



Shabbat Shalom

18 Cheshvan 5776
October 31, 2015

Parashat Vayera

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, October 31:

Havdalah—7:02 pm

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
(Bat Mitzvah of Leah Samuel-Devaney)	

Sunday, November 1: Day Light Savings Time End (clocks turned back one hour)

Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Talmud Torah	9:30 am
Hebrew Level I with Donna Goldstein	10:00 am
Hebrew Level II with Donna Goldstein	11:00 am
Pre-Kadima Fun Run Olympics	12:30 pm
USY on Franklin	2:00 pm

Monday, November 2:

Tuesday, November 3:

Ari Shavit at Duke	7:30 pm
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Wednesday, November 4:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Talmud Torah	4:15 pm

Thursday, November 5:

Synagogue Life Committee Meeting	7:00 pm
Ari Shavit at UNC	7:30 pm

Friday, November 6:

Candle Lighting—4:56 pm

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 11/7 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 11/7 Chavurah Minyan
- ✧ Sat. 11/7 Orthodox Kehillah Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 11/7 B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 11/7 Monthly Parsha Study
- ✧ Sat. 11/7 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 11/7 Kadima Movie Night
- ✧ Sun. 11/8 Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 11/8 Talmud Torah (PreK-7)
- ✧ Sun. 11/8 Hebrew Level I and Hebrew Level II
- ✧ Sun. 11/8 Knitting Chevra
- ✧ Sun. 11/8 Walking with Mitzvot
- ✧ Sun. 11/8 USY Chopped with Judea
- ✧ Wed. 11/11 Weekly Wednesday Minyan followed by Shiur
- ✧ Wed. 11/11 Talmud Torah (2-6)
- ✧ Wed. 11/11 Board Meeting
- ✧ Fri. 11/13 Kitah Gan/Kitah Aleph Shabbat Service and Dinner

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.



10/31 Vayera Bernie Fischer bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-597-0064
11/7 Hayyei Sarah Isaac Price isaac@isaacprice.org	919-886-5453
11/14 Toledot Shula Bernard shulabernard@gmail.com	919-967-9393
11/21 Vayetze Jon Wahl jmwahl@email.unc.edu	919-942-3827

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is sponsored by:
Lynn Samuel and Sena Devaney in honor of their daughter Leah Samuel-Devaney 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 Vayera

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

Can there be anything left to say about the Akedah, perhaps the most discussed and analyzed story in the Torah? Clearly if this were simply the story of an old man who hears voices and travels to a nearby mountain with his son in order to kill him there, and who, at the last moment, sees a ram and kills it instead, we would not still be fascinated talking about the story more than two millennia later. No, this is an allegory. . . and therein lies its survival and its power, and our task is to find meaning in the story for ourselves and for our lives.

My initial reaction after hearing the story was, "So what else is new?" Parents often sacrifice their children in all kinds of ways. Many in the class that entered medical school with me were people whose talents and desires drew them in different directions and who were there at their parents' insistence. It was not so long ago that children were required to take over family businesses or enter loveless marriages. What about war? Wars are fought by the young and when countries go to war, they are saying, "There are values we hold strongly enough to let our children die for." When the "The Greatest Generation" went off to fight World War II, their parents sent them with anxiety but also with pride and the conviction that they were doing the right, the moral, the correct thing. Think of our brothers and sisters in Israel whose children are regularly put in harm's way to preserve values that provide a life of meaning. Of course no one wants their children to die, but the ideal of preserving a secure Jewish state is just that important.

