

# *B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation*

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FEBRUARY 2013

SHEVAT/ADAR 5773

## JOIN US IN FEBRUARY FOR

Friday, Feb. 1	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Feb. 2	TEXT STUDY: Prophets <i>Hosea</i> <i>Ice Cream for Breakfast Day</i>	9:30 AM
Friday, Feb. 8	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICE</b> Synagogue Scholar: Martha Rozett will review <i>The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit</i>	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Feb. 9	TORAH STUDY: <i>Mishpatim</i> Ex. 21.1-24.18 <b>SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE</b> Pre-K/Kindergarten Kiddush Lunch	9:30 AM <b>10:30 AM</b>
Friday, Feb. 15	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Feb. 16	TORAH STUDY: <i>Terumah</i> Ex. 25.1-27.19	9:30 AM
Friday, Feb. 22	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Feb. 23	TORAH STUDY: <i>Tetzaveh</i> Ex. 27.20	9:30 AM
Friday, Mar. 1	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Mar. 2	TEXT STUDY: Prophets <i>Hosea</i> Extended study with coffee and bagels	9:30 AM
Friday, Mar. 8	<b>EREV SHABBAT SERVICES</b> Social Action Shabbat	<b>8:00 PM</b>
Saturday, Mar. 9	TORAH STUDY: <i>Vayakhel-Pekudei</i> Ex. 35.1-40.38	9:30 AM

*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 others' 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 PRESENT**

Yom Kippur Eve 5773 – September 25, 2012

At the very point in time when we're supposed to be focusing on all that we did wrong, what should pop up in my mind as part of the brain-storming process but none other than the list of the things that Jews do right. It's a short list, not that we don't do a lot of things right; it's just that we argue about what should be on the list of what we do right. The two things on this list are things we don't argue about: things that Jews universally agree we do right. You may ask "What kind of Jewish list could that be, if no one argued about?" "How significant could it be, if it didn't rate controversy?" Hear me out.

The first thing on the list of what Jews do right is: Jewish Summer Camp. Our kids love their camps. We tear out our collective Jewish communal hair wondering how to instill Jewish identity and ensure Jewish continuity, and we agonize over getting kids to synagogue for Religious School, for services, for Youth Group; but for camp, they can't wait. There, they sing Hebrew songs, and observe Shabbat, participate in programs that teach and reinforce Jewish values, meet Israeli staff members, engage in meaningful prayer on a daily basis, become adept at Hebrew terminology, and they do this without parental pressure. I wonder if camp succeeds *davka* [especially] because parents aren't around.

The second thing that Jews do well is: death and mourning. I was reminded of that this past year when a neighbor died. There was one window in our schedule for a wake at the church. In 10 minutes we moved 2, maybe 3 feet, and we didn't have the 90 minutes it was going to take. Other wakes we've gone to of other neighbors have been shorter, but I can't help wondering about the 10 year old grandson standing there at one, or the five daughters at another. We bury first, and soon, then mourn. Shiva makes so much more sense, when you have a range of days and times to visit. And our mourning is a set of gradually decreasing restrictions on the mourners, permitting a gradual re-entry into normal life. And most significantly, I think, is that our funerals are about the deceased, and not built on around the premise of a better place. A Jewish funeral isn't the time for theology; it's for honoring the deceased and comforting the mourners.

Jewish funerals aren't about the world-to-come. They're about the here and now: the person we've lost, and the pain that his or her family and friends are experiencing at the loss.

Judaism itself is pretty much about the here and now. True, we spend an awful lot of time talking about the past. Who, and what we are as a People, and hopefully as individuals within that people are built upon ancient writers, medieval scholars, and modern thinkers. I talked about this on Rosh Hashanah. And equally true, our tradition talks about the future, an idealized future, and we ponder what we can do to contribute to the vision and reality of that future. But by and large, we can safely say that Judaism is a system set up to help us in the here and now: how we order our world, and our lives; how we determine right from wrong; how we find meaning in the moment.

The present is always self-extinguishing, yet also always self-renewing. The present becomes the past automatically, and is replaced just as automatically with a new present. We can only be in the present; we cannot go back to the past and relive an improved time-line. There is no time machine, no portal, no fissures in the time-space continuum; or if there are, we don't yet have the necessary warp-speed vehicle to engage in time travel.

