for the beautiful and spiritually uplifting High Holy Day Services** by Ben and Becky Marvin

Lewis Sperber

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

The following Yahrzeits will be observed in January:

1/3

Judith S. Dobris*; Anita Dubb*; Arnold Rosenberg*; Roberta Minzer; Mildred Adler*; Olaf "Sonny" Hausgaard; Lore (Laurie) Lee; Benjamin Sacks; Rachel Trombley Porter

1/10

Herbert Swift; Irving Goodman*; Gerald Davis; Michael Leon Kramer*; Vera Winston Propp*; Jean Pacuk; Joseph Velk*; Walter L. Hock Jr; Eleanor Marvin; Sylvia Brownstein; Kitty Lazoroff*

1/17

Mortimer Henry Englander; Avraham Koren*; Minnie Edel*; Martin Loeb*; Tobey Katz; Philip Oppenheimer; Theron Vosburgh; Leo Cabelly

1/24

Milton Cohen; Rena Bach*; Joyce Putterman; Julian Wager; Harold M. Smuckler*; Bertha Friedman; Miriam Miller; William Smith; Marian Hock*; Bernard Smith

1/31

Leonard Samuels; Ronald Weisdorffer; Elizabeth Nelson Mutschler*; Leonard Samuels; Allen Heffler; Elizabeth Nelson Mutschler*; Hilda Smith; Aaron David Stoller*; Max Fiks*

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

February

January 8

March

February 12