



August 26, 2017

ד אלול תשע"ז

Parashat Shoftim - Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9 שפטים
Stone – p 1024 Hertz – p 820 Etz Hayim – p 1088

Hafarah – Isaiah 51:12-52:12 ישיעהו
Fourth Week of Consolation
Stone – p 1199 Hertz – p 835 Etz Hayim – p 1108

**We Celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of
Alex Levy**
Kiddush luncheon is sponsored by Alex's parents,
Stephanie Cogan & Ari Levy

Talmud Class—5:45 PM
Minchah – 7:00 PM
Seudah Sh'lishit
Shabbat Ends – 8:24 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 & 7:30 PM
Sunday—9:00 AM
Monday, Tuesday & Thursday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM
Wednesday & Friday—7:00 AM

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
Tobie Hupert
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—Shoftim

...for the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise and make righteous words crooked. (16:19)

Once he has accepted a bribe from him, it is impossible that the judge should not tilt his heart towards [the briber] (Rashi ad loc)

...so that you will live and take possession of the Land that Hashem, your Gd, gives you. (16:20)

Appointing decent judges is worthy to keep Israel alive and to settle them on their Land. (Rashi ad loc)

Our *parashah* is filled with exhortations to judges to avoid bribery and all sorts of corruption, and it is therefore generally an appropriate time to lament the sorry state of politics that we see around us. However, we can also see that the problems plaguing us today are actually nothing new – if the Torah legislates that judges should not take bribes, it is obvious that judges have been taking bribes for thousands of years. If the Torah tells us that society cannot function with a dishonest judiciary, then there must have been contemporary examples, and in fact we find such examples in both Jewish and non-Jewish history, right up to the present time.

This year, however, I would rather consider why it is that the quality of judges and of justice is so very important. On the surface there are the obvious points. We all have an innate sense of fairness, and, unless we become numbed to it, we react strongly against those who treat others unfairly, or use their power to oppress others. We react even more strongly when that oppression is cloaked in a patina of legality. Furthermore, a society depends on group cohesion. Group cohesion requires buy-in by the great majority of the society to the basic values and principles of the society. If the judiciary is corrupt, favoring some at the expense of others, such buy-in gets harder and harder to obtain. Eventually, no matter how strong the army is, or the secret police, eventually the society rots from within.

This is the surface level. On a deeper level, corrupt judges pervert the truth, thus damaging all levels of creation. In fact, the verses right after the verses quoted above deal with the prohibition of idolatry. Idolatry, which denies the Unity of Gd, is the grossest form of falsehood. The juxtaposition of the verses indicates a commonality between perverting justice and denying truth. This is further borne out by a verse later in our *parashah* (19:17) where the litigants in a court case are described as standing "before Hashem." Justice is, ultimately, Gd's to carry out. The judges are nothing more than Gd's instruments for this purpose. Therefore, if the judges act corruptly, they profane Gd's name.

Truth is that which doesn't change. This can be seen in the actual written Hebrew language. The Hebrew word for *truth* is *emet* – which is written with *aleph* – *mem* – *tav*. Each of these three letters has a wide, firm base: *aleph* stands on two feet; *mem* has a flat base and *tav* again stands on two feet. By contrast, the word for *falsehood*, *sheker*, is spelled *shin* – *kuf* – *reish*, all of which stand on one point – in other words, the letters are all unstable.

Our Sages tell us that "the seal of the Holy One is Truth." Gd is unchanging and eternal; therefore the Truth of Gd is absolute. The truth of anything in the manifest creation is necessarily contingent. If I say that my computer exists, that statement is true at the moment, but it wasn't true 20 years ago before the computer was manufactured, and it probably won't be true 20 years hence. The truth of the existence of my computer is contingent, because all existence other than Gd's is contingent. Our Sages describe this contingency in the Midrash (*Genesis Rabbah* 8:5), where Gd is listening to a debate as to whether human beings should be created or not. *Truth said, 'Let him not be created, because he is compounded of falsehood;'*... *What did the Holy One do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground.*" I think that this "casting of truth to the ground" can be read as follows: Absolute Truth is only to be found in Heaven. But for Absolute Truth to be *realized* in material creation, it has to be "cast to the ground" – that is, made contingent.

