

Congregation Anshe Emeth



E-Newsletter May 2026

Services, Led by our Shaliach Tzibur, Jese Shell

Friday, May 8 @ 7:30 pm

- Shabbat Services, followed by an Oneg
- Services are in person or on zoom, see zoom information at the end of this newsletter.

No services scheduled for the summer, but summer opportunities for worship and fellowship are available in Dayton!

Beth Jacob: <https://bethjacobcong.org/>

Temple Israel: <https://tidayton.org/>

Beth Abraham: <https://bethabrahamdayton.org/>

Temple Beth Or: <https://www.templebethor.com/>

Jewish Federation of Dayton: <https://jewishdayton.org/>

Sunday, August 2, time TBD (tentatively late morning)

- Our annual business meeting and picnic, Piqua Hollows Park

Zichrono Livracha

Mitzi Saeman, mother of Marty Saeman (Barb), aunt of Lois Foster and Judie Thompson, great-aunt of Jeff Foster, passed away on April 24. She was a long time member of our congregation and a woman of valor and strength. Z”L

Shavuot Trivia at Temple Beth Jacob

Join Beth Jacob Congregation on **Friday, May 22nd** for a fun evening of davening, a dairy dinner, and Torah learning! Dinner served at 6:00 PM followed by Torah Trivia and Candle lighting at 8:30 pm. RSVP with your email and name to Bethjacob@aol.com. An event flyer is attached with this newsletter. Contact Jese for additional information!

Shabbat on April 17

It was wonderful to gather for a quiet and meaningful Shabbat on Friday, April 17. Thank you to Jese for a lovely service and book club discussion. The highlight of the evening for many was seeing Kennedy and her Aunt Janessa's smiling faces!



Window Work Completed!

The storm window project is finished! Our south facing windows are protected from unexpected acts of nature (and man). We are grateful to the Piqua Foundation for their financial support, our neighbors for their patience with the project, and Blanck Glass Art Studios in Piqua for being so easy to work with!



Building Maintenance Committee

The Building Maintenance Committee will gather at our building on **Sunday, May 24 at 10:30 am** to discuss concerns about our building's infrastructure and develop solutions. Mike Feinstein, Luke Bowman, and Jeff Bargemann are the hearts and heads of this committee, but anyone who would like to join them is welcome.

Stars of Bethlehem



These wildflowers in the front of the Temple are called *Stars of Bethlehem*. They seemed out of place in a Jewish setting until our most "learned" prayer leader, Jese Shell, explained the Hebrew meaning of Bethlehem. *Bet* in Hebrew means dwelling and *Lechem* means bread or food. It is

true that we are always eating when our community gathers for worship or fellowship!





Mazel Tov to Luke and Karen Bowman on the upcoming marriage of their daughter, Ellie!



Yahrtzeits for May . . . Of Blessed Memory

*Toby Asher
Sanford Barcus
Lillian Kastner Cohen
Dina Kastner
Samuel Louis
Henry Saeman
Sam Shuchat
Barbara Speraw*

Mi Shebeirach . . . Prayers for Healing

*Bill Peck
Sue Young
Barb and Marty Saeman
Joey Ferrell
Rosanne Youngstein
Leonard Wyrobnik
Ruthie Wyrobnik-Davis
Shelly Seigel-Weiss
Galta Giltala bat Cillia
Chaya Vidal
Zeke Levi
Itzca Zohar
Burt Carrico
Chana Chaya Chaya bat Yenta Malka*

Prayers for healing are a mitzvah, but a true joy is knowing someone is healed. Please let us know when you or your loved one is better so we can joyfully remove them from the Mi Shebeirach list!

Behar-Bechukotai: Rest, Renewal, and Responsibility

Jese Shell- Congregation Anshe Emeth

Shalom Everyone!

As we gather together in the coming week to pray, reflect, and join in community, we enter into the powerful double portion of *Behar-Bechukotai*, which concludes the Book of Leviticus (*Vayikra*). There is something spiritually weighty and deeply reflective about reaching the end of a book of Torah, especially one so focused on holiness, responsibility, and the sacred rhythms of life. This parsha invites us not only to look back at what we've learned, but to consider how we carry these teachings forward into our lives today and what they mean to us all.

