



Shabbat Shalom

1 Nisan 5776

April 9, 2016

PARASHAH TAZRIA
SHABBAT HACHODESH
ROSH CHODESH NISAN

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, April 9:

Havdalah—8:26 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
Shabbat Honoring our Gabbaim	
Monthly Parashah Study	9:30 am
facilitated by Rabbi Sager	

Sunday, April 10:

Weekly Sunday Minyan	9:30 am
Talmud Torah (PreK-7)	9:30 am
Simchat Tot	9:45 am
Knitting Chevra	10:00 am
Beth El DIGs SEEDS (session 1)	9:30 am
Walking with Mitzvot	10:30 am
Beth El DIGs SEEDS (session 2)	1:00 pm

Monday, April 11:

Freedom Song Performance	7:30 pm
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Tuesday, April 12:

Va'ad Meeting	7:00 pm
Ritual Committee Meeting	7:30 pm

Wednesday, April 13:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Talmud Torah	4:15 pm
Board Meeting	7:30 pm

Thursday, April 14:

Friday, April 15:

<i>Candle Lighting</i> —7:26 pm	
Got Chametz Shabbat?	6:00 pm

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
*Robin Barth, Mary Joan and Alan Mandel,
and Katie Schwartz*

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. 4/16 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 4/16 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 4/16 B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 4/16 Shabbat Morning Services,
High School Senior Shabbat/New Driver Shabbat
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Talmud Torah (PreK-7)
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Walking with Mitzvot
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Pinwheels for Prevention
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Regional USY/Kadima Kings Dominion Day
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 PJ Library Launch Party
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Midrasha Open House
- ✧ Sun. 4/17 Sisterhood Election and Potluck
- ✧ Tue. 4/19 Hebrew Levels I/II with Donna Goldstein
- ✧ Tue. 4/19 Finance Committee Meeting
- ✧ Wed. 4/20 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Wed. 4/20 Talmud Torah
- ✧ Fri. 4/22 Erev Pesach
- ✧ Fri. 4/22 Minyan and Siyyum/Chametz Burning

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.



4/9 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
rperilstein@hrc-pa.com 919-286-9814

4/24 2-day Pesach
David Rubin
david_rubin@unc.edu 919-967-7725

Parashah Tazria

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

When I was 12, a few weeks before my bat mitzvah I went in to meet with one of the rabbis of my synagogue. At the time, the synagogue newsletter included a “pasuk of the week,” a verse from that week’s Torah portion that was particularly interesting or thought provoking. However, as the rabbi confessed to me, the week of my bat mitzvah was to be the end of that custom. He just couldn’t find anything that fit the bill. That week’s parashah? Tazria.

In many ways, all of Leviticus is considered the flyover territory of the Torah, something that one needs to get through as quickly as possible to get from the rich narratives of Genesis and Exodus to the wars and reminiscing of Numbers and Deuteronomy. And Tazria is seen as the worst of the worst, with its meditations and legal rulings on childbirth, impurity, and tzara’at, which is some sort of skin disease. In addition to being unappealing, it feels irrelevant, and even offensive, to our modern values and sensibilities. So what should we, as Jews living in 2016, make of Parashat Tazria?

I strongly believe that, despite the challenges involved, there is much for us to learn from Leviticus, and even from Tazria. So to choose a pasuk of the week, here is what I suggest.

The Torah requires that, if the priest who is inspecting the person with a skin condition finds that he has tzara’at, the priest declare him unclean. Then, “the person with tzara’at, who has the skin lesion, his clothing is torn and his head is uncovered, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Impure, impure!’” (Lev. 13:45).

At first glance, the insistence that the victim be forced to identify himself as impure seems cruel. It is bad enough to be sent out from the camp and exiled by the community at his moment of need. Does he really need to call further attention to himself? Must we add to his humiliation? However, there is another way to read this verse, one that presents a paradigm that applies even when concerns about tzara’at have fallen away.

To understand how tzara’at and its subsequent punishment might relate to the modern world, it is helpful to understand how the Rabbis regarded the condition, which was likely as mysterious to them as it is to us. The most common explanation of how tzara’at occurs frames it as a physical manifestation of our internal failings—specifically, the habit of lashon harah, or speaking badly about others. The Midrash makes a pun, connecting the metzorah, the one who is afflicted with this skin disease, to the motzi shem ra, the one who ruins someone’s reputation by spreading lies about that person (Lev. Rabbah Parashat Metzora par. 16:6). (This is a fairly typical example of rabbinic punning, one of the Rabbis’ favorite exegetical tools.) According to this midrash, because there are five sections of the Torah that discuss the disease of tzara’at, one who is a motzi shem ra has transgressed the entire five books of the Torah.

