

Torah Thoughts, Mishpatim, Exodus 21:1-24:18

“What 4000 Years of Law Teach us About Today”

One of the oldest known code of laws is the Code of Ur-Nammu. Composed in Sumeria in the time of Abraham and Sarah, sometime in the early 2000s BCE, over four thousand years ago, this precious artifact of the ancient world serves as a basis for all other codes that came after it. Surprisingly the 57 laws archaeologists have been able to decipher, are much more humane than you would expect. Unlike Hammurabi’s Code there is no Lex Talionis, or an “eye for an eye”, in this version of law. All injuries or abuses are dealt with by fines. So, what changed in the several hundred years between the two codexes?

The answer is the world expanded from a localized society to a globalized one. When the people around you are family or friends, the trust level is very high. When your world includes distant strangers, as ancient Babylonia did, distrust grows exponentially.

The laws we find in this week’s Torah portion, Mishpatim, from the book of Exodus, attempt to bridge that gap. While fines exist, capital punishment does as well. The Hebrew slaves who escaped Egypt were both members of the same tribe and a mixed multitude. Here, as they begin their journey, they are still trying to find familiarity with one another.

In a way, all of us living in the 21st Century are trying to bridge this same gap. There was a time in the not too distant past where everything was localized. News from beyond our borders was scant, as were the products and people who lived there. The clash of cultures and ideologies can be confusing, and can easily lead to cruelty. Hopefully, like our Biblical ancestors before us, we will find a balance between loving the stranger and protecting ourselves from the outside world. As our Torah continues to teach us, we are perpetually on a journey, rarely reaching the Promised Land, no matter how tantalizingly close it can often appear.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Alex

In Memoriam

Sheloshim

Anthony Logalbo
Lorraine Medwin
Karen Neiman
Elaine Weinstein
Elaine Zeve

Yahrzeits

Abraham Ackerman
Jose Ash
Diane Hurwitz Baumler
Marcia Jo Billick
Sophie Brockman
Dorothe Brockman Fratini
Bruce Bronstein
Dorothea Brooks
Charlotte Bush
Joel Camhi
Donald Campbell
Joel Cavior
Harry N. Faxstein
Laura Feldman
Pesach Finkel
Jack Freid
Martin Freidlander
Ernest William Gordon
Dora Hecht Weiss
Tillie Horwitz
Alex Jeffay
Dorothy Klampert

Richard Kneitingger
Ruth Kraus
James Lackner
Rebecca Margulis
Gloria Massimo
Clarisse Mendelovici
Sylvia Nadel
Isak Osterreicher
Bernard Panar
Paul E. Phillips
Bernard Pleskow
Donna Resman Smith
Mildred Rubin
Hannah Seitz
Sophie S. Small
Samuel Spark
Raymond Strauss
Joseph Swartz
Nancy Taylor
Vincent Vizzi
Harry Wile

Erev Shabbat Service
Friday, February 21, 2025/23 Shevat, 5785
7:00 pm



Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein
Cantor Arlene Frank
Executive Director Joanne Marquisee
Community Religious School Director Rabbi Einav Symons
President Todd Sugarman

CONGREGATION SHIR SHALOM
In Person Events & Virtual Services

Saturday, February 22nd

9:00 am Torah Study in person and via Zoom-offsite

10:45 am Shabbat Morning Service and Kiddush Luncheon-offsite

Sunday, February 23rd

NO CRS

NO CRS Junior Choir

2:00 pm WSS at the JRT

Monday, February 24th

Office Closed

6:30 pm Pickleball Open Play

Tuesday, February 25th

11:30 am Earth Day Committee Meeting via Zoom

7:00 pm Membership Committee Meeting via Zoom

Wednesday February 26th

11:00 am Loving Your Enemy as Yourself

7:00 pm Mussar Class

Thursday, February 27th

6:30 pm Pickleball Open Play

8:00 pm Talmud Study via Zoom

Friday, February 28th

Chai Club Drawing

7:00 pm Erev Shabbat Service via Boxcast, Facebook and YouTube

8:00 pm Oneg Shabbat

UPCOMING EVENTS

Chai Club tickets will be drawn every Friday for fourteen weeks. There will be \$18, \$36, and \$54 prizes. The grand prize drawings will be for \$180, \$360, and \$540. Tickets are \$18 each and will be returned to the drawing after you win. Tickets are still available to purchase in the Temple Office.

The Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month Celebration will be on Monday, February 24th at 7:00 pm at the JCCC Benderson Building. Hear inspirational personal stories and learn about the importance of inclusion and belonging within our community. For more information, please contact Robin@buffalojewishfederation.org

The Temple Beth Tzedek's Keshet Inclusion Outstretched Arm and Women's Network Purim Celebration will be on Sunday March 9th at 10:30 am. People of all ages and abilities are invited for music, Megillah reading, Hamantaschen, a festive meal, and fun! Please RSVP to the TBT office by March 2nd.

This Year's Purim Spiel will be Wicked, Defying Gravity Together. Join us on Thursday, March 13th at 6:00 pm for a complimentary Pizza Dinner. Purim Spiel and Megillah Reading will be at 7:00 pm followed by our Hamantaschen Oneg Shabbat.

The Scout Shabbat Family Service will be on Friday, March 21st at 6:30 pm. Join us in worship and song as we celebrate Scout values at this family friendly service, followed by an Oneg Shabbat at 7:30 pm. Feel free to wear casual clothing.

Our Mission Statement, as a congregation, is to be a welcoming community and to enhance all aspects of Jewish life.

The Board of Trustees of Congregation Shir Shalom
COMMITMENT STATEMENT

We, the Board of Trustees, pledge to unite and to enrich the lives of our congregation.

We will proceed in our commitment to Congregation Shir Shalom, to create an inclusive and open environment for the entire congregation.

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Cantor-Arlene Frank
Executive Director-Joanne Marquisee
Community Religious School Director-Rabbi Einav Symons
President-Todd Sugarman
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Immediate Past President-Bruce Corris

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Bruce Corris	Kirstie Henry	Michael Schwartz	
Micky Farber	Tara Karch Cross	Rebecca Shaw	

Prayer for those who lead our congregation

O God, this congregation has honored us with the task of leading them, and of serving You with them.
May we strive to be fit for this sacred task.
May we lead well and may we serve well.
May we hear the quiet as well as the active voices, and may we heed the call and follow the paths of what we, after honest searching, feel to be the right things to do.
May we listen to each other, and may we listen to You, as all of us together make this synagogue a *kehillah kedusha*, a Holy place.

Congregation Shir Shalom is Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism and Reconstructing Judaism.