



Shabbat Shalom

12 Sivan 5776

June 18, 2016

Parashat Nasso

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, June 18:

Havdalah—9:17 pm

NO B'NEI MITZVAH PEER TUTORING

Shabbat Mishnah Study	8:45 am***
Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
Healing Yoga	10:00 am

Sunday, June 19:

Monday, June 20:

Beth El in Israel	
PJ Library Family Movie Night	5:45 pm

Tuesday, June 21:

Beth El in Israel

Wednesday, June 22:

Beth El in Israel	
Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am

Thursday, June 23:

Beth El in Israel	
Recovery International (RI)	6:30 pm
Support Group at Beth El	

Friday, June 24:

Candle Lighting—8:18 pm

Beth El in Israel	
Young Adult Dinner	7:00 pm

***Please note that this is the last Shabbat Mishnah Study for the academic year. It will resume in September.

Please note that the following programs have been suspended for the summer: Sunday Minyan. Sunday Minyan will resume on Sunday, 9/11 at 9:30 am.

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
Margueritte Cox, Laura Flicker, Sue Gidwitz & Gail Freeman, Donna Goldstein, Sheri Hoffman, Krisha and Syd Miller, Nancy Strauss, Libby Vaughn, & Mardi and Errol Zeiger

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:

- ✧ Mon. 6/20-Fri. 7/1 Israel Trip
- ✧ Sat. 6/25 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 6/25 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sun. 6/26 Jewish Food Festival
- ✧ Sun. 6/26 Monthly Durham Community Café Dinner
- ✧ Wed. 6/29 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Thu. 6/30 Recovery International Group
- ✧ Sat. 7/2 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 7/2 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Mon. 7/4 Beth El Office Closed
- ✧ Wed. 7/6 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Thu. 7/7 MoB Durham Bulls Game
- ✧ Thu. 7/7 Recovery International Group
- ✧ Fri. 7/8 Partners for Youth Opportunity
- ✧ Sat. 7/9 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 7/9 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 7/9 Healing Yoga

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.



- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 6/18 Naso
Isaac Price
Isaac@isaacprice.org | 919-866-5453 |
| 6/25 Beha'alotcha
Diane Markoff
diane.markoff@earthlink.net | 919- 969-8953 |
| 7/2 Shelach Lekha
David Rubin
david_rubin@unc.edu | 919-967-7725 |
| 7/9 Korach
Bernie Fischer
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Parashat Nasso

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

In a plaintive and anxious song by Israeli singer Ehud Banai called “Aneh Li” (“Answer Me”), the challenge of communicating with God is rendered as an increasingly panicked monologue by a man waiting for a voice he’s sure is on the other end of the phone line:

You’re breaking up—there’s background noise—it’s like the ocean.

I guess there’s no reception here—you’ve disappeared.

I’m still waiting on the line for my turn.

I’m holding the connection, in case you return...

Are you still with me?

Answer me.

Banai’s vision comes to mind as I read in this week’s portion:

When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the Ark of the Covenant—from between the two keruvim; thus He spoke to him. (Num. 7:89)

The two keruvim were the sphinx-like figures fixed to the lid of the Ark; their extended wings formed a canopy beneath which God’s presence was understood to hover. Our verse identifies the space just below the two wings as the place from which God’s voice emanated. In a teaching recorded in Bemidbar Rabbah 14:22, Rabbi Akiva emphasizes the specificity of this location. He explains that the voice was not audible from throughout the Tent, nor even from the full surface area of the Ark’s lid, but only from that exact spot beneath the wings.

On the one hand, Numbers 7:89 suggests easy communication between Moses and God, as if God maintained office hours—the very opposite of Banai’s song. Indeed, it seems the model of communication that Banai craves.

On the other hand, our verse suggests that, in order to converse with God, Moses could stand in only one spot. That is, Moses had severely limited means of communication with God.

Rashi, drawing on the Sifra, addresses a contradiction, between two other verses, and explains how Numbers 7:89 resolves it:

[When there are] two contradictory verses, a third one comes to reconcile them. One verse says, “The Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting” (Lev. 1:1), which implies outside the curtain, whereas another verse says, “and speak to you from above the Ark cover” (Exod. 25:22) [which is on the interior, behind the curtain]. Our verse comes to reconcile them: Moses came into the Tent of Meeting, and there he would hear the voice [of God] coming from [between the keruvim], above the Ark cover.

Like a beam of light redirected by a mirror inside a microscope, God’s voice would descend from heaven and be redirected from beneath the keruvim to Moses standing in the outer Tent of Meeting.

