

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

420 WHITEHALL RD., ALBANY, NY 12208
E-mail: office@bnaisholomalbany.org
January 2026

Phone: 518-482-5283
Visit us at <https://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
Kislev/Tevet 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, January 2	KABBALAT SHABBAT WITH TORAH SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 3	EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	10:00 AM
Friday, January 9	TOT SHABBAT	5:30 PM
	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 10	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, January 16	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 17	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, January 23	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE (ZOOM)	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 24	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	9:30 AM
	SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE WITH B'YACHAD	10:30 AM
Friday, January 30	SHABBAT SHIRAH WITH TORAH SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, January 31	TORAH STUDY (ZOOM)	10:00 AM
Friday, February 6	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 7	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...

Over the course of this Chanukah, we had many opportunities to spend time together. We gathered on Zoom for our nightly candle lighting and for our usual weekly Torah study; some of us were at the B'Yachad Chanukah party hosted at B'nai Sholom; some of you may have gone to Federation's Chanukah on Jay event in Schenectady; and we had a spectacular turnout for Shabbat Chanukah – kicking off the evening with Tot Shabbat, concluding with our festive Kabbalat Shabbat service, and this year sandwiching a delicious and well-attended potluck dinner between them. (Thanks for the idea, Libby!)

At each of these events, there was, as expected, lots of talk about light. At our Hebrew school program, Rabbi Dan and I broke the kids and families into two groups for a Hillel vs. Shammai jingle competition. Beit Shammai's chant argued that we should start with all eight candles and remove one each night. Beit Hillel's riff on the 10 8 Duel Commandments song from *Hamilton* promoted starting with one candle and building up to eight by the end of the holiday. To no one's surprise, both groups found "Eight is great!" catchy lyrics to include.

In the adult-oriented gatherings, it was regularly noted that Chanukah is scheduled to fall over the winter solstice – at least in the Northern Hemisphere. As the days get shorter and shorter and the darkness feels most intense, we defy the decline by adding more and more light to our homes and communities. And when the holiday concludes, the days start to get a little brighter, bit by bit, almost as if we bent nature to our will, or at least showed it the way.

Similarly, our Torah readings for the month of January this year recount a decline towards the depths of our experience as a people – the death of Jacob, the death of Joseph, slavery in Egypt, plagues and being chased by Pharaoh's army towards a treacherous sea. And then, in *parashat B'Shalach*, we get the turning point. The Sea of Reeds parts and we make it through, singing for joy after our escape (join us for Shabbat Shirah on January 30 to celebrate in song!). It's slow going after that. As we travel through the desert into unfamiliar territory, we are scared, uncertain and afraid to trust. It takes a *lot* of patience from both God and Moses, as well as multiple miracles, to set us on the path towards confidence again.

This past month, there have been numerous events that have shaken us, especially the attack on the Chanukah candle lighting at Bondi Beach. In the face of that kind of tragedy, it's easy to feel lost in a sea of anger, fear and heartbreak. But our tradition reminds us that we have the tools to push back against the darkness. We add one candle in the *chanukiyah*, march one mile in the desert, perform one mitzvah, bake one dish for a potluck or join one Zoom with our friends – small acts of defiance that bring a little more goodness into the world. And if we add enough of them, perhaps we will eventually feel that we have turned the tide, ever so slightly, towards the light.

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!

From Our President...

We Need Your Noise and Notions!

This is a time of year when we think about leaders. By the time you read this, businesses and schools will be closing in commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday on Monday, January 19, and also for Presidents Day, a celebration of all U.S. presidents, on February 16. Having closed out another election year, we think about leadership – not only as a quality of those at the very top, but hopefully as a potential strength in all of us. It makes sense that on the Friday nearest Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, we often sing "We Shall Overcome" as a Mi Chamocha-themed song. The idea of people peacefully standing up to oppression, appealing to a higher power or drawing on what is best in themselves to find the strength to be brave is ... epic. Resilience, especially in the face of adversity and scarcity, is a treasured characteristic, and we are lucky to have it or to know someone who does.

