



Shabbat Shalom

20 Sh'vat 5776
January 30, 2016

Parashat Yitro

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, January 30:

Havdalah—6:22 pm

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| Shabbat Mishnah Study | 8:45 am |
| Orthodox Kehillah Services | 9:00 am |
| B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring | 9:00 am |
| Main Sanctuary Services, Bar Mitzvah of Qiuhu Louie | 9:30 am |
| Healing Yoga | 10:00 am |
| Children's Services | 10:30 am |
| I.L. Peretz Course with Sheva Zucker | 1:00 pm |

Sunday, January 31:

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| Hebrew Level I with Donna Goldstein | 8:30 am |
| Weekly Sunday Minyan/Shiva Minyan** | 9:00 am |
| Hebrew Level II with Donna Goldstein | 9:30 am |
| Talmud Torah (PreK-7) | 9:30 am |
| Annual Blood Drive | 9:30 am |
| Walking with Mitzvot #2 | 10:15 am |
| Pre-Kadima Movies | 12:30 pm |
| Jason Kowee's Bar Mitzvah Project | 12:45 pm |
| Community Tu B'Shevat Celebration | 3:00 pm |
| Monthly Durham Community Café Dinner | 5:30 pm |

**Sunday Minyan: Please join Noah Pickus, Trudi Abel and their family at the home of Diane and Dale Pahl, 1009 W. Markham Ave in Durham for a morning Shiva minyan to mourn the passing of Noah's father, Robert Pickus, on Sunday, January 31st at 9:00 am.

Monday, February 1:

Tuesday, February 2:

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| Synagogue Life Meeting | 7:00 pm |
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Wednesday, February 3:

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| Weekly Wednesday Minyan | 8:00 am |
| Talmud Torah (2-6) | 4:15 pm |

Thursday, February 4:

Friday, February 5:

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| <i>Candle Lighting—5:21 pm</i> | |
| Kabbalat Shabbat Services | 6:00 pm |
| Community Shabbat Dinner | 7:00 pm |

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 2/6 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 2/6 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 2/6 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 2/6 Monthly Parsha Study
- ✧ Sat. 2/6 Shabbat Morning Services Honoring Chevra Kaddisha
- ✧ Sat. 2/6 I.L. Peretz Course with Sheva Zucker
- ✧ Sun. 2/7 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 2/7 Talmud Torah (PreK-7)
- ✧ Sun. 2/7 Simchat Tot
- ✧ Sun. 2/7 Hebrew Courses with Donna Goldstein
- ✧ Sun. 2/7 Sulam Session #2
- ✧ Sun. 2/7 Sicha: Hevre Kaddisha Day of Learning
- ✧ Mon. 2/8 Sisterhood Board Meeting
- ✧ Mon. 2/8 MoB Movie Night
- ✧ Wed. 2/10 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Wed. 2/10 Talmud Torah (2-6)
- ✧ Wed. 2/10 Board Meeting
- ✧ Thu. 2/11 Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Greyber
- ✧ Fri. 2/11 Kitah Zayin Friday Class
- ✧ Fri. 2/11 Kitzh Zayin Family Beit Midrash
- ✧ Fri. 2/11 Kabbalat Shabbat Services (Bat Mitzvah of Miriam Sage Starr Samuels)

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.



1/30 Yitro
Bernie Fischer
Bernie.fischer@duke.edu 919-493-0306

2/6 Mishpatim
Roger Perilstein
rperilstein@hrc-pa.com 919-286-9814

2/13 Terumah
Alan Mandel
andelcpa@gmail.com 917-589-5673

2/20 Tetzaveh
Isaac Price
isaac@isaacprice.org 919-886-5453

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
*Caryn Rossi & Greg Louie in honor of their daughter,
Qiuhu Louie, becoming a Bat Mitzvah.*

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 Yitro

Adapted from <http://www.learn.jtsa.edu>

Parashat Yitro is a Torah reading of monumental ideas, foundational concepts, and widely-recognized importance. By all measures, this week's portion must be considered a highlight of the entire Torah, since it includes no less (and a lot more!) than the Ten Commandments. This seems to be the right place to explore questions such as these: what did the actual revelation (Exodus 20) include? What were God's commandments? Why were these statements singled out, especially given the amount of law scattered throughout the Torah? What gives these brief pronouncements their distinctive importance? There are so many crucial questions we could ponder with great benefit about the Commandments, their form, their content, and their meaning. However, since so much has been written about the Decalogue, and we have much to learn from other parts of the parashah that are not included within the Decalogue itself, let's move our focus instead to the preceding chapter, Exodus 19.

If you can look over the chapter, this would be a time to read through it to see what of interest jumps out at you; below I will suggest verses that particularly grabbed my attention. I think you will see at least one very powerful and theologically rich theme "hidden" in two verses we might be tempted to neglect, or at least minimize, in our rush to get to the "Big Ten." (Coincidentally, the Big Ten Conference in athletics, which has had as few as 9 member institutions, now has 14. So, too, commentators have suggested that the Ten Commandments might not originally have been 10, some suggesting fewer and others finding more).

The Torah sets the scene: only a few months after the Children of Israel had been delivered out of Egypt, they reached a mountain in the wilderness of Sinai. God told Moses to remind the Israelites of God's role in their redemption and to promise them, as well, that Israel's acceptance of the commandments-yet-to-be-given would assure the people a special place as God's treasured possession, a life of service as "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation." The chapter describes ways in which the entire community (or, problematically, at least those who had the standing of full membership in the community) were to ready themselves for the impending event. Israel is told how to prepare for the theophany, God's appearance, and for the divine revelation. An experience of this magnitude would be magnificent, but also overwhelming. It would be glorious, but potentially fatal. It could have an incalculable effect on every participant and would forever change the community.

