



The Bet Ha'am Weekly Email

Words of Torah from Rabbi Saks

Parashat Mishpatim contains one of the most misunderstood passages in the Torah. Often referred to as *lex talionis*, the principle of literal retribution indicates that when an injury occurs, or even a death, that the penalty must match the crime, "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise" (Exodus 21:23-25). Law codes from the ancient Near East reveal that physical retribution was not the intention in ancient societies, including that of the ancient Israelites. Keen observation of the Torah reveals that while Parashat Mishpatim outlines this type of consequence, there isn't a single instance in Torah in which it is carried out. Around the Middle Ages, many European countries enacted cruel legal practices allegedly rooted in this text, but such an approach misses the point of these laws. During the rabbinic period (1st century CE through 600 CE), the Sages argued that the intention of these laws was monetary compensation scaled to the degree of the injury. Only intentional homicide was an exception.



The Rabbis' approach that physical retribution was not the intention of these laws does not break with tradition; rather, it meshes with the ancient legal codes that paralleled Torah, such as the Code of Hammurabi. Today, we accept the rabbinic interpretation of these verses, in part because no verse of Torah stands on its own. In Leviticus, we read, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against members of your people. Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Eternal" (19:18). Evaluated in this context, we see that this passage in Parashat Mishpatim paired with other laws in Torah that create a justice system aim to create a society that mitigates vengeance rather than encouraging it.

Worship Schedule

We are now using **February** Zoom links for Shabbat worship and Torah Study.

Registrations close at noon on Fridays.

Links will be sent by 4:00 PM on Fridays to all who have registered.

We cannot send Zoom links after 4:00 PM on Fridays.

Read more about our service and our prayer book [here](#).

Friday, February 12

Friday Night Shabbat Family Worship 6:00 PM

Thank you to board member Jay Efron for making announcements.

Thank you to Diane Newman for lighting the Shabbat candles in memory of her father, Harold Newman, and in memory of her grandfather, William Newman.

B'Yachad | Together will not meet this evening.

Register to receive the **Friday Night Shabbat Worship** Zoom link, [here](#).

Saturday, February 13

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Torah study using *The Mussar Torah Commentary* continues--but you don't need to own a copy. Read more [here](#), under the "Torah Study" heading.

Register to receive the **Torah Study** Zoom link, [here](#).

Shabbat Morning Worship 10:30 AM

Register to receive the **Shabbat Morning Worship** Zoom link, [here](#).

Wednesday, February 17

Morning Minyan 7:30 AM

Led by congregant Daniel Oppenheim.

Register to receive the **Wednesday Morning Minyan** Zoom link, [here](#).

Religious School

Religious School on Zoom

Thursday, February 11

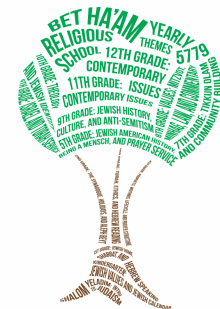
6:30 PM 1st Grade Parent Shabbat Workshop

Sunday, February 14

No Classes

What's Happening?

All are invited to a Purim-themed Family Shabbat Service at 6:00 PM this Friday, February 12. Wear comfy pants and hear the story *Queen Vashti's Comfy Pants!* See Sam's weekly email for the link.



Announcing Bet Ha'am Religious School's 2021 Purim Drawing Challenge! Religious school students of all ages are invited to draw a scene from the Purim story and email a copy to Sam. These will be shared at the assembly closest to Purim. Entries are due February 19.

Grades 8-12 Youth Group Event: Virtual Hamantaschen Bake February 22, 6:30-8:00 PM

Make your dough ahead of time and let it chill for 30 minutes and then join us on Zoom to finish the process! Melissa Montefel, congregant and excellent hamantaschen baker will be on hand to guide us through!

[Here](#) is the recipe we are suggesting, but feel free to use another recipe if you want!

RSVP by February 18. Contact [Andrea Levinsky](#) for the Zoom link.

If you are interested in enrolling in religious school, email Sam at sam@bethaam.org.

