



Shabbat Shalom

23 Adar II 5776

April 2, 2016

Parashah Shemini
Shabbat Parah

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, April 2:

Havdalah—8:21 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
Children's Services	10:30 am

Sunday, April 3:

Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Talmud Torah (PreK-7)	9:30 am
The Bible Players Performance	11:30 am
USY/Kadima Chocolate Seder	12:30 pm

Monday, April 4:

Synagogue Life Committee Meeting	6:00 pm
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Tuesday, April 5:

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

Wednesday, April 6:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Talmud Torah	4:15 pm
Sulam Session 5	6:30 pm

Thursday, April 7:

Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Greyber	11:30 am
Walking with Mitzvot	7:00 pm

Friday, April 8:

Candle Lighting—7:26 pm	
Kitah Hay/Kitah Vav Shabbat Service and Dinner	6:00 pm

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
Lynne and Jeff Koweeek in honor of their son, Jason, becoming a 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.

Upcoming Events:

- ◊ Sat. 4/9 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ◊ Sat. 4/9 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ◊ Sat. 4/9 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ◊ Sat. 4/9 Shabbat Morning Services, Gabbaim Shabbat
- ◊ Sat. 4/9 Monthly Parsha Study
- ◊ Sun. 4/10 Sunday Minyan
- ◊ Sun. 4/10 Talmud Torah
- ◊ Sun. 4/10 Simchat Tot
- ◊ Sun. 4/10 Knitting Chevra
- ◊ Sun. 4/10 Beth El DIGs SEEDS
- ◊ Sun. 4/10 Walking with Mitzvot
- ◊ Mon. 4/11 Freedom Song Performance
- ◊ Tue. 4/12 Hebrew Levels I/II with Donna Goldstein
- ◊ Tue. 4/12 Va'ad Meeting
- ◊ Tue. 4/12 Ritual committee Meeting
- ◊ Wed. 4/13 Wednesday Minyna
- ◊ Wed. 4/13 Talmud Torah
- ◊ Wed. 4/13 Board Meeting
- ◊ Fri. 4/15 Got Chametz 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.



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

4/9 Tazria/HaChodesh
Bernie Fischer
Bernie.fischer@duke.edu 919-493-0306

4/16 Metzora HaGadol
Isaac Price
isaac@isaacprice.org 919-886-5453

4/23 Pesach
Roger Perilstein
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Parashah Shemini

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

Shemini (Lev. 9-11) contains two main topics: the elaborate sacrificial rites performed on the eighth day of the dedication of the Tabernacle, and the laws regarding kosher and nonkosher animals. The first topic details the numerous sacrifices accompanying the last stages of the dedication of the shrine, which reach an intensity matched only by the yearly rites of the Day of Atonement. This is no accident, because the annual event is meant to restore the shrine to the purity it possessed on the day it was dedicated.

At the end of the ceremony of sacrifice and purification performed by Aaron and his sons, the Kavod—the divine Glory, which had entered the Holiest Place of the Tabernacle (Exod. 40:34)—revealed itself to the people, and shot out a flame of fire that consumed the sacrifices on the altar. The altar fire thus merged with the divine fire. Since that altar flame was never allowed to go out, its perpetual presence in the midst of the camp, as a nightly glow and the cloud of smoke by day, were a sign of the divine Presence in the midst of the People, similar to the pillar of cloud and fire that had led them in the desert. The same was true of the later Temple(s). The altar fire was a larger form of the eternal light.

But the sanctified mood of the day was broken by another fiery act. Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered "strange fire" (esh zarah), and the divine fire shot out again and consumed them (Lev. 10:1-3). The strange fire may have been an offering of unconsecrated incense (cf. ketoret zarah in Exod. 30:9); but in context the offering is condemned as one that God had not authorized (asher lo tzivyah otam). That seems to be the crime. All through the dedication rites, it was repeatedly stated that everything was done as God had commanded Moses. Although the prohibition, in this context, against priests drinking alcohol before serving in the shrine perhaps hints that the brothers had imbibed, Nadab and Abihu made the offering—even if well-meaning—on their own initiative.

The two consuming fire events—of the sacrifices on the altar and of the miscreant sons—form a play of positive and negative, a warning that priests must be punctilious in the cult or risk death. As God said after the tragedy: “I must be sanctified [especially] by those nearest to me”—that is, the priesthood, an office fraught with danger.

The events in Leviticus 10 are a counterpart to an event at the end of the wanderings, when Moses and Aaron are condemned by God for having “not sanctified” Him (Num. 20:12), although their fate is less immediate than that of Nadab and Abihu. The names of the two sons of Jeroboam—Abijah and Nadab, who succeeded their father on the throne of the Northern Kingdom of Israel—are almost the same as the names of Aaron’s sons consumed by the fire. Jeroboam is viewed as a sinner who turned to idolatry by setting up two calves, in Bethel and Dan, a crime close to that of Nadab and Abihu’s father, Aaron, in making the Golden Calf. The intrabiblical allusion seems to hint that priestly laxity in the legitimate cult commanded by God is equivalent to the gross idolatry of the later Northern Kingdom.

