

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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FEBRUARY 2022

Phone: 518-482-5283

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

SH'VAT/ADAR I 5782

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, February 4	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, February 5	EXTENDED STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 11	TOT SHABBAT SERVICE	5:00 PM
Saturday, February 12	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 18	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:30 PM
Saturday, February 19	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, February 25	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	7:30 PM
	SYNAGOGUE SCHOLARS TALK	
	BY MARTHA ROZETT	
Saturday, February 26	TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, March 4	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	6:13 PM
Saturday, March 5	EXTENDED STUDY	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...

Further Reflections on Colleyville, Texas...

For those who read my e-mail on January 20, reflecting on the recent hostage crisis in Colleyville, Texas, first, a correction: I accidentally cited Exodus 21:16 as part of *parashat* Yitro, when it really belongs to the following *parasha*, Mishpatim. My apologies!

In that same message, I mentioned that it is frustrating to know that Rabbi Cytron-Walker and Congregation Beth Israel did everything right and still faced this terrible situation. At the time, I was referring to their security measures. However, there are other things that Rabbi Cytron-Walker and the congregation did right that I'd like to highlight. They modeled our Jewish values from start to finish –

– building and sustaining relationships with people of all faiths.

You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deut. 10:19)

Congregation Beth Israel had longstanding relationships with other faith groups in the area, much like B'nai Sholom's partnership with Delmar Presbyterian Church in Family Promise, or members' participation in the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom and the Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition (CRICCC).

– demonstrating hospitality.

...[Abraham] was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and bowed to the ground. (Gen. 18:1-2)

Rabbi Cytron-Walker's first encounter with his eventual captor wasn't at gunpoint. The man, who we now know had spent at least one night in a homeless shelter before the attack, had shown up at the synagogue, knocking on the glass door to be let in. "When I took him in, I stayed with him," Cytron-Walker said. "Making tea was an opportunity to talk with him..."¹

– preserving human dignity.

The Talmud (*Arachin* 16b) emphasizes doing everything possible to avoid embarrassing others.

When Rabbi Cytron-Walker first had suspicions that something might be amiss, before any actual violence had broken out, he made an effort to talk to the visitor privately, demonstrating sensitivity.

– *pikuach nefesh* – preserving life.

While we regret the loss of *any* human life in the course of these events, we are also grateful that those taken hostage were prepared to run to safety when they had the chance and to defend themselves by force when necessary.

¹ Quoted in *The Dallas Morning News*. "[Rabbi says he threw chair at Colleyville synagogue hostage-taker before lunging for the door](#)" by Kelli Smith and Maggie Prosser. January 17, 2022.

(Continued from page 2.)

The events of January 16 were tragic and terrifying. In the face of these unpredictable attacks, we want to feel as safe and prepared as possible. Between the support of the Albany police, the resources of our local Jewish Federation (which has a dedicated page of security-related resources at <https://www.jewishfedny.org/security>), and the efforts of our own Safety and Security Committee, we continue to make strides in that direction. We are giving serious and sustained attention to preserving life; yet, we must also remember that *pikuach nefesh* is not our *only* Jewish value.

In an interview with NPR, Rabbi Cytron-Walker was asked whether he would act any differently if someone else knocked on his door seeking food or shelter. He responded with incredible grace, maintaining his commitment to hospitality: “And so when someone comes to the door, they are nervous. They are questioning. They’re asking – am I going to be accepted? ... And I want them to know that they are going to belong. We can't forget about who we are. Hospitality means the world. ...We can't know what's coming. And we also can't live in fear every step of the way.”²

We will continue to address these issues as a congregation and I remain available to you as a resource, should you want to talk. In the meanwhile, may the breadth of Jewish tradition and values remain our guide.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot

The congregation mourns the death of Herb Swift, husband of Ruth and father of Rachel and Elizabeth.
May his memory forever be for a blessing.

² *All Things Considered* interview with Rabbi Cytron-Walker. “[Texas Rabbi who was held hostage says we can't live in fear](#)” by Mary Louise Kelly. January 19, 2022.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT...

February 2022 marks the 14th observance of Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month. It is a time to reflect on the important advocacy work that Jews with disabilities and their allies have done over the years to make Jewish communities more accessible. We can also consider our ethical obligations as Jews to support and advocate more broadly for people with disabilities as part of our commitment to Tikkun Olam.

