

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

420 WHITEHALL RD., ALBANY, NY 12208

E-mail: office@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us

MARCH 2021

Phone: 518-482-5283

Visit us at <http://www.bnaisholomalbany.org>

ADAR/NISSAN 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, GOOD DEEDS, CELEBRATION AND STUDY

Zoom links for services are sent out weekly.

Please call the office for information about telephone access to prayer services.

Friday, March 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, March 6	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, March 12	TOT SHABBAT SERVICE KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	5:00 PM 6:13 PM
Saturday, March 13	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, March 19	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, March 20	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, March 26	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, March 27	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY First Seder, Passover	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, April 2	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE with Special Passover Prayers	6:13 PM
Saturday, April 3	Seventh Day of Passover - NO TORAH STUDY – Enjoy!	

**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

Rabbi's Message...

Dear B'nai Sholom Friend,

Perhaps you have heard this quip: "All Jewish holidays are the same: "They tried to kill us. We won. Let's eat!" This joke always draws a chuckle, but as we approach Passover and review the holidays of our calendar I've been wondering just how true the witticism is. Not all that accurate, I think. For instance, there are no great festive meals associated with Purim or Chanukah. Yes, on Purim there are hamantaschen and on Chanukah we eat latkes but these are not great feasts and they carry little weight. Only on Passover do we retell a story of survival during a major meal that is central to the holiday.

But all three holidays do concern anti-Semitic rulers (or their henchmen) who would have preferred us subservient or dead, and each holiday does teach a way to respond to anti-Semitism when it presents itself.

Let's take Chanukah, which is an innocent holiday when our children play with dreidles and families eat fried foods. Though King Antiochus really did reign in Assyria in the year 168 BCE, Chanukah plays often turn him into a cartoon figure. What we learn from Chanukah is this - and the lesson on anti-Semitism is entirely relevant because we are back in the land of Israel - sometimes it is necessary to take up arms and fight against those who threaten us. Sometimes a strong military is our best strategy for survival.

Now let's turn to Purim. On Purim the theme of anti-Semitism appears as a fairy tale of a little Jewish girl who gets to be Queen. There are no great sermons to give on the evening the Megillah is read. Children are reassured that they can make fun of murderous figures and that the bad guys will lose. And we adults learn that we should never be afraid to identify ourselves as Jews. So on Purim we learn another strategy for survival - that it is good to have connections in high places in order to circumvent those who would seek our harm. (This is why we vote for congressional candidates who will protect Jewish interests.)

And finally there is Pesach, which comes this month. We tell the story of standing at the shore of the Sea of Reeds, fleeing Pharaoh's armies. How many times throughout the centuries have we had to flee our enemies? In medieval times, as blood libels were cast at us, we ate our Passover dinners and discussed how there were those who rose up against us in every generation to hurt us. Passover teaches us that sometimes the only strategy to survive is to escape.

"They tried to kill us. We won. Let's eat!" The one-liner does not do justice to the variety of ways our holidays teach us to respond to anti-Semitism, but for Passover there is truth in the joke.

So on this Pesach of 5781, let us recline and discuss the themes of political oppression and freedom of religion. Let us enjoy the holiday...the food, the company of family and friends (even on Zoom) and the prayers we recite - prayers of hope for a world without hatred, prayers of hope for a world free of fear.

Nancy and I wish you and your family a very happy Passover.

Rabbi David Katz

From Our President...

This semester, as I opened the term for one of my all-online classes, in addition to asking my students about their future plans, I asked them to tell me, if they could, one silver lining of their pandemic experiences. This was merely a ploy on my part to get them talking and listening to each other, but the results surprised and moved me. Almost all are young and at the beginning of their adult lives. Yet their responses showed a wisdom and grace far beyond their years. Here are just a few of the things they reported:

“I have learned to slow down and take the time to think and reflect about things.”

“I have made an effort to build my connections with the natural world and appreciate it more.”

“I’ve been at home with my family. My relationships with them have deepened.”

“I have become more flexible and more able to deal with major changes that life throws at me.”

“I feel like I am more kind and connected to my community.”

What a striking counterpoint this proved to be to the dominant narrative of college-aged folks as being unconcerned and careless about COVID-19! I was particularly touched because over the last year, so many students have had their lives and the lives of their families upended by the pandemic. Many now face a much more uncertain future, yet they are finding within themselves the courage to grow from their experiences and look forward with hope. While their life journeys took an abrupt turn in an unexpected direction, they are finding and saving the good things their journeys have provided.

