

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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June 2024

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Visit us at <https://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>
Iyyar/Sivan 5784

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, June 7	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, June 8	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Tuesday, June 11	YIZKOR SERVICE	7:00 PM
	EREV SHAVUOT SERVICE	7:30 PM
Friday, June 14	TOT SHABBAT	5:30 PM
	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE (ZOOM ONLY)	7:00 PM
Saturday, June 15	TORAH STUDY	9:30 AM
	TORAH SERVICE	10:30 AM
	POTLUCK KIDDUSH LUNCH	12:30 PM
	POST-SHAVUOT LEARNING SESSION	1:30 PM
Friday, June 21	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, June 22	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, June 28	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, June 29	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, July 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:00 PM
Saturday, July 6	EXTENDED STUDY OF THE PROPHETS (HYBRID)	10:00 AM

Visit <https://reformjudaism.org/learning> for each week's parashah.

B'nai Sholom's 2024 Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held on Thursday, June 27, and will begin at 7 p.m.

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...

The receiving of Torah at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20) is a rather dramatic experience. It is accompanied by thunder, lightning, blasts of the shofar, fire and smoke. In fact, we are in such a state of awe that we beg Moses to intercede on our behalf, lest we die from too much direct contact with God. Several midrashim find the experience not just frightening, but coercive. After all, how can we enter freely into a covenant if our partner in the contract holds all the power? One midrash imagines Mount Sinai literally hanging over our heads, a threat from God that if we do not accept Torah, we will die:

Rabbi Avdimi bar Hama bar Hasa said: the Jewish people actually stood beneath the mountain, and the verse **teaches that the Holy Blessed One overturned the mountain above the Jews like a tub, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there will be your burial.** ([Shabbat 88a](#))

The Talmud immediately points out the problem with this kind of relationship. If the Torah was given under conditions in which we had no free will to refuse, then we would not be obligated to follow its laws. And just as quickly, a solution is suggested: the Jews freely accepted Torah during the time of Achashverosh (i.e. the Purim story).

The case for *Megillat Esther* (the Scroll of Esther) can be made by pointing out that God is – somewhat strangely – absent from the story, giving the Jewish people the freedom and space to choose whether to follow Torah law or cave to pressure from other humans (i.e. Haman). We know how that turned out!

I don't think we need to jump so far afield, though. The scroll associated with Shavuot is not the story of Esther, but the book of Ruth. Ruth, a Moabite who married a Jewish husband, famously chose to stay connected to the Jewish people after her husband died. Despite several nudges from her mother-in-law, Naomi, to return to her people and find a new partner who can support her and give her children, Ruth famously declines:

But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. / Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the Eternal do to me if anything but death parts me from you." ([Ruth 1:16-17](#))

The description of the moment of Revelation at Sinai may be overwhelming, but Shavuot doesn't really mark a single instant in Jewish history – one do-or-die moment of decision to accept Torah in the wilderness. As Ruth demonstrates, it's about continuity and ongoing commitment – making the choice to affirm and sustain our connection to God and the Jewish people on a daily basis. That's what covenant truly looks like.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot

Longevity Dinner Celebrates Longtime B'nai Sholom Congregants

More than 50 Chai-Plus members – congregants who've been with B'nai Sholom for 18+ years – enjoyed a delicious potluck meal at this year's Longevity Dinner. Questions left on each table stimulated conversation about their experiences at B'nai Sholom, which were then discussed with the whole group after the dinner.

Rabbi Weisbrot gave a lovely sermon at the Shabbat service and had the Chai-Plus members rise for a benediction. Afterward, everyone enjoyed desserts provided by the Member Events Team (Bettina Stoller, Deb Nozik, Ann Shapiro, Anne Hausgaard, and honorary member Lene Hausgaard).

Thanks go to Deb for providing tablecloths and napkins, Ann S. for picking up the one item that had to be catered and ordering the pad/pen gifts that everyone seemed to like, Lene for helping on her birthday, and Linda Strohl and Susan Radosh for assisting in the most invaluable manner. Howie Stoller provided security, and Phil Teumim and Eric Goldberg helped with garbage removal (no small task!). And Team member Gabe Hanoufa organized the SignUp Genius – a great help!

