

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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

Phone: 518-482-5283
Visit us at <https://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
Kislev/Teves 5786

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation is a Brit Olam Congregation in covenant with the world because we seek the world we want for all, not the world as it is. We embrace our sacred responsibility to care for the Earth and its inhabitants, a Jewish tradition of stewardship and partnership in the ongoing work of Creation.

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 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, December 6	EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	10:00 AM
Friday, December 12	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE (ZOOM)	7:00 PM
Saturday, December 13	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	9:30 AM
	SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE	10:30 AM
Friday, December 19	TOT SHABBAT	5:30 PM
	SHABBAT CHANUKAH SERVICE	7:30 PM
Saturday, December 20	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, December 26	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, December 27	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, January 2	KABBALAT SHABBAT WITH TORAH SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 3	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...

My friends will be traveling over Chanukah. They'll be in Europe for all eight days, along with their young children, visiting family. They spent some time brainstorming the logistics of a portable menorah and have a plan for lighting candles abroad, even if they sometimes need to use electric lights. But there was one question they asked me to help with: Are there any child-friendly Chanukah songs they could take along?

"Of course!", I said. I started listing several and then realized it would probably be easier just to share the Tot Shabbat Chanukah song sheet I had prepared a couple of years ago (which will be used on December 19 – right before our congregational potluck dinner and Shabbat Chanukah service!). It contains some classics like "I Have a Little Dreidel" and "Who Can Retell?" along with some newer compositions that are still fun and catchy for the kids – including one literally called "Chanukah Catch." But then I took a second look at the songs on the page. With the exception of "S'vivon, Sov, Sov, Sov" ("Dreidel, Spin, Spin, Spin") in Hebrew, they were all in English, which is great for us here in the US, but not terribly accessible for their family abroad, especially for relatives who are not Jewish.

I'm sure there must be Chanukah songs in almost every language at this point, just an internet or social media search away, but instead of going modern, I went old school with Ma'oz Tzur (Rock of Ages). While not strictly a children's song – we sing the popular first verse and a thematic, not literal, English interpretation, but the full text gets pretty dark as it continues – it is certainly a holiday classic. The Hebrew text is a *piyyut* (liturgical poem) from the 13th Century,¹ during the time of the Crusades. The familiar tune was likely a German folk song, which has also been adopted as a setting for the Christian hymn, Rock of Ages, whose text was taken from a poem by Augustus Toplady and which also references some of the same images from Psalms as the Hebrew poem. The hymn has been translated into numerous languages over the years. And all of these lyrics do share a common theme as well: giving thanks to God for Divine protection.

So, while this overseas family holiday might feature three different languages singing three slightly different texts, they can all share the same tune and the same joy as they gather around the *chanukiyah*. With the addition, perhaps, of a few presents, that is about as child-friendly as a holiday can get!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot

Here for You: The Caring Community

The Caring Community is here to support you through life's ups or downs — in times of joy as well as times of illness or sorrow. We have had a great response from volunteers eager to cook, drive you to appointments, run errands, participate in a shiva minyan or just visit. So please call on us if there is anything you need for any reason and give our volunteers the opportunity to perform a mitzvah!

¹ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/rock-of-ages-maoz-tzur/>

The Power of Showing Up

By Hayden Schwartz

Once upon a time, I was hungry. I had just been let go from a job that I thought was going to lift me out of institutional, cyclical poverty that I have experienced since being declared disabled in 2016. It was five days before Christmas and about a week before I would run out of any means of supporting myself. There was no family willing to help, nobody guiding me toward resources and just about nothing to eat at home. I frantically started researching food distribution events and food pantries close to my house. With the added stress of wondering how I would be able to keep my house, my stomach rumbled every time I opened my fridge, hoping that something more than some salad dressing would manifest itself if I wished hard enough.

I found myself in the lines for the food pantry, and then I found Street Soldiers. Every week, I went to the line slowly encompassing an entire park and spilling onto the sidewalk of Nott Terrace in Schenectady. And every week, I kept seeing the same faces of volunteers that kept showing up to serve everyone in line, with zero obligation to do so, just doing it out of the goodness of their hearts. It started to turn an extremely stressful situation into one that I would look forward to, updating the volunteers about my job search, my heartaches, my successes. As the weeks went by, I started to know people by name, and they knew mine, too.