There is also a deeper message, regarding the nature of holiness itself, a message relevant to the entire theological undertaking of the priestly tradition. Kedushah (holiness) is essentially a feature of the divine, the supernatural, shared by God and the other divine beings, sometimes called kedoshim. But at Sinai, Israel is called a “holy nation, a kingdom of priests” (Exod. 19:6). In effect, all of Israel is holy, as Korah would later point out (Num. 16:3), though the actual service of the shrine was delegated by God specifically to the Levites and especially the family of Aaron.

Now, divine holiness is something that is completely incomprehensible to humans. It is what Rudolf Otto called the “numinous,” the “wholly other” of divinity. In what sense can humans be holy? Can they attain true divinity? Not in the eyes of the priestly tradition. Later in Leviticus (Lev. 19) will come the demand that Israel be holy, as God is holy—to do so, that is, through *imitatio dei*, imitation of true divinity. In Leviticus 20, holiness for people will be characterized as punctiliousness in making distinctions between the sacred and the profane. Shemini is a preparation for that kind of definition of holiness.

As noted, the statement is often repeated in the parashah that the rites were done as God commanded Moses. Making an offering that was not commanded condemned Nadab and Abihu. God called their action a violation of His holiness. Therefore, holiness is doing only what God has authorized. It is strictly delineated, and later in Leviticus will be restated as a principle of making distinctions and separations. That is how humanity can “imitate” the divine. The holiness of God remains an unfathomable mystery to humans, but in their service of God they adhere to the divinely revealed rules, which in terms of the shrine and cult will consist of strict delineations.

It is perhaps for this reason that the next section of Shemini details the laws of permitted and forbidden animals. The distinctions are easy and visible in the main, in terms of cloven hooves and chewing the cud. The rules evoke the divine acts of creation as told in Genesis 1 (also part of the priestly tradition), because creation consisted of separations and distinctions. Now, in Leviticus 11, comes a refinement in terms of divine commands concerning created creatures. Some are allowed, others forbidden. Israel is to be trained to holiness, as a kind of education.

There is immense danger in interacting with the holy and divine—manifested in the fate of the two sons of Aaron, as well as in the later fate of the unfortunate Uzzah, who touched the Ark while trying to prevent its falling to the ground (2 Sam. 6:6-7)—a danger that the priests could forget only at the peril of their lives. Through strict adherence to God's rules alone, can the danger of approaching the divine be avoided, and the blessings of holiness be channeled by the priests to the people.

God may remain incomprehensible, but His rules are known and observable. Though the vast majority of cultic rites are no longer practiced, and we may not fear the fates of Uzzah and Aaron's sons, the quest to share in the holiness of a mysterious God is still a part of our lives. And the laws of permitted and forbidden animals, among myriad other distinctions in biblical and rabbinic law, continue to offer us a path to kedushah.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Aharon ben David <i>u'Miriam</i> (Alan Goldman)	Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman)	Lorraine Morley
Baracha bat Sarah	Reuven ben Chanoch <i>v'Dinah</i> (Robert Feurst)	Faye David Rapp Gordon Rapp
Batya bat Shprintza (Barbra Roberman)	Rut bat Sarah (Suzanne Furst)	Ezra Rapport
Bedonna Riva bat Sara	Sara bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Jack Reich
Ben-Zion ben Sarah	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Michael Rockman
Chana bat Malkah	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Richard Roth
Hannah Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Carmen Sadowsky
Daronit Esther bat Tuvia <i>v'Leah</i> (Jennifer Greyber)	Tuvia ben Shmuel <i>v'Tziporah</i> (Tovia Lebovich)	Lauren Schiro Susan Tolchin
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Tziporah bat Esther	Christine Walters Derick Williams
David Yosef ben Avraham <i>v'Hannah</i> (Donald Goldstein)	Yehudit bat Rachel	Orrie Wilner
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Sonia Berman	Amy Wolf
Malkah bat Leah (Meg Anderson)	Anne Boyd	Please contact the synagogue office with any additions or changes to this list.
Malka Hannah bat Basha Rachel	Cynthia Brown	
Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Elinor Fleishman	
M'cor Eyshele bat Esther Tzvia	Jennifer Krunkosky	
M'cor Eyshele bat Esther Tzvia	Inez McFarling	

Yahrzeits יארציזיט

Nathan Greene Erna Stolzenberg
Florence Margolis
Joel Rascoff

BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Jason Koweek on becoming a Bar Mitzvah this Shabbat!

Mazel Tov to the following Beth El members on their birthdays!
Ben Abram, Diana Bobrow Medoff, Jeff Derby, Matt Diamond, Rafael Goldberg, Sue Klapper, Harold Kohn, Rose Levy, Miriam Oren, Judith Snyderman, Ron Strauss, Mardi Zeiger

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber
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