



Shabbat Shalom

29 Sh'vat 5777
February 25, 2017

Parashat Mishpatim

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, February 25:

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services— Social Action Shabbat	9:30 am
Social Action Post Kiddush Talk	1:00 pm
Havdallah	6:49 pm

Sunday, February 26:

Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)	9:30 am
Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Kitah Bet Family Beit Midrash (Purim)	10:30 am

Tuesday, February 28:

Va'ad HaChinuch Meeting	7:00 pm
-------------------------	---------

Wednesday, March 1:

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

Thursday, March 2:

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

Friday, March 3:

Kitot Hay/Vav Kabbalat Shabbat Services and Dinner	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	5:55 pm

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Fri. 3/3 First Friday Shabbat and Dinner
- ✧ Sat. 3/4 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 3/4 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 3/4 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 3/4 Chevra Kaddisha Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 3/4 Parsha Study
- ✧ Sat. 3/4 USY/Kadima Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Greyber
- ✧ Sun. 3/5 Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th grade)
- ✧ Sun. 3/5 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 3/5 Lifelong Learning: Rabbi Geoffrey Claussen, PhD
- ✧ Wed. 3/8 Talmud Torah (2nd-6th grade)
- ✧ Wed. 3/8 BE Board Meeting
- ✧ Thu. 3/9 Tish at Rabbi Greyber's
- ✧ Sat. 3/11 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 3/11 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 3/11 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 3/11 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 3/11 Erev Purim Services
- ✧ Sun. 3/12 Purim Services
- ✧ Sun. 3/12 Purim Carnival

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.



3/4 Terumah Diane Markoff Diane.markoff@earthlink.net	919-969-8953
3/11 Tetzavveh-Zachor David Kirsch dkirsch@md.duke.edu	919-286-4516
3/18 Ki Tissa-Parah Bernie Fischer Bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-493-0306
3/25 Vayakhel Pekude-HaHodesh Jon Wahl jmwahl@email.unc.edu	919-942-3827

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
Social Action Committee

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 Mishpatim

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

There is a strange—little spoken about—law that my mind, particularly over the last few months, keeps re-visiting. The Talmud teaches that when one builds a synagogue or house of study the structure should preferably have windows (BT Berakhot 34b). Indeed, this idea is codified as law in the foundational legal code, the Shulhan Arukh (OH 90:2). The medieval commentaries offer differing reasons for this law. Rashi suggests that the windows expose the sky, drawing our eyes to the heavens; allowing our gaze to be drawn upwards creates the proper humility as we try to relate to the Transcendent. Rabbenu Yonah writes that letting light into a dark space calms the soul and allows one to be more settled and arrive at the appropriate mindset for prayer (see Beit Yosef, O.H. 90:4). For me, windows in the academy and in houses of prayer have always been a precious and needed form of agitation. The light captures my attention and draws me into the world, into the streets. The windows are a reminder that the religious experience I pursue as I try to connect with God through prayer and the study of holy texts must reach beyond the ecclesiastical walls. Judaism demands that there always be a creative dialectic between the world and the *beit midrash*. For Torah to realize its promise and be all that it is meant to be for the world, its teachings must reverberate in the markets and the streets, in the halls of government and in our homes.

A version of this point is made by the juxtaposition between last week's parashah of Yitro and this week's reading of Mishpatim. Last Shabbat, we read about how the Israelites, after three days of preparation, confronted God's awesome presence at Sinai through a thick cloud. With parashat Yitro, the people touch lofty heights. Sinai represents a moment of intimacy between the Israelites and their Redeemer. As we move from Yitro to Mishpatim, we might have expected an elaboration of ritual laws that would govern the people's particular relationship with the Divine. We might have imagined an introduction of the ritual laws of tefillin or tzitzit, Shabbat, festivals or kashrut—laws that give expression to the particularity of the Divine relationship with the Jewish people. But the first laws that are expounded after this intense and intimate religious moment are the laws detailing behavior between people generally. The first laws of the Covenant given immediately after Sinai are about the rights of servants, the commands not to oppress the stranger, not to mistreat the widow and the orphan, not to speak false rumors about people. We are introduced to the laws governing physical damages, property law, and a vision of how best to adjudicate judgment. That is to say, these are laws that form the basis of our interactions with other human beings (*bein adam lehavero*). None of these laws are seemingly particular to the Jewish people's relationship with their God, but rather offer universal moral direction on how to create a just and ethical society.

