



# Shabbat Shalom

30 Av 5776  
September 3, 2016

Parashat Re'eh

## This Week at Beth El Synagogue

### Saturday, September 3:

*Havdalah—8:05 pm*

NO B'NEI MITZVAH PEER TUTORING

NO SHABBAT MISHNAH STUDY

Orthodox Kehillah Services 9:00 am

Main Sanctuary Services 9:30 am

### Sunday, September 4:

USY/Kadima Wet n' Wild 8:00 am

### Monday, September 5:

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE CLOSED

### Tuesday, September 6

### Wednesday, September 7:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan 8:30 am

### Thursday, September 8:

### Friday, September 9:

*Candle Lighting—6:55 pm*

Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:00 am

Bat Mitzvah of Avital Hirsch

\*\*Please note that the following programs have been suspended for the summer: Shabbat Mishnah Study and Sunday Minyan. Shabbat Mishnah Study will resume in September. Sunday Minyan will resume on Sunday, 9/11 at 9:30 am.\*\*

### Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sun. 9/4 USY/Kadima Wet n' Wild
- ✧ Wed. 9/7 Weekly Wednesday Minyan followed by Shiur
- ✧ Fri. 9/9 Kabbalat Shabbat Services, Bat Mitzvah of Avital Hirsch
- ✧ Sat. 9/10 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 9/10 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Services
- ✧ Sat. 9/10 B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring Resumes
- ✧ Sat. 9/10 Shabbat Morning Services, Bat Mitzvah of Avital Hirsch
- ✧ Sat. 9/10 Healing Yoga
- ✧ Sun. 9/11 Yom Beth El
- ✧ Sun. 9/11 First day of Talmud Torah
- ✧ Sun. 9/11 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 9/11 Knitting Chevra
- ✧ Sun. 9/11 Social Action Meeting

### 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.



9/3 Reeh/Rosh Hodesh Elul  
Matt Diamond  
mattdiamond@mindspring.com 919-906-6545

9/10 Shoftim  
Stan Levy  
slevy@mindspring.com 919-408-0782

9/17 Ki Tetzei  
Shula Bernard  
shulabernard@gmail.com 919-967-9393

9/24 Ki Tavo  
Bernie Fischer  
Bernie.fischer@duke.edu 919-493-0306

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is sponsored by:  
Erica Brody and Eric Meyer, Kim and Drew Langsam, Barbara Renner, Jack and Diane Sasson

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

# Parashat Eikev

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

One month from now, we turn to renew the Hebrew calendar, and our spiritual lives with it. On that day, “the day the world is born,” we read the story of Hannah (1 Sam 1:1–2:10). After struggling for years to conceive, Hannah finally gives birth to a son, Shemuel, for whom she had prayed at the temple in Shiloh.

Yet our Sages add another dimension to the story. In the Gemara (BT Berakhot 31a), we hear that Hannah actually threatened to undergo the *sotah* ritual, a humiliating and traumatizing ordeal meant for spouses suspected of adultery, in the hope that its promise of fertility for the fortunate few who passed would open her womb. Hannah sought, from this point of view, to stimulate the divine system from below—to engineer cosmic blessing through threats, coercion, and the intimidating effect of recklessness.

Turns out, this is an established approach to the Divine in our faith, and one that is well-suited to our current calendrical moment.

Our Sages saw Hannah as trying to trap God into offering blessing, and they interpreted the same from another unlikely context, one that also occurs during this month's Torah readings. We read about the apparently bizarre mitzvah of *shilu'ah haken*, the sending away of the mother bird. Deut. 22:6–7 is the sole description of this shockingly precise mitzvah: “If you happen upon a bird’s nest while on the road, whether in a tree or on the ground, whether with chicks in it or still-unhatched eggs, and the mother bird is sitting on the eggs or chicks, you shall not take the mother with the young. Instead, chase away the mother bird and take the young—in order that you be well and your days long.”

What’s the purpose of this mysterious mitzvah? Despite its often being cited as the case par excellence of *ahok*, or irrational commandment, many explanations have been offered. In some sense, the explanation is right in front of us: that we should be well and live long. Yet the standard reasoning, drawing on the Midrash, is that performing the mitzvah reminds us that God’s compassion is upon all creatures, and that performing the mitzvah cultivates the same compassion within ourselves (Devarim Rabbah, Ki Tetzei 6:1; Vayikra Rabbah 27:11). The exact nature of this compassion is not clear, however. Are we exercising compassion for the mother, in preventing her from watching us take her babies? Are we exercising compassion for the species, in not eliminating the possibility of procreation?

Standing at the threshold of the month of Elul, in which we pray for compassion for ourselves, we owe it to ourselves to dig a bit deeper into this mitzvah’s meaning. We’ll find that learning to exercise compassion is not a complete explanation for it.

