



# Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, May 25, 2023 to Wednesday, May 31, 2023  
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper, Hon DMus Shabbat Parashat Shavuot

Shabbat Service May 26, 2023 - 7:30 p.m.

## SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday Evening 7:30 pm

## SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

The Beth Shalom office will now be open on Wednesdays and Fridays. Erica will work from home on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Our office phone and email will continue to be attended to Tuesdays through Fridays.

9:00a-4:00p Tuesday-Friday  
562.941.8744  
[bswoffice@verizon.net](mailto:bswoffice@verizon.net)

## YAHREZEIT

Lila Held  
in memory of grandmother  
Jenny Kuperstein

Sidney Paul  
in memory of sister  
Sylvia Playberg

Michelle Hess  
in memory of grandmother  
Lillian Sandler

Klara Wein  
in memory of grandmother  
Miriam Militeanu

Mark Singer  
in memory of grandmother  
Sarah Singer

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.

## Erev Shabbat Shavuot & Shabbat Shavuot Yizkor

See flyer on page 3.

## Clergy Schedule

Virtual Services: [www.facebook.com/bethshalomofwhittier](https://www.facebook.com/bethshalomofwhittier)

\*Services and events are once again open to in person. Services will continue to broadcast on Facebook simultaneously for those who cannot attend in person.

May 26--Erev Shabbat Shavuot--Lewandowski Shavuot Prelude

7:25 pm; Service 7:30 pm--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

May 27--Shabbat Shavuot Yizkor--Prelude--9:25 am; Service

(including the 10 Commandments Torah Reading and Yizkor)--Hazzan Lance and Guest Organist, Aryell Cohen

June 2--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

June 9--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

June 16--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

June 23--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

## Chosen Together: The Ethical Significance of Shavuot

Torah Portion: Shavuot

By Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, posted on May 13, 2021

Why is the festival of Shavuot called "the time of the giving of our Torah" and not the time of the receiving of our Torah? Because the giving of the Torah happened at one specified time, but the receiving of the Torah happens at every time and in every generation.

— Rabbi Meir Alter of Ger

Each generation must make its own way back to Sinai, must stand under the mountain and re-appropriate and reinterpret the Revelation, in terms that are both classical and new. We recognize change as part of the continuing process of tradition itself.

— Rabbi Ger Cohen

Continued on page 2.

**Beth Shalom Services:** We are now open for in person services. If you are not yet comfortable coming to services in person, please tune in virtually by visiting our Facebook page, **Beth Shalom of Whittier**. When there is a livestream taking place, you can click on it and watch.

**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](https://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 of 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:** We will be reading "Radical Then, Radical Now" by Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth, on Tuesday, June 20th at 12:30 pm. Tuesday, July 18th we will be reading "Syrian Sunset" by Howard Kaplan at 11:00 am. For August we will be reading "The Authenticity Project" by Claire Pooley. Date TBD. Happy Reading

**PayPal Donations:** Paypal donations welcome: [bswoffice@verizon.net](mailto:bswoffice@verizon.net)

**Simcha Sharing** Let the office know of your good news and we will share it in the next weekly. Weddings ★ Births

**Tribute Cards** To send a Tribute Card, please contact Michelle Hess. Her e-mail is: [michelleh3532@gmail.com](mailto:michelleh3532@gmail.com)

**Happy Birthday**  
Irving Bartikofsky--May 25  
Susan Rubin--May 25

**Happy Anniversary**  
Robert & Rita Rubin  
May 30--55 Years

The least-known of the *Shalosh Regalim* is Shavuot, the two-day Festival of Weeks. A victim of schedule, Shavuot comes just before the beginning of summer — unable to fit into the vacation schedule of most contemporaries, and lacking any special rituals to excite widespread observance.

In the biblical period, Shavuot celebrated the conclusion of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. By the time of the Mishnah and the Talmud, some thousand years later, the rabbis expanded Shavuot beyond its agricultural origin to incorporate a foundational event as well. Since the festival comes exactly seven weeks (hence its name) after the second day of Pesah, which marks the liberation of the Jewish slaves from Egypt and their wandering toward Mt. Sinai, the rabbis saw Shavuot as celebrating *z'man mattan Torateinu*, (the season of the giving of our Torah) token, record, and pathway of the special love between God and the Jewish People.

