



The Shofar

May - June, 2025

Congregation House of Israel

3 Iyar - 4 Tammuz, 5785



Shavuot

June 2 & 3

The Book of Ruth

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The Shofar

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Golda Meir

By Sherrill Nicolosi

If Golda Meir had lived, she would be 127 years old. Don't we wish this Israeli politician and stateswoman did live that long?

Golda Meir was born in the Russian Empire in Kiev (now Ukraine) to a Jewish family that emigrated to the United States when Golda was age 8. Her father had emigrated three years earlier, working to bring the family to the States. Golda, her mother and her 2 sisters lived in Pinsk (now Belarus) until they could join Golda's father. Her sister, Shayna, nine years her senior, was deeply committed to the Socialist-Zionist movement and the idea that there would, and should, be a Jewish Socialist State in Palestine. She was much admired by Golda and influenced her later political views.

After emigrating to Milwaukee, Golda graduated and worked as a teacher. There she began her involvement in the Labor Zionist movement. A move to a Kibbutz in Palestine in 1921 solidified her involvement in Zionist politics, and over the next 15-plus years, she served on several key positions in labor and trade unions.

Golda Meir was a signatory of the Israeli Declaration of Independence (1948), elected to the Knesset (1949), and served as Labor Minister (1956). As Labor Minister, she was considered one of the most

powerful Israeli politicians of her time. She was appointed Foreign Minister (1959 to 1966) by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, a position she used to promote the establishment of strong alliances with the international communities.

Mrs. Meir was elected the fourth Prime Minister of Israel (1969-1974), during which time she was a strong advocate for peace in the Middle East.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy accomplishments of her political career concerned her fundraising efforts prior to and during the Palestine War (1947-1949). Mrs. Meir's highly successful fundraising efforts raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the War and for the establishment of the State of Israel. In her autobiography, *My Life*, she told of her speech to the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations in Chicago, "The Jewish community in Palestine is going to fight to the very end. If we have arms to fight with, we will fight with them. If not, we will fight with stones in our hands"

The resulting efforts were critical to the success of the creation of Israel.

Golda Meir's political legacy was marred by what critics called her failure as Prime Minister to timely mobilize Israel's military forces to avoid the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Today, Golda Meir is more correctly viewed as one of the heroes of modern Jewish history, an integral part of the founding of the State of Israel.

Reb Shelly's Desk



Passover Hope

By Rabbi Marc Sack

This week ahead, we in the Jewish community will be enjoying Passover, our celebration of freedom. The most important part of this holiday is the Seder, the meal

during which we revisit our history of slavery and liberation and wonder what it means for us today.

To guide us through our discussion, we use a Haggadah, 'narrative,' that tells the early story of our people. Since the onset of printing, more than 2,600 editions of the Haggadah — more than any other Jewish book — have been published.

We Jews are constantly reexamining what it means to be free. The Haggadah opens with an invitation. 'This is the bread of poverty and persecution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry, come and eat.' On these words, one Haggadah contains this story.

'In the spring of 1945, a father and his teenage son shared the harsh labor in the Nazi camp. The father suggested a pact between them to save part of what little bread they received. After several days of saving, the father reported to his son sheepishly: 'I am sorry, but I have given away our whole store of bread to a new arrival.' 'Why?' asked the son in desperation. The father explained, 'There are two reasons: First, he needed food even more than we, and second, I exchanged the bread for a miniature Haggadah.' Several days later using this Haggadah, the father was able to raise people's spirits by conducting a Seder for many inmates. Even though matzah (unleavened bread) was unavailable, the Seder gave everyone a special kind of nourishment — hope.'

What is hope? Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offered this definition: 'Optimism and hope are not the same. Optimism is the belief that the world is changing for the better; hope is the belief that, together, we can make the world better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to hope.'

Throughout my career, I was an activist rabbi. I saw it as my job to lead my congregation to be involved in the social welfare of our city and, equally, to

establish friendships with other churches and synagogues in our neighborhood. We held annual multisection learning and discussion programs, bringing our congregants together.

The comment we heard most often was, 'we need to do more of this.' We joined together with faith communities to do something — build understanding and friendship. We worked to build hope.

