



April 17-18, 2026

א אייר תשפ"ו

Candle Lighting 7:21 PM

16th Day of the **Omer**

Parashat Tazria-Metzora - Leviticus 12:1-15:33

Stone - p 608 Hertz - p 459 Etz Hayim - p 649

7th Aliyah (Rosh Chodesh) - Numbers 28:9-15

Stone - p 890 Hertz - p 695 Etz Hayim - p 930

Haftarah - Isaiah 66:1-24 ישעיה סו

Stone - p 1208 Hertz - p 944 Etz Hayim - p 1220

REDEDICATION SHABBAT HONORING DR. STEVEN PURO

Kiddush luncheon following services is
sponsored by the congregation
in honor of Steve Puro

Shabbat ends 8:22 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon - Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director - traditionalcong@gmail.com

WEEKDAY AND **SHABBAT** SERVICES

Tuesday - 6:30 PM
Shabbat - 9:30 AM

Board of Directors:

Governance Committee:
Florence Schachter, Chair
Marty Levy, Vice-Chair
Ken Bohm, Ellis Frohman, Ron Green,
Dina Rinder, Mindy Strauss

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President
Mark Weinstein, Ritual Vice President
Marty Levy/Mindy Strauss,
Education Co-Vice Presidents
Dina Rinder, Membership Vice President
Steven Puro, Administration Vice President
Chris Brown/Justin Zeid, Building & Grounds
Co-Vice Presidents
Ron Green, Fundraising Vice President
Barbara Levin, Treasurer
Mimi Levy, Secretary

Past Presidents:

Kenneth H. Bohm, Phil Brick

Members at Large:

Maureen Brodsky
Stanley Estrin
Bill Gold
Gary Golden z"l
Jack Heller
Sid Levin
Ari Levy
Carol Max
Florence Schachter

We welcome new members!

If you or someone you know would like to receive membership information,
please contact our office at 314-576-5230
or traditionalcong@gmail.com

On This Week's Parashah - Tazria-Metzora

The Sages were eloquent on the subject of *lashon hara*, evil speech, the sin they took to be the cause of *tsara'at*. But there is a meta-halachic principle: "From the negative you can infer the positive". So, for example, from the seriousness of the prohibition against *Chillul Hashem*, desecrating God's name, one can infer the importance of the opposite, *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying God's name.

It therefore follows that alongside the grave sin of *lashon hara*, there must in principle be a concept of *lashon hatov*, good speech, and it must be more than a mere negation of its opposite. The way to avoid *lashon hara* is to practise silence, and indeed the Sages were eloquent on the importance of silence. Silence saves us from evil speech but in and of itself it achieves nothing positive. What then is *lashon hatov*?

One of the most important tasks of a leader, a parent or a friend is focused praise. We first discussed this idea in parshat Vayeshev, where we examined the classic text on this - a Mishnah in Tractate Avot in which Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai enumerates the praises of his five beloved students: "Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: a plastered well that never loses a drop. Joshua ben Chananya: happy the one who gave him birth. Yose the Priest: a pious man. Shimon ben Netanel: a man who fears sin. Elazar ben Arach: an ever-flowing spring." Avot 2:11

Every Rabbi had disciples. The imperative, "Raise up many disciples" is one of the oldest rabbinic teachings on record. What the Mishnah is telling us here is how to create disciples. It is not difficult to create followers. Often a good teacher will, over time, notice that they have developed a large following, students who are uncritical devotees - but how to encourage these followers to become creative intellects in their own right? It is far harder to create leaders than to create followers.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was a great teacher because five of his students became giants in their own right. The Mishnah is telling us how he did it: with focussed praise. He showed each of his pupils where their particular strength lay. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the "plastered well that never loses a drop," was gifted with a superb memory - an important ability in an age in which manuscripts were rare and the Oral Law was not yet committed to writing. Shimon ben Netanel, the "man who fears sin," may not have had the intellectual brilliance of the others but his reverential nature was a reminder to others that they were not merely scholars but also holy men engaged in a sacred task. Elazar ben Arach, the "ever-flowing spring," had a creative mind constantly giving rise to new interpretations of ancient texts.

I discovered the transformative power of focused praise from one of the more remarkable people I ever met, the late Lena Rustin. Lena was a speech therapist, specialising in helping children who struggled with stammers. I came to know her through a television documentary I was making for the BBC about the state of the family in Britain. Lena believed that the young children she was treating - they were, on average, around five years old - had to be understood in the context of their families. Families tend to develop an equilibrium. If a child stammers, everyone in the family adjusts to it. Therefore if the child is to lose their stammer, all the relationships within the family will have to be renegotiated. Not only must the child change. So must everyone else.

By and large, we tend to resist change. We settle into patterns of behaviour as they become more and more comfortable, like a well-used armchair or a well-worn pair of shoes. How do you create an atmosphere within a family that encourages change and makes it unthreatening? The answer Lena discovered was praise. She told the families with whom she was working that every day they must notice each member of the family doing something right, and say so - specifically, positively and thankfully.

She did not go into deep explanations, but watching her at work I began to realise what she was doing. She was creating, within each home, an atmosphere of mutual regard and continuous positive reinforcement. She wanted the parents to shape an environment of self-respect and self-confidence, not just for the stammering child but for every member of the family, so that the entire atmosphere of the home was one in which people felt safe to change and help others to do so.

(Con't next page)

I suddenly realised that Lena had discovered a solution not just for stammering but for group dynamics as a whole. My intuition was soon confirmed in a surprising way. There had been tensions among the television crew with which I had been working. Various things had gone wrong and there was an atmosphere of mutual recrimination. After filming a session of Lena Rustin teaching parents how to give and receive praise, the crew likewise began praising one another. Instantly the atmosphere was transformed. The tension dissolved, and filming became fun again.