As you read this month’s bulletin, we anticipate our great festival of freedom, Passover. Like last year, this year most of us will celebrate Passover in a far different way than usual, watching family members asking the Four Questions possibly from four (or more!) far-flung locations on Zoom. Some of us will feel not just the pain of distance, but the pain of loss. But we are in a different place now than last year, when most of us could not have imagined that rather than “next year in Jerusalem!” it would be “next year on Zoom again!”

We learn from the Passover story how a people accustomed to slavery had to flee Egypt and take up a new, strange, and difficult life in the wilderness. The map shows us that it should not have taken the Israelites 40 years to travel in a straight line from Egypt to the Promised Land, even if Moses didn’t ask anyone for directions. The 40 years of living a disrupted, uncanny life, isolated from others most of the time, helped the Israelites to forge a new identity as free people and to come together as a unified community with a purpose. They also experienced unexpected blessings along the way, like Miriam’s inexhaustible well of pure water and the manna and quail that they only had to gather (not even with an Instacart!) to provide sustenance.

As vaccine distribution speeds up, viral transmission slows, and more of us become eligible for protection, our journey through the wilderness will soon come to an end. As we celebrate Passover, we can see the Promised Land over the horizon. While our journey through the pandemic wasteland will not have taken 40 years (thankfully!), we are all eager to leave this desert behind. Perhaps we’ll even think of our traumas and woes as the chametz that we eliminate from our homes, giving us a sparkling clean, fresh outlook on the reopened world of personal human connection we will soon enter.

(Continued on page 4.)

(Continued from page 3.)

I'd like to encourage you, though, to think carefully about what you want to bring with you out of your desert. What are your silver linings? Can you treasure and possibly even keep them active in the future?

We've been through a difficult time, but there may be important practices and insights that we've reached that should survive our wandering. As a congregation, we haven't acquired anything as all-powerful as the Ten Commandments, but we have developed a lot of creativity and flexibility with digital tools and alternative programming ideas and platforms. We've acquired new ways to connect with people from distant locations who can bring us valuable ideas. We've deepened our commitment to social justice issues, taking that work into new spheres of engagement. Many of us have tuned in more closely to our online community and learned that taking the time for these encounters enriches our lives. Our committees and leadership will be looking for ways to keep what we have learned and bring it forward into the future. All of these things will be great resources as we prepare for our congregational future.

While we are still a few weeks out, I wish everyone chag sameach as we enter a spring of hope.

L'shalom,

Julie Novkov

“The Women’s Balcony” Next Film Group Discussion: Thursday, March 4, at 7:30 p.m.

For its next film, the group will be discussing the Israeli movie “The Women’s Balcony.” At the heart of the film is a gender rift in a devout Orthodox community in Jerusalem, making for a rousing, goodhearted tale about women speaking truth to patriarchal power.

The discussion is open to all and the movie can be watched either by accessing ChaiFlicks or by obtaining one of the multiple public library copies. It is also available on some streaming services.

Contact Barney Horowitz at horowitz28@verizon.net for the Zoom link.

Join Us for Virtual Trivia Night

Are you looking for something fun to do while in quarantine and had your fill of jigsaw puzzles? Have you missed partaking in your local pub’s trivia night or watching others participate? Are you a wiz at trivia, a novice, or just looking for something fun and different to do on a Saturday night? Then help us guide winter out and usher in spring with some fun competition!

Join us for a **Virtual Trivia Night** via Zoom on Saturday, March 20, at 7:30 p.m. We will be using the “Trivial Pursuit” format, with a sprinkling of Jewish trivia questions added in. No need to come with a team or partner – we will assemble teams that night. And if you don’t want to compete, then just come to watch and cheer on a team. More details will follow as we get closer to the date.

It promises to be a fun night, when we might even learn some trivia tidbits that we didn’t know before. So, mark your calendars and plan to join us March 20!

News from the Social Action/Social Justice Committee

Food Drive Success!

An incredible amount of non-perishable food and more than 100 boxes/packages of diapers were collected on the National Day of Service honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and kicking off the Inaugural Week. The food will be distributed to the “little free pantry boxes” placed around Albany by Openworld Relief and the box placed by Bellevue Reformed Church in Schenectady. Family Promise of the Capital Region will distribute the diapers.

