

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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DECEMBER 2020

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KISLEV/TIVET 5781

***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 4	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, December 5	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, December 11	TOT SHABBAT SERVICE	5:00 PM
	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, December 12	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, December 18	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, December 19	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, December 25	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, December 26	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, January 1	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, January 2	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ	9:00-9:45 AM*
	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM

*Unless otherwise noted in the weekly announcements.

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...

Dear Friend,

Every day a government agency or a political figure updates us about the pandemic that has spread across the globe and disrupted our personal lives. No hour goes by when we do not read or hear the words ‘virus,’ ‘illness’ or ‘quarantine.’ We continue to live in a state of metaphysical anxiety.

But our tradition offers guidance on to how to feel more secure and we should listen carefully to what it says. We are advised to have a particular sort of faith in God - not a passive, unintelligent, blind faith but an active, wise and discerning faith. In Hebrew this faith is called “bitachon.”

Literally, “bitachon” means “security” or “trust,” and it begins with the simple acknowledgement that the final decisions in life are up to God, not us. Our food, our shelter, our health and illness, our very life and death, are in the hands of God.

There is a popular phrase, “Leave nothing to chance.” With this statement there is an implicit expression of arrogance, for there is no way we can completely control any event in life when God has the final say. If our peace of mind were dependent upon our believing that we had complete control over every situation and possibility that might arise, we would be bound for disappointment. It is incorrect to think we have the ability to foresee every last thing that might go wrong in our lives. It is an impossibility and to demand the impossible is to guarantee frustration. Those things which are beyond the range of human strength and insight, we should calmly commit to God. (*Rabbi S.R. Hirsch on Psalms 127: 1-2*)

On the other hand, having “bitachon” does not mean we should spend all our time praying to God for help when we are in danger. No, like the Maccabees whose victories we shall soon celebrate, we must take every action we can to protect ourselves from anything that would harm us. A disposition of reasonable fatalism may be a sign of spiritual maturity, but it should never lead to passiveness. As our prayer book puts it so eloquently, we should pray as if everything depended upon God and act as if everything depended upon us.

Most important, with “bitachon” we can always be hopeful. Because we do not know God’s plans in advance, we should never think the worst. (*Chazon Ish; Emunah uvitachon 2:1*) As it is written in Psalms, “Hope in God. Be strong and let your heart take courage.”

In these challenging times, let us turn from doubt to confidence and from fear to faith. Let us have “bitachon.” And let us pray with all our hearts that the day will soon come when our state, our nation and all the world will return to full vigor and health.

Have a Happy and Secure Chanukah,

Rabbi Katz

FROM OUR PRESIDENT...

While the days are growing shorter and the winter season approaches, both the Jewish calendar and our needs as a congregation keep us looking forward to a future of possibilities and joy. It's perhaps fitting that right around the time that we celebrate the rededication of the Temple through Chanukah, our rabbinic search will swing into high gear as we look to renew ourselves.

On the advice of the Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees, we are moving forward in what I see as a spirit of responsible optimism. We have looked closely at our congregational profile and thought hard about the right kind of package to advertise to potential rabbinic candidates. We believe that the best candidates, and the ones who will have the best chance of matching our needs and capacity, will be individuals seeking a less than full-time position. We have thus chosen to advertise for a 75% position.

The Search Committee has looked closely at data on national salary scales for Reform rabbis. At the same time, the Finance Committee looked at our resources and calculated a range that we can afford in constructing a package. In putting these numbers side by side, we learned that the total package that we can support without dipping into our savings would fall below what more than three quarters of full-time rabbis are making at congregations of roughly our size. The element of responsibility drove the decision not to spend down our savings drastically, gambling on attracting a candidate whom we might not be able to support in the long term.

Defining the position as a 75% position with a fairly robust salary rather than a full-time position with an anemic salary says some important things about who we are as a congregation. We value rabbinic work, and recognize its immeasurable contributions to our community, and we want to pay fair value for the hours of labor that go into sustaining us as a community. At the same time, we are confident in our own can-do attitude; we are a synagogue where congregants readily volunteer their time and energy to make things happen. We have a longstanding practice of collaboration between the rabbi and congregational committees and a tradition of robust lay leadership on a variety of issues.

What kinds of candidates might fit well into the kind of position we will advertise? We see many exciting possibilities. Perhaps we will attract candidates with children who deeply value maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Maybe some candidates hope to supplement their rabbinic work through teaching, research or other pursuits that complement and enrich their lives and what they have to offer to us. We might draw candidates who are themselves connected to our area, or who have partners who are connected to our area.

