



Shabbat Shalom

13 Iyyar 5776

May 21, 2016

Parashah Emor

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, May 21:

Havdalah—9:01 pm

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am
Shabbat Service Leaders Session	9:00 am
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
Last B'nei Mitzvah Peer Tutoring	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
Healing Yoga	10:00 am
Torah Reading Skills Meeting	1:15 pm

Sunday, May 22:

Sunday Minyan	9:00 am
Shabbat Service Leader Session	10:15 am
Taste of Kitah Gan	10:30 am
Sisterhood Stroll in the NC Botanical Garden	1:00 pm

Monday, May 23:

Tuesday, May 24:

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

Wednesday, May 25:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
Shabbat Service Leader Session	7:30 pm/8:00 pm

Thursday, May 26: Lag B'omer

Lag B'omer Campfire at Rachel Galanter's Home	7:00 pm
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Friday, May 27:

Candle Lighting—8:06 pm
USY Spring Convention

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 5/28 USY Spring Convention
- ✧ Sat. 5/28 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 5/28 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 5/28 Shabbat Morning Services-Sisterhood Installation
- ✧ Sun. 5/29 USY Spring Convention
- ✧ Mon. 5/30 Memorial Day
- ✧ Mon. 5/30 USY Spring Convention
- ✧ Mon. 5/30 Beth El Office Closed
- ✧ Wed. 6/1 Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Wed. 6/1 Community Conversation on Prayers
- ✧ Thu. 6/2 Synagogue Life Committee Meeting
- ✧ Fri. 6/3 Kabbalat Shabbat Services
- ✧ Sat. 6/4 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 6/4 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 6/4 Shabbat Morning Services-Camp Send Off Shabbat
- ✧ Sun. 6/5 Yom Yerushalayim
- ✧ Sun. 6/5 Board Retreat

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.



5/21 Emor
Sally Laliberte
selaib@gmail.com 919-302-0035

5/28 Behar
Diane Markoff
diane.markoff@earthlink.net 919- 969-8953

6/4 Behukkotai
Roger Perilstein
rperilstein@hrc-pa.com 919-286-9814

6/11 Bamidbar
Jon Wahl
jmwahl@email.unc.edu 919-942-3827

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is sponsored by:
*Kelly and Gary Asher, Janine and Kirk Beeson,
Florence Briones and Jonathan Lovins,
Jennifer and Michael Kornbluth,
Pamela Mund and Jon Bellman*

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 Emor

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

Maybe we don't need to overthink why a law code seen as given by God would determine that cursing God is problematic, but how severe a crime is this? Evidently, Moses was uncertain: the culprit was detained while Moses checked in with God (Lev. 24:12). Perhaps the negative consequence of this act seems unclear. After all, what harm can possibly come to God through human words?

In Lev. 24:14, those who hear the blasphemy lay their hands on the blasphemer before he is stoned to death, the same way that the high priest (in Lev. 16:21) transfers the community's sins to the scapegoat. This implies that they have been implicated in this sin just by hearing it and must take action to absolve themselves.

With leshon hara (speaking badly of another person)—another verbal sin—we usually focus on the relationship between the speaker and the ostensible victim, the one who was spoken about. But what about those who were told the rumor? Every time they see the person who was spoken badly of, they remember what they were told about her; they can't shake it, however hard they try. What they heard can never be unheard.

If someone misspeaks during prayer, such as forgetting to substitute the special ending of the third blessing of the Amidah for the High Holiday period, that person has a short window to “undo” this error; if he misses this opportunity, he has to go back to the beginning of the Amidah. The length of the opportunity to undo the error is specified in the Talmud as tokh kedei dibur, the amount of time it takes to say “Shalom, rabi” (“Greetings, my master”)—around three seconds. And this applies for nearly every case in Jewish law when you want to take back what you said:

The law is that replacement words said within tokh kedei dibur are taken as replacing the original words, unless the original words were blasphemy, idol worship, betrothal, or divorce. (BT Nedarim 87a)

That is to say, some words are simply so powerful that they cannot be taken back.