For me, in my identity as a Jewish political scientist, I'm struck by the political power and leadership wielded by people with disabilities in our tradition. Jacob became physically disabled unexpectedly as an adult. He transformed from an ambitious, sly and mildly rebellious tribal leader into the patriarch Israel through his disability-inducing struggle with the Eternal. Moses, on the other hand, appears to have struggled with speech throughout his life. Yet, with the partnership and support of his brother, he was able to speak for and to the people of Israel effectively, enabling the Jews to escape from Egyptian might and survive the long sojourn in the desert, emerging as a nation. This makes a remarkable case study for my colleagues who study political communication!

These examples help us to understand the tremendous stakes involved if people with disabilities are systematically excluded from political participation and political leadership. Many members of B'nai Sholom have deeply engaged the struggle to expand voting rights and access and to push back against new efforts to make voting more difficult for certain communities. As recent research in political science shows, this agenda must include advocacy to protect and expand voting rights and political participation for people with disabilities as well.

The academic journal *Policy Studies* published a special issue focusing on inclusive voting practices in 2020. Scholars April Johnson and Sierra Powell contributed an article using large-scale data to analyze voting by people with disabilities, noting that previous research had demonstrated a persistent gap in voting participation. The gap has persisted despite legislative efforts to mandate accessibility across different dimensions of disability. Johnson and Powell found that, contrary to some stereotypical assumptions, people with disabilities that preclude participation in paid employment are interested in political engagement and seek ways to do so, often using web-based resources. They also found that complicated voting registration requirements have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities, and interestingly, that voting by mail can go a long way toward reducing the gap.

While much of the criticism leveled at voting restrictions in the United States targets states that systematically and legally disenfranchised Black voters in the 20th century, our home state of New York deserves serious scrutiny. In November, New York voters rejected ballot measures that would have reformed registration and absentee voting that could have improved access and participation. New York's Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins announced in January that the Senate would take up a series of voting reforms. However, even if the proposed reforms succeed, significant work remains to address concerns about improving political incorporation and participation for people with disabilities.

L'shalom,

Julie Novkov

Update on Reopening

The Reopening Task Force wants you to know that SHABBAT SERVICES ARE ****REMOTE ONLY**** UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. In light of the rapid rise in positive COVID-19 cases in the area and the very transmissible nature of the omicron variant, we have reluctantly decided to conduct Shabbat services exclusively on Zoom. The prayers are screen-shared during the service, so physical prayer books are not necessary to participate. Look for updates on whether services will be remote or in-person (with a Zoom option) in the coming weeks as we monitor and evaluate the current COVID situation. Thank you for your patience and flexibility!

Layers of Learning

On **Thursday, February 24, at 7:30 pm** join Rabbi Weisbrot on Zoom for a monthly “sideways dive” into other facets of Torah study – midrashic interpretations, Talmudic commentary and whatever other thoughts and insights come up in the group. No prior registration or experience necessary; just look for the Zoom link in the weekly e-blast!

Annual Synagogue Scholars Talk Returns February 25

The Adult Education Committee is resuming its Synagogue Scholars series, beginning with Martha Rozett’s annual book talk and discussion Friday, February 25, following the evening service. This year’s book is *Outwitting History: The Amazing Adventures of a Man Who Rescued Millions of Yiddish Books* by Aaron Lansky, the founder and president of the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Mass.

Lansky’s 2004 account of his adventures, which began when he was 23, is a wonderful collection of tales about a rag-tag group of young people who saved Yiddish books from extinction, one trip at a time, with borrowed cars and rented trucks, last-minute phone calls and a growing circle of supporters. Lansky and his volunteers visited with elderly Jews who had no one to pass their books on to, and in the process, forged a community and preserved a history and language that was in danger of being forgotten. The book is often hilarious, always heartwarming, and above all a record of the way the Yiddish language and culture – once thought to be dead – outwitted history by surviving and flourishing.

Interested in reading *Outwitting History*? Copies are available in the Albany Public Library system and at your favorite bookstore. We will acquire a copy for the B’nai Sholom library for congregants to sign out and return promptly so that others can borrow it.

Social Action/Social Justice

A Successful Year Ends for RAC-NY and a New Year Full of Promise Begins

(Written January 3, 2022)

As 2022 begins, we want to take an opportunity to reflect on our 2021 successes as we plan for new ways in which we will work for a better and more just New York in the years ahead.

