



Shabbat Shalom

27 Adar 5777
March 25, 2017

Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, March 25:

Passover Food Drive
Shabbat Mishnah Study 8:45 am
B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring 9:00 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services 9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services– Gabbaim Shabbat 9:30 am
Havdallah 8:14 pm

Sunday, March 26:

Passover Food Drive
Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade) 9:30 am
Weekly Sunday Minyan 9:30 am
Simchat Tot! 9:45 pm
Kitah Gimel-Prince of Egypt 10:00 am
Morning with Author Mary Fillmore 10:30 am
MoB BBB&M 2:00 pm

Monday, March 27:

Passover Food Drive

Tuesday, March 28:

Passover Food Drive

Wednesday, March 29:

Passover Food Drive
Weekly Wednesday Minyan 8:00 am
Talmud Torah (2nd-6th Grade) 4:40 pm

Thursday, March 30:

Passover Food Drive

Friday, March 31:

Passover Food Drive
Kitah Zayin Class 5:00 pm
Kabbalat Shabbat Services (Bar Mitzvah of Liam Spinner) 6:00 pm
USY Shabbat at The Greybers' 6:30 pm
Candle Lighting 7:19 pm

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
The Ritual Committee in honor of Gabbaim Shabbat

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.

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Wed. 3/29 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Wed. 3/29 Talmud Torah (2nd-6th Grade)
- ✧ Fri. 3/31 Kitah Zayin Class
- ✧ Fri. 3/31 Kabbalat Shabbat Services (Bar Mitzvah of Liam Spinner)
- ✧ Fri. 3/31 USY Shabbat at the Greybers'
- ✧ Sat. 4/1 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 4/1 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 4/1 Children's Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/1 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/1 Shabbat Morning Services (Bar Mitzvah of Liam Spinner)
- ✧ Sat. 4/1 10th Grade Midrasha Class Visits BE Orthodox Kehillah
- ✧ Sun. 4/2 Durham CROP Walk
- ✧ Sun. 4/2 Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade)
- ✧ Sun. 4/2 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 4/2 Kitah Vav B'nai Mitzvah Logistics Meeting
- ✧ Sun. 4/2 Good Deeds Day
- ✧ Sun. 4/2 USY Tikun Olam Project for Good Deeds Day
- ✧ Wed. 4/5 Talmud Torah (2nd-6th Grade)
- ✧ Thu. 4/6 Executive Committee Meeting

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.



4/1 Vayikra Diane Markoff Diane.markoff@earthlink.net	919-969-8953
4/8 Tzav Hagadol Isaac Price Isaac@isaacprice.org	919-866-5453
4/11 Pesach I Matt Diamond mattdiamond@mindspring.com	919-906-6545
4/12 Pesach II Diane Markoff Diane.markoff@earthlink.net	919-969-8953

Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei

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

The Baal Shem Tov posed a question about Parashat Pekudei that I too find most puzzling. Why are we told over and over again—10 times in the course of Exodus chapters 39–40, by my count, in addition to a declaration at the start of Parashat Vayak-hel (35:4)—that the Israelites did all they did for the Tabernacle, gave what they gave, built what they built, “as the Lord had commanded Moses.” Why not just tell us once, at the end of the account, that all they did was done in this way, for this purpose? The founder of Hasidism answered the question with a Kabbalistic teaching about the importance of fulfilling every mitzvah with the proper intention, an achievement for which all Jews should strive but that few can attain. I of course cannot comment on that esoteric teaching—but my understanding of the text proceeds along similar lines.

Two experiences decisively shaped my encounter with Vayak-hel-Pekudei this week. The first: I had a window seat last Sunday afternoon on a flight from New York to the Bay Area, and the sky was cloudless virtually all the way across the country. I stared and stared some more as frozen Midwest plains gave way to black-brown foothills, and then to snow-capped mountain peaks—all this as the sun went down and darkness descended. The scene was magnificent beyond any words I could find, so much so that I was not sure what I could do in the face of it except try to live in the wonder, praise the Creator, and be thankful that I am here to witness it, all the more from the vantage of 35,000 feet.

Something like this wonderment must have been part of the meaning that ancient Israelites found in their labor on the Tabernacle. They had stood at Sinai not long before, a moment of indescribable awe and no small terror. Soon after, they had tried to capture God in the molten form of a calf, acting out of fear that Moses, the sole conduit to the Master of their Fate, was not coming back from his latest meeting on the mountaintop. That mistake had almost resulted in their destruction.

Moses had assured them upon his return that if they followed God’s commandments, including the blueprint for this tabernacle; if they poured devotion of the heart into the building project along with material gifts, and served God in other ways with similar devotion, God would continue to dwell among them during the journey through the wilderness. Perhaps the people were aware, as we are, that the language used to describe the construction of the Tabernacle echoes the description of God’s creation of the world. They did not need technical terms such as microcosm and macrocosm to know that their lives had changed forever at the Red Sea, and changed once more at Sinai. God had in some sense “come down” to the top of a mountain that God had created, in order to meet Moses and give Israel the Torah.