One day, a woman named Linda who serves as a core volunteer was giving out vegetable seeds to those of us waiting for food. It was early in April, and I got a pack of Tuscan kale seeds. Linda told me to plant them as soon as I got home. I found two planters from last year's flowers, ripped out any dead roots and threw in the seeds. And I waited. And Linda was still there every week that I waited for my kale to grow. I eventually had an epiphany that I could buy more seeds and ended up not needing Street Soldiers for the rest of the summer, because I could sustain myself with what I grew.

Fast forward a few months - the Schenectady County Food Council put up a flyer looking for people to join their steering committee. On a whim, I applied just to see what would happen. I knew nothing about the organization other than they were addressing food access. What a surprise it was for me to get there on election night and see Linda, as well as numerous other Street Soldiers volunteers, who worked with the food council. They voted me in, and Linda and I now work together to create policy, advocate for the community and make food accessible to all people in our county.

Now, I continue to show up for those who helped me, but in a different light. No longer in the back of the line with a cart, I show up to help. I show up with groceries, with donations, with my physical body to distribute items to those on the other side of the table. I show up to shop for the Free Food Fridges and bring delicious produce to folks who might not have eaten that day who are finally getting the opportunity to nourish themselves. I show up for the hungry children and elderly, who are especially impacted now by cuts to SNAP, who may not have had food for the last few weeks.

It is harder than ever to access food in the United States in the present day, including our great state of New York. Those who are suffering the most very likely don't have the platform or voice to express this like I do in this moment. While you are reading this, some of your neighbors are going without meals, or figuring out what they can cut from their expenses to be able to feed their children. Your solidarity and support are critical for our community to come together and bridge the gap. With your generous contributions, your volunteered time and energy, and your advocacy, we can work as a village to feed the most vulnerable among us. Please consider making a contribution to the Fresh Food Fund today and help us continue our efforts to feed every neighbor that we can.

You can help by making a donation to B'nai Sholom designated to the Fresh Food for Families program. Join us on a shopping trip and we'll show you how to become a Fresh Food grocer. Thanks a million to those who contribute and let's keep sharing access to healthy food with our neighbors!!

Shabbat Chanukah Potluck Dinner

Please plan to join us for a potluck dinner in conjunction with our Shabbat Chanukah service on Friday, December 19. RSVP and sign up to bring a dish to share using the link in the weekly announcements. Questions? Want to help? Contact Libby Liebschutz at libbyliebschutz@gmail.com.



You Have a Voice!

What legislation should the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism of New York (RAC-NY) prioritize and advocate for in the next NY legislative session?

Each year, RAC-NY selects key issues to advocate for in Albany. This year, in addition to continuing to focus on climate justice, we will focus on one other issue urgently affecting the lives of New Yorkers. Currently, we are considering several different pieces of legislation that touch on the rights of immigrants, antisemitism and affordable housing.

RAC-NY will host a general assembly online Wednesday, Dec. 3, from 7-8 PM. This virtual meeting helps to identify priority legislation. All Reform congregants are welcome to participate, and RAC-NY will share short materials about the legislation under consideration. Registration is required to receive the materials.

To receive a link to register, please contact Barry Pendergrass: bpenderg37@gmail.com.



Win bragging rights for the best chili!

Chilipalooza, B'nai Sholom's chili competition, returns again this year!

Date: Saturday, Jan. 24 at 6 PM

Mark your calendars! Enter your best meat (kosher style) or vegan chili recipe or be a taster and enjoy some delicious offerings. Either way it's always a fun evening for all! Watch for an email in late December to sign up.

Synagogue Scholar Talk by Mary Warren

Torah and Shakespeare in Conversation: *Genesis*, *Richard III* and *Hamlet*

Sunday, December 7 at 10:30 AM

Preceded by bagels and coffee/tea at 10:00

According to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his famous book *The Dignity of Difference*, conversation is the "greatest single antidote to violence," but when fear makes direct conversation difficult, we can look to literature, sacred and secular, to help us find wisdom – the truth that can't be faked. In conversation, Torah and Shakespeare can tell us that this moment, fraught with so much conflict, may be new to us, but it is also old. Civil strife starts with sibling rivalry. It can undermine families and nations because it's driven by overwhelming emotions that smother reason, reflection and perspective. And it's no wonder – siblings represent our first encounter with the other and thereby our first glimpse of the self. All our stories tell us that when we destroy them, we destroy ourselves. By listening to Torah and Shakespeare in conversation, particularly the stories of Cain and Joseph in *Genesis* and Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, we will try to access some much-needed perspective, to fear less, to think better, to believe in the future, in the world we can make together.

