



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, May 13, 2021 to Wednesday, May 19, 2021
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper Shabbat Parashat Bamdbar

Shabbat Service—Friday, May 14, 7:30 p.m.

SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday Evening 7:30 pm

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

While the Beth Shalom office will be closed during the Covid 19 Shut Down, our office phone and email will continue to be attended to during regular working hours:

9:00a-4:00p Tue-Fri.

562.941.8744

bswoffice@verizon.net

YAHREIT

Susan Kramer
in memory of father,
Michael Falk

Klara Wein
in memory of mother,
Rachel Leah Militeanu

Lila Held
in memory of grandmother,
Jenny Kuperstein

Sidney Paul
in memory of sister,
Sylvia Playberg

If you know of someone who is ill, had surgery, or just needs a call now and then, please let us know so we can reach out. Thank you.

Happy Birthday

Alberto Herrera—May 8
Maxine Berkowitz—May 9
Maggie Singer—May 10
Lenore Barembaum—May 11

Clergy Schedule

Virtual Services: www.facebook.com/bethshalomofwhittier

May 14--7:23 pm organ prelude; 7:30 pm service

Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

May 16--**Erev Shavuot**--7:23 pm--Lewandowski Shavuot Organ

Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

Yizkor Memorial prayers recited during this service

May 21--7:23 pm organ prelude; 7:30 pm service

Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

May 28--7:30 pm service Rabbi Kenneth Milhandler

Up All Night

Torah Reading: Exodus 19:1-20:22

Haftarah Reading: Ezekiel 1:1-28, 3:12

Shavuot

By: Rabbi Cheryl Peretz, posted on May 31, 2017/5777

As children, we think staying up all night is pretty cool. Remember the first time you vowed to stay awake for something special? In all likelihood, it ended with you falling asleep, leaving unfulfilled the desire to experience the special occasion of the night. Fast forward to college – an all-nighter took on new significance as a last ditch effort to cram for the big exam (memorizing information that many would say they forget not long after the exam is over) or put the finishing touches on an important paper (one that often made up the majority of the semester grade).

So, why as we conclude counting the omer – the 49 days marking the time between Passover and Shavuot – and having journeyed through the spiritual transformation from slavery to freedom, do we Jews insist on an all-nighter as part of the re-enactment of receiving Torah at Mt. Sinai? For that matter, how is it that Shavuot is connected to the receiving of Torah at all?

Reading the Torah itself ([Leviticus 23: 9-21](#), [Exodus 23: 16](#) and 34: 22), Shavuot is primarily (if not exclusively) an agricultural holiday, marking the harvest season in Israel, and therefore binding God, the Jewish people, and the uniqueness of the land. Come the rabbinic period (beginning in the second century CE), the holiday is given a radically different purpose, best characterized by the 11th century Midrash of Pesikta de Ravta, compiled by Rabbi Tovia ben Eliezer HaGadol of Greece and Bulgaria: "You shall declare a holy assembly on this very day" ([Lev. 23:21](#)). This refers to the fiftieth day, the day the people of Israel stood before Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Our ancestors received the Torah fifty days after leaving the land of Egypt, and therefore the Festival of the First Fruits falls fifty days after the first day of Passover. The people of Israel are thus referred to as "the first fruit" [as in] "I found Israel [as pleasing] as grapes in the wilderness; [your fathers seemed to Me like the first fig to ripen on a fig tree...]" ([Hos. 9:10](#)). Similarly, the verse states: "As an apple tree among trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the others" (Song of Sol. 2:3). Just as the apple tree produces its fruit fifty days after blossoming, so the people of Israel received the Torah fifty days after leaving the land of Egypt.

Save the Date

Celebrating The Festival of Shavuot

Sunday, May 16

7:30 p.m.

See attached Flyer.

Beth Shalom Services: Because of COVID-19, we continue to livestream our Shabbat and Festival services on our Facebook page, **Beth Shalom of Whittier**. When there is a livestream taking place, you can click on it and watch. We encourage everyone to continue to tune in each week and take part in our services virtually and leave messages of greeting to other who are watching. This is one way we can all stay in touch.