Building on this assumption, a midrash in the Sifra explains that when Miriam is struck with tzara’at in Numbers 12, it is because she was criticizing Moshe behind his back. The Sifra assumes that evil speech not only causes tzara’at, but specifically causes it in the face, because “skin lesions do not appear except through evil speech” (par. 5:7). Following the line of reasoning in this framework, forcing the stricken to cry out that they are unclean becomes a type of karmic retribution. The stricken person had spoken in an inappropriate manner about others, and by declaring his or her own uncleanness, the person is opening the door to being talked about in the same way. Speaking carelessly about others, without regard to the others’ reputations, will cause one to be similarly excluded from the community.

But surely, forcing the victim to cry out “Impure, impure” cannot simply be about retribution. Generally, following mitzvot is meant to be restorative, rather than punitive, and surely the system would not be set up in a way that would cause others to sin by encouraging them to talk about the stricken. “Impure, impure,” then, must be about something else.

Often, it is difficult to acknowledge our own weaknesses and failings. We excuse behaviors in ourselves that we condemn in others, justifying our actions even as we are uncomfortably aware that we do not really believe we are doing the right thing. Imagine if, every time we wronged ourselves and others, we were forced to stand up and admit it. Imagine if we were forced to declare ourselves impure every time we felt thus on the inside. Imagine if we had a physical sign of our sins and our failings. Would this not help us change—and improve—our behaviors?

So perhaps this is a lesson we can take from this strange parashah, Tazria. While it may be true that we are (thankfully!) not struck by this mysterious disease anymore, the process that one goes through to cleanse oneself can inform the way we think about our own process of self-improvement. If we created a space—an expectation for ourselves—wherein we had no choice but to be honest about our shortcomings, it seems likely that we would strive to improve ourselves and show more compassion for the weaknesses of others. Rather than hiding behind excuses, we would be forced to stand before the world and say, Look, this is who I am, both for good and for bad. And while this might cause us to be temporarily separated from our communities, ultimately it would have the potential to bring us back in, presenting a more honest and more righteous version of ourselves, scars and all.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Aharon ben David u’Miriam (Alan Goldman)	Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman)	Inez McFarling
Baracha bat Sarah	Reuven ben Chanoch v’Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Lorraine Morley
Batya bat Shprintza (Barbra Roberman)	Rut bat Sarah (Suzanne Furst)	Faye David Rapp
Bedonna Riva bat Sara	Sara bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Gordon Rapp
Ben-Zion ben Sarah	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Ezra Rapport
Chana bat Malkah	Shira Batya bat Meirav (Anna Crollman)	Jack Reich
Hannah Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Michael Rockman
Daronit Esther bat Tuvia v’Leah (Jennifer Greyber)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v’Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Richard Roth
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Tziporah bat Esther	Carmen Sadowsky
David Yosef ben Avraham v’Hannah (Donald Goldstein)	Yitzhaka Zissel bat Avram haKohen u’Malka (Jane Gabin)	Lauren Schiro
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Sonia Berman	Susan Tolchin
Malkah bat Leah (Meg Anderson)	Anne Boyd	Christine Walters
Malka Hannah bat Basha Rachel Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Cynthia Brown	Derick Williams
M’cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia	Jennifer Krunkosky	Orrie Wilner
		Amy Wolf

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Julie Anne Anders	Edith Rapport
Tilly Hyman	Emilie Sasson
Randi Kodack	Herman Schulman
Anna Switzer Meyer	David Spinner
Solomon Modell	Klara Glottmann Tulsy
Theresa Poleski	Gussie Zeiger

BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to the following Beth El members on their birthdays! Harold Baranger, Miriam Berger, Lew Borman, David Bronstein, Carole Fox, Sam Grossinger, Jonathan Katz, Laura Lieber, Sharon Lipp, Marilyn Ornstein, Diane Pozefsky, Caryn Rossi, Sherry Samuels

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Jon Bellman, Pamela Mund and family on the death of Berny Bellman, father of Jon Bellman. Funeral services were held on Sunday, 4/3 in West Palm Beach, FL. Shiva minyanim was held on Wednesday, 4/6 and Thursday, 4/7 at 7:00 pm at the home of Jon Bellman and Pamela Mund.

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber
Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager
Synagogue President: Rachel Galanter