Perhaps like many of you, I am deeply troubled by the polarization in our country. One time, a newcomer to town came to talk to me about my congregation in southwest Florida. He explained that he left California and moved to our city because he liked the political tone better there. Then he asked me where I stood politically. I swallowed hard and told him that I was an ardent centrist, that my political ideal was when people from both sides of the aisle, through give and take, worked things out together. I mentioned that interfaith relations, building friendship with others, was a strong part of our congregational life.

He left my synagogue and never came back. He was not interested in meeting with others who might disagree with him.

I came to Interfaith Action of Central Texas because I believe that to overcome polarization we must work to bring people together. In our time, that effort builds hope.

Here's a comment from another Haggadah. 'History ... cannot move or progress without the individual. God waits for man if there is something to be done. He does nothing until man initiates action. God waits for man, for a single person, to accept responsibility and initiate the process of ... redemption.'

One of the lessons that I gain from the Haggadah is that God needs us to bring hope into the world. One way we do that is by meeting and learning from those who see the world differently than we do. I believe that God wants every one of us to take part in doing that, that our engagement with iACT brings hope.

My thanks to Stuart Leibowitz for sending me this article which appeared in the Austin-American Statesman.

Rabbi Marc Sack, retired after 42 years of serving congregations in Minneapolis, Austin, and Tampa and Fort Myers in Florida, now lives in Austin with his wife and is enjoying time with their children and grandchildren.

ARZA - World Union

What are you going to add to your Seder Plate this year?

On Tuesday morning, I sat around a table across from the parents, siblings, aunts, and uncles of several of the 59 hostages remaining in Gaza. I listened to their painful stories, the love and affection they had for their children, and their emphatic pleas to the American Jewish community to do everything in our power to Bring Them Home. Some of their loved ones, we know, are no longer among the living, and their bodies are being held, and some believe that their loved ones are alive. The thought of sitting down to a second Pesach Seder with a glaringly empty chair at their table is almost unbearable.

Like last year, this year's Seders will be different. We will sit down to tell the story of our own liberation, of our formation and becoming a people. Essentially, it is our story of independence while we are at war, and 59 of our brothers and sisters (the living and the dead) are still, literally, in the House of Bondage.

This Seder will be different for some families because their loved ones have returned home. From January to March, we saw the return of 33 hostages as a result of the hostage release deal and ceasefire. As they sit down to Seder, they will omit one word from the Haggadah: "As if"). When we read this passage, "In every generation, one must see themselves as if they went out from Egypt." They will be compelled to omit the "As if" because they actually went out from captivity, out of *Mitzraim* ("Egypt" or "the narrow places"), and are now free. They will tell their harrowing stories of survival and recall their fellow hostages who did not make it out alive or are still there languishing in tortuous situations, waiting for an impending release.

We must listen to their stories and remain singularly focused on the release of the others, reminding ourselves that when one person is not free, none of us are free either.

While we hear and share stories, we also have a rich tradition of using foods as a symbolic manifestation of the embodiment of the various aspects of our shared memory, afflictions, and causes-du-jour. We all know what the matzah, haroset, salt water, and karpas symbolize. There is a lengthy and growing custom of adding symbolic foods to one's Seder plate to highlight a particular affliction and to call attention to a relevant and contemporary issue.

Many of us may be aware of the custom of placing an orange on the seder plate (chock full of urban myth) as a contrarian response to the rejection of female rabbis, but there are many more (and here). In addition, some seders feature ice cubes to remind us of global warming and climate change, a sheave of wheat in solidarity with Ukraine, etc...

This year Rachel Goldberg-Polin, a Jewish educator and mother of murdered hostage Hersch Goldberg-Polin z"l, asks us to put a Lemon on our Seder plate.

My friend and colleague Rabbi Gersh Lazarow of Melbourne, Australia, penned the following in the formulation of this new ritual:

"This bright yellow fruit, like the ribbons tied in remembrance, represents both hope and the sourness that fills our hearts as we think of the 59 hostages still held in Gaza. Its sharp bitterness echoes the pain of their captivity—a powerful reminder of freedom still denied. This lemon, in addition to the Maror and Chazeret, is more than a symbol; it is a call to awareness and action. It urges us to weave their struggle into our ancient story of liberation. As its bite sharpens our resolve, may it kindle an unrelenting desire to see them safely returned. May this emblem of captivity become a symbol of celebration at their release."