What does this have to do with B'nai Sholom? In my time here (beginning in 1993), this community has been a supportive place where new ideas and ways of doing things have an opportunity to be heard if not encouraged. Rolling up sleeves and moving tables and chairs, thinking of a more efficient way to complete large projects, welcoming newcomers and helping them get to know B'nai Sholom – these behaviors show initiative that is demonstrated not only by board members or committee chairs but ideally by everyone. As anyone who has ever attended a leadership seminar knows, leadership is a quality anyone can have, not just a talent or privilege attached to position.

Finally, on the calendar is Shabbat Shirah on Friday, January 30, when we celebrate the moment in the Torah when Moses makes the sea part and freedom becomes possible. We will fill the synagogue with joyful noise led by those who do not often lead services or singing. That is one of the wonderful things about Shabbat Shirah. It invites people to move from sitting and following along to *making* music. You could be one of those people. Contact Carol Smith (csmith1161@gmaiI.com) if you'd like to play or sing a song in the service or join others in a song. I hope your mouths are full of song and your hands like timbrels.

L'shalom,

Melissa Putterman Hoffmann

Landscape Team Completes Winter Project

You may, or may not, have noticed that the dead tree that was threatening the Sanctuary has been removed. Advantage Tree Service of Delmar came early one November morning, took down the tree and fed it through the chipper in record time. They were a delight to work with in all aspects. Thank you to **Bob Negris** for obtaining estimates and arranging for Advantage to do the work!

Moms Start Here

Thanks to information shared by some members of our Social Action/Social Justice Committee, which in turn led us to the website, we were made aware of the exceptional work Moms Start Here provides. The organization's mission is to provide support for expecting and new parents in the Capital Region. Parents are supplied with items such as diapers, strollers and baby gear as well as a Parent Hotline, support groups and parent education. Information is provided for both pregnant and postpartum women as well as the creation of community through their baby showers and "Mom Table Talk."

And so it was that we donated boxes of beautifully bagged baby board books and literature that speaks to the importance of reading to your baby both while in utero and starting right at the early days after the baby is born. As we know, establishing the routine of reading to your child improves language development and an interest in books that hopefully can last a lifetime. How much vocabulary development and improved conversation skills can result when a child grows up in a house where reading is a custom!

Do you know how we are able to purchase the books and the gift bags that they are lovingly wrapped in? Your donations to our Books for Babies program and the Vera Propp Literacy Fund. As we know, literacy is a vital part of future educational and economic success.

Let's continue to help families bring the joy of the written word into their families' lives!

We Asked and You Delivered

Thank you to all who heeded the call for the most recent clothing and food collections. On November 17, three entire carloads of clothing were delivered to Grassroot Givers in Albany. The transfer of bags to cars and then cars into the facility is always a task that is both invigorating and gratifying because the women at the receiving end are truly amazed by the sheer volume we collect. It is hard to recount the number of times we heard "Thank you" from both the staff and the people who were waiting outside the facility. Being the "givers" can feel humbling.

In advance of Thanksgiving, a trunk-load of nonperishable food was delivered to the Regional Food Bank. A reminder: we are always collecting (well within expiration date) nonperishable food. The boxes are located at the synagogue office entrance. See a BOGO promotion? Please consider others who can certainly make great use of your extras.

With thanks to Jesse Dinkin, Melissa Browne, Mari Vosburgh, Jaimie Miller and Susan Aron for their herculean efforts! Emily Pickering, your signage and support are always appreciated!

PURIM 5786: A Shtick-ful Celebration

Start polishing your act and get ready for a night of shtick and song!

It's **Purim at B'nai Sholom**, a multi-access, in-the-Sanctuary evening of fun featuring your creative talent (but not 10,000 talents of silver).

Monday, March 2 – 7 PM

Perform a sketch, sing a song, tell a (Purim-themed) joke or two – or more.

Use your imagination!

Costume Parade

The Whole Megillah

Continuous Revelry

Then cap it off with hamantaschen and beverages

Want to join in? Here's what to do:

Sign up by email to Ben Marvin bamarvin4574@gmail.com. Indicate whether you plan to write a sketch or sing a song and which Megillah chapter you prefer.

