



Shabbat Shalom

12 Nisan 5777

April 8, 2017

Parashat Tzav Hagadol

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, April 8:

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
Healing Yoga	10:00 am
After Kiddush Talk: "Gorwing Up an Observant Muslim in Post 9/11 America: A Conversation With Somia Youssef"	1:00 pm
Havdallah	8:25 pm

Sunday, April 9:

NO Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade)	
Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am

Monday, April 10:

Siyyum and Burning Chametz	8:00 am
Office Closes Early	1:00 pm

Tuesday, April 11:

Office Closed	
Passover Services	9:00 am

Wednesday, April 12:

NO Talmud Torah (2nd-6th Grade)	
Passover Services	9:00 am

Thursday, April 13:

Passover

Friday, April 14:

Passover	
Candle Lighting	7:30 pm

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ 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
- ✧ Sun. 4/16 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Mon. 4/17 Office Closed
- ✧ Tue. 4/18 Office Closed
- ✧ Tue. 4/18 Finance Committee
- ✧ Wed. 4/19 Talmud Torah (2nd-6th Grade)
- ✧ Wed. 4/19 BE Board Meeting
- ✧ Thu. 4/20 Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Greyber
- ✧ Fri 4/21 Kabbalat Shabbat Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/22 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 4/22 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 4/22 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/22 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/22 Parsha Study
- ✧ Sun. 4/23 Chapel Hill-Carrboro CROP Walk
- ✧ Sun. 4/23 Talmud Torah (Pre-K-7th Grade)

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.



4/11 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
4/17 Pesach VII Stan Levy slevy@mindsprings.com	919-408-0782

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is sponsored by:
Evelina Moulder, John & Joy Kasson, Sol & Sheila Levine, Rabbi Jerry & Carole Fox (Carole's birthday is April 6th), Sharon & Edward Halperin, Barak & Laura Richman

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 Pesah

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

Here’s a fifth question to ask at the seder this year, in addition to the usual four—a question likely to provoke discussion about the meaning of Passover that is especially timely in April 2017.

Why on all other nights (and days too) do we recall the Exodus from Egypt, but on this night, which is dedicated to the telling of that story, the Haggadah says little about what actually happened at the Exodus, and how it happened?

Think about it: you open the text at the start of the seder, expecting to find page after page that fulfills the biblical commandment to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt; you read near the very start of the Haggadah that whoever enlarges upon that story in the course of the evening is to be praised—and then you find a presentation of the Israelites’ move from slavery to freedom that is disjointed, short on detail, and occasionally hard to follow. Moses, who we might have thought would play a major role in the tale, is not mentioned even once. Pharaoh’s name comes up only four times, by my count, three of these in quotations from the biblical account. The third major character in the drama—God—is absolutely everywhere in the Haggadah. That seems to be the point the authors and editors of the text over the centuries had in mind.

I propose we look at the story they gave us, consider the lessons they wanted us to learn, and then ask ourselves two more questions:

- How do we think the story should be told?
- What lessons does it bear for you and me, right here, right now?

The traditional text of the Haggadah wants us to know two things above all about the Exodus, presented as the two answers to the *Mah Nishtanah*.

One: We were slaves in Egypt—and God delivered us (with wonders and plagues).

Two: We were mired in idol-worship before Sinai—and God delivered us from that too.

The lesson: We should regard ourselves as if we personally went forth from Egypt, and praise God for delivering our ancestors and us. God keeps promises—then, now, and in the future.

That’s what the matzah and bitter herbs are meant to remind us of. That’s why we recite the ten plagues one by one, learn through midrash that there were actually 60 plagues, or 240, and sing *Dayenu*. And that’s why the rabbis built the entire Haggadah around the verses (Deut. 26:5-8) that ancient Israelites were meant to say when they brought first fruits to the Temple in the Land of Israel—an act that would witness to the fact that God had fulfilled God’s promises, and they had fulfilled theirs.