The present is a bridge, a tunnel, a canal from the past to the future. It is the hinge, the link between ← *then*, and *then*. →.

There are several different versions of Kol Nidrei floating around among world Jewry, and the present has a role in them. Indeed, the present may be the only non-controversial piece of the story.

The Torah views oaths and vows as binding. There is no way to retract them. One simply cannot renege on them. There is no three-day waiting period, or paying a cancellation penalty; nothing like that. You are stuck. You are committed. You are bound by your words. Words mean something. Remember that in the Torah, God creates by speaking, and gives Torah by speaking. Words, and speech, are significant.

Later on, in the Prophets, we see some examples of what a problem it can be when someone rashly makes a vow, the most famous and egregious story being that of Jephthah, who vows that if he returns home safely after battling the Ammonites, he will sacrifice the first thing that comes out the door. He's victorious, and what comes out the door? Not some sheep, or lamb, or goat, or even a dog, but his daughter. (Judges 12)

A thousand years later, in the first century CE, the philosopher Philo wrote that one way of getting out of a vow of a pledge or dedication to the Temple was for the priest to refuse to accept it. The Mishnah, the early post-biblical law code mentions a ceremony of *hatarat nedarim*, nullification of vows, which permits certain vows to be annulled under certain circumstances by a panel of scholars, or by one expert, one who clearly knew what vows were allowed to be annulled under what circumstances. The Tosefta, another Jewish law code from that time, leads us to think that a wise sage could somehow find a way to say that the vow in fact never existed; the vow was no vow, the oath was no oath.

The problem of bad vows was dealt with; the new problem was that vows were taken lightly and frivolously.

The center of Jewish law moved, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, from the land of Israel to Babylonia. By the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century, outside of the world of the Babylonian rabbis, this notion of nullifying or loosening of vows evolved. Contrary to Talmudic dictate, the particular vow no longer had to be specified. By the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, an early version of Kol Nidre appears in an early prayer book, *Seder Rav Amram*. The g'onim, the leaders of the Babylonian Jewish community, opposed the text, opposed the idea, said they never heard of such a thing, but by the 11<sup>th</sup> century it seems to be entrenched that before Yom Kippur, people would recite this formula, hoping to begin the New Year with a clean slate.

At this point, though, there's yet a new center of Jewish learning: Ashkenaz-France and Germany –bursts on the scene as a site of Jewish creativity. Rashi's son-in-law, Rabbi Meir ben Shmuel, didn't like this Kol Nidrei, and his son Rabbenu Tam, explained 4 different halachic problems with Kol Nidrei:

- 1) Unless you have an expert on the laws of oaths and vows – and those tractates were no longer even studied in the academies of Babylonia – you need a tribunal.
- 2) The specific content of the vow must be specified.
- 3) Regret must be expressed.
- 4) One cannot annul one's own vows.

So what does Rabbenu Tam do with a passage that people are attached to, that they've been reciting for a couple of hundred years? He found a passage in the Talmud (*Nedarim* 23b) where it says that at the beginning of the year, one may declare that all one's vows in the new year should not be accepted as binding.

Poof! The old text said "From last Yom Kippur to this one, my vows were not binding." That was no good. The new text by Rabbenu Tam says "from this Yom Kippur until next one, my vows are not binding." Problem solved! From then onward, the accepted Ashkenazic Kol Nidrei text is looking forward from now. We cannot change the past; but by acting in the present, we can do something for the future.

We cannot affect the past. We cannot take back the misspoken word or share words of affection with the deceased. We cannot undo harmful acts, no matter how much we regret them. Our tradition, at this season, encourages us to embrace the trio of teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah, usually understood as reviewing our deeds of the past year, engaging in prayer, and giving generously according to one's means to deserving recipients.

Teshuvah takes us to the past, as we reflect on our deeds. Jewish tradition suggests that we could have begun that 40 days ago, at the beginning of the month of Elul. We reiterated 10 days ago, on Rosh Hashanah, that this was the time for teshuvah. Last Friday was Shabbat Shuva, where we are reminded by the name of the Haftarah that it is the time to reflect and repent those misdeeds. Now, it is Yom Kippur, the day when we are to move from reflection and repentance to atonement, and hopefully in about 21 hours, to forgiveness. Yet as much as we want to move on to כפרה, atonement, we are likely not done with תשובה repentance. But nu? What are you waiting for?

