



Shabbat Shalom

6 Sh'vat 5776
January 16, 2016

Parashat Bo

This Week at Beth El Synagogue

Saturday, January 16:

Havdalah—6:07 pm

NC-WIDE TEEN SHABBATON

NO B'NAI MITZVAH PEER TUTORING

Shabbat Mishnah Study 8:45 am

Orthodox Kehillah Services 9:00 am

Main Sanctuary Services, 9:30 am

I.L. Peretz Course with Sheva Zucker 1:00 pm

Sunday, January 17:

NC-WIDE TEEN SHABBATON

NO TALMUD TORAH

Weekly Sunday Minyan/Shiva Minyan 9:30 am

MLK Day of Service 10:00 am

Monday, January 18:

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE CLOSED

MLK Day of Service @ SEEDS 9:00 am

Tuesday, January 19:

Ritual Committee Meeting 7:30 pm

Finance Committee Meeting 7:30 pm

Wednesday, January 20:

Weekly Wednesday Minyan 8:00 am

Talmud Torah (2-6) 4:15 pm

Thursday, January 21:

Sulam Class #1

Friday, January 22:

Candle Lighting—5:14 pm

Sisterhood Shabbat Dinner 6:00 pm

Sisterhood Shabbat Services 8:00 pm

Upcoming Events:

- ✧ Sat. 1/23 Shabbat Mishnah Study
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 Shabbat Morning Orthodox Kehillah Service
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 B'nai Mitzvah Peer Tutoring
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 Shabbat Morning Services
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 Monthly Parsha Study
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 Healing Yoga
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 I.L. Peretz Course with Sheva Zucker
- ✧ Sat. 1/23 Kitah Gimel Family Beit Midrash
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Hebrew with Donna Goldstein
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Weekly Sunday Minyan
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Talmud Torah (PreK-7)
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Kitah Vav Family Beit Midrash
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Walking with Mitzvot # 2
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 AlephBet Program
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Kadima Ice Skating
- ✧ Sun. 1/24 Community Midrasha
- ✧ Tue. 1/26 Va'ad Meeting
- ✧ Wed. 1/27 Weekly Wednesday Minyan
- ✧ Wed. 1/27 Talmud Torah (2-6)
- ✧ Fri. 1/29 Kabbalat Shabbat Services (Bat Mitzvah of Qiuhu Louie)
- ✧ Fri. 1/29 Teen Shabbat Dinner

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.



1/16 Bo
David Kirsch
dkirsch@dm.duke.edu 919-286-4516

1/23 Beshalach
Diane Markoff
diane.markoff@earthlink.net 919-969-8953

1/30 Yitro
Bernie Fischer
Bernie.fischer@duke.edu 919-493-0306

2/6 Mishpatim
Roger Perilstein
rperilstein@hrc-pa.com 919-286-9814

This weekend's Kiddush lunch is hosted by:
*Meredith Emmett & Galia Goodman, Laura Flicker,
Amy Halberstadt & Anthony Weston,
Sally Hicks & Richard Hart, Dale Wolf, and Barry Yeoman*

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 Bo

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

There are a few texts that have helped me get through dark and difficult periods in my religious life, first amongst them being several paragraphs by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik buried in a footnote in his essay Halakhic Man. At another stage of my life long since gone, I yearned for a simple faith in God. I yearned for a transcendent framework that might help me feel closer to a God that too many times felt too far away. I had believed that a sense of wholeness and integration were possible goals for the religious life.

But life kept on getting in the way.

And with one swoosh of the hand, Rabbi Soloveitchik dismissed these romantic and unconstructive hopes of mine. He writes: "That religious consciousness in man's experience. . . is not that simple and comfortable. On the contrary, it is exceptionally complex, rigorous, and tortuous. Where you find its complexity, there you find its greatness. The religious experience, from beginning to end, is antinomic and antithetic." (Halakhic Man, fn. 4)

Here, I understood the Rav to be telling me that the oasis that I prayed for—of a creative synthesis of the tensions that I felt in my religious life—was a mirage. There would be no resolutions to the many contradictions that existed in the fabric of creation. The religious life is not and cannot be meant to bring psychic peace to a stormy sea. Rather, the world and our relationship to God are built on the bricks of conflicting ideas that will never fit together in an orderly manner: The human being was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and the human being is also dust (Gen. 2:7). God is transcendent and immanent; temporal and eternal; God wants our love and God wants to be feared. God seeks our freedom and yet wants us as servants; we yearn for closeness with God and, like Job, we flee never looking back. Each of these ideas is true. Each is a foundational tenet of the Jewish religion. And each conflicts with another.

Reading these words written by one of the great religious minds of the 20th century gave me the space to begin to think about the religious project in new and more open ways. These ideas allowed me to begin to hold contradictory ideas and feelings without experiencing a need to move towards integration. But more importantly, Rabbi Soloveitchik introduced me to the potential creativity of the idea of paradox for my religious life.

This power of paradox is richly explored by one of the iconic Hasidic figures whose life mission and central teachings confront head on—the struggle for faith. With the seemingly simple opening words of our parashah, Rebbe Nahman of Bratzlav (1772-1810) builds an elaborate statement on the themes of faith and doubt and the work of religion to help us dance almost seamlessly between these moments.

God said to Moses, "Come to Pharaoh (Bo el Paroh), for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, in order that I may display My signs among them."

