



February 13, 2021

א אדר תשפ"א

Shabbat Sh'kalim שבת שקלים

Parashat Mishpatim משפטים Exodus 21:1-24:18
Stone – p 416 Hertz – p 306 Etz Hayim – p 456

Rosh Chodesh – Numbers 28:9-15
Stone – p 890 Hertz – p 695 Etz Hayim - p 930

Special Maffir Exodus 30:11-16 (שקלים)
Stone – p 484 Hertz – p 352 Etz Hayim – p 523

Hafarah – Second Kings 12:1-17 (מלכים ב יב:יז)
Stone – p 1213 Hertz – p 993 Etz Hayim – p 1277

Shabbat ends: 6:18 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—until further notice

Sunday—8:30 AM

Tuesday—6:30 PM

Thursday—7:00 AM

Shabbat—9:30 AM

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*Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know would like to receive membership information, please contact
Chris Brown, Membership VP, at 636-288-5356*

Our parsha takes us through a bewildering transition. Up until now, the book of Shemot has carried us along with the sweep and drama of the narrative: the Israelites' enslavement, their hope for freedom, the plagues, Pharaoh's obstinacy, their escape into the desert, the crossing of the Red Sea, the journey to Mount Sinai and the great covenant with God.

Suddenly, we now find ourselves faced with a different kind of literature altogether: a law code covering a bewildering variety of topics, from responsibility for damages to protection of property, to laws of justice, to Shabbat and the festivals. Why here? Why not continue the story, leading up to the next great drama, the sin of the Golden Calf? Why interrupt the flow? And what does this have to do with leadership?

The answer is this: great leaders, be they CEOs or simply parents, have the ability to connect a large vision with highly specific details. Without the vision, the details are merely tiresome. There is a well-known story of three workers who are employed cutting blocks of stone. When asked what they are doing, one says, "Cutting stone," the second says, "Earning a living," the third says, "Building a palace." Those who have the larger picture take more pride in their labour, and work harder and better. Great leaders communicate a vision.

But they are also meticulous, even perfectionists, when it comes to the details. Thomas Edison famously said, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration." It is attention to detail that separates the great artists, poets, composers, filmmakers, politicians and heads of corporations from the merely average. Anyone who has read Walter Isaacson's biography of the late Steve Jobs knows that he had an attention to detail bordering on the obsessive. He insisted, for example, that all Apple stores should have glass staircases. When he was told that there was no glass strong enough, he insisted that it be invented, which is what happened (he held the patent).

The genius of the Torah was to apply this principle to society as a whole. The Israelites had come through a transformative series of events. Moses knew there had been nothing like it before. He also knew, from God, that none of it was accidental or incidental. The Israelites had experienced slavery to make them cherish freedom. They had suffered, so that they would know what it feels like to be on the wrong side of tyrannical power. At Mount Sinai, God, through Moses, had given them a mission statement: to become "a Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation," under the sovereignty of God alone. They were to create a society built on principles of justice, human dignity and respect for life.

But neither historical events nor abstract ideals – not even the broad principles of the Ten Commandments – are sufficient to sustain a society in the long run. Hence the remarkable project of the Torah: to translate historical experience into detailed legislation, so that the Israelites would live what they had learned on a daily basis, weaving it into the very texture of their social life. In the parsha of Mishpatim, vision becomes detail, and narrative becomes law.

So, for example: "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything" (Ex. 21:2-3). At a stroke, in this law, slavery is transformed from a condition of birth to a temporary circumstance – from who you are to what, for the time being, you do. Slavery, the bitter experience of the Israelites in Egypt, could not be abolished overnight. It was not abolished even in the United States until the 1860s, and even then, not without a devastating civil war. But this opening law of our parsha is the start of that long journey.

Likewise the law that "Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result." (Ex. 21:20) A slave is not mere property. They each have a right to life.