That link between Pesah and Shavuot, based on the Torah's insistence that Shavuot occur precisely 50 days after Pesah, follows a logic of human liberation as well as the cycles of the calendar.

Pesah, however popular, is just a beginning: the initiation of Jewish freedom. As our ancestors were liberated from Egyptian slavery, they took their first halting steps toward freedom and independence. No longer saddled with the burdens and oppression of Egyptian taskmasters, the Jews entered the wilderness of Sinai, experiencing their independence as little less than anarchy. There was a freedom from control, a freedom from limits. Such liberty, by itself, is the freedom of adolescents, one which bristles at restraint.

Such a freedom is fine as a first step, but it ultimately cannot insure human growth, creativity, and community. Rather than simply avoiding limits, mature freedom entails living up to one's best potential, meeting responsibilities towards community, and towards others with a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Freedom fulfilled is freedom to live productively, with meaning, and in relationship.

Just as "freedom from" finds completion in "freedom to", so the festival of Pesah initiates a process of liberation that culminates in the festival of Shavuot. The second of the three pilgrimage festivals of the Torah, Shavuot marks the coming of age and responsibility of the Jewish People, celebrating the encounter between God and the Jewish People at Mt. Sinai. That moment of divine-human commitment resulted in a formal link between the two, a *Brit* (Covenant) that bound God and the Jewish People forever. That brit received its first expression in the writings of the Torah, which has formed the core of all subsequent Jewish identity.

Shavuot, then, marks the special relationship between God and the Jews, celebrates the biblical understanding of the Jews as God's Chosen People, a concept essential to Jewish identity, and one which has been distorted, both by Jews and by non-Jews.

What does it mean to be chosen? Chosen does not mean superior, and it does not mean that God loves the Jewish People better than other people: the Bible itself records God's love for all humanity. Being chosen does, however, imply that God loved the Jewish People first. That love is a matter of historical record: Judaism gave birth to the two monotheistic faiths, Christianity and Islam, which have spread a commitment to biblical values and knowledge through much of the world.

"To be chosen" is really a grammatical fragment: a person is never simply chosen, but always chosen for something. When we say that the Jews are chosen, we mean that the Jews were selected to embody the practices and values of Judaism as expressed in the Torah and subsequent Jewish writings. God chose us to be a role model—to demonstrate that a society of people dedicated to ritual profundity, moral rigor, and compassionate action could profoundly shape the world. Jews are chosen to live Torah, nothing more and nothing less. In the words of the Siddur, "You have chosen us from among all peoples by giving us Your Torah." To the extent that we make the practices and values of the Torah real in our daily lives and in our communal priorities, we in turn choose God. The Torah is given anew each time we allow it to live through our deeds. To live Torah is far more than an affirmation of ritual commitments, although it certainly includes that. Living Torah means caring for the widow and orphan as an expression of religious obligation. It means loving the stranger as oneself, honoring parents, feeding the hungry, preventing the blind from stumbling, and a whole host of ethical commitments that elevate human relationship and human caring to a pedestal of justice — the truest expression of covenantal love.

Shavuot, then, is a recommitment to our founding purpose. Each year, we remember why there is a Jewish People, why there is Judaism. On this festival, we celebrate, as did our ancestors, in wonder, the fact that God chose our people to live the mitzvot, and we renew our commitment to walk in God's ways, and to help each other to arrive together.

**See flyer on page 3.**

PLEASE JOIN  
BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER

In Celebrating  
*The Festival of SHAVUOT*



**EREV SHABBAT SHAVUOT**

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2023--LEWANDOWSKI SHAVUOT ORGAN PRELUDE 7:25 PM,

SERVICE 7:30 PM

HAZZAN LANCE H TAPPER, HON DMUS, OFFICIATING  
TY WOODWARD, ORGANIST

**SHABBAT SHAVUOT MORNING SERVICE (INCLUDING YIZKOR)**

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2023--SHAVUOT ORGAN PRELUDE 9:25 AM, SERVICE 9:30 AM

HAZZAN LANCE H TAPPER, HON DMUS, OFFICIATING  
ARYELL COHEN, GUEST ORGANIST

*in person at*

FIRST FRIENDS

13205 Philadelphia Street, Whittier

THE PRELUDES AND SERVICES WILL ALSO BE BROADCAST  
ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER