



Shabbat Shalom

11 Cheshvan 5777
November 12, 2016

Parashat Lech-Lecha

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, November 12:

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
Healing Yoga	10:00 am
"Politics and Religion" w/ Rabbi Greyber, Leslie Winner and Jeff Spinner-Halev	1:00 pm
Havdalah	5:21 pm

Sunday, November 13:

Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)	9:30 am
Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Simchat Tot!	9:45 am
Knitting Chevra	10:00 am
Kitah Zayin Beit Midrash	10:00 am
5th grade B'nai Mitzvah Meeting	11:30 am
Kadima Kitchen Competition	12:30 pm

Monday, November 14:

Sisterhood Board Meeting	7:30 pm
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Tuesday, November 15:

Va'ad HaChinuch Meeting	7:00 pm
Young Judaea Year Course Info Meeting	7:00 pm
Finance Committee Meeting	7:30 pm

Wednesday, November 14:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Talmud Torah (2nd-6th grade)	4:40 pm
BE Board Meeting	7:30 pm

Thursday, November 15:

Lunch and Learn (CH Public Library)	11:30 am
Kli Yakar (at the JCC)	11:30 am
Rabbi Greyber's Siddur Class	7:30 pm

Friday, November 16:

Candle Lighting	4:16 pm
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Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 11/19 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 11/19 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 11/19 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 11/19 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 11/19 Chavurah Minyan
- ✧ Sat. 11/19 Children's Services
- ✧ Sun. 11/20 Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)
- ✧ Sun. 11/20 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 11/20 Chevra Kadisha
- ✧ Sun. 11/20 Kitot Gan and Aleph Family Beit Midrash
- ✧ Sun. 11/20 Talmud Torah Faculty Meeting
- ✧ Wed 11/23 NO Talmud Torah
- ✧ Thu 11/24 OFFICE CLOSED
- ✧ Fri 11/25 OFFICE CLOSED
- ✧ Sat. 11/26 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 11/26 NO B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 11/26 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 11/26 Shabbat Morning Services

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.



11/12 Lekh Lekha Diane Markoff Diane.markoff@earthlink.net	919-969-8953
11/19 Vayera Jon Wahl jmwahl@email.unc.edu	919-942-3827
11/26 Hayyei Sara Bernie Fischer Bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-493-0306
12/3 Toldot Bernie Fischer Bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-493-0306

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is sponsored by:

Ada Nikolsky, Adele & Joel Abramowitz, Barbara & Simon Shane, Robin & Moss Cohen, Diana & Stan Levy, and Faye Davis Rapp & Gordon Rapp

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 Lech-Lecha

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

In this week's parashah, Abraham makes his dramatic first appearance on the stage of the Torah, when he follows the command to go forth to an unknown land, relying on the promise of an unknown God. His moving story, along with that of his sons and grandsons, has captivated readers from all three large monotheistic religions. Generation after generation wished to read these patriarchal and matriarchal stories into their lives, their time and place. (The great medieval rabbi, mystic, and commentator Moses Nahmanides went even further to argue that the actions of the Patriarchs have inscribed patterns into the cosmic order, which future generations of Jews are compelled to follow). By depicting the Patriarchs as human (at times, all too human) rather than as saintly, it seems that the Torah almost invites us to conflate our fears and hopes, travails and achievements, with those of our mythical fathers and mothers.

In the past seven decades, a new form of temptation has emerged: to interpret the biblical promises and narratives regarding the Land of Canaan as anticipating the history of the Zionist movement and the sovereign State of Israel. As the addressee of many such promises, Abraham became a central figure in this trend.

To be sure, the astonishing evolution of the Zionist movement and its enormous success as epitomized by the sovereign State of Israel does indeed invite interpretations of a miraculous nature. Furthermore, Zionist leaders from left and right have long relied on the yearning of traditional Jews for Zion. The temptation to view this modern democratic state as a fulfillment of the divine promise to Abraham in this week's parashah is quite understandable. Yet this exegetical act, although tempting, is also perilous.

It is perilous not only because it can lead to a failure to recognize that all the peoples of this land—Jews and non-Jews alike—are entitled to live with freedom and dignity within its borders. It is also perilous because conflating the biblical promise with modern statehood can be the cause of a hubris which leads to forgetfulness—it's easy to forget that Israel's independence owes just as much to the support and recognition of the international community of nations as it does to the historical connection of Jews to Zion. Such moral blindness and false political belief may lead the State of Israel to weakness, isolation, and—ultimately—even to real danger. We saw the terrible results of these fallacies in 1994, when a US-born Jewish physician named Baruch Goldstein entered the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and massacred 29 Muslim worshipers, wounding 125 others. In so doing, he committed a horrendous act of *Hillul Hashem* (profaning the name of God).