The Absolute, in order to create, has to, as it were, retreat from its perfection in order to manifest finite things (in Kabbalistic terminology this is called *tzimtzum*, "contraction"). Nevertheless, the same qualities that exist in their fullness in the Absolute still must exist when the Absolute manifests itself. The ocean is completely water – when it rises in waves, the waves are just as wet as the ocean. Thus Truth must still be true, even on earth. It is the function of the judges to make sure that this is the case. Perhaps that is why we learn that the judge who judges justly becomes a partner of Gd's in creation.

So far we have been dealing with judges. There is a further level of consideration that is relevant to every individual. We are all enjoined to establish judges and officers in our gates. What do we mean by "gates"? On the individual level the "gates" are those structures that let influences pass into or out of our individual selves, namely our organs of perception and our organs of action. What does it mean to station judges at these gates? Simply, we must be careful only to take in influences that support our growth and our health, and we must be careful only to send out influences that support the growth and health of everything in the environment. This of course can be quite a challenge. We are not in control of everything in the environment, and it is very hard to filter out all negative influences. Similarly, if our nervous system is stressed and inflexible, we tend to react to stimuli in an instinctive manner, rather than responding to them in a reasoned manner. The challenge is to align our "judges" with the Judge of all the world, Who only does justly. On Yom Kippur we get the formula – *t'shuvah*, *tefillah*, *tzedakah* / "repentance/return to Gd," prayer and charity draw us close to Gd – indeed make us more Gdly.

Shabbat Shalom! Rafi Rabinoff

Join us for Games and Schmooze!

Wednesday * August 30 * 2017



When

Wednesday, August 30, 2017
7:15 PM

Where

Traditional Congregation
Social Hall

Open to all those looking to schmooze or play some board games, bridge, or mah jong, or work on needlecrafts.

Please bring cards and games, or your knitting/crocheting/needlework projects.

Light refreshments will be provided.

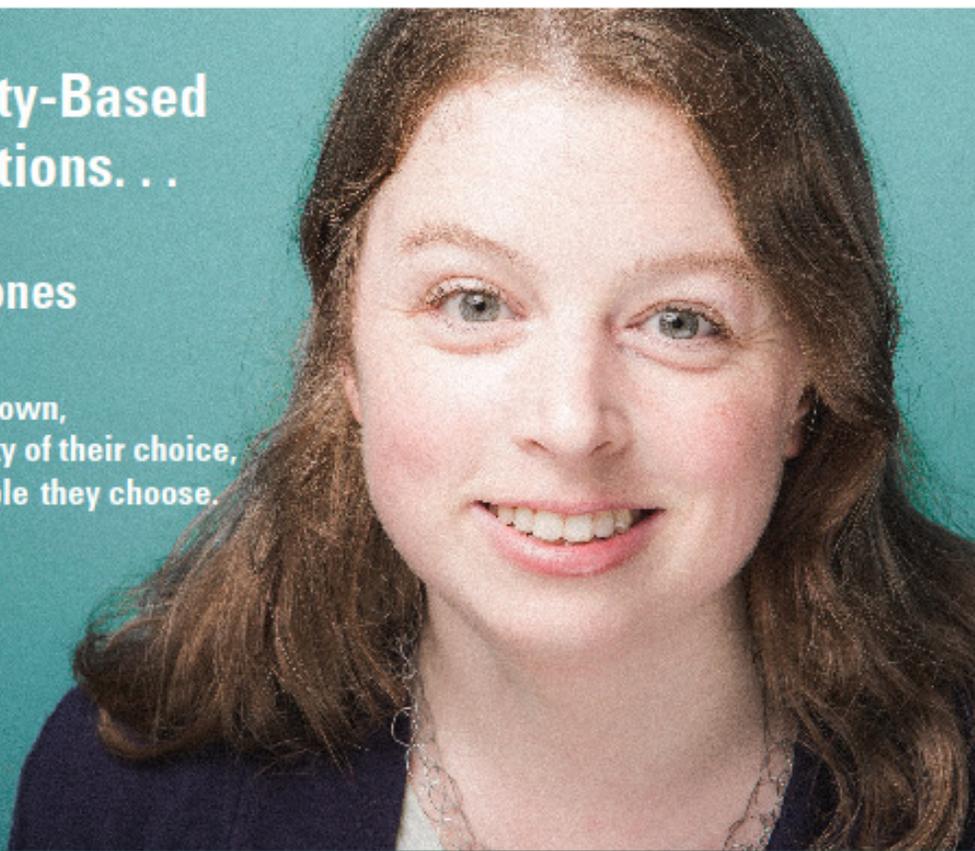
There is no charge, just come and bring your friends!



