



December 2, 2017

יד כסלו תשע"ח

Parashat Vayishlach וישלח Genesis 32:4-36:43
Stone – p 170 Hertz – p 122 Etz Hayim – p 198

Haftarah Obadiah עבדיה 1:1-21
Stone – p 1141 Hertz – p 137 Etz Hayim – p 222

Kiddush is sponsored by Sisterhood

Talmud Class—3:00 PM

Minchah—4:10 PM

Seudah Sh'lishit

Shabbat Ends—5:22 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon – Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com

Rabbi Ephraim Zimand, Emeritus – ravzim@yahoo.com

Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director – tradcong@sbcglobal.net

DAILY SERVICE TIMES

Shabbat—9:00 AM & 4:10 PM

Sunday—8:30 AM & **5:00 PM**

Monday -Thursday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM

Friday—7:00 AM & 5:45 PM

Board of Directors:

Kenneth H. Bohm, President

Steve Bell, Executive Vice President

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President

Marty Levy, Ritual Vice President

Florence Schachter, Education Vice President

Elaine Farkas, Membership Vice President

(Open) Administrative Vice President

Steve Roufa, Building & Grounds Vice President

Chris Brown, Fundraising Vice President

Lori Tesser, Treasurer

Mimi Levy, Secretary

Christy Brick, Sisterhood Representative

Members at Large:

Sid Bennett

Shelah Feldman

Bill Gold

Ari Levy

Carol Max

Steven Puro

Dina Rinder

Iris Salsman

Jerry Tullman

Jeff Weisman

Justin Zeid

Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know would like to receive membership information, please contact Membership VP Elaine Farkas at 954-558-1159.

On This Week's Torah Portion—Vayishlach

by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

There are Mozarts and there are Beethovens. Which are you?

I have only the most amateur knowledge of music, but the impression one gets about Mozart is that, from him, music flowed. There is something effortless and effervescent about his compositions. They are not “sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought.” He wrote at speed. He carried the worries of the world lightly.

Not so Beethoven, for whom it sometimes took years for an idea to crystallise into its final form, with countless drafts and revisions and crossings-out. This was a man who could be angry with himself and with the world, for whom creativity was a struggle from which he emerged triumphant with work that is rarely less than strenuous and full of conflict until its final majestic resolution. The ethereal, mystical, almost other-worldly quality of his last compositions, the sublime late piano sonatas and string quartets, are the creation of one who has finally found peace after a life of wrestling with his own angels and demons.

All of this is, for me, a way of coming to understand Jacob, the man who became Israel, our father in faith. Jacob is not the most obvious choice of religious hero. He does not appear – at least on the surface of the biblical text – as a man with Abraham's courage or kindness, Isaac's faithfulness and self-restraint, Moses' vigour and passion, David's politics and poetry, or Isaiah's lyricism and hope.

He was a man surrounded by conflict: with his brother Esau, his father-in-law Laban, his wives, Leah and Rachel, and his children, whose sibling rivalry eventually brought the whole family into exile in Egypt. His life seems to have been a field of tensions.

Then there were his transactions: the way he purchased Esau's birthright, took his blessing, and eventually outwitted his wily father-in-law Laban. In each case he seems to have won, but then his situation deteriorates. The episode in which, at Rebekah's request, he dressed up as Esau and deceived his blind father, forced him to leave home and – as we see in this week's parsha – left him traumatised with fear at the prospect of meeting Esau again. Almost the same deception he practised on Isaac, he suffered at the hand of Laban. Even his escape from Laban might have ended in tragedy, had God not warned him not to harm Jacob (Hence the passage in the Haggada: “Go and learn what Laban the Aramean sought to do to our father Jacob”). His life as portrayed in the Torah seems to be a constant series of escapes from one trouble to the next.