We would like to share this beautiful and meaningful ritual of putting a lemon on the seder plate to call attention and raise awareness for those in captivity. An additional ritual from Rabbi Evan Shultz of Congregation Bnai Israel in Bridgeport, CT (and a Vote Reform #3 slate member) encourages us to break 59 pieces of Matzah as symbols of the fragments of the modern captivity of the hostages. This is a moment to read the names of the hostages, say their names, and take this moment to highlight the brokenness as Rabbi Shultz wrote:

"We take a moment to read their names and pray that, like our ancestors, they, too, cross the sea to freedom."

We encourage you to adopt these new and hopefully temporary customs at your seders this year and post pictures of your ribbons, empty chairs, and lemons. We have heard many testimonies from freed hostages who say that the prayers, protests, and efforts to raise awareness gave them the strength and resilience to survive. Our Reform Movement has been steadfast in its efforts to bring the hostages home. Lee Siegel, a member of Kibbutz Gezer and Reform Congregation Birkat Shalom was reunited with his brother Keith, who was released after 481 days in Hamas captivity.

Continued on page 6

Purim 2025



Pesach 2025



Arza - World Union

Continued from page 4

Since his release, Keith has dedicated his efforts to pushing for the release of the remaining hostages – including speaking at the White House Pesach event.

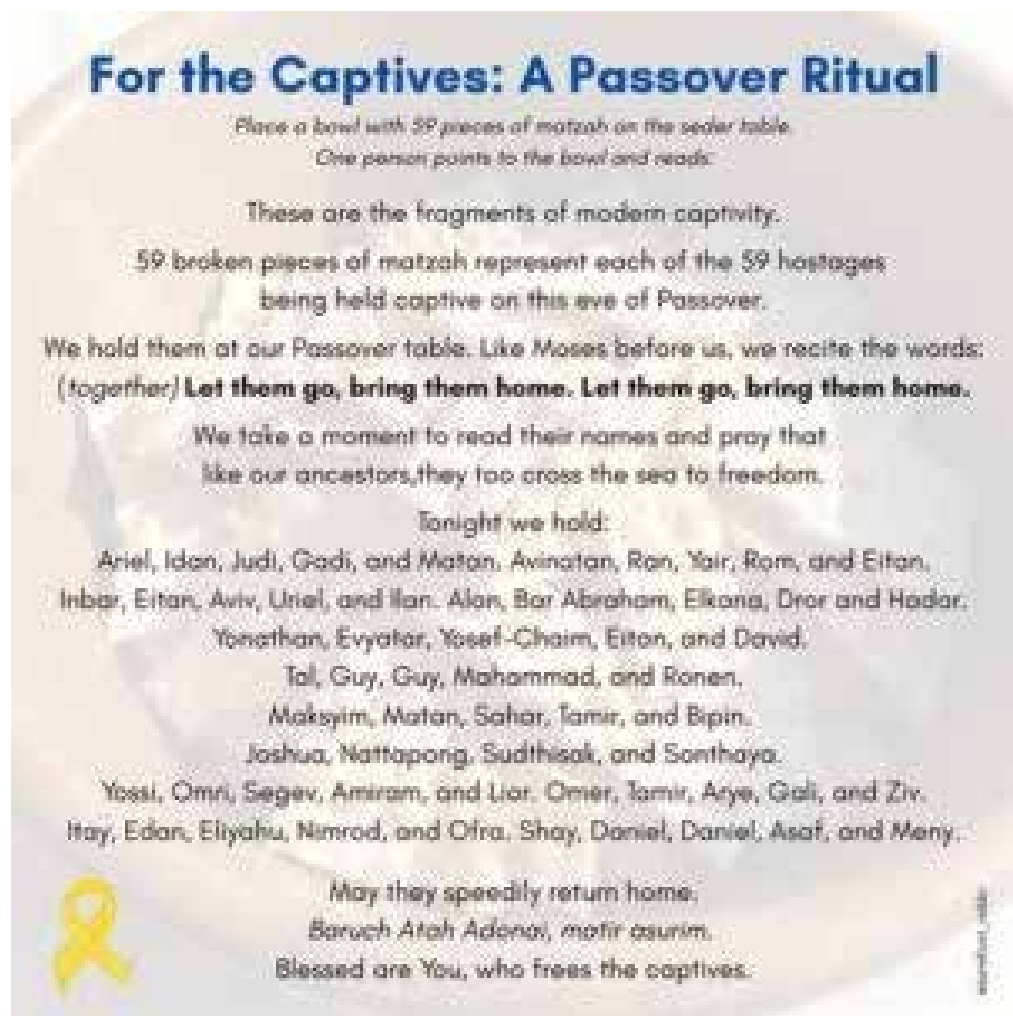
Lee has his own message for Reform Jews around the world: Vote Reform.