Thank you to all the generous donors who brought items. Special thanks to the B’nai Sholom volunteers who braved the cold and snow squalls during our two outdoor collections with our Family Promise partner congregation, Delmar Presbyterian Church:

Lois Gordon, Jesse Dinkin, Amy Koren-Roth, Sharona Wachs, Gail Golderman, Janet Strominger, Barry Pendergrass, Steve Gottlieb, Steve Klein, Sheila Schwartz, Marilyn Spencer, Joe DeFronzo, Susan Aron, Anita Stein, Wayne Olinzock, Valerie Tabak, Mari Vosburgh and Becky Marvin.

If you missed the collection but want to support the little pantries, here are the locations where you can place items any time:

Our Lady of Americas Shrine Church, 273 Central Ave. (N. Lake St.) **Albany**

Grassroots Givers, 522 Washington Ave. (Quail St.) **Albany**

South End Children’s Café, 25 Warren St. (Phillip St.) **Albany**

West Hills Cultural Hub, Quail and 1st Streets (park shed) **Albany**

Bellevue Reformed Church, 2000 Broadway (Genesee St.) **Schenectady**

Riversweep Returns, Plans Spring Date for Hudson River Cleanup

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

For the second consecutive year, B’nai Sholom will partner with the Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition to sponsor a litter cleanup along the Hudson River. This year’s event will take place the first weekend in May, so we will work on **Sunday, May 2**. This is a great opportunity to get outside and see one of the most significant natural features in our region. It is a nice event for the entire family! Masks and other health protocols will be observed.

Please nominate a site to clean up between Green Island and Bethlehem. A Co-Captain is needed to help the volunteers. Let Barry Pendergrass know if you would like to Co-Captain: bpenderg37@gmail.com or 518-489-4558.

Please contact Barry if you would like to take part in this enjoyable and worthwhile day.

We anticipate a wonderful event.

More News from the Social Action/Social Justice Committee

PRAYER WALK FOR CLIMATE

An Interfaith Prayer Walk for Climate has been scheduled for Thursday, March 11, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants will walk around the Capitol and are welcome to join in for as much time as you can. The walk is organized by GreenFaith, NY Renews and Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition. (B'nai Sholom is a member of CRICCC.)

Parking is available at First Lutheran Church, 181 Western Avenue.

For more information: ken@greenfaith.org

B'nai Sholom Seeks Members Who Care about Racial Justice to Join in Statewide 'Less Is More NY' Campaign

As members of a synagogue that prioritizes racial justice, we have the opportunity to turn our interest into action – by representing B'nai Sholom as RAC-NY launches its campaign to pass an important piece of racial justice legislation: Less Is More NY. (RAC-NY is The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's New York State advocacy project.)

In January, more than 300 clergy and lay leaders from around the state and leaders from RAC-NY chose to advocate for passage of the Less Is More NY bill, which would end the practice of sending people to prison for minor, technical parole violations after they have completed their sentences.

How is this a racial justice issue? **Black people are 12 times more likely to be incarcerated in New York City jails for technical parole violations than white people.** Seven thousand, five hundred individuals per year who are out on parole are immediately re-incarcerated (before they have a chance to get a hearing) for missing an appointment, staying out beyond a curfew, testing positive for alcohol, and other minor, technical violations after their release from prison. New York re-incarcerates more people for minor transgressions like these than any other state in our country except Illinois, and **40 percent of all people sent to prison in New York are jailed for non-criminal technical violations of parole.** This not only costs New York roughly \$650 million a year, it also costs lives. Re-incarceration for a technical, non-criminal violation costs individuals their jobs and separates families. And the first COVID deaths in New York State's prisons were inmates at Rikers awaiting hearings for technical parole violations.

Believe it or not, South Carolina, Louisiana and Missouri have already passed legislation similar to Less Is More, while New York has not. Working with RAC-NY, we can impact legislation here. We will do this by meeting virtually with our state legislators and explaining why this racial justice issue is important to us as we work to make New York a more just, compassionate state.

Our representatives need to see that their constituents of faith support this legislation! Virtual meetings with our local State Assembly members and Senators will take place in late February. To join our team's visits with these legislators, please contact Gail Volk, B'nai Sholom's RAC-NY representative, at gvolk53@gmail.com. The more people we have at the virtual meetings, the more impact we can have.

In addition, we can help by signing up now at this link <https://rac.org/NYlobby> to join the launch of RAC-NY's virtual lobby month on the steps of the virtual State Capitol on March 1 from 5:30-6 p.m. and the closing rally to conclude our month of virtual advocacy on April 6 from 5:30-6 p.m. Join us!

