



# Shabbat Shalom

25 Cheshvan 5777  
November 26, 2016

*Parashat Chayei Sara*

## This Week at Beth El Synagogue

### Saturday, November 26:

NO Shabbat Mishnah Study  
NO B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring  
Orthodox Kehillah Services 9:00 am  
Main Sanctuary Services 9:30 am  
Havdalah 5:12 pm

### Sunday, November 27:

NO Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)  
NO Weekly Sunday Minyan

### Wednesday, November 30:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan 8:00 am  
Ramah Darom visits Beth El 4:30 pm  
Talmud Torah (2nd-6th grade) 4:40 pm

### Thursday, December 1:

Executive Committee Meeting 8:30 am  
Kli Yakar (at the JCC) 11:30 am  
Rabbi Greyber's Siddur Class 7:30 pm

### Friday, December 2:

Kitot Gan/Aleph Shabbat Service & Dinner 6:00 pm  
USY Dinner at the Greybers' 7:00 pm

### Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 12/3 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 12/3 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 12/3 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 12/3 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 12/3 Parasha Study
- ✧ Sat. 12/3 Teen Takeover Shabbat
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 Men of Oil Latke Making
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 Simchat Tot!
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 Chanukah Bazaar
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 Aleph Bet & Pre Kadima Chanukah Extravaganza
- ✧ Sun. 12/4 USY Teen Lounge Study Hall/Hang
- ✧ Wed. 12/7 Talmud Torah (2nd-6th grade)
- ✧ Wed. 12/7 Synagogue Life Committee Meeting
- ✧ Thu. 12/8 Kli Yakar (at the JCC)
- ✧ Thu. 12/8 Rabbi Greyber's Siddur Class
- ✧ Fri. 12/9 Got Shabbat?

### 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.



11/26 Chayei Sara Bernie Fischer Bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-493-0306
12/3 Toldot Bernie Fischer Bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-493-0306
12/10 Vayetze David Rubin David_s_rubin@mindspring.com	919-967-7725
12/17 Vayishlach Jon Wahl jmwahl@email.unc.edu	919-942-3827

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is sponsored by:

*Louis Sawyer, Myrna & Joel Schwartz, Tobin Fried & Scott Schwartz*

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 Chayei Sarah

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

Of all the lessons that Parashat Chayei Sarah teaches us about *hesed* (kindness), perhaps its most important lesson can be summed up in the word “no.”

Rebecca, the heroine of the parashah, is both physically and ethically strong. She can lift a heavy water urn with ease, and she possesses a deep graciousness called *hesed*. When she gives water to Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, and his camels, she fulfills Eliezer’s eloquent prayer, in which he appealed to God moments earlier to find a fitting wife for Isaac. He names the value of *hesed* twice in this brief prayer (Gen. 24:12, 14), and his prayer is answered so rapidly and completely by Rebecca’s action that Eliezer is stunned (Gen. 24:21). Rebecca’s *hesed* is rewarded later on with an awkward but real love scene in an open field at dusk (Gen. 24:62-66). Apparently *hesed* is as natural to humanity as young love, and is as basic to our inner capaciousness as a wide-open field is to our sense of human autonomy and possibility.

*Hesed* is defined earlier in the Bible, without being named, in an act that preceded—and may have precipitated—the birth of Isaac, the very man Rebecca will marry. In Parashat Vayera, Abraham energetically welcomed three strangers to his and Sarah’s tent, inventing the mitzvah of *hachnassat orkhim* (welcoming guests), which is a central form of *hesed* in Judaism. This important kindness leads to the announcement of the miraculous birth of Isaac, who will become the first heir to Abraham’s spiritual legacy.

In all these scenes, the kind acts that we read about are forms of an empathic “yes” to another person: whether it is Rebecca generously offering water to a stranger; or Eliezer earnestly praying to God, not on his own behalf, but on behalf of Abraham; or the protective love of the strong Rebecca for the quiet, pensive Isaac in his mother’s tent in the field. All these kindly “yeses” are tempered with an important “no” that is implied in two scenes in Chayei Sarah.