“It was the Reform Movement that held me close and gave me support during this dark and difficult time. Now, I am asking you to support our Movement.”

The value of freedom is at the center of our Pesach experience. We will pray for it, discuss it, hope, sing songs of freedom, and symbolize our freedom during the Seder. We will add new rituals to our ancient customs and take action. We need everyone to Vote Reform to advocate for the release of the hostages and to ensure a strong, secure, democratic Jewish State.

May this Pesach bring meaning for you and your loved ones, and may we know no more empty chairs.

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Pesach Sameach!



For the Captives: A Passover Ritual

Place a bowl with 59 pieces of matzah on the seder table.
One person points to the bowl and reads:

These are the fragments of modern captivity.
59 broken pieces of matzah represent each of the 59 hostages
being held captive on this eve of Passover.


We hold them at our Passover table. Like Moses before us, we recite the words:
(together) **Let them go, bring them home. Let them go, bring them home.**

We take a moment to read their names and pray that
like our ancestors, they too cross the sea to freedom.

Tonight we hold:

Ariel, Idan, Judi, Gadi, and Matan, Avinatan, Ron, Yair, Rom, and Eitan,
Inbar, Eitan, Aviv, Uriel, and Ilan. Alon, Bar Abraham, Elkana, Dror and Hadar,
Yonathan, Evyatar, Yosef-Chaim, Eitan, and David,
Tal, Guy, Guy, Mohammad, and Ronen,
Maksym, Matan, Sahar, Tamir, and Bipin,
Joshua, Nattapong, Sudthisak, and Sonthaya,
Yossi, Omri, Segev, Amiram, and Lior, Omer, Tamir, Arye, Gali, and Ziv,
Itay, Edan, Elyahu, Nimrod, and Ofra, Shay, Daniel, Daniel, Asaf, and Meny.

May they speedily return home.
Baruch Atah Adonai, motir asurim.
Blessed are You, who frees the captives.



Rapper-comedian stages Passover Seder dinners on the subway to help combat antisemitism on NYC trains

Story by Natalie O'Neill, NY Post

He's fighting subway antisemitism one matzoh ball at a time.

A comedic rapper has been staging Passover Seder dinners on the subway as a "fun and quirky" way to combat anti-Jewish sentiment and "bring people together" on Big Apple trains, he told The Post.

For the performances, Rami Matan Even-Esh, 43, who goes by the punny rap name Kosha Dillz, dresses like Moses with a fake beard and robe as he rolls tables of food into the Q train, footage shows.

"There are so many antisemitic train incidents, but the dinner has a spiritual, deeper meaning," said Even-Esh, who also appears on MTV's Wild 'n Out.

"It's a really great way to bring people together."

During the sacred meal on wheels, Even-Esh spits funny and self-deprecating rhymes and offers straphangers everything from Katz's matzoh ball soup to grape juice and even gefilte fish, he said.

Straphangers reactions' to the mobile Passover feast have included a Dominican dad and son who chowed down on matzah crackers and an Egyptian teenager with a "Free Palestine" bracelet who ended up joining the fun, Even-Esh said.

He also plans to stage a Seder at the Knicks game against the Detroit Pistons outside of Madison Square Garden on Saturday.

"We're praying for the Knicks," he quipped.