So who and what was Jacob? To this there are two radically different answers. There is the Jacob of midrash who even in the womb longed for a synagogue,[1] who spent his years as a young man studying in the *bet midrash*,[2] who looked like Abraham[3] and whose arms were like pillars of marble.[4] His motives were always pure. He bought Esau's birthright because he could not bear to see Esau offering sacrifices (the privilege of the firstborn) to idols.[5] As for his father's blessing, the very reason Isaac became blind in old age was so that this could be possible.[6] Esau was the opposite, a violent and mercurial character who had deceived his father into thinking he was ultra-pious,[7] but who had – on the day he came in “tired” from the field – committed a whole series of crimes including murder.[8]

This is an extreme portrayal, but not without scriptural basis. Jacob is called an *ish tam*, which conveys the sense of simplicity, integrity and single-mindedness. The plain sense of the oracle Rebekah received before the twins were born was that “the elder will serve the younger.”[9] She knew Jacob was the son destined to prevail. Besides which, as Maharatz Chajes says in his Introduction to the Aggadic Literature,[10] midrash paints biblical characters in moral black-and-white for obvious moral and educational reasons. It is difficult to teach children how to behave if all you have to offer is a series of studies in ambiguity, complexity and shades-of-grey.

The other Jacob, though, is the one we read in the plain sense of the text. The obvious question is: why did the Torah choose to portray the third of the patriarchs in this way? The Torah is highly selective in the details it chooses to relate. Why not paint Jacob in more attractive colours?

It seems to me that the Torah is delivering, here as elsewhere, an extraordinary message: *that if we can truly relate to God as God, in His full transcendence and majesty, then we can relate to humans as humans in all their fallibility*. In every other religious literature known to me, heroes are idealised until they no longer seem human at all. They are Divine or semi-Divine, perfect and infallible. There is no one like that in the whole of Tanakh. Even Noah (righteous, perfect) is seen drunk and dishevelled. Even Job (blameless, upright) eventually curses his fate. The man who, more than any other, epitomises fallibility is Jacob.

And perhaps that is the point. Jacob was a Beethoven, not a Mozart. His life was a series of struggles. Nothing came easily to him. He, alone of the patriarchs, was a man who chose to be chosen. Abraham was called by God. Isaac was chosen before his birth. Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah: these were all singled out by God for their mission. Not so Jacob. It was he who bought the birthright and took the blessing, he who chose to carry Abraham's destiny into the future.

Not until he was running away from home did God appear to him. Not until years later, alone, at night, terrified at the prospect of meeting Esau, did God or an angel wrestle with him. He alone was given, by God or the angel, a completely new name, not an enhancement of his old one but a completely new identity: “Israel.” Even more strikingly, despite the fact that he was told “Your name shall no more be called Jacob,”[11] the Torah continues to call him Jacob, suggesting that his struggle was lifelong – as, often, is ours.

Were I to choose a soundtrack for the Jacob I have come to know, it would be Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata or his *Grosse Fugue*, music of such overwhelming tension that it seems on the verge of bursting through all form and structure. Yet it was through these epic struggles that Beethoven eventually reached his own version of serenity, and it was through Jacob's extended wrestling-match with destiny that he eventually achieved what neither Abraham nor Isaac accomplished: all his children stayed within the faith. “According to the pain is the reward,” said the sages.[12] That is Jacob.

There are saintly people for whom spirituality comes as easily as did music to Mozart. But God does not reach out only to saints. He reaches out to all of us. That is why He gave us Abraham for those who love, Isaac for those who fear, and Jacob/Israel for those who struggle.

Hence this week's life-changing idea: if you find yourself struggling with faith, you are in the company of Jacob-who-became-Israel, the father-in-faith of us all.

Time to Register!!



**FIRST FRIDAYS
ARE BACK!!**



Friday, November 3, 2017
and
Friday, December 8, 2017

5:45 PM—Kabbalat Shabbat Service
6:30 PM—Delicious, kosher, full-course dinner

RSVP:
tradcong@sbcglobal.net or 314-576-5230

\$18/person
No charge for first-time guests/kids under 6!

Experience the warmth of
Traditional Congregation!



VODKA & **Latkes**

A Chanukah Celebration!!
Saturday night, 12/16 7:00 PM

Raise a glass, *chap* a latke!
There'll be other food to
enjoy and non-alcoholic
beverages as well.

