



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, August 4, 2022 to Wednesday, August 10, 2022
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper, Hon DMus Shabbat Parashat Devarim

Shabbat August 5, 2022 - 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

YAHREIT

Jay Weinschenker
in memory of mother
Evelyn Weinschenker

Dorothy Wiener
in memory of husband
Leonard Wiener

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.

Birthday/Anniversary

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Clergy Schedule

Virtual Services: www.facebook.com/bethshalomofwhittier

**Services and events are once again open to in person attendance with proof of vaccination and a mask. Services will continue to broadcast on Facebook simultaneously for those who cannot attend in person.*

August 5-- 7:25 pm--Prelude, 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

August 12-- 7:25 pm--Prelude, 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

August 19-- 7:25 pm--Prelude, 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

August 26-- 7:25 pm--Prelude, 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

September 2-- 7:25 pm--Prelude, 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

September 9-- 7:25 pm--Prelude, 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

Eichah: Praise, Rebuke, or Lament?

Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 1:1 - 3:22

Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 1:1 - 27

Torah Portion: Devarim

By Rabbi Gail Labovitz, PhD, posted on August 7, 2019

It is noted in Midrash Rabbah to Eichah, the Book of Lamentations, that three prophets each made a statement to Israel that begins with the word "Eichah," "how." What is more, we will encounter each of those verses this week:

- Moses: "How can I bear unaided the trouble of you, and the burden, and the bickering!" ([Deut. 1:12](#), Parashat Devarim)
- Isaiah: "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" ([Isaiah 1:21](#), which is read as part of this week's haftarah, the last of the 3 haftarot of rebuke that lead from the 17th of Tammuz to the 9th of Av)
- Jeremiah: "How does the city sit solitary, that was so full of people" ([Lamentations 1:1](#) – attributed by the rabbis to the authorship of Jeremiah – which will be read after Shabbat, as the fast and commemoration are deferred to the 10th as it always is when the 9th falls on Shabbat)

Not only are these three verses read each year in the same week, it is also traditional to read the first two in the distinctive trop (style of cantillation) used for reading the Book of Lamentations on Tisha B'Av. So it would seem that the three are connected, that they carry some similar message, right?

Well, maybe – or maybe not.

Beth Shalom Lunch and Learn with Hazzan Lance H Tapper

Saturday, August 13th.
See flyer on page 3.

RSVP Today

Beth Shalom Services: We are now open for in person services. Vaccinated people with proof may attend in person. Masks are required in accordance with the current LA County Public Health Dept. guidelines. All others may watch on our Facebook page, **Beth Shalom of Whittier**. When there is a livestream taking place, you can click on it and watch. If you are not yet comfortable coming to services in person, please tune in virtually and feel free to leave a message of greeting to others who are watching.

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 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: The next meeting of the Beth Shalom Book Group is Tuesday, August 16th at 12: 30 PST. The book we are reading is "The Woman with the Blue Star" by Pam Jenoff who will be joining us via Zoom. The book has been on The NY Times Best Seller List. Everyone is welcome.

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

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

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

The midrash that links these three verses goes on to suggest that they form a progression charting the fall of Israel:

- Moses sees the people at a time of honor, or perhaps ease (there are multiple versions of the midrash). Look up a few verses, and one can see why: "Thereupon I said to you, 'I cannot bear the burden of you by myself. The Lord your God has multiplied you until you are today as numerous as the stars in the sky...'" (1:9-10). Bickering? Sure, but what's also going on here is that the people, blessed by God, have simply grown beyond Moses' capacity to administer their judicial system by himself.
- Isaiah, on the other hand, sees the people at a time when they have grown haughty and reckless. Where once justice and righteousness dwelt, now there are murderers, as the verse goes on to say.
- And Jeremiah addresses the people at a time when they are frightened and anxious, and when they have been disgraced.