He's banking on the idea that food and laughter will bring New Yorkers together.

"If I can make the world a little happier and lighter, that's awesome," he said.



Passover Gift Set



Sisterhood



This is my last Shofar article as president of Sisterhood because my term comes to an end in May.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my deepest thanks and sincere admiration for the members of

Sisterhood.

Sisterhood works tirelessly and quietly on behalf of our congregation in so many ways. Our members plan the events, prepare the food, set up and decorate the tables, serve the food, and clean up afterward for all our community activities. Without these dedicated women, our community life would be much diminished.

So, ladies, BRAVA!

Glenda

Birthdays & Anniversaries

May Anniversaries

Jerry and Fran Rephan	May 3
Les and Diana Surfas	May 18
Dennis and Anita Williams	May 25
Larry and Carol Levi	May 27

June Anniversaries

Ira and Stephanie Kleinman	June 8
Giles and Katina Bowden	June 10
Mark and Patti Fleischner	June 12
Anthony & Sherrill Nicolosi	June 14
Ross and Ruth Sedler	June 16
David and Cheryl Cohen	June 27

May Birthdays

Ira Kleinman	May 13
Mark Fleischner	May 14
Sharon Waxler	May 14
Elaine Wolken	May 16
Patti Fleischner	May 17
Glenda Kirsch	May 23
Rachel Schulman	May 26
Giles Bowden	May 29

June Birthdays

Sheldon Kleinman	June 4
Michael Richardson	June 4
Andrea Parker	June 9
Randy Lewis	June 12
Linda Leibowitz	June 18
Mary Klompus	June 20
David Cohen	June 21
Yossi Baron	June 28

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Refuah Shlemah

The following people are in our thoughts and prayers for healing. Please offer prayers that they have a full and complete recovery.:

- Walter Collier
- Oded Grenman
- Randy Lewis
- Pat McCarthy
- Mike Richardson
- Larry Taub
- Misty Stricklin
- Shep Taxer
- Anita Williams
- James Woodfork
- Tamara Keith
- 59 Israeli Hostages

May - June Jahrzeits

Kaddish Recited May 2

Moria Viner

Sister of Cynthia Rephan

Hannah Taub

Grandmother of Betty Feir

Robin Rans

Niece of Fred Korngut

Mark Cohen

Father of David Cohen

Samuel Kirsch

*Grandfather of Steven Kirsch
Grandfather of Mark Fleischner
Grandfather of Stuart Fleischner*

Kaddish Recited May 9

Serena Kirsch

Mother of Steven Kirsch

Marvin Taxer

Brother of Sheldon (Shep) Taxer

Kaddish Recited May 16

Frances Koppel

Mother of Hal Koppel

Helen Kleinman

*Mother-in-law of Betty Kleinman
Grandmother of Ira Kleinman*

Leanora Ballard Haynie

Mother of Laura Castillo

Nathan Davis

*Grandfather of Rachel Schulman
Grandfather of David D. Reagler*

Kaddish Recited May 23

Louise Levi

Mother of Larry Levi

Morris Reagler

*Grandfather of David D. Reagler
Grandfather of Rachel Schulman*

Shirley Sedler

Mother of Ross Sedler

Irwin Kleinman

Brother of Sheldon Kleinman

Kaddish Recited May 30

George Thornton Ginsburg

Brother of Millie Baron

Norman "Dick" Franklin

Step-father of David Cohen

Kaddish Recited June 6

Nancy Kleinman

Mother of Sheldon Kleinman

Dora Korngut

Mother of Fred Korngut

Tillie Creim

*Great Aunt of David D. Reagler
Great Aunt of Rachel Schulman*

Kaddish Recited June 13

Tikva Baron

Mother of Yossi Baron

Faye Kirsch

*Grandmother of Steven Kirsch
Grandmother of Mark Fleischner
Grandmother of Stuart Fleischner*