Tzedakah, the making of charitable donations, is something we do at one point in time, but which only has significance in the future. The help we offer will pay off then, not now.

Tefillah, prayer, is the "now" of the triad. Teshuvah was ←then, and Tzedakah is then →, but Tefillah is now ↓. Our prayers of praise, thanksgiving, petition, confession, repentance, are all now, in the present. It is **now** that we express the need, and the desire, to regain control over those aspects of our lives which may have gotten away from us. Or, perhaps even to get control for the first time over those aspects which have always, in our weakness, eluded our control. **Now** is the time for change, to plan for change, to hope for change, to arrange to change, to pray for change, to struggle for change.

There's one more thing that I think Jews do right, and that's dealing with sin. We don't get hung up on it on a regular basis, we don't base our entire religion around the notion of sinfulness and redemption from sin. We don't obsess about sin. Rather, we have this holy day, this Repentathon<sup>©</sup>, to deal with our human frailties. Now, on the Day of Atonement, we engage in divestiture of our sins, crimes, misdeeds, failings, shortcomings, wrongdoings, which we do by reflection upon them and confrontation with them.

Now, we get to think about our own personal lists of what we do right. What would you like to be able to add to that list? What personal foible have you found yourself confronting year after year on Yom Kippur? What are you going to do about it? When do you plan to do something about it?

The time is now; for if not now, when?

## **It's Purim 5773....**

In the late 400s BCE, three guys and one gal from the streets of Shushan somewhere in central Joisey became one of the greatest successes in ancient rock 'n' roll history – and invented Purim along the way.

How'd they do it? Find out...Saturday, February 23

6:30 p.m. – Hamantashen and Beverages

7:00 p.m. – Purim Celebration

As B'nai Sholom and the Shushan National Touring Company & Timing Association present

### **“Jewsey Boys”**

Featuring tunes by The 4 Seasons, The Four Seasons, Frankie Valli and The 4 Seasons, and Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons

A totally un-Orthodox (really!) musical revue written by B'nai Sholom's own pool of amazing, award-whining wiseguys

Chortle as a corps of crazy congregants deftly delivers delightfully demented ditties

Costume Parade – prizes for all

Continuous revelry

No shtick needed this year – we're Working Our Way Back to Purim for you.

**SO MUCH FUN THAT YOU'LL WANT TO “STAY JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER”  
– GUARANTEED!!**

....and announcing:

**PURIM GRAGGER (noisemaker) CONTEST!** Prizes to be awarded at whim of judges...possibly for loudest, most creative, most beautiful, most thematic or who knows what else! (No air horns, please)

# COME JOIN US

Wine and Cheese Tasting at B'nai Sholom  
**Saturday February 9, 2013 @ 7:00PM**

Wine selected and provided by

Upstate Wine & Liquors of Delaware Plaza

Cheese selections provided and introduced by staff of the  
Honest Weight Food Coop

Come and enjoy time with friends and  
learn about pairing of wine and cheese selections.

Join us at **7pm** in the sanctuary for **Havdalah**

*we will then proceed to the Social Hall*

**Cost: FREE for All - Members & Non-Members!!**

*Invitations will be e-mailed as an Evite - please watch your e-mail for your invitation.*

*Please RSVP by Feb 1st.*

*Any questions or to RSVP, contact Ron Royne at [rroyne42@gmail.com](mailto:rroyne42@gmail.com)*

*or 518-439-7780*

*sponsored by your Membership Committee*

**MONDAY NIGHT SONG SESSIONS** are now every other week, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of the month (instead of every week). Drop-ins welcome! If interested, please contact Libby Lliebschutz at 439-5089 or [libbyliebschutz@gmail.com](mailto:libbyliebschutz@gmail.com)

## **IT'S SNOWING....ARE WE OPEN? IS THERE A MEETING? IS THERE SCHOOL?**

You can find out quickly by listening to these radio stations: WRVE, WFLY, WGY, WYJB or watching these television stations: WNYT TV, WRGB TV, WTEN TV, WXXA TV

We will also post cancellations on our web site and change the telephone message (by 8 am on Sunday mornings). You may also go to our website and subscribe to cancellation e-mails. n.b. cancellation of committee meetings are NOT on radio or TV. Watch for email or call the office and listen to recorded message.

