



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, January 27, 2022 to Wednesday, February 2, 2022
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper Shabbat Parashat Mishpatim

Shabbat Services January 28, 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

YAHARZEIT

Judith Silberberg
in memory of mother
Ida Silberberg

Jay Devore
in memory of brother
Paul Devore

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

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.

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.

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

February 4-- 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

February 11-- 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

February 18-- 7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service Hazzan Lance and Ty Woodward

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

"Seventy Faces to the Torah" - and Grateful for All of Them

Torah Reading: Exodus 21:1-24:18

Haftarah Reading: Jeremiah 34:8-22, 33:25-26

Torah Portion: Mishpatim

By: Rabbi Elliot Dorff, PhD, posted on February 18, 2009

Several years ago, I was asked to discuss embryonic stem cell research with a group of leaders of the Evangelical Christian community. The group included several university professors, several heads of biotechnology companies, and a few scientists, so they were really smart. When I asked them why they had any problems with embryonic stem cell research, they all pulled out their Bibles (I must admit that I did not have one with me!), and they turned to [Jeremiah 1:5](#): "Before I formed you in the womb, I chose you; and before you were born I consecrated you, I appointed you a prophet to the nations." "Does that not mean," they said, "that we are full human beings already in our embryonic stage?" They then invoked [Psalm 139:13](#): "You it was who fashioned my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." "Does that mean," they asked, "that we have our own personal identity already in an embryonic stage? And if so, does that mean that we are killing a human being if we take out an embryo's inner cell mass and thus kill the embryo in order to do medical research?"

Fortunately, I understood the literalist methodology they were using for interpreting the Bible immediately, and so I asked them to turn to [Psalm 19:1](#): "The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims his handwork." "Do the heavens speak?" I asked them. Then I asked them to turn to [Nehemiah 9:6](#): "You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, the highest heavens, and all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and everything in them. You keep them all alive, and the host of heaven prostrate themselves to You." "Do the sun and moon bow?" I asked them. "Oh," said one of them, "we are supposed to see these as metaphors." "Yes," I said, "for whatever you think about the divinity of the biblical text, it is at least good literature, and, like all other good literature, it uses all of the literary devices that you

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: Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 8th at 12:30 pm. The Book is "And After The Fire" by Lauren Belfer. Today, January 10th, we had a great (Zoom) discussion meeting. As of now, the next meeting will also be on Zoom. Everyone is invited to attend.

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 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

Happy Birthday

Jay Weinschenker - January 31

Happy Anniversary

Chuck & Lila Held - February 1

would expect. In fact, the Rabbis say that 'there are seventy faces to the Torah' ([Numbers Rabbah 13:15-16](#)) 'to emphasize the point that there are multiple ways in which the Torah may be interpreted.' It was a good thing that they were sitting down, for looking at the Bible that way is, for them, wrenching, if not an anathema. For them, after all, the literal meaning of the Bible (whatever that is) is the direct word of God, and so any suggestion that the Bible might be interpreted in various ways undermines their trust of it as a divine guide for their lives. One, though, said to me at that point, "You are really way ahead of us in the way you understand the Bible."

Then I pointed out to them the passage from this week's Torah reading in which two men are fighting, they hit a pregnant woman, and she miscarries. If there is no further injury to her, then the assailant must pay compensation for the lost fetus to be based on "reckoning," presumably an assessment of how far along she was in the pregnancy. On the other hand, if there was injury to the mother, then it is "life for life, eye for eye, etc." ([Exodus 21:22-25](#)). Catholic Bibles translate this passage based on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Torah c. 250 B.C.E.), and that mistakenly translates *ason* as "form," which leads to their position historically that as soon as the fetus has a human form, it is a human being. (In the last several centuries, that has expanded to be that as soon as there is a fertilized egg there is a human being.) Protestant Bibles, though, translate the Hebrew correctly, so the Evangelical Christians in the room were reading the same text that I was. They then caucused that evening, and the next morning they told me that the New Testament had nothing on point about this issue and that according to their methodology, they may then use the Old Testament as a guide, so the [Exodus 21](#) text convinced them that they may engage in embryonic stem cell research. Not bad for two days work!

The larger point of how we read the Bible, though, was too much for them to integrate into their discussion of this specific issue. It is a feature of Judaism, though, that goes to the heart of how we understand ourselves as Jews, so much so that we take it for granted. Jews tend to think that the whole world is Jewish - or at least that the whole world thinks as we do. This was one clear indication that that is not so, and that in order to understand our Christian and Muslim neighbors, we need to recognize that many (but not all) of them are literalists in a much stronger sense than even Orthodox Jews are.

Another experience taught me how much to appreciate this aspect of Judaism. I was once on a plane from Boston to Los Angeles, and I started talking to the man sitting next to me. He lived in Newton, a suburb of Boston in which many Jews live. Neither he nor his family was Jewish, but his thirteen-year-old daughter had many Jewish friends from her public school, and she was invited to many Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations that year. Usually he would just drop her off for the service and then pick her up later that afternoon when she called him, but once he decided to stay for the service. He told me that it was at the Conservative synagogue in Newton, Temple Emanuel. The invitation said that the services began at 9:00, so he and his daughter were there at 9:00. I knew that the service would be almost entirely in Hebrew, and so he would have been there for approximately three hours of listening to something he did not understand, with fear and trepidation I asked him what he thought of the service. He exclaimed, "I loved it!" Incredulous, I asked him what he loved about it. He said, "Well, you have a book at every seat with a red cover that has the Bible and a whole host of commentaries (he was clearly talking about *Etz Hayim*, the Conservative movement's new Torah commentary), and so I sat there for three hours reading those commentaries." I asked him, "Don't you have such commentaries?" "What are you talking about?" he said to me. "I am a Methodist. *Sola scriptura*, the Scripture alone is what we are given and are supposed to read." In seeing our way of reading the Torah text from the perspective of someone who is not used to it and absolutely loved it I gained a much greater appreciation for what we Jews have inherited "with our mother's milk," as it were.

As we read the many laws that are in this week's Torah reading, then, together with the rich rabbinic commentaries and expansions of those laws, let us take a moment to appreciate what we have as Jews - a virtual treasure house of interpretations that give ever new meanings to the text of the Torah and provide us with an ample basis for resolving the moral dilemmas of our time. Let us also bless God for that heritage in the liturgy of the early morning service, "Praised are You, Adonai, ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us to get involved in the words of Torah...Praised are You, Adonai, who teaches Torah to His People Israel."

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.