



Shabbat Shalom

7 Tamuz 5777

July 1, 2017

Parashat Hukat

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, July 1:

Orthodox Kehillah Services	9:00 am
Main Sanctuary Services	9:30 am
Havdallah	9:18 pm

Monday, July 3:

Office Closed

Tuesday, July 4:

Office Closed

Wednesday, July 5:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan	8:00 am
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Friday, July 7:

Candle Lighting	8:17 pm
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Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Wed. 7/5 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Sat. 7/8 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 7/8 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Wed. 7/12 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Sat. 7/15 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Wed. 7/19 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Sat. 7/22 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 7/22 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Wed. 7/26 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Sat. 7/29 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 7/29 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Mon. 7/31 Tish'a B'Av Community Services
- ✧ Wed. 8/2 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Thu. 8/3 MoB Night at the Durham Bulls
- ✧ Sat. 8/5 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 8/5 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Wed. 8/9 Weekly Wednesday Minyan

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.



7/8 Balak Matt Diamond mattdiamond@mindspring.com	919-906-6545
7/15 Pinchas Bernice Fischer Bernie.fischer@duke.edu	919-493-0306
7/22 Mattot-Masei Isaac Price isaac@isaacprice.org	919-866-5453
7/29 Devarim Hazon Shula Bernard shulabernard@gmail.com	919-967-9393

Kiddush is sponsored by:
Beth El Synagogue

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 Hukat

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

“Moses entered the stage of Jewish history by striking (the Egyptian) and exited from the stage of Jewish history by striking (the rock).” This startling observation by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin in his commentary on the Book of Numbers (*Torah Lights: Bemidbar*, 169) causes us to reflect deeply on the subject of Jewish leadership.

Narrative symmetry, of course, is a characteristic of both biblical literature and rabbinic interpretation. It suggests purpose over randomness—a meaningful connection between beginnings and endings. Here, however, the symmetry is ironic, even disquieting. Moses’s entry onto the stage of Jewish history is through killing another human being; his forced exit is the result of hitting an inanimate object. The killing is viewed in a positive light, both within the biblical narrative itself and in rabbinic interpretation; it is a reflection of Moses’s courage and concern for his oppressed people. The assault on the rock, on the other hand, is condemned in the harshest terms and results in Moses’s exclusion from entry into the Promised Land, even though the act caused no harm to life or limb. Moses becomes a Jewish leader with an act of violence and loses that role through a trivial act of pique.

But let’s dig deeper. The killing of a taskmaster is a type-scene of slave narratives from Spartacus to Nat Turner. What distinguishes the biblical story is who committed the killing and the aftermath. In the usual narrative of slave revolt, a slave kills one or more overlords and then immediately assumes leadership of the rebellion. In the biblical story, it is not a slave who commits the act of violence, but rather a prince of Egypt, Moses. What is more, he does not lead an immediate revolt, but rather flees to the wilderness, the scene of spiritual awakening.

Two of the hallmarks of great leadership begin to come into view: empathy and deep reflection. Even in his exalted position, Moses radically empathizes with the oppressed slave. A connection is made which goes well beyond sympathy to identification. Leadership is not merely an intellectual enterprise, but also a deeply emotional one. At the same time, leadership requires contemplation rather than spontaneous reactions. It requires humility and quiet introspection before the mantle of leadership can truly be carried with dignity and effectiveness.

And yet it is not the beginning of Moses’s leadership mission, but its supposed end, that is the concern of this week’s parashah, Hukat. Is it really the case, as Rabbi Riskin suggests, that Moses exited the stage of Jewish history by striking the rock to obtain water for B’nei Yisrael? Although many children learn in Hebrew school that Moses was punished because he hit the rock with his staff rather than speaking to it as commanded by God, Nahmanides categorically rejects this theory. He notes that God explicitly had directed Moses to “take his staff,” and that direction in and of itself implied that he should strike the rock. Elsewhere in the Torah—particularly in the narrative of the ten plagues—God orders Moses to take his staff, always with the purpose of striking with it. Why should Moses have thought differently in this situation? In any case, the miracle of water from the rock was not diminished in the least by Moses hitting the rock rather than speaking to it.

Numerous other explanations have been offered as to what really constituted Moses’s sin justifying his exclusion from the Promised Land. But rather than examine those explanations, I want to take issue with the idea that whatever Moses’s sin was at the waters of Meribah, that is the moment when he exited the stage of Jewish history. To the contrary, it is precisely because Moses persevered in the face of divine rejection that we can understand the extraordinary nature of his leadership.

After the sin at Meribah, God pronounces his punishment: “Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them” (Num. 20:12). What is Moses’s reaction to this harshest of sanctions? Does he sulk or walk away from his mission? Does he really exit the stage of Jewish history?

