



November 24, 2018

טז כסלו תשע"ט

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 luncheon is sponsored by
Mel & Louise Saltzman
in honor of
the engagement of their son,
Michael,
to Stacey Kaplan

Talmud Class - 3:00 PM
Minchah – 4:10 PM
Seudah Sh'lishit/Arvit
Shabbat Ends – 5:25 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

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

Rabbi Ephraim Zimand z"l, Emeritus

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

DAILY SERVICE TIMES

Shabbat—9:00 AM & 4:10 PM Sunday—8:30 AM

Monday—Thursday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM

Friday 7:00 AM & 5:45 PM

Board of Directors:

Elaine Farkas, President

Paul Tesser, Executive Vice President

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President

Marty Levy, Ritual Vice President

Florence Schachter, Education Vice President

Steve Roufa, Building & Grounds Vice President

Chris Brown, Fundraising Vice President

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Jerry Chervitz, Alan Rosenberg, Phil Brick, Boaz Roth, Cyndee Levy, Kenneth Bohm

Members at Large:

Steve Bell

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
Marian Gordon at 314-576-5230*

On This Week's Torah Portion – Vayishlach

The major portion of our *parashah* deals with Ya'akov's confrontation/reunion with his brother Esav. The story begins two *parshiyot* ago when Ya'akov deceives his father and receives the blessing that Yitzchak had intended to give Esav. Esav was not pleased and threatened to kill Ya'akov. Rivka arranges for Ya'akov to flee to her brother, Lavan, and to seek a wife there. In last week's *parashah*, Ya'akov dutifully leaves for Charan, finds Lavan and his family, winds up with 4 wives eleven children (Rachel will die delivering the 12th son, Binyamin, later in our *parashah*). After having spent 20 years with Lavan, and two years coming home, Ya'akov is ready to face his twin brother. Esav is ready to meet Ya'akov too. He's already on his way, with a small army to back him up.

Now, on the night before the fateful confrontation, Ya'akov is left alone on one side of the river to wrestle with someone until daybreak. Who he is wrestling with is purposely left vague, although the sparse dialog indicates that this is no ordinary "man." The commentators are pretty unanimous in following the Midrash and identifying the "man" with the "angel of Esav," a heavenly counterpart of the earthly Esav, or perhaps a subtle level of Esav's personality that exists on a level beyond his physical body. In any event, it appears that Ya'akov is not so much wrestling with Esav, but with what Esav represents. In the Rabbinic literature, Esav writ large is Rome, the original "Evil Empire," which destroyed the Second Temple and oppressed Israel and eventually began the present, seemingly interminable exile.

Who, then, is Esav and what does he represent? In a word, Esav represents the material, surface, outer value of creation, as opposed to Ya'akov, who represents the inner, abstract, spiritual value. We see this in several places. First, when we are first introduced to them, Esav comes out all hairy, as if fully grown – indeed the name "Esav" means "made" – Esav was developed as far as he could develop, rigid, bounded, spiritually immobile. Ya'akov, on the other hand, is a "simple [i.e. innocent] man, dwelling in tents," which the Rabbis identify as "tents of Torah" (meditation rooms?). When Esav and Ya'akov do meet up, Esav tries to refuse Ya'akov's lavish gifts, saying, "I have a lot." "A lot" is still a finite value, and leaves room for more – which Esav winds up taking from Ya'akov. Ya'akov on the other hand, urges Esav to accept the gift, saying, "I have everything." Ya'akov is rooted in the infinite, transcendent reality of life. He is full; nothing can increase or diminish him. Esav accepts the gift. Shortly thereafter "Ya'akov came *whole* to Shechem." Rashi comments that his hip (where the "man" injured him) was healed and his wealth was restored from what he gave Esav.

Finally, in terms of civilizations, Roman civilization, Esav's spiritual descendants, was known for its engineering marvels and its extreme cruelty, privileging the material over the spiritual. Jewish culture, on the other hand, seeks to create a society that balances order and justice with compassion, based on rooting that society in the innermost spiritual dimension where opposite values are harmonized.

