



# Shabbat Shalom

5 Nisan 5777

April 1, 2017

Parashat Vayikra

## This Week at Beth El Synagogue

### Saturday, April 1:

Passover Food Drive	
Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
10th Grade Midrasha Class visits BE OK	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services (Bar Mitzvah of Liam Spinner)	9:30 am
Children's Services	10:30 am
Havdallah	8:20 pm

### Sunday, April 2:

Passover Food Drive	
Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade)	9:30 am
Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Kitah Vav B'nai Mitzvah Logistics Meeting	10:00 am
Durham CROP Walk	2:30 pm

### Monday, April 3:

Last Day of the Passover Food Drive

### Tuesday, April 4:

Passover Movie Night "When Do We Eat?" 7:00 pm

### Wednesday, April 5:

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

### Thursday, April 6:

Executive Committee Meeting 8:30 am  
Synagogue Life Committee Meeting 6:00 pm  
Tish at Rabbi Greyber's 7:00 pm

### Friday, April 7:

Candle Lighting 7:25 pm

### Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 4/8 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 4/8 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 4/8 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/8 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/8 Healing Yoga
- ✧ Sat. 4/8 "Growing Up an Observant Muslim in Post September 11th American: A Conversation with Somia Youssef"
- ✧ Sun. 4/9 NO Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade)
- ✧ Sun. 4/9 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 4/9 Knitting Chevra
- ✧ Mon. 4/10 Siyyum and Burning of Chametz
- ✧ Mon. 4/10 Office Closes
- ✧ Tue. 4/11- 4/19 Passover
- ✧ Tue. 4/11 Office Closed for Passover
- ✧ Wed. 4/12 Office Closed for Passover
- ✧ Wed. 4/12 No Talmud Torah (2nd-6th Grade)
- ✧ Sat. 4/15 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 4/15 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/15 NO B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 4/15 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sun. 4/16 NO Talmud Torah

### 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.



4/8 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
4/15 Hol Hamoed Pesach David Kirsch dkirsch@md.duke.edu	919-286-4516

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:  
The Spinner Family in honor of Liam Bar Mitzvah!

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 Vayikra

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

I must confess that as someone who has spent most of my adult life studying and teaching modern history, Vayikra—both the parashah and the *sefer*—is not my favorite portion of the Torah or the Tanakh. We lovers of narrative are in for something of a letdown as we enter a biblical book that, aside from a few brief interludes, seems to be a long list of injunctions relating to priestly service and ritual purity. Indeed, there will be no more sea-splitting or plague-wreaking; the tablets have been given; the golden calf has been wrought and unwrought; and the Mishkan has been planned, plotted, and built. The fun is over, and now it's time to talk about the particulars of sacrifice, ceremony, and the sacred.

All that said, I will resist the part of myself that reflexively demands action and excitement in order to maintain focus, and will take a step back to touch on the intricacies of sacrifice and the seemingly endless parade of ritual injunctions and guidelines detailed in Vayikra (both *sefer* and parashah) through a different lens. Though the detailed instructions for animal sacrifice might seem arbitrary to contemporary observers, their function is not limited to their mere rote performance. Their purpose may also extend to the building up of the collective narrative and the reinforcement of the communal cohesion of a still-young people of Israel. These very sacrificial rituals connect to all aspects of Israelites' lives and behavior—both good and bad—and may in turn serve to cement their collective identification as an *am*, a nation.

Benedict Anderson, a leading scholar of modern nationalism, is best known for his argument that the nation itself is defined by the process of communal imagination. In his best-known book, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson strikes out a position somewhere on the spectrum of students of nationalism. At one end are the “primordialists,” who posit that the nation and nationhood have existed from time immemorial; on the other end are the “constructivists,” who argue that nations are essentially a political and social invention conceived of and promoted by elites. In contrast with both of these extremes, Anderson sees the contemporary nation as an innovative phenomenon rooted in cultural traditions. In this vein, he argues that modern nations are primarily the product of collective imagination of the masses, not the invention of an elite set on recruiting those masses to their cause. For Anderson, it is the very process of people repeatedly engaging in the same activities simultaneously that promotes their self-conception as part of a community that is made real not only in the hearts and minds of its members, but in the world at large.