2021 was a good year for RAC-NY, with more Reform congregations and more Reform Jews joining together to make a real difference in the lives of New Yorkers. The efforts of RAC-NY were key to the passage of Less Is More parole reform, which was recently signed into law. Under the bill, thousands of people who finished their prison sentence will no longer be sent back to jail for minor parole violations like missing an appointment with a parole officer or breaking curfew. RAC-NY contributed to a coalition effort by meeting with 57 legislators across the state, winning the support of key legislators in Westchester, Long Island and elsewhere where the rest of the coalition lacked access; 835 Reform Jews from 65 Reform congregations throughout the state participated in the Less Is More campaign and in doing so helped make New York state safer, more humane and more racially just.

RAC-NY also participated with Reform Jews across the country in the Reform Movement Racial Justice Campaign. Reform Jews across the state participated in trainings on Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI). We also participated in actions to help pass two key federal voting rights bills, including a November Call-In Day to President Biden and NY Senators and a powerful Zoom meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Schumer was visibly moved by the 675 Reform Jews who joined the meeting, saying, "The fact that you were here, the fact that you have my back, the fact that you are pushing so hard on something I so devoutly believe in, gives me strength." The Senate Majority leader has promised that the Senate will consider rule changes to allow a vote on the two voting rights bills by January 17. RAC-NY will continue to hold Senator Schumer accountable for the promises he made to us that he would make sure that the filibuster will be reformed and the bills will pass.

All told, 1,731 Reform clergy, lay adults and teens from 91 Reform congregations participated in RAC-NY actions and trainings this year.

What to Look Forward to in 2022

RAC-NY is working on plans to build on what we accomplished in 2021, to involve even more NY Reform Jews and to move NY state even closer to the Jewish values of justice, compassion and wholeness. **Keep an eye out for news of a virtual gathering in March where you will have the opportunity to weigh in on an exciting new two- to three-year effort to combat climate change.** This longer, new kind of campaign will include more outreach to Reform congregations, communities and individuals, more discussion within our congregations of the challenge of climate change and more time to work on bigger solutions to the problem than can be passed in one year.

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Social Action/Social Justice (cont.)

We have learned how powerful we can be if Reform Jews come together with allies across lines of faith, class and race to make change. And we have only just begun to build our power. Together, we can combat racial injustice, the potential destruction of our planet and threats to democracy. Together, we can create an equitable New York where people of all backgrounds can experience justice, compassion and wholeness.

*n.b. Barry Pendergrass has agreed to be our representative keeping an eye out for information on RAC-NY's plans and sharing the information with us as quickly as possible. **If you would like to be help with climate change efforts, please contact Valerie Tabak, Becky Marvin or Barry Pendergrass.***

Nominating Committee Established

The Nominating Committee to select this year's candidates for open officer and Board of Trustee positions consists of: Barbara Devore (chair), Maxine Goldberg, Becky Marvin, Ann Lowenfels, Libby Liebschutz, Shari Whiting and Julie Novkov. Anyone who wishes to propose a candidate should contact a member of the Nominating Committee.

B'nai Sholom's Caring Community

The Caring Community can call on congregants who are willing and able to mobilize quickly when events such as births, bereavement and accidents make their inevitable way into our lives.

If you or someone you know needs assistance, help and support when:

- ✓ someone is sick or confined
- ✓ a new baby arrives
- ✓ there's been a death in the family
- ✓ there's a tragedy, accident or trauma

please call the office manager and/or Rabbi Weisbrot – 518-482-5283 – to notify us of the situation so we can initiate our support services.

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

New Fundraising Endeavor: Got Sneakers?

Do you have sneakers lying around the house (or your grandchildren's homes) that you no longer wear, that no longer fit or that you don't like and can't return? The Fundraising Committee has signed up with "Got Sneakers?" to keep sneakers out of landfills.

Sneakers that are still in wearable condition will be sent to people who need them. Sneakers that are too beat up to wear will be recycled into new surfaces such as playgrounds and tracks. And if all that wasn't enough incentive, B'nai Sholom will get paid for the sneakers we send to the program! The more sneakers we send, the more money B'nai Sholom will receive, at no cost to the temple.