David Lockwood

*Grandfather of Susan Siegel
Grandfather of Diane Goltz*

Charles Bellin

Father of Ruth Sedler

Kaddish Recited June 20

Estee Klompus

Mother-in-law of Mary Klompus

Kaddish Recited June 27

Vicki Seligman

Mother of Diana Surfas

Morris Nathan Bauman

Father of Cynthia Rephan

Louis Brown

Father of Betty Forshberg

Roxanne Smalley Capotosto

Sister of Kim Baron

May Parshiot

Tazria/M'tzora

May 3, 2025

The Parshahs of Tazria and Metzora continue the discussion of the laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

Tzaraat (often mistranslated as “leprosy”) is a supernatural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person’s skin (dark pink or dark green in garments or homes), a kohen is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the kohen pronounces it tamei (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the tzaraat recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

When the metzora (“leper”) heals, he or she is purified by the kohen with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

Acharaei - Kedoshim

May 10, 2025

Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, G d warns against unauthorized entry “into the holy.” Only one person, the kohen gadol (“high priest”), may—but once a year, on Yom Kippur—enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred ketoret to G d.

The Parshah of Acharei also warns against bringing korbanot (animal or meal offerings) anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant sexual relations.

The Parshah of Kedoshim begins with the statement: “You shall be holy, for I, the L rd your G d, am holy.” This is followed by dozens of mitzvot (divine commandments) through which the Jew sanctifies him- or herself and relates to the holiness of G d.

Emor

May 17, 2025

The second part of Emor lists the annual Callings of Holiness—the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nissan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nissan; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the second day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the fiftieth day; a “remembrance of shofar blowing” on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival—during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the “Four Kinds”—beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the “eighth day” of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).

B'har - Bechukotai

May 24, 2025

On the mountain of Sinai, G d communicates to Moses the laws of the Sabbatical year: every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast.

Seven Sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the Jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been

sold revert to their original owners. Additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury, are also given.

Bamidbar

May 31, 2025

In the Sinai Desert, G d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary. They replace the firstborn, whose number they approximated, since they were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel “ransom” to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. Before the Sanctuary’s entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons. Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.



June Parshiot

Naso

June 7, 2025

Completing the headcount of the Children of Israel taken in the Sinai Desert, a total of 8,580 Levite men between the ages of 30 and 50 are counted in a tally of those who will be doing the actual work of transporting the Tabernacle.

God communicates to Moses the law of the *sotah*, the wayward wife suspected of unfaithfulness to her husband. Also given is the law of the *nazir*, who forswears wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and is forbidden to become contaminated through contact with a dead body. Aaron and his descendants, the *kohanim*, are instructed on how to bless the people of Israel.

B'haalot'cha

June 14, 2025

A "Second Passover" is instituted in response to the petition, "Why should we be deprived?" by a group of Jews who were unable to bring the Passover offering in its appointed time because they were ritually impure. God instructs Moses on the procedures for Israel's journeys and encampments in the desert, and the people journey in formation from Mount Sinai, where they had been camped for nearly a year.

The people are dissatisfied with their "bread from heaven" (the *manna*), and demand that Moses supply them with meat. Moses appoints 70 elders, to whom he imparts of his spirit, to assist him in the burden of governing the people. Miriam speaks negatively of Moses, and is punished with leprosy; Moses prays for her healing, and the entire community waits seven days for her recovery.

Shelach

June 21, 2025

Moses sends twelve spies to the land of Canaan. Forty days later they return, carrying a huge cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig, to report on a lush and bountiful land. But ten of the spies warn that the inhabitants of the land are giants and warriors "more powerful than we"; only Caleb and Joshua insist that the land can be conquered, as God has commanded.

The people weep that they'd rather return to Egypt. God decrees that Israel's entry into the Land shall be delayed forty years, during which time that entire generation will die out in the desert.

Korach

June 28, 2025

Korach incites a mutiny challenging Moses' leadership and the granting of the *kehunah* (priesthood) to Aaron. He is accompanied by Moses' inveterate foes, Dathan and Abiram.

Joining them are 250 distinguished members of the community, who offer the sacrosanct *ketoret* (incense) to prove their worthiness for the priesthood.

The earth opens up and swallows the mutineers, and a fire consumes the *ketoret* offerers. A subsequent plague is stopped by Aaron's offering of *ketoret*.

Aaron's staff miraculously blossoms and brings forth almonds, to prove that his designation as high priest is divinely ordained