Were I in the situation of those Israelites, I hope that I too would have responded as Parashat Vayak-hel describes, with such a generous outpouring of gifts and skills that Moses had to tell them to stop. “Let no man or woman make further effort toward gifts for the sanctuary!” (36:6). I might have rejoiced in the very *materiality* of the things they brought: the colors and textures of the fabrics; the shine of the metals; the gleam of the precious stones. There was comfort in the cutting of the boards, and the weaving and dying of the cloths. The measurements themselves were a source of joy and meaning in the wake of encounter with the Infinite: two of this, twelve of that, this many cubits high by that many wide, “the copper from the elevation offering [coming] to 70 talents and 2,400 shekels.” YHWH their God, they now knew for sure from close encounter, could not be imaged, could not be seen or touched, is forever ethereal and beyond definition—as endless as those mountains seemed to me as I flew over them and stared as far as my eyes could see. And yet, having built the Tabernacle, they are promised that God would dwell “in them” or “among them.”

The second experience that shaped my reading of Vayak-hel-Pekudei this year is the reading of Michael Lewis’s book, *The Undoing Project*, a gripping account of the research and friendship of two great Israeli psychologists, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman. I overlapped with Tversky at Stanford for a while, and we have mutual friends; I have seen Kahneman in action at a conference or two. The impact of the book for me lay in its lucid presentation of the pair’s research, which demonstrated that much human thought—or at least thought by highly educated individuals in the modern West—is less clear-headed than we like to think. All sorts of biases, self-deceptions, longings, and fears get in the way of seeing what is in front of us. We filter out noise that we do not want to hear—and other things too; we calculate risk differently, depending on whether it is framed as possible gain or possible loss; we exhibit a strong preference for the known, the status quo, over the unknown, the strange. “A part of good science,” Tversky stated, “is to see what everyone else can see but think what no one else has ever said.”

I believe that the Torah sees itself as an attempt by God to get humanity to see, think and act differently than we have ever done before—and that is one major reason why God commands the building of the Tabernacle. What led to the golden calf except a witches’ brew of Israelite anxiety, longing, and desire? What provoked the people to worry about finding adequate drinking water so soon after God had split the Sea for them? Why did the Children of Israel doubt God and Moses on countless occasions?

The Israelites, in this view, wanted desperately to keep the overwhelming experience of God’s presence close at hand—but in a way that did not threaten their own precarious survival. They had looked into the terrifying abyss of their own propensity for self-destruction, and needed a way to contain that as well. The painstaking detail of the blueprint for the Tabernacle was required for the task, no less than the space left by God for their own free-will offerings, skills, and creativity. Use this kind of stone, on that kind of setting; measure this many cubits by that many; direct energy in this way, contain fear in that; express and channel love in acts that come more easily and routinely than purity of heart or words of sincere devotion.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

<i>Batya bat Shprintza (Barbra Roberman)</i>	<i>Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)</i>	<i>(Tovia Lebovich)</i> <i>Tziporah bat Esther</i>
<i>Chaim Michael ben Flora (Howard Margolis)</i>	<i>Moshe Yosef ben Vishka Elka (Michael Perkins)</i>	<i>Ya’akov Roni ben Margalit</i> <i>Alvin Jacobson</i>
<i>Chana bat Malka</i>	<i>Odavya ben Esther Malkah (Odavya Fleishman)</i>	<i>Anne Boyd</i> <i>Alan Marty</i>
<i>Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)</i>	<i>Riva bat Ya’akov v’Sarah (Donna Goldstein)</i>	<i>Caitlin Evans-Jones</i> <i>Christine Walters</i>
<i>David ben Sarah (David Leitner)</i>	<i>Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)</i>	<i>Ezra Rapport</i> <i>Helen Rosenberg</i>
<i>David Yosef ben Avraham v’Chana (Donald Goldstein)</i>	<i>Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)</i>	<i>Jack Reich</i> <i>Jeff Shields</i>
<i>Esther bat Yankale Sura</i>	<i>Shalom ben Sprintze (Stanley Ramati)</i>	<i>Joyce Romm</i> <i>Ken Walkers</i>
<i>Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)</i>	<i>Shimon ben Shlomo haLevi v’Sheyna (Stuart Levine)</i>	<i>Lauren Schiro</i> <i>Netta Boswell</i>
<i>Herschel David ben Aharon haKohen u’Bela Miriam</i>	<i>Shira Batya bat Meirav</i>	<i>Orrie Wilner</i> <i>Richard Roth</i>
<i>Israel ben Zalman u’Malkah</i>	<i>Shmuel ben Shoshana</i>	<i>Sidney Barker</i>
<i>Leah bat Miriam (Eileen Abramson)</i>	<i>Shraga ben Devarah Leah (Phillip Samuel Ramati)</i>	<i>Please contact the synagogue office with any additions or changes to this list.</i>
<i>Malka bat Leah (Meg Anderson)</i>	<i>Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip Skoletsky)</i>	
<i>Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel</i>	<i>Sura Malka bat Rivka (Molly Grossinger)</i>	
<i>M’cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia</i>	<i>Tuvia ben Shmuel v’Tziporah</i>	
<i>Mishulamit bat Maryam (Marcia Hagan)</i>		

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Harold Isaac	Sandra Pasternak	Gussie Zeiger
Goodrich	Joel Rascoff	
Ezjel Lederman	Julie Anne Anders	
William Goldberg	David Spinner	
Harry Hirsch	Anna Switzer Meyer	
Florence Margolis	Theresa Poleski	
Garvey Haynes	Edith Rapport	
Joseph Klein		

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to:

Harold and Susan Kudler and their family on the death of Harold’s father—Harvey Kudler, Chaim ben Aharon—who passed away this morning, March 17, in Queens, New York. Burial and shiva minyanim will take place in Queens.

Lois Price and her family on the death of Lois’s beloved aunt, Livia Silver, who passed away on March 3; and her beloved cousin, Jeffrey Schwartz, who passed away on March 13.

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