Mary is a professor at SUNY Orange Community College, where she taught the college's Shakespeare course for 23 years, as well as other literature, writing and philosophy courses. Over the years, Mary has given a number of presentations and led discussions on Shakespeare plays, including at B'nai Sholom.

All are welcome and non-members are requested to pre-register via the website link.

For Kids and Families...

Chanukah

PJLibrary.org has many ideas for activities for different age groups, including preparing Chanukah recipes from around the world. One recipe is for bimuelos, dough fritters dipped in syrup and enjoyed by many Sephardic families.

Ingredients

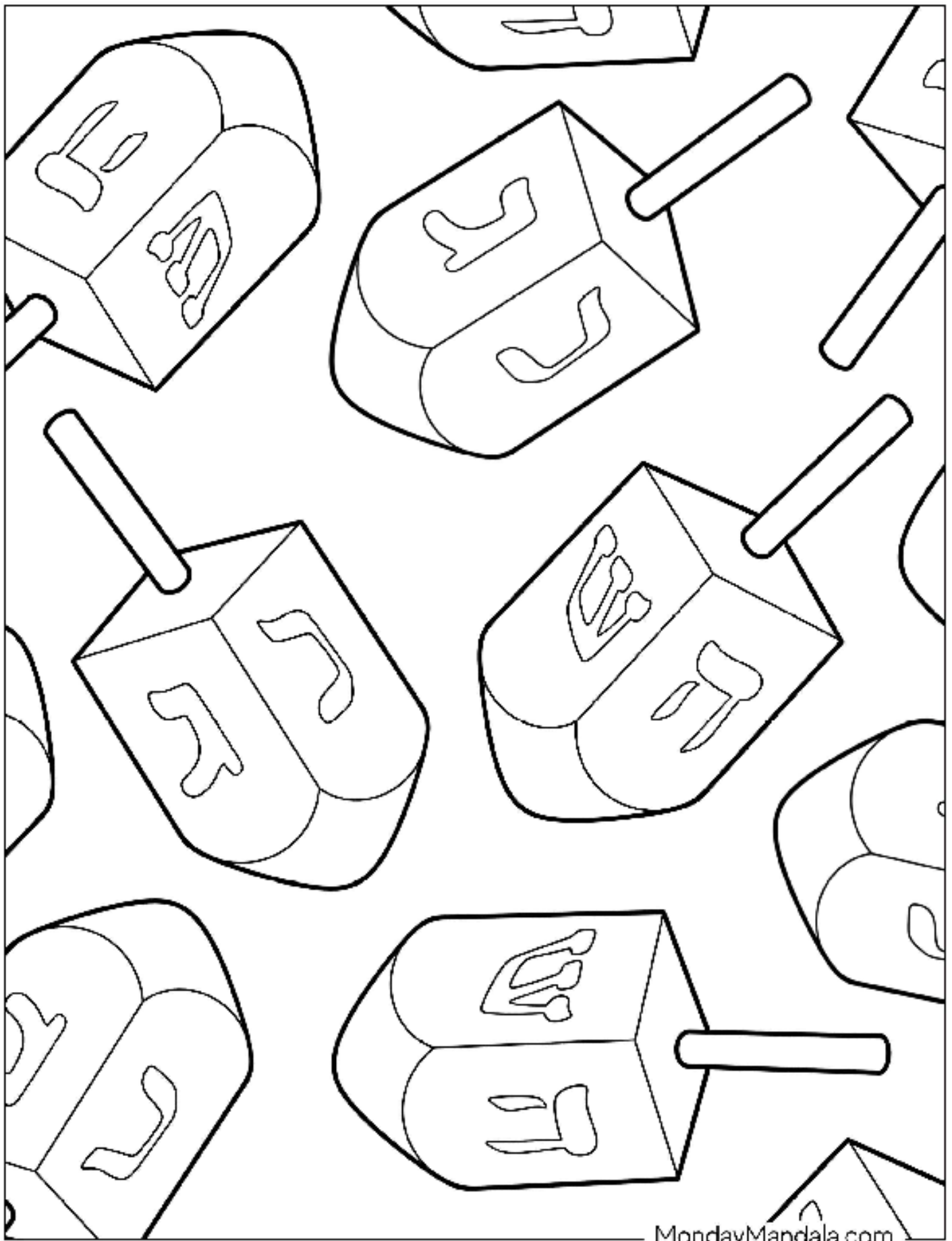
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup of milk
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Optional: honey, maple syrup, or powdered sugar for dipping or topping your bimuelos.

