Congregation Bonai Shalom’s Response to Racism Group

**A Call to Action**

**In-depth discussion on Zoom of**

***Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson**

**Definitions** (Wilkerson’s and other definitions)

**Caste** an artificial hierarchy that helps determine standing and respect, assumptions of beauty and competence, and even who gets benefit of the doubt and access to resources.

A caste system, is “an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but are ascribed life-and-death meaning.”

**Race**, in the United States, is the visible agent of the unseen force of caste. Caste is the bones, race the skin.”

Race is a tool of the underlying structure that we live with, race is merely the signal and cue to where one fits in the caste system.

Race is the newer concept, and it was, in some ways, created to maintain - to delineate, categorize and create the caste system that underlies our society.

**Racism** is prejudice against people based on physical characteristics (ADL Definition)

**Classism** is prejudice against people based on real or perceived economic status (ADL Definition)

**Questions we will be discussing:**

1. At the beginning of *Caste*, author Isabel Wilkerson compares American racial hierarchy to a dormant virus. How does this metaphor help combat the pervasive myth that racism has been eradicated in America?

2. Wilkerson discusses three major caste systems throughout the book: India, Nazi Germany, and America. What are some of the similarities and differences that stood out to you among these three systems? Did the fact that the Nazis actually studied America’s segregation practices and Jim Crow laws help underscore the breadth of our own system?

3. Are there any situations in your daily life where you come across examples of casteism? Have you experienced casteism personally? Have you benefited from casteism? How can you address casteism when you become aware of it?