



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, April 1, 2021 to Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Hazzan Lance H. Tapper 7th Day of Passover

Shabbat Service—Friday, April 2, 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

Yahrzeit

Sandra Paul
in memory of mother,
Ann Lehman

Anita Horowitz
in memory of husband,
Jacob Horowitz

Robert Klein
in memory of father,
Sam Klein

David Rosen
in memory of mother-in-law,
Lena Nuckowitz

Mona Di Natale
in memory of father,
Sam Shinder

Millie Hock
in memory of
Abe Goldberg, father
Betty Goldberg, step-mother

Happy Birthday!!!

April 6th:
Evelyn Goldberg
Brunelle

Save the Date

7th Day Pesah Service - Shabbat, April 2

Pesah Yizkor Service - Saturday, April 3

Adult Education: The Ten Commandments - Sunday, April 25

Clergy Schedule

Virtual Services: www.facebook.com/bethshalomofwhittier

April 2--Erev 7th Day Pesah--7:23 pm--Lewandowski Pesah Organ Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

April 3--Pesah Yizkor--9:23 am--Pesah Organ Prelude; 9:30 am Service --Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

April 9--7:23 pm organ prelude; 7:30 pm service
Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

April 16--7:23 pm organ prelude; 7:30 pm service
Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

April 23--7:23 pm organ prelude; 7:30 pm service
Hazzan Lance and Mark Peterson

Pesach VII & VIII

Torah Reading: Leviticus 16:1-17:16

Haftarah Reading: Ezekiel 22:1-14

By Rabbi Ephraim Pelcovits, posted on April 16, 2016/5776

Last week I had one of those perfect moments as a teacher. The passage of Talmud we were studying was a challenging one, but my students had studied hard before coming to class, so we were off to a good start. We struggled together to put all the pieces of a complex passage into place, and when we *finally* achieved clarity in interpreting the difficult page, I noticed that we had gone a full fifteen minutes over our allotted class period. It was a rare moment where time – at least for me, the teacher – seemed to have stood still.

I got a sense last week of what it must have been like at the famous "Gathering of the Sages in B'nai Berak," which we remember each year at our Seders. You know, the story of five rabbis who "were telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt the whole night, until their students came and said to them, "Masters, the time for the morning Shema has arrived!" When the story is *really* gripping, whether it's an exciting movie, or a well-curated Seder, we can lose ourselves in the tale.

Talk about a hard act to follow! How can these last days of Passover end with the holiday's beginning, and the great story of the Haggadah? Yet, these days have a majestic story to tell as well: According to our tradition, the seventh day of Passover marks the anniversary of the parting of the Red Sea, and the final redemption of our ancestors from Pharaoh's yoke. It's a story that recalls both *our* complete salvation and also *Egypt's* absolute destruction as the sea swallows up an entire army, just as our ancestors make it to dry land.

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 the 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 Tuesday, April 13 at 12:30pm. The book is 'A Bend in the Stars' by Rachel Berenbaum

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

Simcha Sharing: Let us know about your Simcha's. Let the office know of your good news and we will share it in the next weekly. Weddings ★ Births

The parting of the Red Sea is certainly a thrilling narrative, but it's also a tale that raises as many questions as the Haggadah. How can we make sense of the Divine in this story, of a God who is both deeply protective, and awfully vengeful, in a single moment? While such concerns might seem to be particularly modern ones, in fact, they troubled our medieval commentators long before us. In particular, they were bothered by one of the first lines in the Song of the Sea, the hymn of praise our ancestors sang on the safe side of the Red Sea, which we shall hear as our Torah reading on Friday, in honor of the Festival:

The LORD is a man of war, the LORD is his name. (Exodus 15:3)

For a traditional reader of scripture, this verse is *particularly* strange in its choice to refer to "God the warrior" as "LORD"—a name which typically is understood to denote God's *merciful* attributes, not God's quality of meting out justice. How can that name of God be present when the Divine is being described as a "man of war," and after having just destroyed the entire Ancient Egyptian Army under a wall of water?