Praise gives people the confidence to let go of the negative aspects of their character and reach their full potential.

There is in praise a deep spiritual message too. We think religion is about faith in God. What I had not fully understood before was that faith in God should lead us to have faith in people, for God's image is in each of us, and we have to learn how to discern it. I then understood that the repeated phrase in Genesis 1, "And God saw that it was good," was there to teach us to see the good in people and events, and by so doing, help to strengthen that goodness. I also understood why God briefly punished Moses by turning his hand to tsara'at – because he had said about the Israelites, "They will not believe in me." (Ex. 4:1) Moses was being taught a fundamental lesson of leadership: It does not matter whether they believe in you. What matters is that you believe in them.

It was from another wise woman that I learned another important lesson about praise. Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, in her book *Mindset*, argues that it makes a decisive difference whether we believe that our abilities are innate and determined once and for all (the "fixed" mindset), or whether we may assume that talent is something we achieve through time by effort, practice and persistence (the "growth" mindset). People who take the former approach tend to be risk-averse, afraid that if they fail this will show that they are not as good as they were thought to be. The latter group embrace risk because they take failure as a learning experience from which they can grow. It follows that there is good praise and bad praise. Parents and teachers should not praise children in absolute terms: "You are gifted, brilliant, a star!" They should praise effort: "You tried hard, you gave of your best, and I can see the improvement!" They should encourage a growth mindset, not a fixed one.

Perhaps this explains a sad aftermath in the life of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai's two most gifted pupils. The Mishnah immediately following the one quoted above states:

He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] used to say: If all the Sages of Israel were in one scale of a balance and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the other, he would outweigh them all. However, Abba Saul said in his name: If all the Sages of Israel, including Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, were in one scale of a balance, and Elazar ben Arach in the other, he would outweigh them all. (Avot 2:12)

Tragically, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was eventually excommunicated by his colleagues for failing to accept the majority view on a matter of Jewish law. As for Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, he became separated from his colleagues. When they went to the academy at Yavneh, he went to Emmaus, a pleasant place to live but lacking in other Torah scholars. Eventually he forgot his learning and became a pale shadow of his former self.[6] It may be that praising his students for their innate abilities rather than their effort, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai inadvertently encouraged his two most talented students to develop a fixed mindset rather than engage with colleagues and stay open to intellectual growth.

Praise, and how we administer it, is a fundamental element in leadership of any kind. Recognising the good in people and saying so, we help bring people's potential to fruition. Praising their efforts rather than their innate gifts helps encourage growth, about which Hillel used to say: "He who does not increase his knowledge, loses it" (Mishnah Avot 1:13). The right kind of praise changes lives. That is the power of *lashon hatov*. Bad speech diminishes us; good speech can lift us to great heights. Or as W. H. Auden said in one of his beautiful poems:

"In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise."

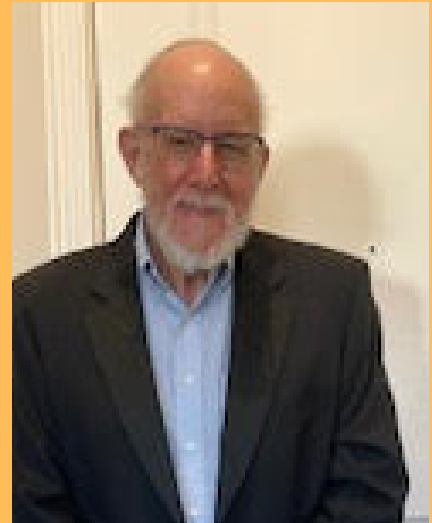
W. H. Auden

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, zt"l

Rededication Shabbat

honoring

Steven Puro, Ph.D.



This Shabbat, April 18, 2026

Services begin at 9:30 AM
Festive kiddush luncheon
to follow in Steve's honor

Please join us to honor Steve
for the many years of
devoted service he has given
to our congregation.

RSVP with names of all attending to:
traditionalcong@gmail.com



SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026



KOLOT

St. Louis Jewish Women's Choir

AT TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION



Light breakfast @ 10:00 AM,
followed by KOLOT.

KOLOT performs Jewish songs in Hebrew and English,
Broadway show tunes and other popular songs.

Advance RSVP is required:

traditionalcong@gmail.com or 314-576-5230
with names of all attending

No charge, but donations are gratefully accepted.

Please stay after the performance to help assemble
gift bags for the Florence Gaponoff Mother's Day
Tzedakah Project, which will be distributed to
women's shelters in the STL metropolitan area.

Traditional Congregation
12437 Ladue Road, STL MO 63141
314-576-5230
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PRAYER

O Guardian of Israel, we ask Your blessings
Upon the people of Israel and the Land of Israel.

*Bless them with peace, tranquility, and achievement,
Bless them – even as they have been a blessing to us.*

For they have nurtured our pride,
And renewed our hopes

*They have gathered in our homeless;
They have healed the bruised and the broken.*

Their struggles have strengthened us;
Their sacrifices have humbled us.

*Their victories have exalted us;
Their achievements have enriched us.*

They have translated into fulfillment
The promises of Your ancient prophets:

*“They shall build up the waste cities and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine.”*

Truly, they have made the wilderness into Eden,
And the desert like the garden of God.

*Watch over the Land, we pray;
Protect it from every enemy and disaster.*

Fulfill the prophetic promise
Which still awaits realization;

*“Violence shall no more be heard in your land
There shall be no more desolation within your borders.”*

*“Zion shall be redeemed through justice.
And that they dwell therein through integrity.”*

Author Unknown

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE.

Every child, woman and man should possess license to speak or sing in his or her true voice.

Joyce Maynard