You know we take our silliness seriously.

Why not share your silly side with us this year!?

Questions? Contact Ben for more information.



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.

Food, Glorious Food...

Yes, there was food-a-plenty in those carts and the sun was (mainly) shining as we shopped, sorted and filled the refrigerators. And people came. How proud we were to be your emissaries as we spent the funds that you, our congregants, have donated to the Fresh Food for Families Fund.

Jamella Anderson, who runs the Free Food Fridge Albany program, is always so grateful when she receives my text informing her that we are ready to do another shop and fill. We are delighted to be part of this program, which allows fresh food to go directly into the hands (and mouths) of our neighbors in need.

We don't need to tell anyone about the price of groceries and that the City of Albany has neighborhoods that are clearly "food deserts." Now, more than ever, our assistance has a positive impact on residents in the areas where the refrigerators are located. With your support, we can continue to fulfill this mitzvah.

Did you know that you can place fresh food in a refrigerator if you have extra fresh food for which you may have no use? Are you leaving the area for a vacation and have fresh produce that will spoil while you are out of town? Shopping at Honest Weight? The FFF refrigerator is located in the east end of the parking lot and would love to receive your donation. Following our recent New Member Shabbat, there was enough of the catered food left over for us to fill eight "to go" boxes with delicious meals that were labeled and placed in the refrigerator located in the parking lot. When that refrigerator was checked the following day, those meals had been taken. Once again, we shared our bounty with others.

In addition to the generous monetary donations, we are always looking for volunteers to shop, sort and fill. For more information, please contact Valerie or Becky.

With many thanks to my enthusiastic and very capable November shopping partner Candy Raderman.

--Valerie Tabak

Author Talk with Holocaust Survivor Peter Balint

Thursday, January 8 at 2 PM – Followed by Dessert

In-person at B'nai Sholom



Please join us for a talk with Peter Balint, author of the memoir, *The Shoe in the Danube: The immigrant experience of a holocaust survivor*, a remarkable story of resilience and self-discovery.

Born during an air raid in Budapest in 1944, Balint's life was shaped by war, loss and displacement. His father was killed on a bridge over the Danube during a death march from Mauthausen concentration camp. After fleeing communist Hungary, Balint's family returned to Germany and eventually immigrated to Albany when he was just 13.

Drawing from his memoir, Balint shares his journey of understanding his origins and navigating the cultural divide between his German upbringing and his American academic and professional life. This heartfelt conversation honors the strength of refugees, survivors and those who dare to begin again.

All are welcome! Non-members are requested to pre-register via website link.

And coming up:

Author Talk with Professor Adam Jortner (via Zoom)

Date TBA

In a very special program recognizing America's 250th birthday, we will host by Zoom Professor Adam Jortner, author of *A Promised Land: Jewish Patriots and the American Revolution and the Birth of Religious Freedom* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2024). The book is a lively and comprehensive account of the intersecting histories of Jews and the American founding. It details as to how Jewish Patriots not only fought in every major engagement but played a key role in making the right to worship freely a reality.

Jortner holds an endowed chair at Auburn University, where he is a professor of history. He specializes in the history of religion in the early nation, having written several books on the subject as well as a lecture series on Audible entitled "Faith and the Founding Fathers." Jortner is a frequent contributor to NPR's "Backstory." Stay tuned for more...

For Kids and Families...

Shabbat

JewishGrandparentsNetwork.org is a great resource, and its authors share the importance of family traditions that create an “intergenerational sense of belonging.” They suggest that Shabbat provides an opportunity for “a deeply meaningful family tradition *that happens every week.*”

JewishGrandparentsNetwork.org even offers a downloadable “Shabbat Discovery Kit” to use with children ages 3-8, suggesting ideas and activities to bring Shabbat to life, including:

- The Story of the First Shabbat
- Shabbat activities and challenges (“Days of Creation Challenge” with found objects; “Lunar Time” with sandwich cookies)
- Movement games (“Lecha Dodi Parade”; “Yoga Shabbat-Style”)
- Challah, grape juice, and *besamim* (spices) recipes

PJLibrary.org is another resource, and it has many ideas for Shabbat-themed books, including *Alef is for Abba* by Rebecca Kafka for ages 2-3 years, *The Always Prayer Shawl* by Sheldon Oberman for ages 7-8+ years and *Bubbie & Rivka’s Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)* by Sarah Lynne Reul for ages 4-5 years.

