



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, February 20, 2025 to Wednesday, February 26, 2025
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper, Hon DMus Torah Portion Mishpatim

Shabbat Service - February 21, 2025 - 7:30 p.m.

SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday Evening 7:30 pm

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

Erica will work from home Tuesday - Friday, 10:00a-4:00p. The Beth Shalom office will now be open by appointment only. Our office phone and email will continue to be attended to during office hours.

10:00a-4:00p Tuesday-Friday
562.941.8744
bswoffice@verizon.net

YAHRTZEIT

Jay Devore
in memory of brother
Paul Devore

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.

At Shabbat services this Friday, February 21st, Jayson Gallegos will be welcomed into the congregation after completing his conversion.

Please come and help us welcome him as a full fledged member of the tribe!

Happy Birthday

Russ Shane - February 22
David Weiss - February 22

Clergy Schedule

Virtual Services: 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.

February 21--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty

February 28--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty

March 7--7:30 pm Service--Rabbi Ken

March 13--Erev Purim--7:30 pm Service--Rabbi Ken

March 14--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty

Open Up in the Name of the Law

Torah Reading: Exodus 21:1 - 24:18
Haftarah Reading: II Kings 12:1 - 17
Torah Portion: Mishpatim

By Rabbi Edward Feinstein, posted on February 22, 2012

Among those who left Egypt, there were two of my ancestors - call them Berel and Shmerel. As slaves, these two had grown so accustomed to looking down at the ground they could no longer lift their eyes. And so when Moses brought Israel across the Red Sea, Berel asked Shmerel, "What do you see?" "I see mud," he responded. "I see mud too. What's all this about freedom? We had mud in Egypt, we have mud here!"

When Israel stood at Mt Sinai, Shmerel asked Berel, "What do you hear?" "I hear someone shouting commands," he answered. "I hear commands too. What's all this about Torah? They shouted commands in Egypt, they shout commands here!" Finally after forty years, when Israel arrived at the Promised land, Berel asked Shmerel, "How do you feel?" "My feet hurt," he replied. "My feet hurt too. What's all this about a Promised Land? My feet hurt in Egypt, my feet hurt here!"

So what did they do? They turned around and walked back to Egypt. Some say, they are wandering the wilderness to this day.

Removing the external chains of slavery doesn't make a person free. The body is unfettered but the mind remains in bondage. "One of the great liabilities of life," declared Martin Luther King in one of his last sermons, "is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social

Service Attendance

If you are not a member, coming with a member or known to someone who will be at the service, please call the office before coming to any of our services. We do have security guards at all of our services and events.

Beth Shalom Services: We are 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.

Book Club: At our last meeting, we had a great discussion about "James" by Percival Everett. Our next book club meeting is Tuesday, March 18th at 1:00pm. We will be talking about "The Boys Of Riverside" by Thomas Fuller. It tells about the incredible story of an all-deaf high school football team's triumphant climb from underdog to undefeated, a fascinating portrait of deafness in America. For more information contact Michelle.

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

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

Lunch and Learn

March 1st.

See flyer on page3.

change, and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses, that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a revolution."

Freedom, in the Torah, comes in two parts: The exodus from Egyptian slavery and the revelation of law on Mt Sinai.

Why law? Law seems an odd place to find spirituality. Law is technical and dry. Law is about conflict and confrontation. Law is a restraint on the lowest parts of ourselves. In Western culture, law is an instrument for achieving social order -- a way to keep us from killing one another.

Now consider a law from Maimonides' Mishna Torah, Code of Jewish Law: You must give charity to the poor. You must give at least one tenth of your income, but may not give more than one fifth. When you give charity to the poor, the dignity of the poor must be respected. You may not humiliate the recipient of charity. Anonymous giving, where neither donor nor recipient are aware of one another's identity, is best. Even better is to provide employment or business opportunity thus alleviating the need for further assistance.

Notice how this is phrased. It doesn't say the poor have a right to receive charity. This isn't an entitlement. It says you have an obligation. It is a mitzvah, a commandment. This is the core concept of Jewish law: You are obligated because you are covenanted.

This law speaks, not to the lowest in us, but to the highest. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord Your God am Holy." The purpose of law in the Torah is to cultivate the holy, the compassionate, the just, the sensitive within us -- to cultivate the divine within us. Law is educative. In Breshit Rabbah, the sage Rav taught: " Does God really care how people slaughter animals for food? Does God care which animals a person eats and which he doesn't eat? Mitzvot were given us only to purify us." The mitzvah has a purpose. We must measure ourselves not solely on the care we take in fulfilling the mitzvah, but on the quality of change the mitzvah affects within us. The authority of mitzvah rests not only in its source in heaven, but in its effect on the human soul.

Law is a nexus between what is and what ought to be. Law rests upon a paradox: Because we're human, we need law. Because we have drives, because we often forget who we are, because we have the ability to rationalize any behavior or attitude...in other words, because we're human, we need law. But we can live up to the law only because we have the divine with us. Every "ought" implies a "can." The commandment to be holy -- to live a life of justice and compassion -- is the strongest possible confirmation that we have the capacity to be holy. It is testimony that we have Godliness in us.

"The great danger facing all of us," wrote the preacher Phillips Brooks, "is not that we shall make an absolute failure of our life. Nor that we shall fall into outright viciousness. Nor that we shall be terribly unhappy. Nor that we shall feel that life has no meaning. The danger is that we shall fail to perceive life's greatest meaning, fall short of its highest good, miss its deepest and most abiding happiness, be unable to tender the most needed service, be unconscious of life ablaze with the light of the Presence of God, and be content to have it so.

The danger is that we will wake up to find we've missed life itself. Satisfied too soon with too little -- with a life that falls short of the best.

See flyer on page 3.



Beth Shalom of Whittier

Lunch & Learn

Hazzan Lance will discuss and do a deep dive into the prayers, customs, ceremonies, traditions and fictions about the festival of Pesah (Passover). All are invited to attend.

Join your Beth Shalom friends for an afternoon of informative discussion and a light lunch.

Saturday, March 1, 2025 ★ 12:00 – 2:00 PM

Please RSVP by February 25th so we will have enough food for everyone,

by email: bswoffice@verizon.net or

by phone: 562.941.8744