Returning to our parashah, what is the effect of the blasphemous utterance on the listeners? To answer that we need to know what we mean by blasphemy. Our verses themselves make clear that two distinct elements are required: (1) using the divine name, and (2) cursing God—that is, calling for something bad to befall God (“pronounced the name and cursed” [Lev. 24:11]). This is not a statement of heresy (denying a tenet of faith, or casting aspersions on the true religion or its leaders), but an attack aimed directly at God. Biblical scholar Baruch Schwartz suggests that the essence of the crime is that the name of God is considered a sacred object, and this is a misuse of that object (the Oxford Jewish Study Bible, 1st ed. 268). In keeping with the themes of Leviticus, this is a serious matter: everything has its place and its order, and the holy must be protected and kept apart from the impure.

This gives us some insight into why the crime was taken so seriously, but if misusing the holy name of God were the whole story, someone who uses the ineffable name to advertise their commercial product (“The only engine oil Hashem would use”), or names their pet yud-heh-yav-vav-heh should suffer a similar punishment. The other element—“cursing,” or direct attack—is also required.

The Babylonian Talmud sheds light on this issue while discussing how we deal with the blasphemer's remains. According to the Mishnah, only the bodies of blasphemers and idolaters are displayed after execution (M. Sanhedrin 6:4). But the Torah states that displaying the bodies of these executed criminals can cause further cursing of God, and so must last no longer than until the end of that day (Deut. 21:23).

The Talmud gives two different, almost contradictory, reasons why leaving out the body of the executed causes God to be cursed.

The first explanation is that passersby will say, “Oh, look, there's the person who said ‘_____!’” (BT Sanhedrin 45b). This suggests that the problem with blasphemy is what it does to the relationship between people and God: if people are constantly reminding themselves that God can be insulted by humans, how can they continue to understand God as transcendent, almighty, the apex of holiness? Just as hearing of the misdeeds of one's neighbor can affect how you think about them forever, so, too, recounting the crime of blasphemy conjures up the notion that God is less than supreme.

The second explanation, found just one page later, is related by way of a parable:

גניא אומר ר"מ משלו משל למה הדבר דומה לשני אדום תאומים בעיר אחת אחד מנוהג מלך ואחד יצא לליסטינות צוה המלך ותלאוהו כל הרואה אותו אומר המלך תלוי צוה המלך והורידוהו:

It is taught: Rabbi Meir says, “They told a parable: What is this matter analogous to? To two twin brothers in a city. One of them was the king, and the other became a bandit. The king ordered that his twin be hanged. All who saw the hanged one said, ‘The king was hanged!’ So the king ordered that he be taken down.” (BT Sanh. 46b)

This parable's use of “twins” to describe the king (= God) and the brigand (= our blasphemer) is striking. Not just lookalikes, not just siblings, but twins. It is no mere coincidence that these two are confused by the onlookers: they are identical in appearance, in lineage, even in their DNA. The lesson of the parable seems to be that divinity and humanity are inextricably connected, in such a way that they are destined to a shared dignity: where one lacks it, the other cannot retain it.

Almost paradoxically, then, we find that the crime of blasphemy is taken so seriously because to curse God is to curse all of humanity, including the blasphemer. If God can be cursed, those who hear the blasphemy will think, What hope is there for all of us, who are twinned with God?

Quite rightly, we are sometimes entreated to create a world where human dignity is paramount because we are made in the image of God. The law of the blasphemer emphasizes a slightly different side of that same challenge: to recognize that God's dignity is of a piece with our own dignity, and insulting either one is always an offense against the other.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

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

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Adelene Barker	Dorothy Gross
Bessie Bergman	Roslyn Rose
Marion Bobroff	Albrecht Strauss
Herbert Flicker	Jack Winfield
Michael Goodrich	

BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to the follow community members on their birthdays! Elisabeth Albert, Janine Beeson, Christine Budasoff, Sarah Denes, Jane Gabin, Michael Gilbert, Valerie Glassman, Larry Golstein, Stephanie Greenberg, Alan Mandel, Sarah Mendlovitz, Sabina Sager, Karen Scher, Merle Schwartz, Mya Sendak, Rhoda Silver, Miriam Slikin, Randi Smith, Amanda Snyderman, Ted Snyderman, Nancy Strauss, Wendy Walker, Flora Weisleder

Mazel Tov to our newly elected Board members!

Mazel Tov to Libby Vaughn on being honored as our Volunteer of the Year!

Mazel Tov to Gladys Siegel's granddaughter, Marisa Siegel, who received her Masters degree in Business from Columbia University on Sunday. She is employed by Anheuser Busch.

Mazel Tov to Erica Rapport Gringle and Rob Gringle on the birth of their granddaughter, Lucille Archer Risk.

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