As the search moves forward, we will all have opportunities to be involved. I hope that when the time comes, you'll take advantage of the chance to meet with candidates. Not only will this help us to make better judgments about who will be our best fit; it will also help us to show candidates what a vibrant and exciting congregation we are, and what a great position this rabbinate will be for the right person.

L'shalom,

Julie Novkov

What Does Herring Taste Like Via Zoom? Barney Horowitz Provides the Answers – and the Fish

On October 23, 2020, more than 50 B'nai Sholom congregants and friends logged on to "The Herring Project," a virtual Zoom lecture and tasting led by long-time member and past president Barney Horowitz. Except for a few who joined from as far away as California, all participants had before them a paperboard clamshell filled with seven or eight varieties of herring. Many participants settled in for the pre-dinner-hour talk with beer, slivovitz, rye bread or other appropriate accompaniments, including wine choices suggested by congregant and wine importer Joseph DeFronzo.

Barney delivered an extensively researched talk about the history of herring's popularity within the Jewish community, illustrated with slides of fine art, archival photos from Europe and New York City, song lyrics, quotes from popular culture, advertising slogans, and even the deli receipt from his own bar mitzvah reception in 1963 (revealing an order for 5 pounds of chopped herring, as well as 75 kichel). "The story of herring was a perfect vehicle for telling the story of the journey of the Ashkenazic Jews and their vanished world, and a trip from the old country to the new," said Barney.

The highlight was, of course, the tasting. Participants sampled varieties that began with the most basic and traditional and ended with new, exotic flavors, sharing comments freely across the Zoom gallery. Barney went to considerable effort to procure herring in wine sauce, herring in cream sauce, spiced matjes herring, schmaltz herring, dill herring, chopped herring, smokey zaatar herring, and sweet pepper herring. He purchased some varieties at local groceries, but others were shipped in from Zabars and The Rebbe's Choice companies. In total, Barney prepared 47 sample boxes for pick-up at B'nai Sholom.

Barney was inspired to research and talk about herring after prior successful talks about the history of bagels and the Bagel Bakers Union, as part of B'nai Sholom's Synagogue Scholars series in 2017, and about the links between Chinese food and the Jewish community, as part of a late-night study session for Shavuot in 2020.

Barney has also pursued his interest in Jews of the Old World through studying Yiddish, beginning with classes offered at the synagogue in 2012 and for several years thereafter taught by Rachael Weisz of Cobleskill. He attended a one-week intensive Yiddish residence at the Yiddish Book Center in April 2019 and resumed study last fall online through classes offered by Workers Circle. Said Barney, "Yiddish is one way to connect with my grandparents, immigrants from Belarus and Ukraine, all of whom had died by the time I was three years old."

Check out the website to see some Herring Project photos.

Come Outdoors with B'nai Sholom!

Do you find your spirituality in nature? Join us for one or more hour-long programs of prayer and personal reflection, combined with walking, at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar. Weather permitting, programs will take place at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 2; Sunday, December 6; Wednesday, December 16; Sunday, December 20; and Wednesday, December 30. Social distancing, masks and limits on group size will all be employed to ensure the safety of participants.

Registration is required at least one day in advance so we can limit numbers if necessary and communicate regarding safety protocols and weather accommodations. Register by calling Libby Liebschutz at 518-466-7034 or emailing her at libbyliebschutz@gmail.com.

Interested, but Wednesday and Sunday mornings don't work for you? Contact Libby to propose other days or times.

Update from Reopening Task Force

B'nai Sholom's Reopening Task Force continues to recommend that all meetings, services and study sessions be held online. We have worked with the Ritual and Membership committees to develop safety guidelines for several outdoor events including the Shofar service, a Sukkot service, and a Shabbat walk at Five Rivers. For these events, we followed NYS Department of Health Guidance for Jewish Observances (released 9/16/20). According to these guidelines, all seating should be separated by at least 6 feet; 12 feet if there will be singing or chanting, irrespective of whether the services are indoors or outdoors. Also, face coverings must be worn at all times if singing or chanting is involved. The full guidance document is available online: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/09/guidance-for-jewish-high-holidays-2020-covid.pdf>

Become a Kibbutznik

Do you have someone or something to celebrate, honor or remember? Please consider **Becoming a Kibbutznik** to help support B'nai Sholom. We'll announce your message in the weekly announcements and monthly bulletins.

Please send the wording you would like to Lois Gordon, rgordon1@nycap.rr.com preferably by Tuesday of the week you want your message to appear. Any amount is appreciated. Please send your checks to the office and note that it's for Becoming a Kibbutznik.

Thanks for considering this opportunity to help our congregation.

