

November 27-28, 2026 י''ח כסלו תשפ''ז

Candlelighting: 4:23 PM

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

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

Kiddush following services is sponsored by the congregation

Shabbat ends: 5:23

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 *Arvit*
Shabbat - 9:30 AM

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
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Co-Vice Presidents
Ron Green, Fundraising Vice President
Barbara Levin, Treasurer
Mimi Levy, Secretary
Past Presidents:
Kenneth H. Bohm, Phil Brick
Members at Large:
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Stanley Estrin
Bill Gold
Jack Heller
Sid Levin
Ari Levy
Carol Max
Michael Roth
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 Torah Portion - Vayishlach

Parshat Vayishlach contains a shocking incident. Dina, Yaakov's daughter, is abducted and raped by Shechem, the son of the local town's ruler. Her brothers are incensed and demand justice. Shechem then asks for permission to marry Dina and in an act of subterfuge, Yaakov's sons agree to the marriage and strike a deal, saying that first all the males of the town of Shechem must be circumcised.

Once the men are weakened by the pain of their circumcisions, Dina's brothers, Shimon and Levi, carry out a brutal revenge by killing every male in the town. Yaakov reproaches his sons, and fears retaliation from neighbouring communities. However, Shimon and Levi justify their actions, arguing that their sister should not be treated so sickeningly.

The Torah, unusually, includes authorial comments emphasising the moral gravity of the situation. It articulates the grief and anger of Yaakov's sons upon learning of their sister's ordeal, and their internal justification in punishing the city for her defilement. But was this enough of a justification?

Years later, on his deathbed (in parshat Vayechi), Yaakov curses Shimon and Levi for their violence and recklessness, foretelling their dispersion in Israel. This act by Yaakov presents a stark contrast to the earlier justification of their actions.

This narrative sparked a debate between two prominent Jewish scholars: Rambam and Ramban. The Rambam, in his Mishnah Torah, argues that the people of Shechem were collectively responsible for failing to bring their prince to justice for his crime against Dina. After all, the Noahide laws demand the establishment of legal courts by Gentiles to enforce justice. According to the Rambam, the entire town was complicit in this violation.

The Ramban offers a counter-argument. He posits that while the Noahide laws obligate establishing justice systems, they do not imply collective responsibility or warrant death for failing to implement these laws. Indeed, he questions why Yaakov would condemn his sons if their actions were justified. This debate highlights the unresolved nature of collective responsibility and justice in Jewish law and theology. While Jewish law advocates for collective responsibility among Jews, the question arises whether this principle extends beyond Jewish law to all societies, as the Rambam suggests. To what extent are individuals responsible for the establishment of a fair judicial system in their towns?

According to the Talmud, one who can prevent sin in their household, community, or the world but fails to do so is morally culpable. Rabbi Sacks adds that the human courts of law can only punish the one who has acted, but God can choose to also hold to account any bystanders who permitted a preventable evil to take place.

This dovetails with the horrible events of the Holocaust. Philosopher Karl Jaspers, when considering the guilt of the German populace, terms the guilt of bystanders as 'metaphysical guilt'. In other words, 'guilty in a way not adequately conceivable either legally, politically or morally.'

If this is the case, Shimon and Levi's actions cannot escape moral condemnation either. Despite the guilt of Shechem, the brothers were wrong to execute justice by killing all the males, and Yaakov is right in condemning them. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, a noted Israeli moralist, suggests that some actions, even if vindicated, can still be morally reprehensible. Rabbi Sacks concludes that it is critical to distinguish between collective responsibility and collective punishment. While the former is a moral imperative for all of us, the latter, as exemplified by the actions of Shimon and Levi, is far more ethically fraught. This parsha serves as a powerful exploration of justice, morality, and the complexities of collective ownership.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Join us at B’nai Amoona on December 6th!



Adults (13+): $12
Children (3-12): $8
2 & Under Complimentary
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Shabbat Hanukkah Chinese Dinner

Friday, December 11th



6:00pm:
Musical Friday Evening Services
7:00pm:
Delectable Chinese Dinner



Adults (13 -59): $25 per person Adults (60+): $18*
Children (3-12): $10 per person 2 & Under Complimentary

REGISTER HERE

https://www.bnaiamoona.com/form/shabbat-chinese-dinner-december-2026.html

*Cost is subsidized by a grant from the Women's Auxiliary Foundation for the Jewish Aged & JCA Charitable Foundation

Note: There will be a separate space available for a ***Shabbat*** service without instruments

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New or clean gently used clothing is accepted

The International Institute of St. Louis provides opportunities for immigrants and refugees to thrive in order to create a welcoming, prosperous, and healthy region for all.



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