



Shabbat Shalom

1 Sh'vat 5777
January 28, 2017

Parashat Va'era

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, January 28:

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
Post Kiddush Talk with Rabbi Mark Borovitz	1:00 pm
Havdalah	6:21 pm
Kadima Ice Skating	7:00 pm

Sunday, January 29:

Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)	9:30 am
Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Community Session & Book Signing Rabbi Borovitz	10:30 am
Pre-Kadima Paint and Pop	12:30 pm
Teen Talk with Rabbi Mark Borovitz	4:00 pm

Tuesday, January 31:

MoB Bowling	7:00 pm
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Wednesday, February 1:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Talmud Torah (2nd-6th grade)	4:40 pm

Thursday, February 2:

Synagogue Life Meeting	6:00 pm
Tish at Rabbi Greyber's	7:30 pm

Friday, February 3:

Candle Lighting	5:27 pm
First Friday Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Kitot Bet/Gimel/Dalet Shabbat Service/Dinner	6:00 pm
USY Home Hosted Shabbat Dinner	6:30 pm

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 2/4 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 2/4 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 2/4 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 2/4 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 2/4 Parasha Study
- ✧ Sat. 2/4 Federation Kickoff Event
- ✧ Sun. 2/5 Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade)
- ✧ Sun. 2/5 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 2/5 Simchat Tot!
- ✧ Sun. 2/5 Kitah Dalet Family Beit Midrash (Tu B'Shevat)
- ✧ Sun. 2/5 Kitah Vav Parent-only B'nai Mitzvah Program
- ✧ Wed. 2/8 Talmud Torah (2nd-6th grade)
- ✧ Wed. 2/8 BE Board Meeting
- ✧ Fri. 2/10 Kabbalat Shabbat Services (Bat Mitzvah of Talia Samuel-Devaney)
- ✧ Fri. 2/10 Kitah Vav B'nai Mitzvah Family Program and Potluck Dinner
- ✧ Sat. Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. Shabbat Morning Services (Bat Mitzvah of Talia Samuel-Devaney)

Gabbai Schedule

Contact the scheduled gabbai if you'd like to request an *aliyah*, other honor, or to volunteer to lead a service in the Main Sanctuary. Gabbaim will try to accommodate requests made on Shabbat morning (by 10:15am, before the Torah service) but we ask for your understanding if all honors have been previously claimed during the week.



2/4 Bo Diane Markoff Diane.markoff@earthlink.net	919-969-8953
2/11 Beshallah-Shira Elise Goldwasser Elise.goldwasser@duke.edu	919-956-8871
2/18 Yitro Roger Perilstein rperilstein@hrc-pa.com	919-286-9814
2/25 Mishpatim-Shekalim Shula Bernard shulabernard@gmail.com	919-967-9393

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:

Diane Markoff & David Reed, Kathy Bartelmay & Roger Perilstein, Hunter & Jay Levinsohn, Sabina & Steve Sager, and Pat & Frank Fischer.

Beth El is a welcoming community of members with diverse backgrounds, ideas, levels of knowledge, and observance. We are an egalitarian Conservative congregation, and a member of the Southeast Seaboard district of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), and the Orthodox Union.

Parashat Va'era

Adapted from <http://www.jtsa.edu/jts-torah-online>

Listening to Moses try and wrap his mind around becoming an agent of change and transformation for the Israelites and the Egyptians is, at times, painful. As we eavesdrop on the early exchanges between God and Moses, a raw intimacy between Moses and us emerges. In his back and forth with God about his assignment to be God's voice in Egypt, Moses immediately reveals his deep insecurity: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?!" (Exod. 3:11).

At this point, God is simply asking Moses to be a mouthpiece. And even though God promises to do the heavy lifting (with signs and wonders, etc.) of persuading Pharaoh, the Israelites, and the Egyptians that big changes are coming and the God of the Israelites is up to the task, Moses remains one hundred percent convinced that he is the wrong person for the job. Speaking of the Israelites themselves he says, "What if they do not believe me and do not listen to me, but say 'the Lord did not appear to you?'" (Exod. 4:1).

After God tries to reassure him, Moses says even more desperately: "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exod. 4:10).

The crescendo of Moses's aria of self-doubt peaks with his worst nightmare actually coming true: "But when Moses told [the Israelites that God would liberate them from slavery in Egypt and deliver them to the Land of Israel], they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage" (Exod. 6:9). And right then, when Moses undoubtedly thought it couldn't get worse, it does. After the Israelites refuse to believe him, God suggests that Moses go back and tell Pharaoh himself to let the Israelites go. It is in this moment, it seems, that Moses sinks into full despair, actually begging God to reconsider that last instruction: "The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Pharaoh heed me, a man of impeded speech!?" (Exod. 6:12). This dismal first run at becoming God's agent of change and liberator of the Israelites begs the question: Why is Moses failing? Is it the content of the message? Is it, as Moses himself suggests, the deficiency of the messenger? Or, perhaps, the problem lies with the Israelites who do not seem capable of absorbing or accepting the message that change and transformation are even possible. What is going wrong?