When Abraham instructs Eliezer to seek a wife for Isaac in Abraham’s homeland and bring her back to Canaan to marry Isaac, Eliezer raises a question: “What if the woman doesn’t consent to follow me to this land, shall I then take your son to the land from which you came?” (Gen. 24:5) Abraham answers that if the woman refuses consent, Eliezer is relieved of his oath. If she does not want to go with Eliezer, she doesn’t have to. She can say “no.”

Rebecca’s right to say “no” to a man is expressed still more forcefully later on in the story, when Eliezer invites Rebecca to leave her family home and travel to Canaan to become Isaac’s wife. Her mother and her brother invent a simple way to decide whether Rebecca should go or not: They ask her! “*Nikra lana’arah venishalah et pihah,*” “Let us call the girl and ask for her reply” (Gen. 24:57). Here, too, Rebecca can say “no.” In Chayei Sarah, the happiest form of “yes,” the consent to marry, is twice predicated on the woman’s right to say “yes” or “no.” Her “no,” if she had said it, would have been decisive, both to her nuclear family and to her future father-in-law, Abraham.

Regrettably, Abraham was not always so sensitive to the wishes of women. The first time the word *hesed* appears in the Bible, it is used in a rather terrible way by Abraham towards his wife, Sarah. In the incident at Gerar in Parashat Vayera (Gen. 20), Abraham asks Sarah to present herself as his sister in order to protect him from violence, should the godless men of Gerar desire her. Abraham believes that if these men were to learn that he is her husband, they would kill him in order to seize her. He tells her, “let this be *hasdech* [your kindness] that you shall do to me: whatever place we come to, say there of me: He is my brother” (Gen. 20:13). Here *hasdech* is pointedly Sarah’s kindness, since Sarah is in a unique position to rescue Abraham from danger.

The problem is that making Sarah complicit in this lie about their relationship could result in her unwanted sexual intimacy with dangerous strangers. As the story unfolds, the local king, Abimelech, does seize her, and God must intervene to prevent adultery. Abraham’s plan for Sarah opens the door to Sarah’s sexual coercion, and almost entraps Sarah and Abimelech in a mortal sin. Abraham has instructed Sarah to act against her own best interests; as Rashi notes, “He [Abraham] did not ask [her] permission, rather he forced her, not to her benefit” (Gen. 20:2). Readers are justified in asking: Why was Abraham the only one who deserved protection in Gerar? Why was Sarah not protected? The beautiful word *hasdech* has become a tool of manipulation; it is now a deep distortion of the idea of *hesed*, voiced by Abraham, who is the master of *hesed*.

Years later, in Chayei Sarah, Abraham has grown ethically, and not only as evidenced by his offer of hospitality to three strangers. Now Abraham readily accepts his servant’s concern that a woman may say “no” to a proposal of marital intimacy with Isaac. Perhaps the death of Sarah, recorded in this parashah, has caused Abraham to regret how he treated her at Gerar. In Abraham’s old age there will be no more misrepresentations of a woman’s endangerment as her volitional act of kindness.

The vigorous woman of the next generation, Rebecca, is no passive object of desire to be manipulated by men. She has agency, value, and strength, and her powerful and unassuming *hesed*, freely shared, is her most astonishingly beautiful feature. From the first moment we meet her, Rebecca possesses the two essential emotional qualities to be a great practitioner of *hesed* in her own right: empathy for others and respect for herself. This is how Abraham’s *hesed* is transformed by the next generation. It is profoundly shaped by Rebecca’s ability to say “no,” which allows her, when she wishes, to freely and enthusiastically say “yes.”

*Hesed* as a biblical idea becomes kind to women in Parashat Chayei Sarah, and is no less effective for it. If anything, *hesed* is now more strong, more gentle, more vigorous, more joyous, and more hopeful than it ever has been. So it remains to this day.