In the Mishnah’s original outline of the seder, the key to the entire story is the double move, political and spiritual, from “degradation” to “praise.” The traditional Haggadah enlarges on that bare outline, but not by much. It does not try to give us detail, let alone history. If the Rabbis had opted for history, our fidelity to the holiday would have been held hostage to the latest archeological discoveries about what “really” happened. If they had given us detail instead of scaffolding, they might have turned the seder into the rote recitation of a script instead of lively discussion of what the Exodus means to us.

And if the Haggadah had not included notes about how our ancestors observed the holiday—first in the Temple, then (after the Temple was destroyed) in Benai Berak—and made sure we follow in their footsteps by eating the same foods, placing the same symbols on the table, and saying the same key words—we would not have understood our responsibility to keep this tradition alive, and apply its lessons, in our generation.

As a bridge to asking how we would tell the story, and what lessons we would draw from it, consider the three-fold takeaway proposed by philosopher Michael Walzer in his wonderful book *Exodus and Revolution*:

- [W]herever you live, it is probably Egypt;
- [...] there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land;
- [...] “the way to the land is through the wilderness.” There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching.

Walzer phrases those lessons in a way that maximizes their universality. His book argues that the Passover story has had greater influence than any other on liberation struggles throughout history and throughout the world.

I would tell the Passover story in 2017, and formulate its lessons, this way:

One: We were strangers in the Land of Egypt—a powerless minority of immigrants, persecuted to the point of enslavement—and we were freed with God’s help. That put us in a position to help the strangers in our midst, and assist *their* move toward redemption.

Two: We were once devoted to false gods of our own devising—and we were delivered from that error with God’s help as well—brought to recognize that we are created in God’s image, and endowed with the ability and obligation to protect fellow-creatures and the Earth.

In short: This year, we are slaves. Next year, we will be free, and if not next year, then the one after that.

There are many ways to be enslaved, in body and in spirit. One sign that we are free, the very best proof available, is that we help others to break free from whatever is enslaving them. But the point of the Haggadah is not just to make us reflect on what it is to be enslaved or free, but to get us to focus on what the word *we* means. “This year we are slaves” means one thing if “we” includes only those gathered around the table, or the larger group of family and friends who could not be with us for the seder, or the local Jewish community, or even the Jewish people as a whole. Suppose our “we” also includes the neighbors we don’t really know, the people down the street or a few miles away, fellow-residents of the continent we inhabit, or fellow inhabitants (and stewards) of the planet. Once you and I have “them” in our sights and hear their call for help, it’s hard not to conclude that we, too, *are* slaves this year, and must work harder, together, to be free.

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You and I are indispensable to this effort. And so, in ways much harder to understand, is God. Our effort is absolutely necessary but, sadly, it will not be sufficient. The Passover story goes out of its way to stress that God took Israel out of Egypt “with a strong hand and an outstretched arm”—demonstrably, directly, without intermediate agents or messengers. (Hence, perhaps, the absence of Moses from the telling.) But only a month before Passover, Jews celebrate Purim, and the character notably absent from the text read that day is God, Who appears nowhere in the Book of Esther and (unless God was active behind the scenes) plays no role in Israel’s salvation from the Pharaoh of that era, Haman. The combination of the two salvation stories is true to our experience, I believe, in a way that either one alone is not. The Lord continues to work in mysterious ways.

I read the Haggadah as saying, with help from the Megillah: Do the work you need to do. Thank God for giving you the bodily and spiritual resources you need to do that work. Thank God by joining in the effort to free other human beings—who, like you, bear God’s image—from slavery.

And do not despair if the redemption you have worked for, and the help you have counted on, does not arrive.

This year, we are here. Next year, we will be in a holier place called Jerusalem.

May your seder be lively, and your holiday sweet.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Edna Clifford	Nathan Strauss	Springer
Louise Clifford	Joseph Belenko	Augusta Ornstein
Richard Clifford	Stanley Gross	Louis Fishman
Leo Friedman	Will Grossman	Rosalie Macklin
William Golden	Carl Samuel	Eleanor Winfield
Anne Goldstein	Myrna Barbara	

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