Shabbat Word Search

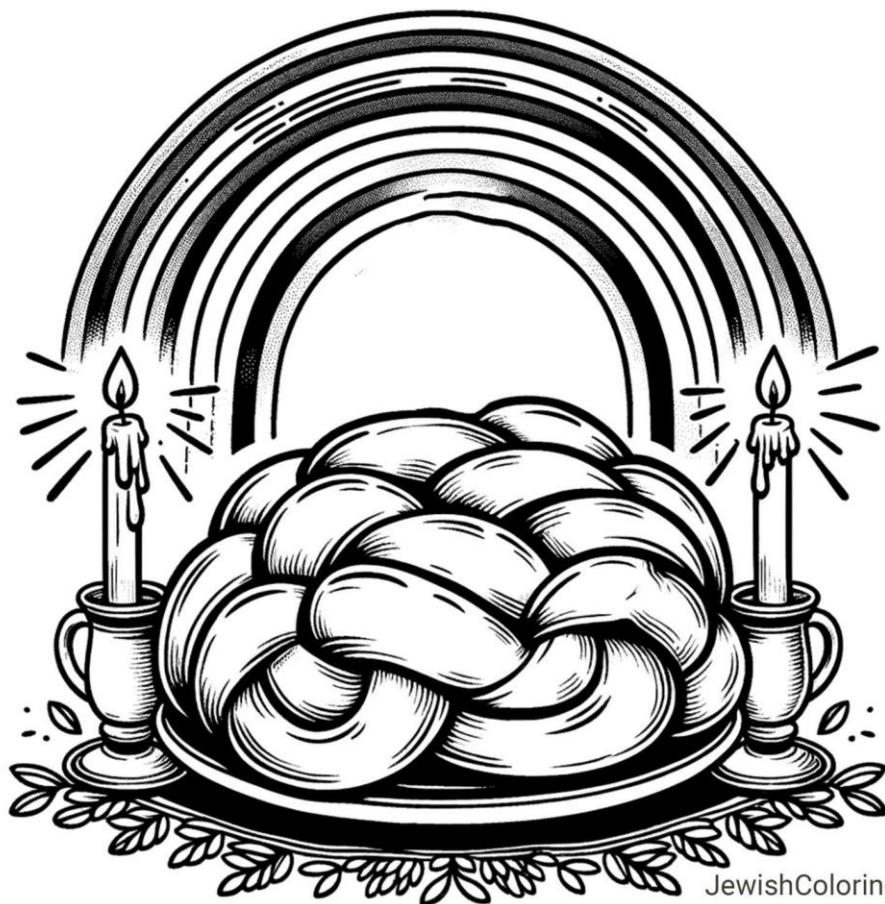
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S	I	C	W	O	U	T	B	W	K
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W	Z	Y	P	Y	R	T	L	A	D
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CHALLAH
SHABBAT