## *From the Fundraising Committee:*

### **Deadline for Mishloach Manot orders is February 13!**

Order form enclosed. This is a wonderful and easy way to spread joy and warm wishes during Purim. Purim bags will be available for pickup on Erev Purim, February 23, 2013.

### **Do you know about our Hannaford and ShopRite gift card program?**

It couldn't be simpler: you can raise money for B'nai Sholom just by doing your weekly grocery shopping. Hannaford and ShopRite pledge 5% back on pre-loaded shopping cards you can purchase through the Synagogue. That's right: without spending an extra cent, you can donate to B'nai Sholom. Just purchase the cards through the Fundraising committee, and then use your card like cash at Hannaford and ShopRite. The cards – available in multiples of \$25, \$50 or \$100 – can be purchased just by sending a check to B'nai Sholom. They make terrific gifts, too. For more information, contact Marjorie Pass or Ellie Davis. The sooner you start using the cards, the more you'll be helping B'nai Sholom.

### **VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT**

The deadline for the March Bulletin is February 6 and will be strictly adhered to.

## **Social Action**

**Mark Your Calendars: Our next blood drive will be held on Sunday, May 5** from 8 am to 1 pm in the social hall. March 10 is the cutoff date for donating prior to that drive. Many thanks to those who already signed up to volunteer or to donate - we will call to remind you in the spring.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in our blood drives, please call the temple office. We are always in need of volunteers to help recruit donors and to help run the drives. It's a good way to get to know your fellow congregants!

*Please note that during January and February, the office will be open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The office will be closed on Wednesday.*

# WHAT'S AHEAD IN ADULT ED.....

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 8:00 PM SYNAGOGUE SCHOLAR MARTHA ROZETT**

Dr. Rozett will review the book, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*

**JEWISH AUTOBIOGRAPHY** course begins Wednesday evening, February 27 at 7:30 pm and continues for 6 weeks. Autobiography is not just an assemblage of personal information, but the creation of an identity. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for American Jewish writers this meant dealing with the clash between Old World Yiddishkeit and secular, often anti-Semitic America. Books to be discussed need not be read. Teacher: Peter Heinegg, professor of comparative literature at Union College. Registration required: \$45 fee (\$30 for members of B'nai Sholom)

## **“A Conversation” Keeps going**

“A Conversation” is our occasional program for non-Jewish congregants and Rabbi Cashman to get together. We've met twice: once to talk about the fall holidays, and again to talk about Hanukkah.

We're getting together again on February 10, March 10, and April 21 to talk about Purim, Passover, and Israel respectively, and you're invited to join in the conversation on these Sundays from 9:30-10:30 am in the Library.

## **IN THE COMMUNITY**

### ***O Powerful, Western Star!***

Book talk by congregant Peter Golden

Thursday, Feb. 7 at 7:00 pm (snow date Feb. 12)

The Golub Center, Jewish Federation of Northeastern NY

184 Washington Ave., Extension, Albany

The movement to rescue Soviet Jewry was hundreds of years in the making. In this remarkable study of those years, Golden explores events across three continents that converged to propel American Jewry into the midst of the Cold War and assigned them a crucial role on the front lines of that war's final battle. *O Powerful, Western Star!* Leads us on a journey through the cultural and political changes in America and Russia, and chronicles the collective impact of the Second World War, the Holocaust, the founding of Israel, and the social upheaval of the 1960s on American and Soviet Jews. Golden draws on his personal interviews with Mikhail Gorbachev, Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Larry Eagleburger, Richard Perle, Jacob Birnbaum, Max M. Fisher, Shoshana S. Cardin and many others.



## MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

B'nai Sholom is happy to accept contributions of cash or securities, which may be directed to any Committee or budget line. The Congregation also maintains several funds which can be designated to receive contributions. Contributions to these funds remain in these funds from one year to the next, as opposed to budget line contributions, which return to the General Fund at the conclusion of the Fiscal Year if they have not been used. Examples of budget line contributions are to the Library, the Art Committee, etc.