Havdalah Together

February 13, 6:30 PM

Havdalah Together

Winter is here, which means Statewide Havdalah. This month we will be led by Rabbi Rachel Isaacs from Beth Israel, Waterville, Rabbi Lily Solochek from Adas Yeshuron, Rockland, and Cantor Shayna De Lowe of Rodeph Sholom, New York. Join Jews from across the state as we say goodbye to Shabbat and welcome a new week. This gathering is sure to be spirited and thought-provoking.



Please register to receive the Zoom details. You'll receive a confirmation email that contains the link, and a reminder email the Friday before the service.

Havdalah Registration

Purim

February 28, 10:00 AM

Purim Celebration

Rejoice during a morning of Purim celebration and fun on Zoom. This year's activities will include our annual Megillah reading and new Purim shpiel written by Mike Levine, *Good Morning Shushan: A Zoom Shpiel For COVID Times*. In our shpiel, a daily reporter gets the scoop of a lifetime at the royal palace. Join us to find out what happens!



Registration is required by Friday, February 26 at 12:00 Noon. Links will be sent out after 1:00 PM on February 26.

Purim Registration

Community-Building Workshop

Monday, March 1, 6:30-8:00 PM

Bet Ha'am Zoom Community-Building Workshop 3

Our relationships are enriched by personal sharing. Open to new as well as previous participants. Congregant Asherah Cinnamon, with assistance from her team of local facilitators, is pleased to offer another community-building workshop on Zoom for Bet Ha'am members. This will be a participatory group (not a discussion or debate) designed to strengthen our connections with each other. Asherah will open with Introductions and with a brief talk on "What is **internalized Anti-Semitism**, and How Might It Impact You and Yours?"

This is an opportunity for adults to express the personal impact of current events, including COVID-19, the rise in visibility of anti-Semitism and racism, and the tensions of politics in families and communities. In large and small listening circles, each participant has an equal opportunity to be respectfully listened to.

Asherah is a trained facilitator with decades of experience bringing people together. Her bio may be found on her website at www.asherahcinnamon.com.

Please register by Friday, February 26 at 12:00 Noon. Please register each person in your household who plans to participate, preferably on a separate device.

Please contact Asherah directly by email at acinnamon@meca.edu with questions. The Zoom link will come from Asherah's email before the event.

Tikkun Olam

Subject: A quick action you can take to support the LGBTQ+ community

Please join an initiative organized by [Keshet](#) to send emails and postcards to our representatives and senators asking them to pass the Equality Act, proposed federal legislation to establish non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ Americans.

Click [here](#) to complete a brief form to (1) send an email or tweet to your representative and senator, and (2) sign up to receive a postcard package to complete and mail to your Maine representatives. There will be an online postcard writing party later in February too, where you'll also have an opportunity to learn about the Equality Act. Details to come!

Help Set the Stage

Help Set the Stage

for A DRAMATIC AFFAIR

A Virtual Evening with Maine Dramatists

Saturday Evening, May 1, 2021



We need **your help** to produce Bet Ha'am's storied annual gala

Can you help with:

- virtual event planning
- writing thank you notes
- virtual greeting during event
- record keeping
- composing various letters
- technical assistance during the event
- selling ads or raffle tickets
- creating social media and promotional content including short videos
- creating digital marketing materials
- creating digital program booklet (flip book)

Tasks are short term with few meetings and high reward.
Get Involved. Have Fun. Feel more connected.

For more information, contact Toby Rosenberg at story@bethaam.org

For Your Parsley Planting Pleasure



The Garden Committee has a limited number of parsley planting kits available to anyone who would like to try their hand at growing parsley. Plant now and have parsley ready for your Passover seder. Kits include seeds, soil, planter, and planting instructions. They will be available on a first come, first serve basis until gone. No reservation is required.

Stop by Bet Ha'am Monday-Friday, between the hours of 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM. The kits will be outside in the drop-off/pick-up bin located in the main courtyard. Please help yourself. Thank you for remembering to sanitize your hands before touching the bin.