Emily Pickering provided office support, and – of course – we thank all of our Chai-Plus members for their scrumptious food contributions. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone in this gargantuan undertaking; if I have, please forgive me. Thanks again, everyone!

Bettina Stoller

Old Computers Get Repurposed...And Not Put In A Landfill!

After our April collection of computers, printers, monitors and peripherals, a fully loaded SUV made a delivery to GE Elfun Computer Rehab of Schenectady. Retired GE employees will erase the hard drives, load new software and pass the computers on to non-profit organizations and schools in need. Equipment that cannot be refurbished will be disassembled and parts responsibly recycled or disposed of.

The delivery consisted of seven towers, 10 laptops and notebooks, three monitors and numerous keyboards, mice and power cords!

What Makes Free Food Fridge Shopping Fun? Knowing that People Eat Better Because of Us

"Looks like you've got a bunch of teenage boys to feed," said the gentleman approaching our overflowing shopping cart as the two enthusiastic shoppers pushed on. "I'd better get ahead of you two before you buy out the store," remarked another. If you want a great upper body workout and at the same time test Newton's Second Law of Motion (how the cart's mass affects its acceleration), participate in a Free Food Fridge "shop, sort and delivery day."

My shopping partner reported that it was "fun." If "fun" means spending the better part of a beautiful day inside a grocery store, choosing the best value and quality that can stretch the funds as far as possible, returning to the synagogue to sort produce into equitable portions to fill three refrigerators, reloading the car and then playing, with the help of Google Maps, "Find the Fridge," cleaning the refrigerators and then stocking them, it certainly is a fun adventure and a great workout!

So where is the actual *fun*? How about the part where people come to access the food while you are filling the refrigerator and they bless you and thank you over and over again? And then there's knowing that because of the generosity of our congregants, we are providing fresh fruits and vegetables, nutritious dairy products and healthy snacks and breads for our neighbors in Albany. What could possibly be more enjoyable than knowing there are people who eat better because of us?

There are prayers and talmudic passages that reference God's providing food for all. Sadly, there may be an abundance of food possibilities in this country at this time in history, but there are many reasons food prices are inflated and we all know who suffers. This spring, while you are planting your vegetable gardens, please consider a little bit more. The Free Food Fridge locations are listed online. It's okay to add some of your bounty to them.

In the meantime, please do not forget that you have fellow congregants who want to have some "fun" shopping for the FFFs in Albany. Please donate in honor of a loved one, in remembrance of someone who may have loved to eat healthy and delicious food, or just because you want to do a mitzvah.

Valerie Tabak

Going, Going, Gone! Family Promise Online Auction Opens Sunday, June 2

Don't miss your opportunity to bid on great items and support Family Promise of the Capital Region. As a support congregation for the program, B'nai Sholom assembled a terrific basket of coffee-themed items. You can bid on our basket or a framed photograph by congregant Ben Marvin. Other themed baskets include chocolates, an ice cream social, an Italian basket, local cookbooks, local food and many more goodies of all kinds.

All funds support the Family Promise mission of aiding homeless children and their families. Since Family Promise does not accept government funds, the generosity of the community is even more important.

Beginning the last week of May, the link to the auction can be found at:

<https://www.familypromisecr.org/>

or on Facebook: just enter "Family Promise of the Capital Region" in the Facebook search box.

A BIG THANK YOU! goes to the congregants who donated generously to our *Café Culture* basket: Molly Davis, Dayle Zatlin, Gail Golderman, Mari Vosburgh, Lois Gordon, Judy Fruiterman, Anita Stein, Ellie Davis, Melissa Browne, Valerie Tabak and Becky Marvin.

Capital Region Pride Parade Steps Off June 9

Come and join other congregants to show your solidarity and support for the LGBTQ+ community. Let's let the Capital District know that B'nai Sholom is welcoming to all! We will proudly march again behind our banner, showing our true colors.