In *Behar*, we are introduced to the laws of the *Sabbatical year (Shemittah)* and the *Jubilee year (Yovel)*. Every seventh year, the land is to rest, fields lie fallow, debts are released, and the people are reminded that the earth ultimately belongs not to us, but to G-d. After seven cycles of seven years comes the 50th year, the Jubilee Year, when land is returned to its original owners and societal inequities are reset. These laws emphasize economic justice, environmental stewardship, and communal responsibility.

In *Bechukotai*, the Torah presents a covenantal framework: blessings will follow if the people walk in G-d's ways, while hardship will come if they abandon them. Though the language can feel stark and even uncomfortable, it reflects an ancient understanding of moral cause and effect. It shows that we are partners in making the world a moral and just place and outlines a powerful, sacred blueprint for that. The portion concludes with laws about vows and dedications, reinforcing the idea that our commitments, spoken and lived, matter deeply.

At its heart, *Behar-Bechukotai* is about balance: between ownership and stewardship, freedom and responsibility, action and rest. The commandment to let the land rest every seventh year is radical, even by today's standards and seems like a huge task to the producers and to meet the needs of a growing world. It challenges a mindset of constant productivity and reminds us that rest is not laziness, it is and can be sacred. In our modern world, where burnout is common and rest is often undervalued, the Torah's insistence on pause is both countercultural and deeply necessary. For many when working, burnout can severely impact someone's mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. The Torah reminds us that we are not robots and

must acknowledge our human need for rest, as well as the land's.

The Jubilee year expands this vision into the realm of social justice. It acknowledges that over time, inequality can grow, and without intervention, systems can become unjust. The Torah's solution is not permanent accumulation, but periodic reset, a reminder that dignity, opportunity, and belonging should never be permanently out of reach for anyone. This has powerful implications for how we think about fairness, equity, economic systems, and community care today.

In *Bechukotai*, we encounter the idea that our choices matter—not just individually, but collectively. The blessings and admonitions are not simply rewards and punishments, but reflections of a deeper truth: that a society built on compassion, justice, and integrity will flourish, while one that neglects these values will struggle. While we may not read these verses literally, they invite us to consider the consequences of our actions and the kind of world we are helping to create.

So how do we bring *Behar–Bechukotai* into our modern lives?

First, we can embrace the value of intentional rest. Whether it is observing Shabbat more fully or often, taking moments for prayer and gratitude, setting aside time to unplug from work and truly rest, or simply allowing ourselves space to breathe, we honor the spirit of *Shemittah* when we recognize that we are not defined solely by what we produce. Second, we can commit to justice and fairness in our communities. This might mean supporting local initiatives that address inequality, being mindful of how we treat others in business and daily interactions, or advocating for systems that reflect our Jewish values of dignity and compassion. Third, we can reflect on our covenantal responsibilities and not just brush them off when the going may get tough. Judaism teaches that we are partners in shaping the world. Our actions and how we speak, how we give, how we show up for one another are not insignificant. They are the building blocks of a just and holy society. Finally, *Bechukotai* reminds us of the importance of accountability and hope. Even in its most challenging passages, there is an undercurrent of the possibility for return (*teshuvah*). No matter how far we may stray, the path back is תמיד open. This is a message of profound comfort and resilience.

As we conclude the Book of Leviticus, we traditionally say, “*Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazek*”—“Be strong, be strong, and let us strengthen one another.” These words feel especially fitting this week. The journey toward holiness is not meant to be walked alone. It is a shared endeavor, rooted in community, sustained by tradition, and

inspired by hope.

May this Shabbat and all bring you rest and renewal. May the teachings of *Behar–Bechukotai* guide us toward lives of balance, justice, and compassion. And may we continue to grow stronger together as we carry these sacred values into the world.

Shabbat Shalom u'mevorach.

JOIN IN PERSON OR ZOOM

To Join Zoom Service:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7643723318?pwd=STJIR1drNXFoL29XRGw0L1AzMThxQT09>

Or go to your Zoom App and put in this information:

Meeting ID: 764 372 3318 Passcode: 0092

Or simply dial by your location:

646 876 9923 US (New York)

When prompted, put in for the Meeting ID: 764 372 3318 and push #

Passcode: 0092 and push #