December Kibbutzniks

Shari Whiting

Steven Morse and Brenda Hazard

Novkov-Bloom Family

Susan Aron and Joe DeFronzo

In memory of her daughter, Sarah

In memory of Elenore Morse

In gratitude to all B'nai Sholom congregants who worked on the 2020 election

With appreciation for our B'nai Sholom family and the friendships within it that make us laugh and keep us sane during these difficult times

Editor's note: One of a continuing series of personal expressions written by congregants and contributed by the Ritual Committee under the theme of "I Come to Services Because..."

I Attend Services Because...

by
Rema Goldstein

I attend services because it has a calming and peaceful effect on me. The prayers make me feel closer to God. My everyday problems seem to disappear as I concentrate on the beautiful words and lyrics to the songs.

I also feel a deep connection to my Jewish heritage. I think of my ancestors and the sacrifices they made to leave their Eastern Europe homeland in order to practice their religion in the U.S.A. My parents were born in New York City and my grandparents were the immigrants. It never ceases to amaze me that despite pogroms, Anti-Semitism and many hardships, Judaism has survived and is practiced in synagogues worldwide. I feel that deep connection to the past when I attend services.

Services on Zoom are not the same as being with everyone in our beautiful sanctuary. But it will have to suffice for the time being.

For me, attending services is a spiritual experience that is good for the soul.

The following Yahrzeits will be observed in December:

12/4 Edward Wallant; David Gottlieb; Jack Pendergrass; Jacob Lichtenfels*; Grace Fruiterman; Ida Sennesh; Sanford Liebschutz

12/11 Albert J. Abrams*; Ben Dietchman; Rita Binenkorb Ray; Sadie Cohen*; Hannah R. Jaffe*; Franklin Steinhardt*; Marvin Millens; Erwin Winston*; Jacob Lazoroff*; Freda Kussack; Harry Cohen*; Ruth Aronson; Estera Fiks; Adah Vosburgh; Norma Belle Singer Beatman*; Gertrude Slotnick

12/18 Samuel Link; Saul Mouchly Small; Hannah Tabak; Adele Broch Krochmal; Cornelius Epstein*; Waldamar Knieling; Florence Morse

12/25 Alfred Watman; Morris Adler*; Mildred Adler*; Judith S. Dobris*; Anita Dubb*; Arnold Rosenberg*; Bernard Fleischer*

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

THE CONGREGATION NOTES WITH THANKS THESE CONTRIBUTIONS

General Fund

In honor of **The Herring Project and the poor Jewish herring** by Stephen and Jeanette Gottlieb.

In honor of **Judy and Roy Fruiterman** by Seth Edelman.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Ronni and Ted Farber.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Barbara and Jack Devore.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Barney Horowitz.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Ellie and Randy Davis.

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Rondi Brower and Phil Gilly

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

In memory of **Sarah Renée Whiting** by Shari Whiting.

How You Can Help B'nai Sholom Reimagine Its Sukkah

Are you someone who enjoys designing and building, and has time to share a project?

Take this Personality Test:

Does the image below...

1. Draw on your curiosity ... what would the sukkah look like upside down?
2. Stir your reverence and impatience toward Mother Nature ... why did this have to happen to us?
3. Galvanize your imagination and creativity how could we combine salvageable parts and other materials to make a new improved sukkah?



Rabbi Katz reminds us “the sukkah is a symbol of our fragility.” And we at B’nai Sholom are presented with an opportunity to reimagine and rebuild this important symbol. The canvas and several other parts have been saved. All we need are the imaginations and thirst to take on this project. If you are interested, contact Melissa Putterman Hoffmann at mputtermanhoffmann@gmail.com. Once we have a group of collaborators, we’ll set a date and let the fun begin.

Thank You

.....to Amy Sternstein, Ellie Davis, Anne Hausgaard and Lois Gordon who completed various office projects for the office manager.

.....to Gail Volk for her generous offer of help to the office manager on Election Day.

..... to the Bulletin Brigade – Joe DeFronzo, Jim Savitt, Anita Stein, Barbara and Richard Nussbaum, Bettina Stoller, Amy Koren-Roth and Anne Hausgaard – who helped fold and stuff the November bulletin.

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JFS wishes you and your family a meaningful,
happy and healthy New Year.

RABBI: David Katz

RABBI EMERITUS: Donald P. Cashman

PRESIDENT: Julie Novkov

OFFICE MANAGER: Christine Blackman

BOOKKEEPER: Jean Dashnaw can be reached at bookbnaisholom@gmail.com

OFFICE HOURS: TUE/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM–3:30 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 9

February.....January 13