



# Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, November 25, 2021 to Wednesday, December 1, 2021  
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper      Shabbat Parashat Vayeshev

Shabbat Service—Friday, November 26, 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)

## Yahrzeit

Morton Goldberg  
in memory of father  
Max Goldberg

Mark Singer  
in memory of father  
John Singer

Eunice Singer  
in memory of husband  
John Singer

Michelle Hess  
in memory of uncle  
Emmanuel Morzinsky

Rita Rubin  
in memory of sister  
Gail Goodstein

Hope Greenwood  
in memory of father  
Isaac Leiboff

## Happy Birthday

Klara Wein - November 25  
Evelyn Litwin - November 30

## Clergy Schedule

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

**November 26-- 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service** Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

**December 3-- Shabbat Hanukkah 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service** Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

**December 10-- 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service** Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

**December 17-- 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service** Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

## Shabbat Hanukkah Celebration

A Gala Dinner and Service

Friday, December 3

Dinner 6:00 p.m., Prelude: 7:25 p.m., Service 7:30 p.m.

**Because of the Holiday week we are extending the RSVP date to Monday November 29th.**

\*See flyer on page 3.

## The Power of Teshuvah

**Torah Reading: Genesis 37:1 - 40:23**

**Haftarah Reading: Amos 2:6 - 3:8**

**Parashat Vayeshev**

By: Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, posted on December 24, 2005

Every year, during the Days of Awe, Rabbis urge their congregants to repent of their wrongdoings of the previous year. This process of taking stock in ourselves, of examining our actions and our motivation, and of recognizing and regretting where we have gone astray is called *teshuvah* in Hebrew, repentance in English. It is the single most important value within rabbinic Judaism, the key to the entire system of *mitzvot* (commandments). Small wonder, then, that our holiest days are devoted to its pursuit.

How is *teshuvah* the key to Judaism? God and the Jewish people are linked through the *brit*, the covenant in which God promises to be our God and we promise to be God's people. That *brit* is concretized in the Torah and made real through the *mitzvot*. 613 commandments of the Torah, with all the amplifications and interpretations of the rabbis are obligatory on each and every Jew, for all time. Yet even the most pious Jew cannot perform them all perfectly, and many of us are unable to always do even those *mitzvot* we find personally compelling. What happens, then, when a Jew fails to perform a *mitzvah*, or when a Jew violates a prohibition. Are we then always in a state of sinfulness? Are we forever barred from God's love?

**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](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 are meeting on Tuesday, December 7th at 1:00 p.m., at Michelle's home. (Note time change). No book selected. Everyone has been asked to suggest 3 or 4 possible future reads. We will then discuss and vote on our preferences. The meeting will be in-person and virtual, with all in-person attendees being vaccinated.

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

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

For the system of commandments to work, there has to be a provision for how to wipe the slate clean in the case of an error or even an intentional sin. That corrective is *teshuvah*, repentance. God's love is bigger than any sin we might commit. And after making it up to the person we have wronged, after attaining their absolution, all it takes to get God's forgiveness is a simple act of contrition; all it takes is *teshuvah*.

*Teshuvah*, then, is the linchpin that keeps Jews connected to God and engaged in *mitzvot*. Without it, our sins would simply mount irreversibly, and there would be no corrective within the system. *Teshuvah* is the oil that keeps the machinery of Torah humming.

Paradoxically, however, there are few biblical embodiments of the act of *teshuvah*, few biblical figures who we see repenting of their sin and then being forgiven by God. Even the command to repent, while understood by the rabbis to come from the Torah, itself is a little murky. True, the Book of Numbers records that "when a man or woman commit any sin...then they shall confess their sin." But this sentence, in context, goes on to mandate the offering of a sin offering, a sacrifice to atone for the sin that was committed. Ever-careful readers of the Torah, the rabbis note that offering the sacrifice is preceded by awareness that a sin was committed, and implies remorse about having erred. But separating *teshuvah* from sacrifice isn't explicitly mentioned until the prophets.

Today's Torah portion is understood to contain one of the few cases of *teshuvah* in the Torah. Reuven watches as his brothers decide to kill Joseph by leaving him in a pit. When he returns to the scene, they have already sold Joseph by selling him to the Midianites as a slave. Describing his return, the Torah says, "And Reuven returned to the pit." The verb used for "return" is *va-yashav*, the same verb as "to repent." One can translate the verse as "When Reuven repented at the pit."

Unlike his brothers, Reuven is filled with remorse. He realizes that he has allowed his brother to be wronged, and he returns to the pit to try to correct his sinful act, to restore his brother to freedom. Yet he arrives too late. Anguished, he turns to God. While the Torah never tells us where Reuven had gone, the rabbis fill in that lacuna through their powerful imaginations: "Where had he been? Rabbi Eleazar said, Reuven was taken up with his fasting and sackcloth, and when he became free he went and looked into the pit." Reuven did *teshuvah*, and sat with sackcloth and ashes to mourn his tragic lapse.

In reward for that act of repentance, according to Midrash Bereshit Rabbah, "God says 'No one has ever repented after sinning before Me, and you are the first who has repented. As you live, your descendant will stand forth and be the first to urge repentance.' To whom does this allude, to Hosea, who cried out, 'Return, O Israel, to Adonai your God'."

Because Reuven "discovered" *teshuvah*, he was rewarded by having that *mitzvah* expounded through one of his descendants, the prophet Hosea. Such is the greatness of *teshuvah*.

As the Sefer Ha-Hinnukh, a 13th Century Spanish listing of the *mitzvot* explains, "the essence of *teshuvah* is sincere remorse in the heart over the past, and one must resolve not to do such a thing ever again. This confession is the essential part of repentance."

By offering himself as a model of *teshuvah*, Reuven cleansed his family name, and gave a precious gift to his children and to us, his distance relations. Let us pray that we can use his model to stimulate our own introspection, repentance, and resolve.

Shabbat shalom.

**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.

# **Beth Shalom of Whittier Shabbat Hanukkah Service**

Friday, December 3, 2021

Prelude 7:25 p.m.

7:30 p.m. Shabbat Hanukkah Service with Hanukkiah Lighting

All are welcome to attend with proof of vaccination

First Friends

13205 Philadelphia Street, Whittier 90601

Officiants:

Hazzan Lance H Tapper, Spiritual Leader

Ty Woodward, Organist