Amid thunder and lightning, a thick cloud and strong shofar blast, the people tremble. The scene is set; the people are around the base of Mount Sinai; prepared. Moses is up on the mountain. The cloud and the smoke of God's fire grows thicker; the sound gets louder; the mountain itself, mirroring the people, trembles. Then—and now—we are ready for God to speak, to proclaim, to command. With unimaginable excitement, we anticipate the "Ten Commandments". But, wait! Several verses still precede the revelation itself and even precede some technical instructions with reminders that God gives Moses for the people. While the order of events in this chapter is notoriously difficult to discern, the sense of excitement and trepidation is palpable. We focus on two verses, Exodus 19:19-20. Read them carefully and slowly, asking yourself, who does what, where, and when?

וַיְהִי כֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר הַזֶּה וְהָלַךְ וַתִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַקּוֹל וַיִּגְדַּל וַיַּעֲלֵה עַל-יְדֵי ה' אֶל-רִאשׁוֹ הַהָר וַיִּקְרָא ה' לְמֹשֶׁה אֶל-רִאשׁוֹ הַהָר וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה.

The sound of the shofar was getting stronger. Moses was speaking and God was answering him thunderously. The Lord came down onto Mt. Sinai, onto the top of the mountain, and the Lord called to Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Before God reveals, Moses speaks and God answers. Moses first and then God? So it seems (in Exodus 19:19), but perhaps the two events were simultaneous. Then God descends to the Mountain, to the very top of the Mountain, from wherever God had been—perhaps riding in the highest heavens or riding on the clouds (cf. Ps. 68:5, 34)—and now God is ready to expound. No, still not yet. God realized how far away Moses was, recognizing the gap between them. Revelation, despite its grandeur, needs to be intimate. God wants, needs Moses to be close and, so, calls Moses to the top of the mountain where God was at the time. We are confident that now we will hear God's special pronouncements. No, again; not yet! At this point, what can possibly be missing?

There will be no divine revelation; there can be no divine revelation, until Moses ascends to the top of the mountain. Without "the mortal Moses" (Ex. 32:1, 22), there will be no divine revelation. It will not exist. If God speaks words which fall in the woods, and no human being is nearby to hear them—to receive them and to interpret them—they simply do not exist. An ancient rabbinic commentary (Sifrei Devarim, Section 346) makes the same point, interpreting the biblical verse Isaiah 43:12. The relevant part of the verse, "You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am God" is explained this way in the commentary: "When you are My witnesses, I am God; and if you are not My witnesses, I am not God, as it were."

Beth El Synagogue

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber

Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager

Synagogue President: Rachel Galanter

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

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| Adelah bat Avrom v'Chenya (Adele Abramowitz) | Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman) | Cynthia Brown Elinor Fleishman |
| Aharon ben David u'Miriam (Alan Goldman) | Reuven ben Chanoch v'Dinah (Robert Feurst) | Ilene Jacobson Jennifer Krunkosky |
| Aliza Chana bat Leah | Rut bat Sarah (Suzanne Furst) | Inez McFarling |
| Aryeh ben Tziporah | Sara bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante) | Ezra Rapport |
| Baracha bat Sarah | Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo) | Jack Reich Michael Rockman |
| Bedonna Riva bat Sara | Shira Batya bat Meirav | Pearl Rohde |
| Ben-Zion ben Sarah | Shmuel ben Shoshana | Richard Roth |
| Chana bat Malkah | Sprinya Simcha bat Yehudah v'Chana (Susan Rosefielde) | Carmen Sadowsky Lauren Schiro |
| Daronit Esther bat Tuvia v'Leah (Jennifer Greyber) | Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich) | Susan Tolchin Christine Walters |
| David ben Sarah (David Leitner) | Tziporah bat Esther | Orrie Wilner |
| Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon) | Yehudit bat Rachel | Amy Wolf |
| Gershon Yonah ben Teyva haKohen v'Chanah Leah haLevi (Harlan Gradin) | Yisrael Yitzhak ben Yosef u'Malka (Ronald Cumin) | |
| Malka Hannah bat Basha Rachel | Lucretia Bell Sonia Berman | |
| M'cor Eyshe bat Esther Tzvia | Anne Boyd | |

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

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|--------------------|------------------------|
| Neil August | Muriel Modell |
| Anne Cohen | Bob Roberman |
| Paul Gidwitz | Alex Rubin |
| Sarah Berg Hoffman | Julius Saffron |
| Bernie Kessler | Louis Saper |
| Shmuel Lebovich | Herb Shatzman |
| Dora Levine | Bert Weaver |
| Hannah Libman | Marie Whitehurst Wells |
| Sidney Markman | |

BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Qihu Louie on becoming a Bat Mitzvah!

Mazel Tov to the following Beth El community members on their birthdays! Kelly Asher, Shari Fischer, Lorraine Morley, Ya'akov Ariel, Andrea Ginsberg, Laurie Wolf, Jonathan Wahl, Marlene Spritzer, Harold Strauss

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Noah Pickus, Trudi Abel and family on the death of Noah's father, Robert Pickus who passed away on Saturday evening in California. Funeral services took place in California.