Preparation

- Kids can help with making the dough, rolling batter and choosing toppings. Grown-ups should handle **all** of the frying.
- Mix the dry ingredients together.
- Add the egg and milk, then stir until batter forms.
- In a frying pan, pour in your oil (about two inches high) and warm your oil to about 365 degrees.
- Drop the batter by tablespoons into the oil.
- Fry the bimuelos until they are golden on each side, about 2 to 3 minutes.
- Use a slotted spoon to transfer your finished bimuelos to a paper towel-lined plate to cool and allow the oil to drain.
- Enjoy!

PJLibrary.org also recommends wonderful holiday-themed books, including *The Chanukkah Guest* by Eric Kimmel for ages 3-5 years, *Antlers with Candles* by Chris Barash for ages 3 to 4 Years, and *All-of-a-Kind Family Hanukkah* by Emily Jenkins for ages 5 to 6 Years.

Your family might also enjoy creating a paper plate menorah. *PJsandPaint.com* has the directions.



Thank You!

... to the fantastic Bulletin Brigade who helped fold and stuff November's Bulletin: Jim and Joan Savitt; Martie Teumim; Cheryl Reeder.

... to the following congregants who recently hosted an oneg Shabbat or kiddush lunch: Lois Gordon, in memory of **Bob Gordon**; Melissa Putterman Hoffmann; Gail Golderman and Rochelle Goldfarb.

Mazal Tov!!

...to Alex Wiegand and Sean O'Connor on their wedding Oct. 26 in Warrensburg!

...to Sarah Waxman on her wedding to Zachery Shepherd Oct. 31 in Albany!

...to Sam Fein on his election to the office of Chief City Auditor of Albany!

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

Michael and Tracie Waxman – In honor of the marriage of our daughter, Sarah Jane Waxman, to Zachery Shepherd

Shari Whiting – In memory of Sarah Whiting

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

Michael Malinowitz; Shari Whiting; Michael and Tracie Waxman; Barney Horowitz

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

In memory of **Doris Lowenfels** by Jack and Barbara Devore

In memory of **Estelle Nitka** by Mark and Cheryl Reeder

In celebration of **Jamie Kammer, on the birth of her son Eric** by Ben and Becky Marvin

In memory of **Doris Lowenfels** by Ben and Becky Marvin

In honor of **Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass on their son Josh's wedding to Anastasia Shpurik** by Ben and Becky Marvin

In celebration of **Alex Wiegand and Sean O'Connor on their wedding** by Ben and Becky Marvin

High Holy Days

Jack and Barbara Devore; Ben and Becky Marvin; Arthur and Rita Alowitz; Carol and Doug Smith; Barney Horowitz; Amy and Yossi Koren-Roth; Douglas Goldman and Malinka Gutierrez

Yizkor Books

Nancy and David Rudinger; Maggie Tabak and David Smith; Mimi Bruce and David Ray

Fundraising Appeal

Jeffrey and Teresa Weisbrot; Jack and Barbara Devore; Maggie Tabak and David Smith; Ben and Becky Marvin; Deb Burger; Rema Goldstein; Phil and Martie Teumim; Debra and Steve Nozik; Eric and Maxine Goldberg; Lew Sperber; Candace Raderman, in honor of the birth of **Ari James**; Mimi Bruce and David Ray; Julie Friedman and Bob Negrish; David and Libby Liebschutz; Arthur and Rita Alowitz; Anne Hausgaard; Valerie Tabak and Jesse Dinkin; Marsha Lazarus and Kathleen O'Connor; Steven Morse and Brenda Hazard; Judy and Roy Fruiterman

Free Food Fridge

Jim and Joan Savitt; Maxine and Eric Goldberg; Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass; Laurie Shanks

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

The congregation mourns the recent passing of

Constance "Connie" Goldfarb

Mother of Rochelle Goldfarb and

Mother-in-law of Gail Golderman

May her memory forever be for a blessing.

The following Yahrtzeits will be observed in December:

12/5

Nusia Reichbach*; Abraham Porter; Ray Stephany; Simon Semelisky*; Frances Rudinger; Elihu Propp*; Richard L. Brower*; Bertha Markstein Peckerman*; David Cohen*; Paul B. Blum; Emery Sennesh; Albert Marcus*; Sylvia Goldstein Marcus*

12/12

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

12/19

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

12/26

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

1/2

Judith S. Dobris*; Anita Dubb*

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

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

January 2026
February

Deadline

December 10, 2025
January 14