Entertainment!

Bring your chanukiot so we can
light together

\$20/person
RSVP to :
tradcong@sbcglobal.net or 314-576-5230 or
online: www.traditional-congregation.org

**Did we mention
there'll be vodka??**



COLUMN A

2nd Annual

CHINESE DINNER AND MOVIE!!

Monday, December 25

5:00 PM Dinner

(meat & veggie options)

7:15 PM Movie

(title tba)

COLUMN B

\$20/age 14 and up

\$10/kids 6-14 years old

No charge/kids under 6

COLUMN C

RSVP by 12/15:

tradcong@sbcglobal.net

314-576-5230

Online: [www.traditional-
congregation.org](http://www.traditional-congregation.org)

Practice using your chopsticks and get the popcorn ready!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, December 8 **First Friday**—enjoy Kabbalat Shabbat and a delicious full-course Shabbat dinner with your Traditional family. Bring your friends! \$18/person; no charge for first-time visitors to TradCong and kids under 6. RSVP by **12/4**, 314-576-5230 or tradcong@sbcglobal.net.

Shabbat, December 9 **Kiddush luncheon sponsored by Susan Fleminger** in honor of the 75th birthday of Steve Puro.

Thursday, December 14 **General Board Meeting**, 7:30 PM.

Shabbat, December 16 **Kiddush luncheon sponsored by Barry Schapiro** in honor of his 75th birthday.

Motzei Shabbat, December 16 **Vodka & Latkes: A Chanukah Celebration!** Raise a glass and *chap* a latke (or three)! Enjoy yummy treats, beverages (with and without alcohol), and entertainment! All for just \$20/person. 7:00 PM. Bring your friends, and bring your chanukiot so we can light together. RSVP: tradcong@sbcglobal.net, 314-576-5230 or www.traditional-congregation.org

Monday, December 25 **Chinese Dinner & A Movie!** Looking for something to do on December 25th? Problem solved!! Join us at 5:00 PM for a delicious Chinese dinner (meat and veggie options available), followed by a movie (title TBA) at 7:15. \$20/age 14 & up; \$10/kids 6-13 year old; no charge/kids under 6. RSVP by 12/15: tradcong@sbcglobal.net, 314-576-5230 or www.traditional-congregation.org

Hanukkah Hugs JF&CS and Jewish Women's Philanthropy are helping families in need of financial assistance to provide Hanukkah gifts for their children. **TradCong is a drop-off location—please bring NEW, UN-wrapped toys, books, gifts or gift cards for kids newborn to age 18** and place them in the collection bin in our lobby **by Wednesday, Dec. 6**. Thank you! And shop easier, shop smarter by making your purchase at www.smile.Amazon.com and choosing Traditional Congregation as the charity you support—no legwork involved, your Hanukkah Hugs gifts can be shipped directly to TradCong, and TradCong receives a donation from Amazon as well! Win, win!!



Visit our website www.traditional-congregation.org

PRAYER

Eternal God, shepherd of every hope, source of strength, and wellspring of peace,
we join with like-minded lovers of peace in the pursuit of peace.

*You have made all of us one blood, and as you love us as one, so too, we must love
all others as one – even those with whom we do not agree –
with the embrace of understanding and the extended hand of friendship.*

May we not grow weary in our efforts to fashion a world of peace
for all Your children.

Illuminate the hearts and minds of those who lead us.

May we all be guided in the way of peace, especially when hatred and pride
appear to be the most attractive, easy option.

*We have received this good earth as a sacred trust to enjoy and share
as members of one human family. Help us to keep that trust.*

Save us, our compassionate God, from our folly by Your wisdom,

From our arrogance by Your forgiveness,

From our greed by Your generous bounty,

From our insecurity by Your healing power.

Grant us peace, O God of peace.

*Teach us that justice and mercy can meet; that truth and peace can,
once and for all, truly embrace. Amen!*

Rabbi Stephen S. Pearce

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Fear can keep us up all night long,
but faith makes one fine pillow.

Philip Gulley