But additional complications emerge upon closer reading. In Bemidbar Rabbah 14:19 we learn:

Our verse [Num. 7:89] says, “When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him,” but in Exodus 40:35 it says, “Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.”

Bemidbar Rabbah resolves the contradiction with the phrase “because the cloud had settled upon it.” When the cloud—that is, the cloud signifying God’s presence—had settled upon the Tent, Moses could not enter. But once the cloud was lifted, Moses would go in and speak with God.

The presence or absence of the cloud is complex. Bemidbar Rabbah also teaches that when Moses could not enter, it was because it would have been dangerous to do so. The cloud signaled that, in God’s anger, He had unleashed destructive forces; Moses could not safely enter. With the retreat of the cloud, the threat retreated and Moses was free to seek God’s counsel.

And then there is the nature of the communication between God and Moses. Who was talking? Our verse tells that Moses went to the Tent “to speak with God” (לדבר עם, ledaber imo). Up to this point, we understand that both Moses and God will speak. But the verse says that Moses would hear God’s voice (מקדבר, middabber) from atop the Ark. This unusual verb is reflexive, indicating that what Moses hears is not God speaking to him but God speaking to Godself. Rashi explains that Moses walking up to the Tent and having a conversation with God would suggest too much intimacy. In this telling, we don’t have a model of the divine teacher and his disciple during office hours, but rather of the supplicant-seeker receiving didactic instruction from the barely approachable Master.

In contrast, a wonderful essay by Gilad Sasson of Bar-Ilan University explores a later tier of commentaries that show God lovingly inviting Moses into direct communication inside the cloud in the Tent. (“U-vevo Moshe el Ohel Moed”, Daf Shevui #1173, Faculty of Jewish Studies of Bar-Ilan University) Deep study and open-hearted prayer open these lines of communication for some, while being out in nature or a pervasive sense of God’s love open them for others. But the notion of communication with God being fraught, limited, and perhaps one-sided better describes the experience of many. That’s the kind of experience expressed in Ehud Banai’s song.

To facilitate our own communication with God, we might start by paying attention to how Moses came to have a place for such communication. Remember that the Tabernacle was built by human hands. And it was built because God wanted it. God sought a place to be present among the people whose lives and destinies He had covenanted, at Sinai, to journey through with them. Neither a conversation with nor direct guidance from God can be had easily. But that sweet spot beneath the wings of the keruvim was fashioned by people, and at God’s direction. The confidence that God seeks to be in communication with us and that we are capable of fashioning opportunities for connection can give us cause to hope. If we pay attention, perhaps we can begin by hearing and learning from God middabber—God speaking of our lives to Godself.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Aharon ben David u’Miriam (Alan Goldman)	Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman)	Riki Friedman
Baracha bat Sarah	Reuven ben Chanoch v’Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Alan Marty
Chana bat Malka	Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Inez McFarling
Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Lorraine Morley
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Ezra Rapport
David Yosef ben Avraham v’Chana (Donald Goldstein)	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Jack Reich
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v’Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Richard Roth
Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)	Tziporah bat Esther	Lauren Schiro
Malka bat Leah (Meg Anderson)	Ya’akov ben Sarah (Jacob Schonberg)	Edward Thompson-Starkey
Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel	Anne Boyd	Susan Tolchin
M’cor Eyschel bat Esther Tzvia	Cynthia Brown	Christine Walters
Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Sammy Follodor	Derrick Williams
		Orrie Wilner

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

Yahrzeits יארצייטן

May their memory be a blessing

Norman Evenson	Marilyn Lubar
Lily Feiler	Irene Markoff
Bertha "Bea" Freifeld	Pearl Penner Morrison
Stuart Garr	Amram Rasiel
Willard Gidwitz	Lionel Shapiro
Theodore Gradin	Herbert Sharp
Lotte Herzfeld	Jonathan Shimm
Herman B. Kushner	Molly Zauder

BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to the follow community members on their birthdays! Meg Anderson, Phyllis Dworsky, Sheri Hoffman, Jean Hurwitz, Freya Kamel, Meyer Liberman, Eric Lipp, Sharon Lunk, Leslie Nydick, Peter Perault

Mazel Tov to Sheri Hoffman on her nephew, Devin Schiro, who was Director of Photography on the film "Still Life", which just won Best Short at the Sunset Film Festival 2016 in Los Angeles.

BE Remembered

Beth El Synagogue extends condolences to Marilyn Telen and Henry Greene and their family on the death of Marilyn's father, Abraham Telen -- Avraham ben Yeshayahu, who passed away June 9 in Durham.

Beth El Synagogue

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber
Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager
Synagogue President: Noah Pickus