The deeper level is the one that Hannah acted out in the rabbinic imagination. She didn’t only plead for divine compassion, she took action—manipulating the spiritual system to *ensure* compassion.

Similarly, for the significance of *shilu'ah haken*, the Zohar offers a deeper take. The Zohar tells us there is an angel appointed over the birds, and when we perform the mitzvah and chase away the mother, that angel appears before God angrily, asking, “God, how could it be a commandment to show such cruelty to birds?” Immediately, the Zohar tells us, God turns to the other angels and says, “Look, this one is concerned about his birds—but not a single one of you could plead on behalf of the Shekhinah and her children exiled on Earth?!” Eventually, out of frustration, God states, “Then I will act for my own sake,” arousing compassion for the Shekhinah and Israel here on Earth (Tikkunei Hazohar 23a).

Thus, our performance of the mitzvah does eventually stimulate divine compassion—but only through our exercise of cruelty. *Shilu'ah haken*, for the Zohar, operates the same way the Sages saw Hannah maneuver in her moment of desperation—a way to engineer the cosmos through our own action, a way to “work the system” and manipulate God into acting for our sake and for the sake of compassion. In this view, we don’t simply plead for compassion; instead we blackmail, threaten, and coerce compassion from God.

As we stand at the beginning of the journey toward Rosh Hashanah and enter the period when *selihot* (penitential prayers) are recited in the weekday liturgy, it is worth considering what exactly we are doing with our spiritual efforts. Are we, like the midrash about *shilu'ah haken* says, exercising compassion upon ourselves and pleading that God grant it to us? Or are we, like Hannah and the Zohar, using what resources we have to *make* God be compassionate upon us? Does this mean that we should do teshuvah differently? Maybe not; maybe all that is required is to *see* teshuvah differently. Perhaps we should embrace Hannah’s method and find a way to make God see us. Perhaps we should understand the practices of these *Yamim Nora'im*, these Days of Awe, not as petition, but as protest.

What if the fast of Yom Kippur was not about depriving ourselves, but instead was about getting God’s attention? What if the hunger we experience is not that of an ascetic practice, but that of a hunger strike? What we do, when we recite *selihot* every morning, when we rise early to plead before God, when we starve our bodies to feed our souls, is protest. Not petition, but protest. We don’t do *shilu'ah haken* in order to *becompassionate*; we act cruelly in order to *get* compassion.

Similarly, we should not spend the next 40 days asking for forgiveness, we should ensure it. We should act in a way that requires God to forgive us. We should work the system, and appeal to God’s sense of justice as much as God’s sense of love. The mitzvot purify us, but they also can be our form of protest. Our earnest engagement with repentance can be a way of saying, perhaps above all else, “Look at what a mess it is down here! I’m going to rub it in your face until you do something about it.” Perhaps if we embrace the practice of protest, we’ll find our petitions better received and our souls more ready to begin another year in a renewed world.

# Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Avigal bat David haLevi (Alice Gold)	Mishulamit bat Maryam (Marcia Hogan)	Ya'akov Roni ben Margalit
Avram Moshe ben Esther (Alan Mandel)	Miriam Shifra bat Issur (Margaret Sachs)	Yehuda ben David (Jerry Robins)
Baracha bat Sarah	Mordechai ben Mathilda (Morty Berkowitz)	Anne Boyd
Batya bat Shprintza (Barbara Roberman)	Ovadya ben Esther Malkah (Ovadya Fleishman)	Cynthia Brown
Chana bat Malka	Reuven ben Chanoch v'Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Alan Marty
Chana Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Sarah bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Lorraine Morley
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Ezra Rapport
David Yosef ben Avraham v'Chana (Donald Goldstein)	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Jack Reich
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Helen Rosenberg
Esther bat Yankale Sura	Shraga Feivel ben Leib (Philip Skoletsky)	Richard Roth
Esther Malka bat Chaya Fruma (Elinor Fleishman)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Lauren Schiro
Malka bat Leah (Meg Anderson)	Tziporah bat Esther	Edward Thompson-Starkey
Malka Chana bat Basha Rachel	Ty-Esther Tobi bat Tzeryl (Mindy Shapiro)	Christine Walters
M'cor Eyshel bat Esther Tzvia	Yakov ben Sarah (Jacob Schonberg)	Please contact the synagogue office with any additions or changes to this list.

# Yahrzeits יארצייט

May their memory be a blessing

Harriett Borman	Lucille Anderson
Philip Joffe	Shirley Kresses
Marcia Kudler	Rebekah Resnick
Ida Snyderman	Florence Satinsky
Harry Brown	
Eve Feldman	
Frank Malin	
Pearl Siegel	

# BE Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Rabbi Daniel and Jenn Greyber on their 20th wedding anniversary!

Mazel Tov to Emily and Ben Hayes on their 4th wedding anniversary!

**Beth El Synagogue**  
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Rabbi Emeritus: Steven Sager  
Synagogue President: Noah Pickus