For all the difficulty we, in this day and age, have with Abraham—why did he not simply refuse? Why did he not at least argue with God?—for our ancestors, the issue was not that God asked too much, but that Abraham did not do enough. The Talmud (BT Gittin 57b) relates the story of a woman whose seven sons were all martyred, tortured to death in front of her. It is a paradigm of loving acceptance and suffering, a story of mourning and rejoicing, mourning because it was decreed that her sons be slain and rejoicing because through their deaths Heaven's glory was sanctified. A heroine and paragon of virtue, she says: "Go and tell Father Abram: Let not your heart swell with pride! You built one altar but I have built seven altars and on them have offered up my seven sons. What is more: Yours was a trial; mine is accomplished fact." (Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, 15)

In some midrashim, Abraham's failure to carry out God's demand was not for lack of trying. In one, when the angel's tears dissolve his dagger, he asks if instead he can strangle him, or burn him, or cut him to pieces—that is why the Torah says, "Do not put forth your hand to him or do anything [else] to him." In another, Abraham actually does stab and kill Isaac, who is revived, whereupon Abraham stabs him again—that is why the angel has to call out to him twice.

During the crusades, there were numerous stories of men slaughtering their wives and children before killing themselves, and of mothers telling their children to hold still so the knife wouldn't slip. For Jews in the rabbinic period and the Middle Ages, "their sufferings and sacrifices exceeded by far everything endured by the original Akedah's father and son." (Spiegel, 21) They were sympathetic mainly to Abraham's being thwarted from demonstrating his devotion to God.

Most modern commentaries tend to be critical of Abraham, but a recent popular film that I believe is a midrash on the Akedah story takes a different view. Footnote, an Israeli film that won Best Screenplay at Cannes in 2011 and was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Foreign film, is about an Israeli family—the father and son both Talmud scholars at Hebrew University. The father does esoteric philological research, very much out of fashion in contemporary academia. The son's research is much more modern and he is the more well-known of the two. The father does not have much regard for the kind of scholarly work the son does. One day, the father receives a call informing him that he has won the prestigious Israel Prize. He and his family feel he should have received it years ago and the only reason he has not is the personal animus of the head of the Israel Prize committee. Once it is announced, he becomes a minor celebrity. In a television interview, he ridicules the type of research his son does and in effect, throws his son under the academic bus. Ironically, the call he received was an error.

Beth El Synagogue

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber

Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager

Synagogue President: Rachel Galanter

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Aharon ben David u'Miriam (Alan Goldman)	Rifka bat Idel v'Elka (Suzanne Furst)	Janette Francis Ilene Jacobson
Aliza Chana bat Leah	Sara bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Jennifer Krunkosky Inez McFarling
Baruch ben Shalom v'Raisel (Bernard Leibel)	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Ezra Rapport Jack Reich
Baracha bat Sarah	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Michael Rockman
Ben-Zion ben Sarah	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Pearl Rohde
Chana bat Malkah	Sprinya Simcha bat Yehudah v'Chana (Susan Rosefelde)	Richard Roth
Daronit Esther bat Tuvia v'Leah (Jennifer Greyber)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Carmen Sadowsky Lauren Schiro
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Tziporah bat Esther	Susan Tolchin
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Yehudit bat Rachel	Christine Walters
Gershon Yonah ben Tevya haKohen v'Chanah Leah haLevi	Lee Ballen	Sharon Welensky
Hannah Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Lucretia Bell	Orrie Wilner
M'cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia	Sonia Berman	Amy Wolf
Miryam bat Rivkah (May Segal)	Anne Boyd	
Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman)	Cynthia Brown	
Reuven ben Chanoch v'Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Anna Crollman	
	Lydia Cowan Davis	
	Elinor Fleishman	

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Sarah Behar	Joseph Poss
Reuven ben Eliezer	Yetta Rockman
Arthur Concors	Fannie Romick
Benjamin Ellman	Shirley Schulman
Marvin C. Goldstein	Sylvia Shane
Larry Katz	Celia Shatzman
Arnold Klapper	Hattie Singer
J. Everett Levinsohn	Mildred Sass Slatkoff
Eric Ivan Pas	

BE B'nai Mitzvah

Mazel tov to Leah Samuel-Devaney on becoming a bat mitzvah!

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to the following:
Laura and Harold Strauss and their family on the death of Laura's mother, Frances Rothstein, who passed away on Thursday morning in Buffalo, NY.

Marc Brettler on the death of his father, Sidney Brettler - Shalom ben Moshe Tzvi, who passed away on October 10 in Jerusalem. Burial took place on October 12 in Jerusalem.