



Shabbat Shalom

2 Adar II 5776
March 12, 2016

Parashah Pekudei

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, March 12:

Havdalah—7:03 pm

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
Healing Yoga	10:00 am

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS STARTS—CLOCKS AHEAD 1 HOUR!

Sunday, March 13:

Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Talmud Torah (PreK-7)	9:30 am
Kitah Vav Parent B'nei Mitzvah Meeting	10:00 am
Knitting Chevra	10:00 am
Kitah Zayin Family Beit Midrash	11:30 am
AlphBet/Prekadima	12:30 pm
Hamantashen Wars	

Monday, March 14:

Tuesday, March 15:

Hebrew Level I with Donna Goldstein	6:00 pm
Hebrew Level II with Donna Goldstein	7:00 pm

Wednesday, March 16:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Talmud Torah (2-6)	4:15 pm
Purim Rehearsal	7:00 pm
Walking with Mitzvot	7:00 pm

Thursday, March 17:

Sulam Session #4	6:30 pm
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Friday, March 11:

Candle Lighting—7:08 pm

Kitah Zayin Class	5:00 pm
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 3/19 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 3/19 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 3/19 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 3/19 Shabbat Morning Services, Bat Mitzvah of Sophie Brezter
- ✧ Sat. 3/19 Children's Services
- ✧ Sat. 3/19 Purim and Violence: A Conversation with Rabbi Greyber and Barry Yeoman
- ✧ Sun. 3/20 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 3/20 NO FORMAL TALMUD TORAH (PreK-7)
- ✧ Sun. 3/20 Purim Carnival
- ✧ Sun. 3/20 Purim Rehearsal
- ✧ Sun. 3/20 Durham CROP Walk
- ✧ Sun. 3/20 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring Refresh Session
- ✧ Mon. 3/21 Sisterhood Board Meeting
- ✧ Tue. 3/22 Hebrew Levels I/II with Donna Goldstein
- ✧ Wed. 3/23 Erev Purim/Ta'anit Esther
- ✧ Wed. 3/23 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Wed. 3/23 Talmud Torah (2-6)
- ✧ Wed. 3/23 Pre Megillah Reading Dinner
- ✧ Wed. 3/23 Megillah Reading
- ✧ Wed. 3/23 Orthodox Kehillah Megillah Reading
- ✧ Thu. 3/24 PURIM
- ✧ Thu. 3/24 Orthodox Kehillah Megillah Reading and Services
- ✧ Thu. 3/24 Minyan and Megillah Reading
- ✧ Fri. 3/25 Shushan Purim

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.



3/12 Pekudei
David Rubin
david_rubin@unc.edu 919-967-7725

3/19 Vayikra Zachor
Matt Diamond
mattdiamond@mindspring.com 919-688-0377

3/26 Tzav
Elise Goldwasser
elise.goldwasser@duke.edu 919-956-8871

4/2 Shemini Parah
David Kirsch
dkirsch@dm.duke.edu 919-286-4516

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by the following families:

Ian and Naomi Davis, Jeff and Elyza Halev, Lewin/Wittle Family, Isaac and Lois Price, Jared and Jennifer Resnick, Matt and Susan Springer

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 Pekudei

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

For a story that began with the promise of intimacy, I had hoped for a happier ending.

Consider these verses near the end of Exodus (40:33-35):

וַיִּכְלֵם מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמִּלְאָכָה:
וַיִּכְסֵם הַעֲנַן אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּכְבֹּד ה' מִלְא אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן:
וְלֹא־יָכֹל מֹשֶׁה לָּבוֹא אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד כִּי־יִשָּׁבֵן עָלָיו הַעֲנַן וַיִּכְבֹּד ה' מִלְא אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן:

So Moses completed the work [of constructing the Divine Dwelling]. Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Divine Dwelling. And Moses was not able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud dwelt over it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Divine Dwelling.

These verses are the climax of the numerous chapters chronicling a budding romance between God and the people of Israel. Beginning in fairy-tale manner, God took notice of the damsel-in-distress Israel and rescued the nation from the hands of an oppressive master. Then God and Israel first encountered one another on a mountaintop just outside the point of rescue, where they exchanged their eternal vows. At the height of the ecstasy, God said: "Make for me a sanctuary, that I might dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8), and the people responded with the full force of a love interest, longing for that moment of stability and connection that would come at the culmination of the construction of God's Divine Dwelling on Earth, among us. They built God's house.

But at the moment in our parashah when Moses and his team finish building the Divine Dwelling, God settles into it and Moses is compelled to wait outside. Why can't Moses enter? He's just encountered God face to face on Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:18), right in the midst of that same foggy cloud that has descended on the Tent of Meeting here. Some time later, Moses will enter that very Tent of Meeting from which he is barred at this time (Num. 7:89). So why can't Moses enter now and be with God?