Anderson, who connects the advent of modern nationalism in part to increased availability of printed texts (and, by extension, increased levels of literacy), depicts newspapers as the “new prayer book.” Keeping in mind that periodicals and the standardized languages in which they were written were still something of a novelty in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Anderson presents the very act of reading them as a ritual that affirmed for readers that there were a multitude of other people who were reading the same words in the same language at the same time as them, even though they would never meet them. The seemingly mundane act of routinely reading a daily or weekly periodical, Anderson argues, contributed to the emergent sense of national identification that has since become a universal phenomenon.

The sacrifices and other seemingly random practices detailed in Vayikra, I would argue, promote the same sort of collective self-regard that Anderson discusses. An Israelite, at this point in the history of the people, still belonged to a mere collection of clans. She or he was likely tied more to her or his immediate family and extended tribe than to an unwieldy and hard-to-fathom confederation containing an immense number of people, most of whose members would never meet each other face-to-face. Keeping Anderson in mind, we can see how the performance of shared practices and rituals—regardless of their particular content or overt meaning—implicitly promotes the belief that one belongs to a greater whole, even if one won't ever meet the vast majority of the other pieces of that whole.

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To take this one step further, I'll turn to two scholars whom many consider the greatest Jewish historians of their respective generations, Heinrich Graetz and Salo Baron. Graetz points out that the people of Israel, when they were in the desert, already possessed the shared myths and common narrative that formed the foundation of their group cohesion. “[T]he marvelous occurrences in Egypt and in the desert...formed a link of fellowship among them...and nursed the sentiment of a common nationality” (*History of the Jews*, I, 58). However, the shared experiences and stories provided only the foundation. The sacrifices and the other rituals prescribed to the people in the desert provided the bricks and mortar that made up the durable, if somewhat more banal (when compared to the crossing of the Red Sea or the revelation at Sinai), structure that rests on the foundation of miracles, trauma, and catharsis.

Baron conveys a similar idea: “We have seen that the sacrifices in the nomadic age were not so much the remnant of prehistoric ancestor worship as an appropriate expression of the religious needs of a clan society, symbolizing the ideal blood relationship between the members of the various clans, or the people and their god” (*A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, I, 127). To add to Baron's assessment, the sacrifices and rituals that we see on extensive display in Vayikra are an expression not only of the religious needs of the nascent people of Israel, but a reflection of their *communal* needs as well—giving form and substance to an emergent sense of “groupness” that transcended the tribal and familial divisions that then characterized their society of wanderers.

Though the sacrificial order mandated by the Torah is something that has long since fallen out of use, thinking of it in this sociological frame reminds us that community and identity are not just “things” that exist in the world that we can simply “have,” but rather that they must be continuously produced and maintained through persistent performance, practice, and action.

## Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Adelah bat Avrom v'Chena (Adele Abramowitz)	Mishulamit bat Maryam (Marcia Hagan)	Ya'akov Roni ben Margalit Alvin Jacobson
Bedonna Riva bat Ya'akov v'Sarah (Donna Goldstein)	Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Anne Boyd Alan Marty
Chaim Michael ben Flora (Howard Margolis)	Moshe Yosef ben Vishka Elka (Michael Perkins)	Christine Walters Ezra Rapport
Chana bat Malka	Ovadya ben Esther Malkah (Ovadya Fleishman)	Helen Rosenberg Jack Reich
Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Jeff Shields Joyce Ramm
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Ken Walkters Lauren Schiro
David Yosef ben Avraham v'Chana (Donald Goldstein)	Shalom ben Sprintze (Stanley Ramati)	Netta Boswell
Esther bat Yankale Sura	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Orrie Wilner
Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)	Shmuel ben Shoshana Shrage ben Devorah Leah (Phillip Samuel Ramati)	Richard Roth Sidney Barker
Herschel David ben Aharon haKohen u'Bela Miriam	Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip Skoletsky)	
Israel ben Zalman u'Malkah Leah bat Miriam (Eileen Abramson)	Sura Malka bat Rivka (Molly Grossinger)	
Malka bat Leah (Meg Anderson)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Please contact the synagogue office with any additions or changes to this list.
Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel M'cor Eyschel bat Esther Tzvia	Tziporah bat Esther	

## Yahrzeits יארצייט

Rueben Leeb	Joan August	Bernard Shane
Herman Schulman	Emma Cohen Kresses	William Shecter
Karl Meyers	William Ginsburg	Marcella Silver
Emilie Sasson	Rebecca Shapiro Ornoff	Mary Weaver
Randi Kodack	Marion Poleski	

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