As parking is difficult that day, please let Becky Marvin know if you plan to attend so we can coordinate carpools: beckymarvin4574@gmail.com

Join Us – and Help! – at Bethlehem Pride Festival June 22

B'nai Sholom will host an information table at the first-ever Bethlehem Pride Festival on Saturday, June 22, from noon to 4:00 PM. The outdoor festival, hosted on the grounds of First United Methodist Church, 428 Kenwood Ave. in Delmar, will feature musical performances, food and kids' activities. B'nai Sholom's table will offer festival attendees the opportunity to decorate sugar cookies with rainbow icing while they learn about our congregation.

Please plan to come by to visit the B'nai Sholom table, enjoy the festival activities and demonstrate your support for the LGBTQ+ community. Or, volunteer to help! If you can bake a dozen (or more) plain sugar cookies for us to decorate, or if you want to take a turn staffing our information table, please contact a member of the Membership Team: Libby Liebschutz, Barbara Devore, Katelyn Ouellette DiPaola, Howie Domfort, Julie Friedman or Alex Wiegand.

Caring Community: Helping to Help Each Other

When a congregant is experiencing a time of stress such as an illness, a death in the family or a new baby, B'nai Sholom's Caring Community offers a helping hand.

But the Caring Community can't do that without you.

We need congregants to sign up for the "on call" list to cook, to drive a fellow congregant to a medical appointment or to attend a minyan during shiva. Signing up does not mean you have to do it when it is not convenient. It means we can call and ask.

If you are willing to help in times of need, please contact Nancy Maurer by email: nancymaurer5@gmail.com

Don't delay, reach out today.

"On three things does the world stand: On Torah, on worship and on deeds of lovingkindness." Pirkei Avot 1:2

FBI Offers Revised Active Shooter Advice

Four B'nai Sholom members recently attended a de-escalation training session offered by the FBI at Congregation Beth Abraham Jacob, which offered revised "Run Hide Fight" advice to be used in an active shooter incident. This advice indicated that "Hide" no longer means hiding under a desk, as that has become less effective; "Hide" now means staying out of the shooter's line of sight. If you are hiding, you should prepare a defense plan and use teamwork and surprise to incapacitate an attacker.

The FBI offers excellent active shooter safety resources at <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/active-shooter-safety-resources>. On the FBI site, there is a 4.5-minute video that covers what is discussed above, and more.

It behooves us all to know this, as active shooter events have become more frequent. Those of us who volunteer as greeters should know what to do if one occurs, in order to offer guidance. Of course, the focus of our temple security is on controlling access to the building, to prevent an attacker from entering in the first place.

****SPECIAL EVENTS****

"Jews, Dodgers and Brooklyn: Before the Diaspora" with William Simons

**SUNY Professor Emeritus and Co-director, Cooperstown Symposium on
Baseball and American Culture**

**Sunday, June 23, 10:30 AM
Preceded by bagels and coffee/tea at 10 AM**

On June 23, we will host Professor William Simons for a presentation that will examine the special relationship that existed between Brooklyn's large Jewish community and baseball's Dodgers before they departed for Los Angeles. It is a story about an extraordinary time and place in American Jewish history and one leavened with humor and verve. The Dodgers drilled deep into the borough's social fabric, creating a unique bond with its Jewish residents and a shared sensibility between them. These bonds only got stronger when Jackie Robinson broke the color line in 1947. Simons will explore this unique connection in what should be a fascinating discussion.

Simons is professor emeritus at SUNY Oneonta and former chair of its history department. He is also co-director of the Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, an annual academic conference sponsored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and SUNY Oneonta.

Non-B'nai Sholom congregants are invited to register at <https://forms.office.com/r/wHvnyGELgQ>. Watch also for a Zoom link in the weekly e-mail.