Already in the Zohar, Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai questions the verb of this otherwise unremarkable sentence—"It would have been more fitting for the verse to say, 'Go (lekh) to Pharaoh.' Why [is the verse worded] 'Bo el Paroh (come to Pharaoh)'" (II 34a) Now to contextualize this verse in the Torah in order to emphasize the power of the Zohar's question, when God tells Abraham to leave his homeland, God uses the verb "lekh / go" (Genesis 12:1). When God commands Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness to join his brother on his mission to Egypt, God uses the verb "lekh / go" (Exodus 4:27). Indeed, the command to Moses to return to Egypt to deliver the first plague against Pharaoh, turning the Nile into blood, is made with the verb lekh:

"And God says to Moses, 'Pharaoh is stubborn he refuses to let the people go. Go (lekh) to Pharaoh in the morning as he is coming out of the water.'" (7:14)

Rebbe Nahman develops a Hasidic teaching that pivots on this choice—"Bo el Paroh"—"Come to Pharaoh." "Bo / come," situates God in a different place than the word lekh / go. If the Torah had used the phrase lekh / "Go"—it would mean that God offered this command from the same place where Moses stood—in the wilderness. However, the verb Bo (come) suggests something different. "Come" may be read as an invitation. God invites Moses to come and join God with Pharaoh in the Kingdom of Oppression. With the word "come," God situates God's presence alongside Pharaoh and amidst the evil of slavery. It is as if God tells Moses, "I'm here in Egypt too. Know that My Presence extends even into this place of pain and suffering, where seemingly My Presence is absent."

Rebbe Nahman attaches even more significance to the Torah's choice of words. He teaches that Pharaoh represents the primordial Vacated Space (hallal hapanui) that was needed to birth the world: in order for God to create Heaven and Earth, God had to withdraw and contract (tzimtzum) Godself to make room for the world to come into existence. In this Vacated Space, Rebbe Nahman tells us, "There is, as it were, no Divinity there. Were it not so, it would not be a vacated space...and there would be no room for the creation of the world." (Likutei Moharan 64:1)

Rebbe Nahman places this kabbalistic teaching within a new framework. He reminds us of the foundational paradox that births all of creation: For the world to exist, God must be absent.

Having stated this thesis, Rebbe Nahman also claims that this thesis is impossible. He follows up with what amounts to the antithesis of this idea of the Vacated Space: "However, the ultimate truth is—nonetheless—that Divinity is there, for nothing exists without God's life-force." (64:1)

So now, with the invitation to join God and Pharaoh—who symbolizes the Vacated Space—God, in essence, is asking Moses to confront and hold onto two contradictory ideas (shnei hafakhim): God is present and God is absent in the Vacated Space that represents creation.

And here is the key for Rebbe Nahman—there is no way for Moses or anyone else to reconcile these two opposing truths! There is no way to understand rationally how God is simultaneously present and absent in the Vacated Space. Reason can only get us so far in approaching the Ultimate Mystery of the universe.

At this very moment of impossibility, with this paradox, faith is required. God's (seeming) absence and God's invitation to join God in this absence ("Bo / Come into the Vacated Space") presents us with an opportunity to build a type of faith, frankly, that God's presence cannot offer.

Instead of understanding the competing truths that are part of the texture of our relationship with God and the world as a source of pain, Rebbe Nahman teaches these paradoxes should be seen as an opportunity for a faith that transcends irreconcilable tensions.

For me, confronting these paradoxes reminds me that God is ultimately unknowable. We will never be able to understand how God works in the world. Now with the great humility this knowledge must engender we are asked to commit ourselves to God none the less. Rebbe Nahman teaches us that experiencing a sense of God's absence need not bring us to spiritual crisis. On the contrary, it can bring us to a living and dynamic faith, a mature relationship with God, and a humble awareness of the world's Ultimate Mystery.

Refuah Shleymah רפואה שלמה

Adelah bat Avrom v'Chenya (Adele Abramowitz)	Miryam bat Rivkah (May Segal)	Elinor Fleishman Ilene Jacobson
Aharon ben David u'Miriam (Alan Goldman)	Ovadya ben Elinor (Ovadya Fleishman)	Jennifer Krunkosky
Aliza Chana bat Leah	Reuven ben Chanoch v'Dinah (Robert Feurst)	Inez McFarling Ezra Rapport
Baracha bat Sarah	Rut bat Sarah (Suzanne Furst)	Jack Reich
Bedonna Riva bat Sara	Sara bat Hinda (Sylvia Dante)	Michael Rockman
Ben-Zion ben Sarah	Sarah Gittel bat Rut (Sue Perlo)	Pearl Rohde Richard Roth
Chana bat Malkah	Shira Batya bat Meirav	Carmen Sadowsky
Hannah Leah bat Sarah (Anna Crollman)	Shmuel ben Shoshana	Lauren Schiro
Daronit Esther bat Tuvia v'Leah (Jennifer Greyber)	Sprinya Simcha bat Yehudah v'Chana (Susan Rosefiedle)	Susan Tolchin Christine Walters
David ben Sarah (David Leitner)	Tuvia ben Shmuel v'Tziporah (Tovia Lebovich)	Sharon Welensky Orrie Wilner
Eliyahu Chanan ben Sarah (Ed Gagnon)	Tziporah bat Esther	Amy Wolf
Gershon Yonah ben Tuvia v'Chana Leah haLevi (Harlan Gradin)	Yehudit bat Rachel	
Malka Hannah bat Basha Rachel	Lucretia Bell	
M'cor Eyshele bat Esther Tzvia	Sonia Berman Anne Boyd Cynthia Brown	

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

Yahrzeits יארצייטן

Ernie Bronstein	Esther Lebovich
Gertrude Brown	Frances Lynn
Bartow Culp	Esther Margolese
Ellen Egger	David Herschel "Harry" Nydick
Alan Grossinger	Gerard Rohde
Leon Kahn	Eva Baden Slikin
Rae Korkin	Jerry Ulrich

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Rabbi: Daniel Greyber

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