The expectation that Moses might enter into the Tent with God stems from our deepest and most ubiquitous prayer. The psalms are laden with the repetition of the primal yearning that we may "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives" (e.g. Ps. 23:6, Ps. 27:4). I wonder whether this drama at the end of Exodus might be the moment of anticipation to which the psalmist hearkens back. If I had specific instructions to build God's house, and even God's own architectural plans to follow, then for sure I would do it, and with all the artistic merit I could muster, if that was all it took to have the Divine dwell "among us," and, in some sense, "within me"—because what wouldn't I give to feel the wholeness and settledness of God's presence in my life? Is that not, after all, the purpose of the mitzvot? These awesome acts, these divine deeds, are our currency to exchange for a bit of time with that ultimate feeling of completeness.

So why can't Moses enter? The Torah text offers one answer itself: Moses could not enter because the glory of the Lord was inside. But there is something unsatisfying about this response. Why can't they both be in there together? Is there no room for me in God's house?

In his commentary on Exodus, Nahmanides agreed that the Torah's explanation of why Moses couldn't enter is insufficient by itself. He wrote:

הַשֵּׁעַם שֶׁלֹא יבא בלא רשות אבל יקרא אותו ויבא בתוך הַעֲנַן כְּאִשֶּׁר עָשָׂה בְּהַר סִינַי.

And the reason [is] that he [could] not enter without permission. But if God were to call him, then he may come into the cloud just like he did on Mount Sinai.

It is not enough to say that Moses couldn't enter because the cloud had descended and the presence of God was in the Divine Dwelling. This would not have been the first time Moses would be directly in the presence of God, nor would it be the last. The difference here is that Moses was not invited in. He was not called (yikra). Even though Moses had just showed his devotion by building the Mishkan, God simply was not ready.

It is no surprise, then, that the very next word in the Torah after this final passage of Exodus is *vayikra*. The sequel to Exodus is a book about the invitation to be close to God, and it is not the romance that Exodus was. *Vayikra*, the book of being called, is the story of life's day-to-day routine of rituals, and the messiness that comes with it. According to Nahmanides, *Vayikra* is the real love story: the moments when humans will actually "dwell in the house of the Lord." Intimacy is in the daily details of Leviticus, not the grand romantic gestures of Exodus.

Our learning here is jarring and poignant: We need to adjust the paradigm of our relationship to God. God is not a genie whose favor we can conjure through the performance of mitzvot. God is a complicated lover. The image of the cloud descending on the dwelling in which we hope to have intimacy with God is apt: Navigating the most intimate of relationships is hazy. Loving another means being prepared to wait until the other person is ready to connect—even if, as Nahmanides reminds us, we connected so easily in the past. Mitzvot are not a currency to exchange for God's favor, but a language with which to speak to God. We don't perform them in order to merit divine encounters, but rather to understand one another when those encounters arise.

We have a tendency to try to solve problems, a propensity to seek solutions. It is tempting to view our relationship with the Divine in the same way: if only I can follow the instructions perfectly, I may unlock the warmth of wholeness that comes from being with God. But the end of the book of Exodus bears the abrupt realization that the human-Divine relationship is not a science we can master. Like most other relationships in which we exist, it is a complicated art that we may never fully apprehend.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Aharon ben David u'Miriam (Alan Goldman)	Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Elinor Fleishman
Aryeh ben Tziporah	M'cor Eyshe bat Esther Tzvia	Ilene Jacobson
Baracha bat Sarah	Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman)	Jennifer Krunkosky
Bedonna Riva bat Sara	Reuven ben Chanoch v'Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Inez McFarling
Ben-Zion ben Sarah	Rut bat Sarah (Suzanne Furst)	Lorraine Morley
Chana bat Malkah	Sara bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Lorraine Morley
Hannah Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Ezra Rapport
Daronit Esther bat Tuvia v'Leah (Jennifer Greyber)	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Jack Reich
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Michael Rockman
David Yosef ben Avraham v'Hannah (Donald Goldstein)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Richard Roth
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Tziporah bat Esther	Carmen Sadowsky
Gershon Yonah ben Tevya haKohen v'Chanah Leah haLevi (Harlan Gradin)	Yehudit bat Rachel	Lauren Schiro
Malkah bat Leah (Meg Anderson)	Sonia Berman	Susan Tolchin
Malka Hannah bat Basha Rachel	Anne Boyd	Christine Walters
	Cynthia Brown	Derick Williams

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Eleanor Bienstock	Muriel Kirschner
Miriam Brettler	Leon Schoenfeld

BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to the following Beth El members on their birthdays! Arthur Axelbank, Neil Berman, Aaron Falchook, Allan Fishkin, Neil J. Freedman, Donna Goldstein, Susi Lieff, and Larry Margoese-Malin

BE at Beth El

Beth El Synagogue welcomes the following new members to our community: Shai and Miriam Posner

Beth El Synagogue

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber

Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager

Synagogue President: Rachel Galanter