



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, February 8, 2024 to Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper, Hon DMus Shabbat Parashat Mishpatim

Shabbat Service - February 9, 2024 - 7:30 p.m.

SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday Evening 7:30 pm

Please note: during these troubled times, in person services and events will only be open to members, former members and anyone who is known to our Board of Directors. We will continue to have security guards on the premises and reserve the right to inspect any bags or purses. Please do not bring backpacks or anything of that type with you to services. If you do, you will be asked to leave them in your car.

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

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

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

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

March 1-- 7:30 pm Service--Rabbi Kenneth Milhandler

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 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.

Book Club: Our February meeting will be on Tuesday, the 13th of February. The author, AJ Sidransky, will be joining us on Zoom. The book is "The Incident at San Miguel". It is about 2 brothers in Cuba, each on opposite sides of the Castro revolution. The story is based on real people, which the author will explain. Please be sure to read the book before the meeting so you can enjoy the author's input. We are continuing to meet on Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join in our discussion. If you have any questions, please call either Michelle or Myra. Happy Reading Everyone.

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

Does the World Need More Love or Justice?

Torah Portion: Mishpatim

Torah Reading: Exodus 21:1 - 24:18

Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 66:1 - 24; 66:23

By Rabbi Stephanie M. Alexander

We're often taught that it's what's on the inside that counts, beauty is only skin deep, and we should never judge a book by its cover. But what about when there's a disconnect between what we're *told* is on the inside and what we see on the outside — when one's actions leave something to be desired, though supposedly one's heart is in the right place? Is what's on the inside still what counts? This week's Torah portion, *Mishpatim*, suggests otherwise, as it begins:

"These are the rules (*mishpatim*) that you shall set before them [the Israelites]:" (Ex. 21:1)

What follows is just that: an extensive list of specific rules governing everything from holiday observances and dietary practice to ethics in business and the treatment of animals. There's the call to release indentured servants in the seventh year, and the designation of murder and kidnapping as capital offenses — the same punishment incurred for insulting one's father or mother! This Torah portion famously proclaims "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Ex. 21:24), and calls us to take care of the widow and orphan.

Yahrzeit

Susan Lieberman
in memory of grandfather
Morris Aronowitz

Myra Becker
in memory of father-in-law
George Becker

Mark Hilliard
in memory of brother
Sean Hilliard

Lila Held
in memory of uncle
Seymour Brickel

Dan Franden
in memory of
Robert Franden

**Beth Shalom
of Whittier
Lunch & Learn
March 2nd**

See flyer on page 3.

Birthday/Anniversary

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All in all, there are 53 separate *mishpatim*, “rules,” to be followed in this week’s Torah portion, comprising a little bit of just about everything. Yet there is one rule that stands out, one that is repeated twice in this particular Torah portion and — according to the Talmud (*Bava M’zia* 59b) — 36 times in the Torah overall, making it the most often mentioned commandment in all of Torah:

“You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Ex. 22:20)
“You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Ex. 23:9)

Often when we cite this all-important commandment, we quote the text as it appears in Leviticus (19:34), where it is written slightly differently. There we are told: “You shall love each one [stranger] as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Yet, of the 36 times this commandment appears in the Torah, love is only mentioned this once. And it is notably absent in *Parashat Mishpatim*, where the rule is first introduced and repeated. “Love the stranger as yourself” is a beautiful, poetic, compelling ideal. But, ultimately, *love* is subjective, cannot be measured or proven, and is less effective than action in attaining social justice. You shall *not oppress* the stranger, is what matters most.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we all loved the stranger? Of course. And this week’s Torah portion notes that ideally, our feelings should drive our actions. As the Elder of Slobodka underscores, we should be motivated to embrace the stranger by our ability “to feel and participate in [their] joy and distress ... as if these had affected [us] personally;... [to feel] their joys and sorrows with them, without any differentiation.” (Nosson Tzi Finkel of Slobodka in *Torah Gems: Exodus*, p. 163). Yet sometimes love and empathy elude us. And, as we know all too well, even those who profess love sometimes act contrary to it. Ultimately, it’s *not* what is on the inside that matters; it’s what we *do*, regardless of how we *feel*, that counts.

So we are to welcome strangers, remove obstacles to their inclusion, eliminate barriers to their joining our communities. We should not ostracize strangers, create distance between us, or maintain one safety net for those we identify as “us” and another (or none at all) for those we say are “other.” Indeed, we should not treat anyone as *other* at all. In our secular lives, too, our laws, our rules, and the way we structure and frame our society should support this. Regardless of how we may *feel*, whether or not we profess *love*, our *actions* must not oppress the stranger.

This week’s Torah portion shows us that love alone simply isn’t sufficient. It doesn’t tell us — or even suggest — that love will conquer all. What does the Torah give us? Specific and extensive rules, outlining how we are supposed to interact with others and look out for their well-being. There’s a notable absence of concern for emotion, which cannot be regulated. Punishments underscore the importance of the Torah’s specific rules and commandments, and the expectation they will be upheld. These are the ways the Torah conveys its concern for — and commitment to — creating a just, equitable, and safe society.

The American philosopher, Dr. Cornell West teaches: “Justice is what love looks like in public.” As this week’s Torah portion reminds us, we don’t get to justice by professing what we feel inside: we build a just society by legislating and enforcing the behaviors that make love tangible on the outside. We spell out love in *mishpatim* — in concrete rules, steps, and actions that can truly create the just society toward which we all strive.

See flyer on page 3.



Beth Shalom of Whittier Lunch & Learn

Rabbinics/Hazzanics 101 - The Shabbat Prayer services

What were the Rabbis, Paytanim, and Hazzanim Thinking?

Hazzan Lance will provide a tour of the Shabbat services to include why we pray what we pray and why the prayers are placed when and where they are.

Saturday, March 2, 2024 ★ 12:00 – 2:00 PM

Lunch will be provided.

RSVP to the Temple office, by February 23,

by email: bswoffice@verizon.net or

by phone: 562.941.8744

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**Join your Beth Shalom friends for an afternoon of
intriguing discussion and delicious nosh.**