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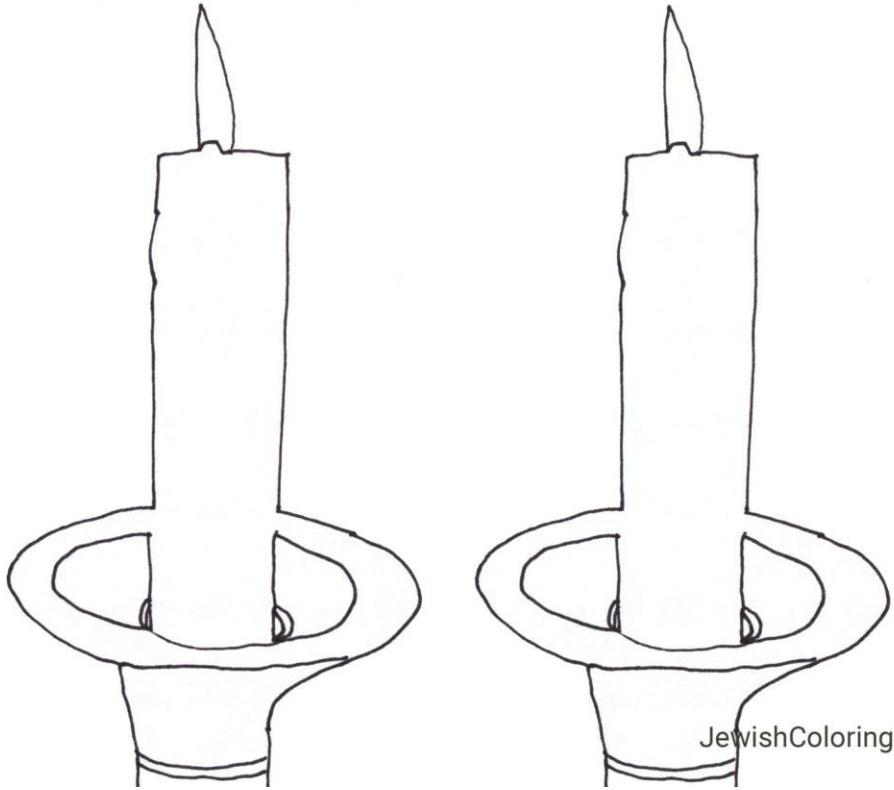
CANDLES
MITZVAH

WINE



JewishColoringPages.com

Shabbat Shalom



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Thank You!

... to the fantastic Bulletin Brigade who helped fold and stuff December's Bulletin: Jim and Joan Savitt; Martie Teumim; Martha Rozett, Anita Stein, Dee Wind.

... to the following congregants who recently hosted an oneg Shabbat or kiddush lunch: David and Libby Liebschutz; Melissa Browne and Mary Warrener; everyone who brought a contribution to the Channukah Potluck!

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

Shari Whiting; Ian Schleifer and Yuyu Kyaw-S

In memory of **Constance Goldfarb** by Ellie and Randy Davis

In memory of **Judy Dobris** by Jan Dobris

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

In memory of **Grace Fruiterman** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman

Fundraising Appeal

Lois Gordon; Ben and Becky Marvin; Susan Radosh and Steve Klein; Dee Wind

In memory of **Jack Pendergrass** by Barry Pendergrass and Ann Shapiro

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

The following Yahrtzeits will be observed in January:

1/2

Judith S. Dobris*; Anita Dubb*; Arnold Rosenberg*; Roberta Minzer

1/9

Benjamin Sacks; Rachel Trombley Porter; Lore (Laurie) Lee; Olaf "Sonny" Hausgaard; Mildred Adler*; Herbert Swift; Irving Goodman*; Vera Winston Propp*; Jean Pacuk; Michael Leon Kramer*; Gerald Davis; Joseph Velk*; Walter L. Hock Jr; Eleanor Marvin; Julian Wager

1/16

Kitty Lazoroff*; Sylvia Brownstein; Mortimer Henry Englander; Avraham Koren*; Martin Loeb*; Minnie Edel*; Theron Vosburgh; Philip Oppenheimer; Tobey Katz

1/23

Leo Cabelly; Milton Cohen; Harold M. Smuckler*; Joyce Putterman; Rena Bach*; Bertha Friedman; William Smith; Miriam Miller; Marian Hock*; Bertha Ginsburg*; Janice Kerper; Allan B. Cashman; Tirza Freeman

1/30

Bernard Smith; Leonard Samuels; Ronald Weisdorffer; Elizabeth Nelson Mutschler*; Allen Heffler; Hilda Smith; Aaron David Stoller*; Max Fiks; Bertye Balin; Morris B. Saxe

**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

February
March

Deadline

January 14
February 11