The Funds we maintain, and their purposes are:

- ☆ General Fund: pays the various expenses of the congregation as laid out in the Budget which is approved by the Congregation at its Annual Meeting
- ☆ Rabbi's Discretionary Fund makes donations to other organizations and pays for unbudgeted items for our congregation, primarily those which assist the rabbi.
- ☆ Vera Propp Social Action Fund supports social action projects and social action awareness programs
- ☆ Ruth G. Warshaw Memorial Fund pays for a guest lecture.
- ☆ Israel Bond Fund purchases Israel Bonds for the Congregation. When these Bonds mature, the proceeds go to the Scholarship Fund.
- ☆ Scholarship Fund provides incentive awards for our students to attend summer overnight camps, and Israel programs.
- ☆ Circle of Life Fund is to pay for major purchases or repairs which are not covered in our budget.
- ☆ Marlene Baker Youth Scholarship Fund is to assist members of our Youth Group to attend NFTY functions.

## **THANK YOU**

--to the paper-cut brigade who prepared the January Bulletin: **Sandy Rosner and Ariella Haas, Shari Green, Sarah Berloff, Matthew Berloff, Martha Rozett, Ruth Swift**

--to the congregants who provided us with a sweet Shabbat: **Jodi Kerper and Karl Rethemeyer, Deb Adler and Ric Crawford, Margie Pass, Ellie and Randy Davis, Mark and Cheryl Reeder, Becky and Ben Marvin** in memory of **Eleanor Marvin, Valerie Tabak** in memory of **Hannah Tabak**, and the Adult Education Committee

A special thank you to **Bruce Goldstein** who has done a terrific job making sure that our new web page is up and running! He spent countless hours participating in webinars, training and phone calls to iron out difficulties implementing the site. Bruce's programming skills and imagination resulted in a site that is well organized, attractive and refreshed constantly. The website now represents the liveliness and diversity of the congregation.

## **THE CONGREGATION NOTES WITH THANKS THESE CONTRIBUTIONS...**

### **General Fund**

In memory of **Benjamin Sacks** by Paula Philo

In memory of **Eleanor Marvin** by Ben and Becky Marvin

In appreciation by Dr. and Mrs. Bryan Bilfield

In appreciation by Jeff and Sandra Goldmeer

In appreciation by Ethan and Stella Suib

In appreciation by Robert and Donna Fine

### **Endowment Community Fund**

In appreciation by Stuart Schwartz and Debbie Youngelman

## **YAHRTZEITS**

The following Yahrzeits will be observed in February:

- 1 Ida Shapiro Jaffe\*, Sandra Samuels, Sylvia Schwartz, Irving Schwartz, Arthur E. Rees, Isaac Adels\*, Ethel Hesch Berke\*, Lillian Hammer\*, Frank Weinberg\*, Morris Alowitz\*, Jack Jarett, Arthur Katz, Bernard Royne, Ethel Strohl, Estelle Rosen, Jerome Ruzow, Jessie Amanda Flax, Milton Kesler
- 8 Esther Rosenberg\*, Eleanor Newman Blum, Sarah Pock\*, Hortense Stone Heart\*, Philip Green, Hannah Ostrow, Rose Goldberg, Ida Goldstein
- 15 Chay Soon Boon, Benjamin L. Dubb\*, Max Fiks\*, Irma Bruce, Frederic Neuburger, George Rifkin, Leah Altmayer, Augusta Lichtenfels\*, Joyce Epstein\*, Pearl Ronay
- 22 Alfred Cohen\*, Elsie Meer, Julie Lawrence\*, Edith Watnick, Herman Reichbach\*, Esther Weiss, Samuel Strohl, Ruth Warshaw\*, Morris Wagner\*, Helen Goldfarb\*, Frances K. Singer\*

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

We note with sorrow the death of

**WILLIAM SMITH**  
Father of David Smith

*B'nai Shalom Reform Congregation*

420 Whitehall Rd.  
Albany, NY 12208

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

RABBI: **Donald P. Cashman**

PRESIDENT: **Jodi Kerper**

OFFICE MANAGER: **Rebecca S. Marvin**

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL DIRECTOR: **Elizabeth Alowitz**

\*OFFICE HOURS: MON/TUES/THU/FRI 9:15 AM – 3:00 PM

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*Bulletin Deadlines*

“As a rule, the second Wednesday of each month.”

**Period Covered**

March

April

**Deadline**

February 6

March 6

Articles and news received after deadline are subject to omission