What, then, is the meaning of the wrestling match? Ya'akov is "bloodied but unbowed" at the end, and he does force the angel to give him a blessing, but in the end, it's kind of a stalemate. Some modern commentators, including R. Goldin, take a psychological approach – Ya'akov was wrestling with his own demons – his doubts about his deceiving his father and "stealing" Esav's blessing, and they see his extracting a blessing from Esav's angel as Esav's acknowledgement that the blessing is Ya'akov's by right.

I would like to take this insight a bit deeper. Life is composed of two aspects. One is the purely abstract, purely spiritual level of the transcendent, and the other is the obvious, manifest level of creation. The one is represented in human life by the soul, and the other by the body. Some religions hold that the two are opposed to one another, and recommend mortification of the flesh in order to culture the spirit; some goes so far as to recommend bizarre and painful practices to subdue bodily desires. Judaism is not one of them. While we recognize that the spirit, which is eternal, is superior to the body, which is transient, both come from Gd and both were created with a purpose. The spirit's purpose is to expand to its infinite potential, and the body's purpose is to provide a vehicle whereby the spirit's unbounded nature can be infused into the material creation.

Apparently Rivka had this insight, whereas Yitzchak did not. Yitzchak sought to give Ya'akov spiritual blessings and Esav material blessings, under the assumption that Esav would support Ya'akov. That, unfortunately, would have put the physical in the driver's seat and ruined the world. Rivka recognized that the physical and the spiritual had to be integrated in one personality, and that personality had to be Ya'akov, who could be counted on to keep the physical in check and serving the spiritual. Ya'akov, who was totally committed to truth, had to deceive his father to get both blessings. As a result, he had to go deal with that paragon of material life, Lavan, and then return to the Land of Israel, the realm of the spirit, with his own spirit intact and with an expertise in dealing with the complexity and ambiguity of the material world.

Since the day Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil opposite values, like spiritual and physical, have been mixed up within human beings and in creation. Our job as humans, and doubly so as members of the Jewish people, is to tease apart the contradictory threads and weave them back together in an orderly way to create a rich tapestry of life that exalts and glorifies every thread. For this each of us must wrestle with ourselves until the light dawns.

***Shabbat Shalom!* Rafi Rabinoff**



Knosh & Knowledge Program

"Helping Refugee Families: My Act Two"

with guest speaker Stan Shanker

Sunday, December 2, 2018

Breakfast @ 9:30 AM

Program @ 10:15 AM

Cost: \$6/person

RSVP by 11/23:

tradcong@sbcglobal.net or 314-576-5230

Stan Shanker, 74, has had a life well lived. Today he volunteers to make sure a good and safe life is possible for others, specifically those new to the U.S., as he immerses himself in helping refugee families resettle and adjust to life in St. Louis.

In 2015, inspired by TV coverage of the difficult plight of refugees around the world and hearing a high holiday sermon by Rabbi Jim Bennett dealing with the struggles of Syrian refugees and the need to help, Stan stepped forward.

He now chairs the Jewish Coalition for New Americans (JCNA), a committee of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of St. Louis. Last year, Stan was instrumental in starting a day camp coordinated by JCNA and held at the International Institute for refugee children. For this work, Stan received a 2017 St. Louis Jewish Light Unsung Heroes Award.

Come meet Stan and hear his inspirational story of finding his post-retirement "Act Two" in helping refugee families new to St. Louis --and what we might do to help.

VODKA / LATKE 2.0!

Chanukah Celebration

Saturday night December 8 7:30 PM



Latkes your bubbe never heard of

Vodka/Wine/Non-alcoholic beverages

Sweet Treats

Bring your chanukiot so we can light the night together!

\$20/person

RSVP to:

tradcong@sbcglobal.net or 314-576-5230

Online at: www.traditional-congregation.org

Please send in your registration form with payment, or register online at:
<https://www.traditional-congregation.org/events>
by December 3 (registrations received after that will be wait-listed).