There is a passage from the Babylonian Talmud that, in its own way, speaks powerfully to the question of the nature of the relationship between an agent of change and those who would be changed or transformed:

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba fell ill and Rabbi Yohanan went in to visit him. [Rabbi Yohanan] said to him: "Are your sufferings precious to you?" [Rabbi Hiyya] replied: "Neither they nor their reward." [Rabbi Yohanan] said to him: "Give me your hand." [Rabbi Hiyya] gave [Rabbi Yohanan] his hand and he [healed] him. (BT Berakhot 5b)

What an evocative, enigmatic question Rabbi Yohanan asks before he heals Rabbi Hiyya! "Are your sufferings precious to you?" What could he mean by that? Why in the world would Rabbi Hiyya's suffering be precious to him? Why would someone even pose that question to someone suffering? Just beneath the surface of Rabbi Yohanan's question, we can hear a deep truth about human beings that we already knew: that we are psychologically and spiritually complicated and have complex relationships with all sorts of aspects of our lives, even our suffering. Perhaps Rabbi Yohanan was asking whether Rabbi Hiyya was attached to the sympathy and attention his illness brought him; perhaps Rabbi Hiyya was attached to the clarity of perspective his illness provided him as to what is and isn't important in this life; perhaps Rabbi Hiyya had simply become habituated to the comfortable or at least familiar role his illness played in his everyday life.

In a way, the specifics of the answer don't really matter. What's important is that Rabbi Yohanan asked it. The overarching message of Rabbi Yohanan's asking that question was, "to heal you, I need first to know your relationship to what is happening right now. Before I can help you move forward, I need to know at least that much about you and your life." Why were Moses's first attempts to connect with the Israelites and ignite their journey of transformation and healing such a splashy failure? Perhaps Moses was so focused on the performative aspects of his mission, the delivery of the lines fed to him by God—a task for which he clearly considered himself wholly deficient—that he neglected to think of (much less ask) the Israelites some version of Rabbi Yohanan's rich and multilayered question: "Who are you, what is your story, and what is your relationship to your life, even to your suffering?" The hard-learned message for Moses as a leader of people, as well as for those of us blessed with a front seat to the evolution of his development as a leader of the Israelites and facilitator of their transformation and change, is that everything healing, everything important, everything transformative begins with authentic connection.

And to facilitate healing and transformation in others, we need first, in some important way, to heal ourselves; we need—through friendship, love, and some self-compassion—to silence or at least dim the distracting and spiritually depleting inner voices that tell us we're not good enough. We need to ask—and then, having asked, we need to listen. Really listen.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

<i>Batya bat Shprintza (Barbra Roberman)</i>	<i>Sachs)</i>	<i>Anne Boyd</i>
<i>Chana bat Malka</i>	<i>Ovadya ben Esther Malkah (Ovadya Fleishman)</i>	<i>Alan Marty</i>
<i>Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)</i>	<i>Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)</i>	<i>Christine Walters</i>
<i>David ben Sarah (David Leitner)</i>	<i>Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)</i>	<i>Ezra Rapport</i>
<i>David Yosef ben Avraham v'Chana (Donald Goldstein)</i>	<i>Shalom ben Sprintze (Stanley Ramati)</i>	<i>Helen Rosenberg</i>
<i>Esther bat Yankale Sura</i>	<i>Shimon ben Shlomo haLevi v'Sheyne (Stuart Levine)</i>	<i>Jack Reich</i>
<i>Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)</i>	<i>Shira Batya bat Meirav</i>	<i>Jeff Shields</i>
<i>Herschel David ben Aharon haKohen u'Bela Miriam</i>	<i>Shmuel ben Shoshana</i>	<i>Joyce Romm</i>
<i>Israel ben Zalman u'Malkah</i>	<i>Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip Skoletsky)</i>	<i>Ken Walkers</i>
<i>Malka bat Leah (Meg Anderson)</i>	<i>Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)</i>	<i>Lauren Schiro</i>
<i>Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel</i>	<i>Tziporah bat Esther</i>	<i>Netta Boswell</i>
<i>Masha bat Fanny (Marsha Schonberg)</i>	<i>Ya'akov Roni ben Margalit</i>	<i>Orrie Wilner</i>
<i>M'cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia</i>	<i>Alvin Jacobson</i>	<i>Richard Roth</i>
<i>Mishulamit bat Maryam (Marcia Hogan)</i>		<i>Sidney Barker</i>
<i>Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret)</i>		

Please contact the synagogue office with any additions or changes to this list.

Yahrzeits יארצייט

May their memory be a blessing

Sam Margolis	David "Harry" Nydick
Yehuda Ohayon	Ellen Egger
Miriam Zucker	
Yetta Brandt	
Hanah Landau	
Barbara Lipp	
Barry Margolin	

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Ari and Diana Medoff and their family on the death of Ari's uncle—Philip Siber—who passed away on Sunday, January 22 in New Jersey.

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Jeff Spinner Halev, Elyza Halev, and their family on the death of Jeff's step-brother—Elliott Rosenbaum, Eliyahu ben Yisrael v'Rachel—who passed away on January 18, in Farmington Hills, MI.

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to David Bronstein, Carla Fenson, and Sarah and Joel Bronstein on the death of David's beloved mother, Sarah and Joel's beloved grandmother—Thelma Bronstein—who passed away on Monday, January 16, in Vancouver, Canada.

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to the family and friends of former Beth El member—Dr. Lesa Morrison—who passed away in December in Nairobi, Kenya.

May the Ever Present One comfort them among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Beth El Synagogue
 1004 Watts Street
 Durham, NC 27701
 919.682.1238
info@betheldurham.org
www.betheldurham.org
 Rabbi: Daniel Greyber
 Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager
 Synagogue President: Noah Pickus