

V'zot Ha-B'racha @ the DC Beit Midrash

Monday, September 20, 2004; 5 Tishrei 5765

Welcome to the DC Beit Midrash!

The Chumash (Five Books of Moses) is divided into 54 portions, which Jews read sequentially each week in services. Each week, a member of our community will lead us in a text-study of this portion, or *parasha*, or in a subject related to our particular location in the Jewish liturgical calendar. The voices of both past and contemporary interpreters will inform our discussion. Every week, a sheet summarizing the Torah portion of the week and the other sources the teacher will use will be provided to aid you in your study.

Wanna teach? Contact Micah:

teachers@dcbeitmidrash.org

Wanna sponsor food? Contact Simma:

food@dcbeitmidrash.org

Know where we should publicize? Contact Jeff:

publicity@dcbeitmidrash.org

Questions, feedback, wanna join our email list?

Anything else? Contact Jana, Ann, and Jesse:

info@dcbeitmidrash.org

This Week's *Parasha* (Torah Portion): V'zot Ha-B'racha

Deuteronomy (*D'varim*), 33:1 – 34:12

V'zot Ha-B'racha is the final portion of the year. It is read on *Simchat Torah*, the holiday of "rejoicing with the Torah." Moses addresses the Israelites one last time, recounting the giving of the Torah and blessing them tribe by tribe. The Israelites are standing on a mountain overlooking the Jordan Valley from the east, but Moses will not be allowed to enter the Land of Israel with the rest of the people. He dies, and is buried; the story of the Torah is now finished, and the story of the judges and prophets begins.

(http://www.kolel.org/pages/parasha/devarim_summary.html)

This Week's Sources

Bemidbar Rabbah

800s-1200s

Bemidbar Rabbah is a collection of *midrashim* (rabbinic biblical exegeses) on the Book of Numbers, the fourth of the five Books of Moses (*Bemidbar* in Hebrew). It is a compilation of two other midrashic texts on the book. The earlier text was compiled around the 9th century CE. The later text is based on the school of Moses the Commentator (*Moshe ha-Parshan*) of the 11th century. The two texts were brought together in the 13th century.

(adapted from <http://learn.jtsa.edu/topics/diduknow/sources/midrashim.shtml#numrab>)

Marc Chagall

1889-1985

Marc Chagall was born in Vitebsk, Byelorussia to a poor Hassidic family. The eldest of nine children, he studied first in a *cheder* (Hebrew school) before moving to a secular Russian school, where he began to display his artistic talent. Most of his career was spent in Paris, although he also returned to Russia, spent the World War II years in the United States, and visited Israel. Chagall painted with a variety of media, such as oils, water colors, and gouaches. His work also expanded to other forms of art, including ceramics, mosaics, and stained glass. Among his most famous building decorations are the ceiling of the Opera House in Paris, murals at the New York Metropolitan Opera, a glass window at the United Nations, and decorations at the Vatican, and the stained glass windows of the chapel of the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

(adapted from http://www.hadassah.org.il/English/Eng_MainNavBar/About/Art+at+Hadassah/Marc+Chagall+biography.htm)

This Week's Teacher

shira@post.harvard.edu

Shira Fischer works for the National Academy of Sciences. She has taught at Adas Israel Congregation and has also taught a course on Jewish holidays for The Melton Adult Mini-School at the DCJCC. She has studied in Israel as a Dorot Fellow, studying Jewish texts at the Conservative Yeshiva, the Hartman Institute, and Hebrew University. While in Israel, Shira also worked at the Academy for Hebrew Language, where she assisted in making up new Hebrew words. Shira is a founding mother of the DC Beit Midrash.

This Week's Food Sponsor:

Eric Gurevitz is sponsoring food this week in honor of the great times he has had in DC, especially at the DC Beit Midrash. He wishes to invite anyone who will be in Israel to his new home in Jerusalem. He can be contacted at gurevitz@gmail.com.

Food is also sponsored in honor of Dr. Efrat Benn on the successful defense of her dissertation and her completion of UMCP's PhD program in school psychology. Mazal tov, Dr. Benn!!!

This Week's Food Shlepper: Simma Asher

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