B'nai Sholom Foodie Gift Basket Raffle

Now's your chance to win the March/April "Foodie" Basket worth almost \$300 in gifts!



Basket includes a selection of teas, a \$100 gift card to A Different Drummer, a \$50 gift card to Honest Weight Food Co-Op, Tea Time book, Ina's Kitchen cookbook, two dishtowels, a \$25 gift card to Perfect Blend, a mug and more!

Raffle tickets are \$2 each, 3 for \$5 or \$20 for the full sheet. Please do not cut up the tickets. Complete each ticket with your name, email address and phone number. Send the completed tickets with your check to B'nai Sholom **no later than March 29**. The drawing will be held promptly after that date and the winner will be notified.

AND...

Congratulations to Christine Blackman, winner of the January/February Relaxation Gift Basket!!

IT'S HERE! YOUR "MOMENTS" SURVEY Have You Completed It?

"Moments" – a new initiative to identify your skills, talents and aspirations and, only then, to ask for a pledge to donate a few "moments" to B'nai Sholom, as needed.

All congregants received an email with a unique link to the Moments survey. If you've filled it out, many thanks! If you've started it but haven't finished, don't stop now, you're almost there.

And if you haven't started yet, there's still time to send yours in. Can't find it? Check your junk mail folder – or let us know and we'll send you a new link.

Questions? Ask the Moments Task Force at moments@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us.

March Kibbutzniks

The Fundraising Committee - In honor of the extraordinary work of Christine Blackman, who is always willing with a caring and helping hand.

Mimi Bruce and Family - In honor of David Ray's 70th birthday

Online Cooking Program with Deanna Fox a Tasty Hit!

Twenty different screens with about 28 participants, including four non-members, joined in the February 9 communal cooking adventure with food journalist Deanna Fox. Some chose to watch and make notes for later, but more than half cooked along with our culinary guide. Deanna commented that she really enjoyed guiding us, that our crew had great questions and she would be happy to provide another class or recruit other cooking expert colleagues of hers.

Some of the positive reviews from our participants:

- "I got a cookbook's worth of cooking tips."
- "It was great to engage with everyone in this activity – well needed at this point in the pandemic, wintry world."
- "I had fun and would do it again."
- "Deanna is a clear, patient teacher, just my speed. I would take more instruction from her."
- "I thoroughly enjoyed the class and would look forward to more offerings."
- "Last night's class was a first for me for any type of cooking class... and I really enjoyed it."

Keep your eyes peeled for our next Zoom cooking offering and maybe some more folks will join us.

Have a delicious day!

Nominating Committee Established

The nominating committee to select this year's candidates for open officer and Board of Trustees positions consists of: Barbara Devore, chair; Eric Goldberg, Ben Marvin, Ann Lowenfels, Linda Strohl, Libby Liebschutz, and Julie Novkov. Anyone who wishes to propose a candidate should contact a member of the Nominating Committee.

CLYNK – COVID-19 Update

CLYNK is the simple way to:

*Recycle your beverage bottles & cans * *Help the environment* *Raise funds for B'nai Sholom*

CLYNK, the beverage container redemption system at area Hannaford markets, is open and committed to keeping this little corner of your life “easy and convenient” even while the rest is anything but. They are taking extra precautions to keep their employees safe, including increased vigilance on the use of personal protective equipment. If you see a driver decked out in unusual gear – please give them a thumbs-up (or virtual elbow bump) from us!

To the same end, they're asking for a voluntary safety pledge from you. **After filling your CLYNK bag and tying it tight, please hold on to it for 3 days before you drop it off at any CLYNK drop location.** This will help to dramatically reduce the risk of surface-to-human contamination. To signal you have done this, please tie a bright piece of ribbon/string/anything to the handle of your bag. They are calling this a “3 Day OK.”

Never fear – they will process your bag with or without the 3 Day OK tie. But when they see the tie their employees will know they can breathe a little easier. Thank you in advance for this small sign of solidarity!

Just how easy is it? Try 4 steps and you're done.

1. BAG IT



Fill your green CLYNK bag with redeemable containers (limit 20 lbs.). Tie it tight.

2. TAG IT



There will be a sticker on the bag with the B'nai Sholom personalized barcode. When you use a CLYNK bag tagged with a B'nai Sholom barcode, we receive the redemption value of that bag.

3. REMEMBER THE 3 DAY OK

Hold on to it for 3 days and tie a bright piece of ribbon/string/anything to the handle of the bag.

4. DROP IT



Bring it to your local Hannaford Supermarket, scan the label & place the bag in the receptacle in the Bottle Redemption Center.