Is it possible to connect the Israeli present with biblical lore without falling into a fetishization of Land and without succumbing to a chauvinism that is confident of God standing unconditionally on its side? I believe that this is possible, and that it is Abraham himself—through his conduct and actions—who provides us with the correct path: Abraham, the Torah tells us, is a newcomer to the land of Canaan, and he acts accordingly. From his first day of arrival to his last day, Abraham walks the land as a nomad, not a landlord. He takes special care, indeed painstaking care, to avoid any quarrel with his neighbors, family members like Lot (Gen. 13:8-9), and foreigners alike (Gen. 21:22-34). He also instructs other members of his household to follow this practice (Gen. 13:8). Abraham does not hasten into war; he chooses the path of force rarely, only when no other option is available. Finally—and most importantly—Abraham's moral standards lead him to engage in a debate with God Himself, wishing to prevent a divine verdict which will result in great violence and bloodshed. When trying to persuade God to defer the verdict of annihilation of Sodom, Abraham invokes an astonishingly provocative question:

הַשֵּׁפֵט כָּל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט?

Shall not the judge of all the earth do justly? (Gen. 18:25)

The promise given to Abraham that he shall inherit the Land may therefore be regarded as a conditional promise, one that is predicated on the first patriarch's upholding of a moral standard and backbone. Without this moral standard, the promise is void. It seems that the prophet Ezekiel understood the divine promise pertaining to the Land of Israel in precisely this way. These are his words of rebuke to those Israelites who believed that God promised them the Land unconditionally:

O mortal, those who live in these ruins in the land of Israel argue, "Abraham was but one man, yet he was granted possession of the land. We are many; surely, the land has been given as a possession to us." Therefore say to them: Thus said the Lord God: You eat with the blood, you raise your eyes to your fetishes, and you shed blood—yet you expect to possess the land! You have relied on your sword, you have committed abominations, you have all defiled other men's wives—yet you expect to possess the land! (Ezek. 33:24-26, NJPS translation)

When we read the story of Abraham, if we find ourselves caught by the allure of interpreting the divine promise about inheriting the Land as referring to current Israeli reality, we will do well to remember what also can be derived from Abraham's character and story—that independence, sovereignty, and power are a political and moral test, not a possession inherently belonging to the Jewish people.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Avigal bat David haLevi (Alice Gold)	Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Ya'akov Roni ben Margalit
Avram Moshe ben Esther (Alan Mandel)	Mordechai ben Mathilda (Morty Berkowitz)	
Baracha bat Sarah	Ovadya ben Esther Malkah (Ovadya Fleishman)	Alvin Jacobson
Batya bat Shprintza (Barbara Roberman)	Rachmiel Daniel ben Nachama u'Pinchas (Roger Perilstein)	Sidney Barker
Chana bat Malka	Reuven ben Chanoch v'Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Anne Boyd
Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Cynthia Brown
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Seymour Lubchansky
David Yosef ben Avraham v'Chana (Donald Goldstein)	Shalom ben Sprintze (Stanley Ramati)	Alan Marty
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Ezra Rapport
Esther bat Yankale Sura	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Jack Reich
Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)	Shrage ben Devorah Leah (Phillip Samuel Ramati)	Helen Rosenberg
Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel	Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip Skoletsky)	Orrie Wilner
M'cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia	Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Richard Roth
Mishulamit bat Maryam (Marcia Hogan)	Tziporah bat Esther	Lauren Schiro
Miriam bat Rivka v'Natan (Miriam Sharp)	Yakov ben Sarah (Jacob Schonberg)	Christine Walters

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

May their memory be a blessing

Sid Rancer	Sadie Greenberg	Treasure Mcclain
Marylu Goldberg	Chaim Mordecai Finkel	Nathan Rafterman
Sandra Richmond	Stanley Barclay	Moshe Friedman
Joseph Morrison	Florence Mintzer	Freda Leiss
Pearl Ellman	Harry Segal	Anna March

Mazel Tov

Last year, Beth El's Durham CROP Walk team helped raise \$146,600 to feed the hungry. Out of all the congregations and community groups that participated, we were 4th most successful, raising \$6960, over 4% of the total!

Mazel Tov to Beth El's softball team, Beth El Boppers, for winning their inaugural game against Judea Reform!

Be Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Anthony Weston, Amy Halberstadt and family on the passing of Anthony's father, Marcus Weston, who passed away on Tuesday, October 24.

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Theo Luebke and family on the passing of Theo's father, North Carolina State Representative Paul Luebke, who passed away on Saturday, October 29.

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

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 Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager
 Synagogue President: Noah Pickus