# Refuah Shleyimah רפואה שלמה

<i>Avigal bat David haLevi</i> (Alice Gold)	Miriam bat Rivka vNatan (Miriam Sharp)	<i>Tziporah bat Esther</i> <i>Yakov ben Sarah</i> (Jacob Schonberg)
<i>Avram Moshe ben Esther</i> (Alan Mandel)	<i>Miriam Shifra bat Issur</i> (Margaret Sachs)	<i>Ya’akov Roni ben Margalit</i>
<i>Baracha bat Sarah</i>	<i>Mordechai ben Mathilda</i> (Morty Berkowitz)	<i>Alvin Jacobson</i> <i>Sidney Barker</i>
<i>Batya bat Shprintza</i> (Barbara Robberman)	<i>Ovadya ben Esther Malkah</i> (Ovadya Fleishman)	<i>Anne Boyd</i> <i>Cynthia Brown</i>
<i>Chana bat Malka</i>	<i>Rachmiel Daniel ben Nachama</i> <i>uPinchas (Roger Perilstein)</i>	<i>Alan Marty</i> <i>Ezra Rapport</i>
<i>Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna</i> <i>Crollman)</i>	<i>Reuven ben Chanoch v’Dinah</i> (Robert Feurst)	<i>Jack Reich</i> <i>Joyce Romm</i>
<i>David ben Sarah</i> (David Leitner)	<i>Sarah bat Hinda</i> (Sylvia Dante)	<i>Helen Rosenberg</i> <i>Orrie Wilner</i>
<i>David Yosef ben Avraham</i> <i>v’Chana (Donald Goldstein)</i>	<i>Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue</i> <i>Perlo)</i>	<i>Richard Roth</i> <i>Lauren Schiro</i>
<i>Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah</i> (Ed Gagnon)	<i>Shalom ben Sprintze (Stanley</i> <i>Ramati)</i>	<i>Christine Walters</i> <i>Ken Walkters</i>
<i>Esther bat Yankale Sura</i>	<i>Shira Batya bat Meirav</i>	
<i>Esther Malka bat Chaya</i> <i>Fruma</i> (Elinor Fleishman)	<i>Shmuel ben Shoshana</i>	
<i>Herschel David ben Aharon</i> <i>haKohen u’Bela Miriam</i>	<i>Shrage ben Devorah Leah</i> (Phillip Samuel Ramati)	
<i>Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel</i>	<i>Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip</i> <i>Skoletsky)</i>	
<i>M’cor Eyschel bat Esther Tzvia</i>	<i>Tuvia ben Shmuel v’Tziporah</i> (Tovia Lebovich)	<i>Please contact the synagogue</i> <i>office with any additions or</i> <i>changes to this list.</i>
<i>Mishulamit bat Maryam</i> (Marcia Hogan)		

## Yahrzeits יארצייט

*May their memory be a blessing*

Agnes Culp	Leah Silver	Ellen Simon Singer
Nora Barth	Lillian Sperling	Shabbetai Ginton
Sara Lieber	William Smith	Walter Reichwald
Ida Stollwerk	Chawa Eichenbaum	Sylvia Parker
Herbert Bailin	Teichholz	Eylon Shalev
Harold Barth	Malka Einchenbaum	Michael Payton
Mary Siegel	Teichholz	
	Naftali Teichholz	

## Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Dan, Alex and Eli Schnitzer on the birth of their son/brother!  
Mazel Tov to Josh Zarkin, son of Abby and Gary Zarkin, and Allison Griffith on their wedding!  
Mazel Tov to Tamar Ariel, daughter of Rachel and Ya’akov Ariel, and Matt Kravitz on their wedding!

## Be Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Rabbi Daniel Greyber and his family on the death of Rabbi Greyber’s father, Dr. Howard Greyber, Herschel David ben Aharon haKohen u’Bela Miriam, who passed away early Tuesday morning in San Jose, California. Funeral services were held today in San Jose. Shiva will begin in CA - details about services to take place in North Carolina will follow.

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Keri and Casey Baker and their family on the death of Keri’s grandfather, Seymour Lubchansky, who passed away last Thursday in Boynton Beach, Florida. Funeral services and burial took place on Monday, November 21, in New Jersey. Shiva minyanim will also be held in New Jersey.

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Ivy and Vince Wingate and their family on the death of Ivy’s father, Jack Poncher, who passed away on Saturday, November 12, in Los Angeles, CA. Funeral services, burial and shiva took place last week in Los Angeles.

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

**Beth El Synagogue**  
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Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager  
Synagogue President: Noah Pickus