Traditional Congregation Scholar in Residence
A Weekend of Learning with

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

December 14-16, 2018

Rabbi Telushkin is an American rabbi, scholar and bestselling author of more than 15 books, including "The Book of Jewish Values," "Jewish Literacy" (the most widely-read book on Judaism of the past two decades), and "Rebbe," a New York Times bestseller. He is a senior associate of CLAL, the National Center for Learning and Leadership, serves on the board of the Jewish Book Council, and is rabbi of the Los Angeles-based Synagogue for Performing Arts.



Friday evening, December 14

5:45 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat Services followed by dinner and presentation: *"The 50 Best Jewish Jokes and What They Say About the Human Condition"* \$25/person; \$18/students

Shabbat, December 15

9:00 AM: Shabbat services and presentation: *"Words that Hurt, Words that Heal: How the Words You Choose Shape Your Destiny"* The conversation with Rabbi Telushkin continues at kiddush following services. No charge.

Saturday evening, December 15

7:30 PM: *"On Being a Good Person in a Morally Complicated World: On Forgiveness, Self Esteem and Why It is So Hard to Change"* The Jean & Bernard Kaplan Memorial Lecture. A dessert reception will follow. \$12/person

Sunday morning, December 16

9:30 AM: Breakfast; 10:45 AM: *"The 21st Century: A Jewish Vision, One Day at a Time"* \$12/person

Paid registration required by December 3 for all events. (*Registrations received after 12/3 will be wait-listed.*) Please send payment to:

Traditional Congregation, 12437 Ladue Rd, St Louis MO 63141

(include phone number on memo line)

or register online at: www.traditional-congregation.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

Through November 27 Please donate new, **UN**wrapped Chanukah gifts for kids ages 0-18 through Women's Philanthropy's Hanukkah Hugs program. Drop-off bin is in our lobby, or you can order at smile.amazon.com and ship directly to Jewish Federation, attn: Marianne Chervitz, 12 Millstone Campus Drive, St Louis MO 63146. (Gift cards are great for teens.) Deadline is **Nov. 27**. (If ordering at smile.amazon.com, be sure to choose Traditional Congregation as your charity of choice!)

Thursday, November 29 Saul Mirowitz Middle School Open House, 8:30 AM. Visit classrooms, hear about the school from students and administrators. RSVP or more info: pbloom@mirowitz.org or lkoertel@mirowitz.org or 314-576-6177.

Sunday, December 2 **Knosh & Knowledge Program with Stan Shanker:** "Helping Refugee Families: My Act Two." Join us for a delicious breakfast beginning at 9:30 AM followed at 10:15 AM by Stan's presentation. \$6/person, RSVP to 314-576-5230 or tradcong@sbcglobal.net. or online at <https://www.traditional-congregation.org/events>

Motzei Shabbat, Dec. 8 **Vodka & Latkes 2.0!** We had such a great time last year, we're doing it again! Celebrate Chanukah at TradCong with vodka/wine/non-alcoholic drinks and latkes unlike any your bubbe made! Bring your Chanukiyot so we can light the night together. \$20/person, paid RSVP's by Nov. 30, tradcong@sbcglobal.net or 314-576-5230 or online at <https://www.traditional-congregation.org/events>

December 14-16 **Scholar in Residence Program with Rabbi Joseph Telushkin**—See page 5. **Register by December 3!!**

If you've not yet made a High Holyday pledge or a Capital Campaign donation—it's not too late. Please communicate your pledge or send your donation to the office. Thank you for your support!

We're looking for...YOU—to sponsor a Kiddush! Call Marian, 314-576-5230 to reserve your date. Not ready to sponsor but would like to contribute to offset our Kiddush costs? It's easy —mail your donation to Traditional (note: Kiddush Fund in memo) or donate online at <https://www.traditional-congregation.org/donate> and select Kiddush Fund Donation. Thank you!

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