Directions for viewing livestream

services: If you are a current Facebook subscriber, you need only to go to our Facebook page, **Beth Shalom of Whittier**, to view these announcements and videos. If you are not a current Facebook subscriber, you need to go to www.facebook.com and sign up with a username and password and then you can access our page at that point. Always log in 5 minutes ahead the video start time.

ROSE HILLS CEMETERY PLOTS

If you want to do your family's mitzvah of pre-planning, please call the office. They can give you information as to what gravesites are available and what steps to take to secure your plot(s). Plots are \$3500 each.

Book Club: Our next meeting is Wednesday, May 12th at 12:30pm. We will be having a joint meeting with Millenium (Our other book group). We will be reading "Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel's Classroom" by Ariel Burger. A winner of the National Jewish Book Award.

Tribute Cards: To send a Tribute Card, please contact Michelle Hess with your request. Her e-mail is: michelleh3532@gmail.com

PayPal Donations: Paypal donations welcome: bswoffice@verizon.net

No longer about an agricultural holiday, Shavuot is now about the receiving of the Torah, the counting is about the time that lapsed between the exodus from Egypt and the giving of Torah, and the agricultural references to the first fruits are a metaphor for the blossoming of the people. And so, in a world where the Jewish people were not centered in Israel and the Temple no longer stood (therefore making the bringing of the sacrifices of the day impossible), the rabbis reimagine the holiday and claim it as the day to mark revelation and the receiving of Torah.

So, why is it that we stay up all night?

It's true that the other festival holidays each have their own rituals that connect us with meaning of the day. Passover has matzah, the seder symbols, and the seder itself. On Sukkot, we sit in the sukkah and we wave the lulav and etrog. Originally, however, Shavuot had no such ritual or connection. And, what is better to recall through ritual the receiving of Torah than study thereby 'receiving' Torah anew. When we study, we are enlightened, and we are in receipt of some new insight, some new recitation, some new element of Torah itself.

Maybe that helps understand the recitation of Torah, but why in the middle of the night and through the night? After all, wouldn't it be better to do so during the day, when we are more alert, more awake, when we can actually 'see' what we are receiving?

Another midrash, *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, Chap. 41, describes God as the groom who is waiting to wed the bride (the Jewish people). Despite the excitement and anticipation a wedding brings, however, the Jewish people was asleep, and Moses had to wake them up to meet God at Sinai for this important union, (A later text even suggests that it was God who had to wake the Jewish people... imagine, a groom having to wake a bride on their wedding day...an auspicious beginning, no doubt.)

So, to make sure we don't fall asleep waiting each year and/or worse yet, that we don't oversleep, the custom of studying all night was born and is today one that is being reclaimed by communities in unique and creative ways.

One final perspective, one I find much more spiritually meaningful. The medieval philosopher, physician, and Jewish law authority, Maimonides, says: "Even though it is a mitzvah to learn both during the day and at night, *one gains the majority of wisdom at night*; therefore, [no one should] lose even one night to sleep, food and drink, conversation, and the like—rather, one should engage in the study of Torah and words of wisdom" ([Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah Chapter 3:13](#)).

According to this read, a person acquires most of her wisdom at night. In the wee hours of the morning, a different self emerges, uncovering the secrets we hide. Hidden truths manifest and true insight, change, and Revelation becomes possible. And, with this, we truly receive Torah anew on an annual basis. So, whether alone on an island, with a single partner, or in a community wide learning, I bless you with the capacity to study into the night. And, perhaps by morning, whether you have slept a part of the night or none of the night, the internal alarm clock will sound, reminding you it is time to hear the words of Torah today and every day.

Hag Shavuot Sameach.

PLEASE JOIN US
BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER

In Celebrating

The Festival of SHAVUOT



ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2021

LEWANDOWSKI SHAVUOT ORGAN PRELUDE 7:23 PM

SERVICE INCLUDING YIZKOR 7:30 PM

HAZZAN LANCE H TAPPER, OFFICIATING
MARK PETERSON, ORGANIST

THE SPECIAL SHAVUOT MAHZOR WILL BE UPLOADED
TO OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AHEAD OF THE SERVICE