Seforno, the great 16th Century Italian exegete, insists upon finding a God of mercy in this moment. God, according to Seforno, does show mercy and compassion here, by removing the most wicked and harmful people from the earth. "Yes," he argues, "we don't think of warfare as being merciful, but sometimes it is!" When a pitiless force wishes to destroy a band of helpless slaves, waging war in their defense, according to Seforno, it is the very definition of compassion. Seforno solves the problem of the verse for himself, by *redefining* his own understanding of what mercy and compassion can mean.

Abravanel, however, a survivor of the Portuguese expulsion in the late 15th Century, rejects such a solution. Instead, he offers an even more radical reinterpretation of our passage, by assigning it new punctuation. Instead of reading the verse as "The LORD is a man of war, the LORD is his name," he *rereads* the passage as a question: *Is the LORD a man of war?* (No,) the LORD (God of compassion) is his name!" It is never a sign of compassion or love to be a warrior, Abravanel insists. To call our merciful God a "man of war," is, in Abravanel's reading, heresy. Therefore, even as the Song of the Sea celebrates this moment of salvation, Abravanel believes that it also rejects attributing warlike attributes to God, for at the end of the day, *compassion* is what God is all about.

As radically different as these two medieval readings of our verse are, it's also worth noting how much they *share* with one another. Both Abravanel and Seforno struggle with the tensions in our verse: The way God is being described here versus the way they previously envisioned the Divine. They both approach the Torah with a deep respect for the text's history, a love of its language, and, just as importantly, a willingness to read the text in ways that might break with the past as well. For one scholar, that means reinterpreting the way a word – compassion – had been previously defined, and for the other, it means shifting the way he reads the text itself, swapping in a question mark for a comma.

On the opening days of Passover, most of us gathered at Seders where we pursued the deepest meanings in our people's foundational story, the Exodus from Egypt as told in the Haggadah. It's a ritual that draws us back home, even at times when we seem to have wandered away from our tradition. Now, a week later, my blessing to all of us is that we *continue* to wrestle with our sacred stories going forward: Over these concluding days of Passover; and more importantly in the weeks and months of ordinary time ahead. Our tradition's great stories are tales that we are meant to lose ourselves in and be consumed by. May we be blessed with the patience, love and creativity to actualize that dream of immersion in Torah!

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Sameach!

BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER
INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE
PESAH
WITH US THIS YEAR



VIRTUALLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER

EREV PESAH AND FIRST SEDER SERVICES

Saturday, March 27—Pesah Organ Prelude @5:37 pm, Service and Seder @5:45 pm

SHABBAT 7th DAY PESAH AND YIZKOR SERVICES

EREV—Friday, April 2—Lewandowski Pesah Organ Prelude @7:23 pm, Service @7:30 pm

YIZKOR—Saturday, April 3—Pesah Organ Prelude @9:23 am, Service @9:30 am

HAZZAN LANCE H TAPPER, OFFICIATING
MARK PETERSON, ACCOMPANIST

THE EVENINGS AND MORNING PESAH MAHZORIM
WILL BE UPLOADED TO OUR FACEBOOK PAGE
THE WEEK OF EREV PESAH

BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER

PRESENTS A CLASS TAUGHT BY

HAZZAN LANCE H TAPPER, SPIRITUAL LEADER

ON



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EXODUS AND DEUTERONOMY
VERSIONS OF THE

TEN COMMANDMENTS

on Sunday April 25 at 10:00 am. by Zoom

Please RSVP to our Temple office by email at: bswoffice@verizon.net or by phone at 562-941-8744 NO LATER than Tuesday, April 20 to receive the Zoom link for the class.

We know you will enjoy this intellectually stimulating discussion about one of the most important pieces of legal literature in our tradition.