ZOOM WITH AUTHOR Jessamyn Hope Date to be Announced

B'nai Sholom will host via Zoom author Jessamyn Hope as she discusses her novel *Safekeeping*. This debut work is largely set in a secluded kibbutz in 1994, with a disparate cast of characters. Hope's novel, written from multiple perspectives, makes the reader feel a part of the tightknit and at times stifling community. In skillfully executed dramatic irony, Hope leaves the readers in a position of understanding far more about the residents than they do about each other. *The Boston Globe* called it "luminous, irreverent and ambitious," while the Toronto *Globe and Mail* characterized it as "a page turner that satisfies all the cravings of escapist reading while meeting the real world head on."

Hope's short stories have been widely published, received two Pushcart Prize honorable mentions and been anthologized in *Best Canadian Essays* and *The New Spice Box: Contemporary Jewish Writing*. She grew up in Montreal, has long lived in New York City and is spending the year in Tel Aviv.

More information will follow but multiple copies of her books are available in both the Synagogue library and that of the local library system. Contact Barney Horowitz at horowitz28@verizon.net for more information.

A Few Minutes with the Torah

Spotlighting the outstanding d'vrei Torah written and delivered by congregants. Howard Domfort shared some thoughts with us at a Board of Trustees meeting earlier this year.

My Jewish Journey: "I Wish I Knew" by Howard Domfort

I grew up in the Bronx in the 1960s. Our neighborhood was almost 10% Jewish. I attended Hebrew school from 1965 until my bar mitzvah in 1968.

A few parents of my fellow students were survivors of the Holocaust. How do I know this? I saw the numbers on their arms. Frieda was a year or two older than me. She would never really talk about her mom but did say she was in the concentration camps. Her mom was always quiet and kept to herself. My classmate Benjamin talked some about his mom who was also in the camps. She was friendly but very protective of her son.

Looking back, either while in high school or college, I wish I had talked to these people to ask, learn, hear about their experiences. I never did and I am somewhat sorry about it.

There were other people from the neighborhood who were Survivors: one owned a candy store; another owned the ice cream parlor. My parents referred to them as the "Refugees." They too had numbers tattooed on their arms. Again, I wish I could've known something more about them besides being behind a counter.

In the mid-1970s my dad told me that his dad (my grandfather) had an older brother, Samuel. He and family were all killed by the Nazis. Dad on occasion would blurt out "They're all gone." I tried to get some more detail about this, but dad would only say, "They were all murdered. Nobody's left." I never pushed my father more on this because I saw how upset he was. Dad even walked out on "Schindler's List." He said he just couldn't watch it. No other relative ever talked about this.

My Domfort cousins started a "cousins club" and would hold an annual family get-together in the mid-1990s. I was in my early 40s at the time. One year they honored their dad (my great uncle) after his passing and stated that he was a survivor of the Holocaust. I had known the man for my whole life and never knew this. Again, I wish I knew. Not as a kid, but at least as an adult.

My in-laws were both survivors of the Holocaust. Ida's dad with his mom, dad and sister escaped Germany to Shanghai. He would tell us about his times under Japanese rule. Every documentary or TV interview about the Jews in Shanghai during WWII is exactly how Walter described it. It was not an easy life, but they survived. I'm glad I knew this.

As for my mother-in-law, the story is very different. She was from Hungary. In 1944, she was captured and was in several concentration camps. While she survived, most of her family was murdered. After the war, she went to Sweden to recover, then to the US. Here she stayed with family until she got married. She told us that she wanted to talk about her experiences in the camps, but her relatives said "You are in America now. What happened is in the past. We don't want to talk or hear about it." She had her Nazi number removed. She would talk about the concentration camps a little with us, but not in too much detail. Just that it was horrible.

When I say I wish I knew, I guess more people than not kept it to themselves or to a very select few. At least I know a little. Thanks to people like Steven Spielberg, who did many interviews with Survivors, I do know some. My mother-in-law was asked to do an interview, but she declined.