Another midrash in Eichah Rabbah further contrasts Moses's statement and the first verse of Lamentations. If we had been worthy, we could have continued to say about ourselves as the Torah does, "How can I bear unaided" the great number of you? Instead, when we forget our principles and act without justice, then what is said of us is "How does she sit alone." "Eichah" is a blessing when we act as a community should, and a lament when we do not.

Ah, but there's more. You thought we were considering the word "eichah"? Well, what about "aiyecah," which means "Where are you," and is spelled exactly the same as "eichah" in unvocalized Hebrew? In [Gen. 3:9](#), God directs this question to Adam after he and Eve have committed the first sin in human history by eating from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. We'll come back to that in a moment.

In the meantime, the midrash in Eichah Rabbah goes further, breaking the word "aiyecah" down into its two parts "where" (aiyei) and "cah," but once again substitutes another word with the same letters, "coh," "thus." The implication is that when we read "Eichah," we are in fact asking what has become of the promise inherent in statements that God made on behalf of the Jewish people which begin with the word "Thus":

[Gen. 15:5](#), God speaking to Abraham: "[Look toward the heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them...] Thus shall your offspring be."

[Ex. 19:4](#), God giving Moses instructions to prepare the people for the revelation at Sinai: "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel..."

That is, aiyecah/eichah implies: what will become of ("where is") God's statement of "Thus," now at this time of national degradation? What has become of our promise, the promise(s) God made to and about us, and the promise we once had to be God's faithful people? But we're still not quite done. Two rabbis each think that "Eichah" (and also "Aiyecah") has a consistent meaning, but they dispute what it is:

Rabbi Nechemiah said the word "eichah" means only lamentation. That's what it means by "And the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" ([Gen. 3:9](#))

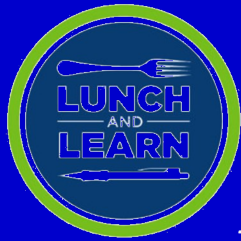
Rabbi Yehudah said the word "eichah" means only rebuke. That's what it means by "How can you say, 'We are wise...'" ([Jer. 8:8](#))

The choice of text cited by each rabbi is rather intriguing. Rabbi Nechemiah turns to [Gen. 3:9](#), which he reads, it seems, as God's lament for the entry of sin into human beings and the world. But it's also a bit strange for the rabbi to turn to Adam and to a text that a) is not actually using the word "eichah" but the identically spelled "aiyecah," and b) could as easily be read as a rebuke as a lamentation? Why not cite [Lamentations 1:1](#), for example? Rav Yehudah's text supports his point a bit better, but he too had other choices, [Isaiah 1:21](#) to name an example. These two views and the prooftexts that are meant to support them are each somewhat less stable (I think) than perhaps they were meant to be.

"Eichah" – praise, rebuke, or lament? Let me propose that it depends on answering the Divine call/question "Aiyechah," "where are you?" Are you in community, or alone? Are you in a place where justice is done, or a place where people think and act as if they are above the law? Will you turn to the person next to you and say "It's her fault!," or are you seeking to be a rightful descendant of Abraham and disciple of Moses, trying to be worthy of the blessings and Torah foretold by the word "Thus" (aiyeh coh)?

Eichah – Aiyecah. We have three goes at it in the days coming up, three chances to answer. May we all be worthy to answer God's call as did Abraham ([Gen. 22:1](#) and 11), Jacob ([Gen. 31:11](#) and 46:2), and Moses ([Ex. 3:4](#)): "Hineni," "here I am."

Shabbat shalom.



Beth Shalom Lunch and Learn
with Hazzan Lance H Tapper, Hon DMus

The Jewish View of the Beginning of Life and Abortion

Saturday, August 13, 2022
12:00-2:00 p.m.

We will meet in the Fellowship Hall at First Friends.

Lunch will be served.

RSVP to the Temple office by August 5th.

Memorial Plaques: We have brought all of the memorial plaques into our office, from the storage unit. If you would like a family member's plaque, please contact the office and let us know the name on the plaque. We will find it and arrange for you to pick it up. If you know of anyone who might have had loved one's plaques on our memorial board, please let them know that they are available to be picked up.