Community-Based Living Options. . .

**Our loved ones
deserve...**

A home of their own,
in the community of their choice,
living with people they choose.



Together, we can create new possibilities.

Join us to learn more about strategies to create alternative housing solutions for Jewish individuals with disabilities interested in living in the St. Louis area.

Tuesday, September 12 at 7:00 pm
Guller Chapel at Congregation B'nai Amoona
324 South Mason Rd, St. Louis, MO 63141

RSVP to Mary Brown at 314-442-3812 or MBrown@JFedSTL.org.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, August 30 **Schmooze & Games**, 7:15 PM in the Social Hall Bring your board games, cards, crafting projects and join us for a relaxing schmooze and an evening with friends. Light refreshments will be provided. No charge, no RSVP necessary.

Shabbat, September 2 **Bat Mitzvah of Hayley Lerner**, daughter of Gary & Alayna Lerner and granddaughter of Bill & Nanci Gold and Marvin & Doris Lerner. Kiddush luncheon is sponsored by Gary and Alayna; all are welcome.

Thursday, September 7 Jewish Federation's Annual Meeting/Event at The Magic House, 516 S. Kirkwood Rd, 5:30 PM. TradCong will have a table at the event, please come out to support us and your Federation. \$18/person or \$36/family including children. Includes admission to the Museum, free parking, kosher hors d-oeuvres and drinks. Register at JFedSTL.org/events/2017-annual-meeting.

Shabbat, September 9 **Open Door Shabbat**. Know someone who's looking for a shul to call home? Invite them to join us and find out what we're all about, experience our service and enjoy a delicious kiddush luncheon. No charge, all are welcome.

Thursday, September 14 **General Board Meeting**, 7:30 PM, open to all members.

Shabbat, September 16 **Bar Mitzvah of Stephen Rosenberg**. Kiddush luncheon is sponsored by Anat Reschke & Brad Fink, Alan & Donna Rosenberg, and Frieda Reschke in honor of Stephen becoming a *bar mitzvah*. All are welcome.

Motzei Shabbat, September 16 **Selichot**. Details to be announced.

Sunday, September 17 **Volunteers needed** to set up our sanctuary and social hall for the High Holydays. 10:15 AM following *minyan*.

Need a good laugh?? Join us to see "Defending the Caveman" at the Playhouse @ Westport Plaza, **Sunday, October 15, 2:00-4:00 PM**. \$40/ticket (regularly \$60). *Before we purchase the tickets, we need an idea of how many people are interested in attending. If you would like to join us, please contact Elaine Farkas, 954-558-1159 ASAP.*



Visit our website www.traditional-congregation.org

PRAYER

Israel survives because it is comprised of inveterate optimists.

We shall swallow the bitterness of life and pursue the sweet.

We survive above all, knowing that life needs direction, norms, discipline.

We place ourselves under the discipline of Torah and rejoice that we have mitzvot.

We survive above all, because the prophetic voices that break out amongst us
from time to time.

*We are blessed with visionaries who never make peace
with the foibles of the people or the whims of the leaders.*

We are not allowed to sink into the sweet lassitude of dissipation and degeneracy
which lead to death.

*We are shaken by the challenging words "...Cease to do evil; learn to do well;
seek justice, relieve the oppressed, support the orphan, plead for the widow."*

We survive because of Moses who smashed the popular golden calf;

Because of Nathan who pointed a finger at his king, "You are the guilty man."

Because of Elijah who thundered at his king,
"Have you killed and also taken possession?"

*Because of Amos who demanded, "Let justice well up as the waters
and integrity as a mighty stream."*

Though we cannot all be Moses, Isaiahs, Elijahs,

We dare not forget that we are the inheritors of their tradition.

Unknown (adapted)

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

War without consideration for humanity is barbaric, and peace at any cost
is the passive consent to unacceptable actions by others.

Jim Chandler