Finally, Rabbi Herschel Schacter was the rabbi of Mosholu Jewish Center in the Bronx where I was bar mitzvah. Upon his death in 2013, a friend sent a Facebook post about him. I read that he was an Army

chaplain during WWII. After the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp, he helped survivors and led religious services. Once again, something I wish I had known. Probably not as a 13-year-old, but it would have been good to know this as a high school student and definitely when I went to college. I asked a couple of friends who went to the same temple – they didn't know this either. Again, not saying much or just keeping it to a select few. I will be buying his book "The Rabbi of Buchenwald."

I feel I missed out on or was deprived of some knowledge. I do thank all these people for being in my life, especially my in-laws Walter and Shari. I will tell you: let the next generation know about things that have happened or are happening now because history does have a tendency to repeat itself. With knowledge and discussion, we can try to make the world a better place.

Would you be interested in hosting a
Rosh Hashanah Luncheon?

Thursday, October 3, 2024

**We provide invitations, stamps, & assistance
coordinating this POTLUCK event.
Please contact Katelyn Ouellette DiPaola
for more details.**

K.Ouellette89@gmail.com



B'nai Sholom Rosh Hashanah Luncheons are a longstanding tradition that has been enjoyed by our members and guests for years. It is a wonderful way to visit with other congregants, reconnect with old friends and make new connections.

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

Martie Teumim: In memory of Milton Cohen, my English teacher and dear friend

Mazal tov!

... to Barbara and Jack Devore on the birth of their granddaughter, Mallory Devore, to Brinley and Eric Devore on May 6.

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: Ann Lowenfels, Bettina Stoller, Susan Aron and Joe DeFronzo, Laura Kaplan.

The congregation mourns the recent passing of
Philip Zatlin – father of Dayle Zatlin and father-in-law of Joel Blumenthal
Charise Joy Pfeffer – Daughter of Lenora and Alan Pfeffer

May their memories forever be for a blessing.

The following Yahrzeits will be observed in June:

6/7

Dorothy Parnes; Lillian Raskin Kuperman*; Vera Walker*; Jerome Hoffmann*; Morris Friedman; Philip Haas; Bailey Bloom; Cleone Owen; Joseph Finkelstein*; Rae Spitalnic*; Lena Rosenblatt*; Earl Marvin

6/14

Ernst Swiwc; Werner P. Frankel; Hal Rosenthal*; Bea Fogel; Donald Putterman*; B. Howard Savitt; Jacob Aronson*; Sol Goldstein*; Harry Weiss

6/21

Nathan Hess*; Gertrude Einstein*; Edward Shapiro; Sol Gordon; Ronald Kaplan; Jack Heller; John Samuels; Dora Edelman; Shing-Yi Huang; Sam Rauch; Leo Levin; Mary Finnan Blakeslee

6/28

Ralph Owen; Lorena Abrams*; Martin Gilenberg; Mildy Fischel; Gerry Green; Isadore T. Jaffe*; Selma Jarett; Martin Neuburger; Jeannette Lubitch Katz; Jennie Dubb*; Marion Goldstein*; Julius Golderman

7/5

Bernard Herbert; Minerva Knee; Rubin Fiegelson*; Ilene Goldman; Cindy Berkowitz*; Lynn Horowitz; Saul Ikler; Janet Samuels Greenbaum*

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

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In Memory of **Claire Roth** by Amy and Yossi Koren Roth
In Memory of **William Lacov** by The Seguine Family
In Memory of **Milton Cohen** by Martie Teumim
In Memory of **Herbert Malsky** by Nancy Newman and Matt Malsky
In Memory of **Moses Khazam** by Carol and Doug Smith and Family
In Honor of **Bruce Goldstein** by Lorraine Van Akkeren
In Memory of **Mildy Fischel** by Mark and Cheryl Reeder
In memory of **Gerry Green** by Ellie and Randy Davis

Free Food Fridges Fund

Valerie Tabak and Jessie Dinkin, Amy Sternstein, Laurie Shanks, Ellie and Randy Davis

Caring Community Fund

In appreciation of **the caring response to Brenda's mother's passing by** Brenda Hazard, Steve Morse and Family

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: Ann Lowenfels can be reached at annlowenfels@gmail.com

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

July

June 12

August

July 10