The answer is given immediately after the punishment is pronounced: “From Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom” (20:14). In other words, Moses continued to provide leadership to his people in the face of what was certainly an almost unbearable rejection by God. The Midrash comments on this juxtaposition:

“And Moses sent messengers.” . . . In the usual way, when a man is slighted by his business partner, he wishes to have nothing more to do with him; whereas Moses, though he was punished on account of Israel, as it is stated: “They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses because of them,” did not rid himself of their burden but “sent messengers.” (Bemidbar Rabbah, 19:7)

We all face personal and professional setbacks in life, some of which are quite profound. When I worked for another organization a few years ago, a junior manager came to talk with me about a promotion which she believed she had been in line for but which had gone to someone else. Although the individual who had

been promoted was unquestionably qualified and widely considered to be a “superstar,” the junior manager was discouraged and demoralized. I suggested that she had two viable choices: walk away and find another job or stay and prove to her superiors through her continued work that she should get the next promotion. She decided to stay, put her head down, and work with renewed energy and creativity. After a few months, she was promoted. When I left the organization a few years later, she said that the advice I had given her had saved her career.

Moses did not walk away. Denied the one thing he wanted more than anything else—to lead his people into the Promised Land—he went right back to work, providing leadership through treacherous times to bring the Children of Israel safely to the border of the Land of Israel. Perseverance in the face of adversity and utter disappointment was the hallmark of Moses’s leadership. It remains a model for our times as well.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

<i>Adelah bat Avrom v'Chenya (Adele Abramowitz)</i>	<i>Michael Pinchas ben Binyamin v'Rachel</i>	<i>Zvi ben Chanoch v'Rivka (Harold Strauss)</i>
<i>Chaim ben Shraga v'Tziporah (Jerry Cramer)</i>	<i>Mishulamit bat Maryam (Marcia Hogan)</i>	<i>Alvin Jacobson</i>
<i>Chana bat Malka</i>	<i>Miriam bat Batya (Joyce Gudeman)</i>	<i>Anne Boyd</i>
<i>Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)</i>	<i>Miriam bat Batya (Joyce Gudeman)</i>	<i>Alan Marty</i>
<i>David ben Sarah (David Leitner)</i>	<i>Moshe Yosef ben Vishka Elka (Michael Perkins)</i>	<i>Christine Walters</i>
<i>David Yosef ben Avraham v'Chana (Donald Goldstein)</i>	<i>Moshe Yosef ben Vishka Elka (Michael Perkins)</i>	<i>Ezra Rapport</i>
<i>Esther bat Yankale Sura</i>	<i>Ovadya ben Esther Malkah (Ovadya Fleishman)</i>	<i>Gail Freeman</i>
<i>Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)</i>	<i>Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)</i>	<i>Harold Strauss</i>
<i>Gershon Yonah ben Tevya haKohen v'Chanah Leah haLevi (Harlan Gradin)</i>	<i>Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)</i>	<i>Helen Rosenberg</i>
<i>Herschel David ben Aharon haKohen u'Bela Miriam</i>	<i>Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)</i>	<i>Jack Reich</i>
<i>Israel ben Zalman u'Malkah Leah bat Miriam (Eileen Abramson)</i>	<i>Shalom ben Sprintze (Stanley Ramati)</i>	<i>Jeff Shields</i>
<i>Llan ben Eunice (Lani Harrington)</i>	<i>Shira Batya bat Meirav Shmuel ben Shoshana</i>	<i>Joyce Romm</i>
<i>Malka bat Leah (Meg Anderson)</i>	<i>Shrage ben Devorah Leah (Phillip Samuel Ramati)</i>	<i>Ken Walkters</i>
<i>Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel</i>	<i>Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip Skoletsky)</i>	<i>Lauren Schiro</i>
<i>M'cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia</i>	<i>Sura Malka bat Rivka (Molly Grossinger)</i>	<i>Lorraine Morley</i>
	<i>Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)</i>	<i>Netta Boswell</i>
	<i>Tziporah bat Esther</i>	<i>Orrie Wilner</i>
	<i>Ya'akov Roni ben Margalit</i>	<i>Richard Roth</i>
	<i>Yehoshua Heschel ben Tova Gitel (Joshua Shatz)</i>	<i>Sidney Barker</i>
		<i>Please contact the synagogue office with any additions or changes to this list.</i>

Yahrzeits יארצייט

Donald Benjamin Hackel	Janet Alpern	Jorge Gadlli
Mildred Marcus	Yetta Greenberg	Eva M. Woods
Neil Felmus	Lester Bogdanoff	
Elizabeth Gay Thurston	Albert M. Fleishman	
Rachel Geller	Ann Geller	
Shlomo Geller	Dave Satloff	
Mary Kirshner	Martin Landau	
Eunice Luebke	Nathan Orloff	

Beth El Synagogue

1004 Watts Street
Durham, NC 27701
919.682.1238

info@betheldurham.org

www.betheldurham.org

Rabbi: Daniel Greyber

Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager

Synagogue President: Noah Pickus