The meaning behind the juxtaposition between these two parshiyot of Yitro and Mishpatim is echoed in the Ten Commandments themselves. On the first tablet we find commands that govern our relationship with the Divine. On the second tablet we have commands that govern our interactions with human beings.

Our reading this Shabbat of Mishpatim—and its almost total focus on the laws that must govern interactions between people—serves as an important corrective to the dangers that inhere in the religious experience. Too often the focus of religious life becomes self-centered, the practitioner prioritizing her individual spiritual world and relationship with God to the exclusion of others and their wellbeing. This inward-looking focus reifies a religiosity in which the pursuit of closeness to God comes to distance us from God's world. This is not how it should be, the Torah warns. Sinai was a one-time experience, an encounter that must not serve as a paradigm for intimacy with the Divine. Moving forward, the people are implicitly told that their relationship with God is developed and deepened as much through the pursuit of justice between human beings (*bein adam lehavero*) as it is through ritual behavior (*bein adam lamakom*). The Talmud has its own language for this idea. "Rav Yehudah said, 'One who wishes to be devout (*hasid*) should fulfill the words of the laws of damages'" (BT Bava Kama 30a). One's relationship with God is deepened when love of God manifests itself not only in sacrifices or prayers, but in also heeding the laws that govern relationships between people. Both in its biblical and Talmudic iterations, the power of the Torah is that it expands the religious life to include civil law and the pursuit of justice generally.

In fact, Rashi makes this point in a gorgeous way in his first comment on Exodus 21. He tells us that the Sanhedrin, the great court of the ancient Jewish people, had to be located in the Temple. This placement should serve as a reminder that the court that heard monetary claims and other civil litigation between people must understand its work of adjudication as a religious activity. Just as the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple constituted a form of worship, so too was the work of the court an expression of Divine service (*avodah*).

Looking out the windows these days we must be careful not to let ourselves become overwhelmed by the dissonance between what the Torah hopes for the world and the world as it currently is. It would be too easy and so wrong to retreat into the *beit midrash* and into our prayers. Mishpatim pushes us past this response, reminding us that we are not to stay at Sinai, but instead must move into the enterprise of building a just society. Mishpatim reminds us that this work is essential to the religious life.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

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

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Michael Jay Gladstein	Rebecca Levtow	Ethel Liebe Zander Perault
David Margolis	Robert Sager	Lillian Rubin
Sadie Rosalie Shimm	Harry Shatzman	Eleanor Bienstock
Florence Telen	Michael Shrott	Leon Schoenfeld
Benjamin Eli Grossman	Sonja van der Horst	Frederick Philip Alpern
William Hayer	Miriam Brettler	Simon Korkin
Joseph D. Levine	Sonia Levin	Alex Marks
Armand A. Zaleon	Marion Goldberg	Samuel Sody
Emanuel Joshua Evans	William Hoffman	Asher Zelig Weisleder

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to:

Bob and Norma Gindes and their family on the death of Bob's mother—Jonathan and Lauren, Danny and Sarah's grandmother; and the great-grandmother of Nate, Levi, Bella, Simon and Nina — Sarah "Sunny" Gindes—who passed away on Wednesday morning, February 22, in Royal Palm Beach, Florida. Shiva minyanim will continue at the Gindes's home on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evenings, February 26-28 at 7:00 pm.

Debra Evenson and her family on the death of Debra's mother - Janet Evenson, Zelda bat Sarah— who passed away on Sunday morning, February 19, in Wilmington, NC.

Michaela Davidai, her son Nahshon Davidai, and their family on the death of Nahshon's mother-in-law—Sima Volman—who passed away on Wednesday, February 15, in Rishon L'Zion, Israel.

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