Stop in the office at B'nai Sholom to pick up tags and bags or contact the Fundraising Committee via Maxine Goldberg at maxm0304@yahoo.com or 518-729-4751..

B'nai Sholom Outdoors Hits Pause

B'nai Sholom Outdoors, our program combining an outdoor walk at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center with personal reflections and spirituality, is on hiatus in March but will resume later in the spring.

An Easy Way to Help B'nai Sholom and Save on Taxes

The Finance Committee would like to advise congregants who are age 72 or older that now is the perfect time to arrange for direct payments from their retirement accounts to B'nai Sholom to cover their 2021 regular and patron dues payments. This portion of their RMD (required minimum distribution) will not be subject to tax! Talk with your tax or financial adviser for details on whether and how you can take advantage of this benefit.

Jewish Federation of NENY Community Calendar Now on Weekly E-announcements

We offer many ways to stay informed of events going on at B'nai Sholom. But what about in the greater Capital Region Jewish community?

The Weekly E-announcements now carries a link to the comprehensive Community Calendar maintained by our friends at the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York. Look for it at the bottom of each week's edition.

Purim - Mishloach Manot

We would like to thank the family of Roberta Hoffman for sharing her Hamentashen recipe for the Mishloach Manot bags with the Fundraising Committee and the Temple community.

Welcome to our newest members,

Seth Edelman!

Leah Cherry and Nick Lennon!

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In memory of **Barbara Sternstein** by Amy Sternstein.

In memory of **Avraham Koren** by Amy and Yossi Koren-Roth.

In memory of **Jack Jarett** by Amy and Yossi Koren-Roth.

In honor of **Rabbi David Katz with appreciation for his Shabbat Torah Study** by Claire Sigal.

In memory of **Dr. Helen Rehr** by Judy and Roy Fruiterman.

In memory of **Bernard Smith** by Arthur and Rita Alowitz.

In memory of **Morris Alowitz** by Arthur and Rita Alowitz.

In memory of **Sylvia A. Brownstein** by Arthur and Rita Alowitz.

In appreciation of **Barney Horowitz for his donation to cover the cost of renting the Film Group's first film for discussion.**

In appreciation of **Barney Horowitz for his donation to cover the cost of the deposit for Deanna Fox's online cooking class.**

In memory of **Leo Cabelly** by The Seguire Family.

In memory of **Paul Rosenthal** by Mari Vosburgh.

In memory of **Richard Rosenthal** by Mari Vosburgh.

Rebuilding the Sukkah Fund

In memory of **Harvey Tress** by Christine Blackman

The following Yahrtsaits will be observed in March

3/5 Gertrude Fass; Harold Nozik; Samuel Caplan*; Mitchell Burkowsky; Harold Strassberg; Carey B. Hatch, Jr.; Evelyn Turoff*

3/12 Barry Brody; Evelyn Rosen; Lazar Kleinfeld; Sylvia Lande; Izadore Pollack; Loretta Weinstein; Albert Blakeslee*; Judith Klein; Louis Schaffer

3/19 Benjamin Steinhart; George Kurak; Max Rosen; Doris Stephany; Dora Stein; Samuel Berman*

3/26 Richard Rosenthal; Helga Bessac; Samuel Adels*; Leonarda DeFronzo; Lilyan Oblas*; Harry, C. Katzin*; Joseph Caplan*

THANK YOU TO...

.....the Bulletin Brigade – Joe DeFronzo, Jim Savitt, Joan Savitt, Rema Goldstein, Mark and Cheryl Reeder, Anita Stein and Anne Hausgaard – who helped fold and stuff the February Bulletin.

Mifgash - Purim/Passover Wine Sale

Mifgash is having a Purim/Passover Wine Sale in conjunction with University Wine and Liquor, 1225 Western Avenue, Albany, NY.

Orders must be received by Monday, March 15.

Completed order forms can be sent to:

Mifgash Passover Wine
c/o Wendy Schaffer
44 Carstead Drive
Slingerlands, NY 12159

Printable order forms with more information can be found at the Mifgash Community High School website:

www.mifgashcommunity.org

RABBI: David Katz can be reached at rabbidavidkatz18@gmail.com

RABBI EMERITUS: Donald P. Cashman

PRESIDENT: Julie Novkov can be reached at julienovkov@hotmail.com

OFFICE MANAGER: Christine Blackman can be reached at christine@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us

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.

<u>Period Covered</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
April.....	March 10
May.....	April 14