Free Sukkah Available

Tom Rosen has a sukkah that needs a new permanent home. The sukkah kit is free but will need to be transported. It is currently is disassembled. The kit includes the 2x4's that make the frame, bamboo rolls for the roof, wind screen for the sides, and plastic vines. If interested, please email Tom.



Ongoing Programs

Shabbat Candle Lighting

Please consider signing up to be a candle lighter at an upcoming Zoom Friday night service. You may choose to do this in memory of a loved one for whom you're observing yahrzeit, in honor of a celebration in your life, or just because you want to engage in this ritual. You can read more from Rabbi Saks [here](#); learn the candle lighting blessing [here](#) (on track 420); and find the words [here](#).

Candle Lighting Sign-Up

Stone Soup

Stone Soup is a Shabbat gift to our congregants. Read all about it [here](#) (on the Stone Soup tab). Many thanks to those who have donated to support Stone Soup.

B'Yachad | Together

Come relax and talk virtually with your Bet Ha'am community before Friday Shabbat services! We will meet every Friday except the second Friday of the month when there is a 6:00 PM Family Shabbat service. [Read more here](#). [Register here](#). Please contact congregant [Alan Davis](#) with questions.



TV Discussion Group

Please join congregants Melissa Montefel and Wendy Hayes, co-facilitators, for a discussion group about Jewish-themed shows. The group meets at 7:00 PM for fun, talk, and insights. Please email [Wendy](#) for the login or with questions or suggestions for future movies.

February 17:

Blazing Saddles - "**Blazing Saddles** is a dang great comedy that couldn't be made today. **Blazing Saddles** (1974) aschews the political correctness that is strangling modern Hollywood. Instead of preaching against bigotry, **Blazing Saddles** mocks bigotry by allowing it to reveal its own absurdity. For that ALONE **Blazing Saddles** is both genius and courageously rebellious." Available on Amazon Prime (and probably libraries & many of us have copies on DVD)

March 3:

Two movies are being generously offered by the Maine Jewish Film Festival. See [MJFF.org](#) to get a pass for the February 19-21 MJFF Weekend Edition.

They Ain't Ready for Me - "The story of Tamar Manasseh, an African American rabbinical student, who has led the fight against gun violence in her Southside Chicago neighborhood. A fascinating look at the complex identity and motivations of an extraordinary person who is Jewish and black, and how these intersecting identities offer her a road map for addressing one of America's most urgent crises."

Rosenwald - "The story of Julius Rosenwald, the son of an immigrant peddler, who rose to head Sears, and partnered with Booker T. Washington and African American communities to build 5,400 Southern schools in African American communities in the early 1900s during the Jim Crow era. As much the chronicle of African American struggle and achievement as the story of a remarkable individual who was inspired by the Jewish ideals of tzedakah (charity) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). Commentary from George C. Wolfe, Julian Bond, John Lewis and Maya Angelou, an alumna of a Rosenwald school."



Curbside Library Borrowing

Although the building remains closed, you may borrow a book from our wonderful library using curbside pick up. Read more on our [library page](#).

Notable Upcoming Services

Purim Together

February 25 at 6:30 PM

We could all use a little celebration! Get your costumes ready, grab a festive drink, and join us for Purim. There will be a *spiel* presented by Temple Beth El (the one in Augusta), a chance to share some unusual hamantaschen combinations, and a special challenge for our local clergy (shhh....it's a surprise). As part of the fun we'll invite you to send in a picture of yourself modeling your Purim costumes; we'll string the images together into a video. Serious prizes will be awarded. More details to come!

But wait, there's more. We'll also have a traditional reading of the *megillah*, so get out your goggers and make some noise!

Half of all donations for this program will go to support Maine's Good Shepherd Food Bank, feeding the hungry in our state. It's an easy opportunity to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of providing gifts for the needy.

To receive Zoom details, please register below. After you sign up, you'll receive a confirmation email with the program link.

[Purim Together Registration](#)

Saturday, March 6

Julia Young Bat Mitzvah

Saturday, March 13

Zephyr Conford Bar Mitzvah

Donate to Bet Ha'am

Please consider donating in any amount to Congregation Bet Ha'am--with your help, we can close the budget gap! We are grateful for your support.

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