We have set up a bag within a box in the vestibule between the two glass doors. All you have to do is drop your sneakers into the bag. When the bag is full, we'll ship it to the "Got Sneakers?" company at their expense and wait for our check. We have several bags ready to be filled and have put a notification in the E-announcements that the bag-in-a-box is ready for your sneakers. So it's time to start gathering them up!

The following Yahrts will be observed in February.

2/4 Esther Rosenberg*; Bernard Royne; Ethel Strohl; Lillian Dinkin; Milton Kesler; Sarah Koblenz Pock*; Eleanor Newman Blum

2/11 Morris Cohen; Sherryl Pflanz; Helen Rehr; Rose Goldberg; Ida Goldstein; Benjamin L. Dubb; Barbara Sternstein; Paul Goldstein; Alfred Cohen*

2/18 Irma Bruce; Frederic Neuburger; Joyce Epstein*; Augusta Lichtenfels*; Leah Altmayer; Pearl Ronay; Sophie Scholl Small; Arlan Walker*; Muriel Rosenthal; Ruth Warshaw*; Samuel Strohl; Lena Semelisky*; Morris Wagner*; Elsie Meer; Julie Lawrence*; Donald A. Wexler*

2/25 Frances K. Singer*; Ida Roth*; Jerome Flax; Eugene Tuck; Shirley Dean; Avi Ezra; Paul Rosenthal; Jonas Bernstein*; Stanley Levy; Murray Maurer; Carey B. Hatch, Jr.; Evelyn Turoff*

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

The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

General Fund

In memory of **Lorraine Plath** by Judy Lee and William Herbert

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

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

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

In memory of **Sandra and Leonard Samuels** by Sharon and Mark Sklar

In honor of **Ben and Becky Marvin's grandchild, Noah Joseph Kitchell**, by Rabbi Don Cashman and Sharona Wachs

In memory of **Michael Kramer** by Mindy Kramer

In memory of **Judith S. Dobris** by The Family of Judy Dobris

In gratitude to **Ellie Davis, Randy Davis, Joan Savitt, Martie Teumim, Becky Marvin, Melissa Putterman Hoffmann and Christine Blackman** by Ruth Burkowsky (*For the purchase of a new refrigerator for B'nai Sholom*)

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

In honor of **Ben and Becky Marvin's grandson Noah** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman

In honor of **the birth of Paige Eloise Ouellette DiPaola** by Ben and Becky Marvin

In honor of **Purim** by Lori Stuart

General Fund – In Memory of Herb Swift

Ellie and Randy Davis

Ian Duckor (*For Library Fund*)

Roy and Judy Fruiterman

Bruce and Edith Goldstein (*In memory of Herb and his love of Judaism and Torah Study to Adult Education*)

Rema Goldstein

Stephen and Jeanette Gottlieb

Gary and Melissa Putterman Hoffmann (*For Torah Maintenance*)

Joan Krochmal

Barney Horowitz

Mitch and Doris Levinn

Martha and Leo Levy

Ben and Becky Marvin (*For Caring Community Fund*)

Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass

Amy Sternstein

Vera Propp – Books for Babies Fund – In Memory of Herb Swift

In memory of **Herb Swift** by Anne Hausgaard

In memory of **Herb Swift** by Elizabeth Propp

In memory of **Herb Swift** by Peter and Suzanne Propp

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund t

In memory of **Herb Swift** by Deb Adler

In memory of **Herb Swift** by Lori Stuart

Cecelia and Keith Kowalski

Our Recent Kibbutzniks

Shari Whiting	In memory of my daughter, Sarah
The Hausgaard Family	In memory of Sonny Hausgaard
Becky and Ben Marvin	On the occasion of the 50 th anniversary of B'nai Sholom's very first Shabbat service, December 31, 1971
Lois Gordon	In memory of Herb Swift
Robin Belansky and Ed Stewart	In honor of Ann Shapiro's and Lois Gordon's birthdays
Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass	In honor of Lois Gordon's special birthday
Lois Gordon	In honor of the special birthday of Ann Shapiro

RABBI: Danielle Weisbrot can be reached at rabiweisbrot@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us

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: Maryann Wygel can be reached at bookkeeper@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us

OFFICE HOURS: TUE/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM–4:30 PM

Articles and news received after the deadline are subject to omission.	
As a rule, the Bulletin deadline is the 2 nd 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>
March 2022.....	February 9
April 2022.....	March 9