Similarly the law of Shabbat that states: "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed." (Ex. 23:12) One day in seven slaves were to breathe the air of freedom. All three laws prepared the way for the abolition of slavery, even though it would take more than three thousand years.

There are two laws that have to do with the Israelites' experience of being an oppressed minority: "Do not mistreat or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt." (Ex. 22:21) and "Do not oppress a stranger; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt." (Ex. 23:9)

And there are laws that evoke other aspects of the people's experience in Egypt, such as, "Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry" (Ex. 22:21-22). This recalls the episode at the beginning of the Exodus, "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them." (Ex. 2:23-25)

In a famous article written in the 1980s, Yale law professor Robert Cover wrote about "Nomos and Narrative."^[1] By this he meant that beneath the laws of any given society is a *nomos*, that is, a vision of an ideal social order that the law is intended to create. And behind every *nomos* is a narrative, that is, a story about why the shapers and visionaries of that society or group came to have that specific vision of the ideal order they sought to build.

Cover's examples are largely taken from the Torah, and the truth is that his analysis sounds less like a description of law as such than a description of that unique phenomenon we know as *Torah*. The word "Torah" is untranslatable because it means several different things that only appear together in the book that bears that name.

Torah means "law." But it also means "teaching, instruction, guidance," or more generally, "direction." It is also the generic name for the five books, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, that comprise both narrative and law.

In general, law and narrative are two distinct literary genres that have very little overlap. Most books of law do not contain narratives, and most narratives do not contain law. Besides which, as Cover himself notes, even if people in Britain or America today know the history behind a given law, there is no canonical text that brings the two together. In any case in most societies there are many different ways of telling the story. Besides which, most laws are enacted without a statement of why they came to be, what they were intended to achieve, and what historical experience led to their enactment.

So the Torah is a unique combination of *nomos* and narrative, history and law, the formative experiences of a nation and the way that nation sought to live its collective life so as never to forget the lessons it learned along the way. It brings together vision and detail in a way that has never been surpassed.

That is how we must lead if we want people to come with us, giving of their best. There must be a vision to inspire us, telling us why we should do what we are asked to do. There must be a narrative: this is what happened, this is who we are and this is why the vision is so important to us. Then there must be the law, the code, the fastidious attention to detail, that allow us to translate vision into reality and turn the pain of the past into the blessings of the future. That extraordinary combination, to be found in almost no other law code, is what gives Torah its enduring power. It is a model for all who seek to lead people to greatness.

Please complete the form below to help support Ethiopian Jewish Israeli Students



Traditional has entered its 30th year as participants in the Adopt-A-Student program sponsored by NACOEJ (North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry). This program supports promising Ethiopian Israeli Jews who need financial help to continue their studies.

While tuition is covered by the Israeli government, students must pay for living expenses. Due to their own financial difficulties, the students' parents are not able to help. In many cases, the financial burden causes Ethiopian students to drop out of school. The support we provide our adopted students helps them stay in school and earn a degree. Ultimately, this education provides them a profession and helps them break the cycle of poverty.

Three of our students are continuing their studies:

Bezuayehu Mengistu (Law, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

I would like to wish you and your families a Happy Tu Bishvat! May you always be growing and may everything bloom around you.

Avkelesh Ytayo (Business Administration, Peres Academic Center)

I started my third and final year of studies and I am really excited that this is my last year, excited to finish my studies successfully and you have a big part in it.

Eliyahu Samuel (Business Management, Bar Ilan University)

Thanks again for the help and especially during this time that the gaps and economic difficulties are increasing.

Our fourth student, Shira Yasu, recently graduated, and we adopted a new student in her place:

Hagit Zerihon (Occupational Therapy, Tel Aviv University)

I served in the army in the Intelligence Corps...After I finished my service...I began to volunteer at a special education kindergarten, where I discovered that I wanted to study Occupational Therapy...I am now entering the third year of my studies.



Help Traditional continue this worthwhile project!

Please send your contribution to: Traditional Congregation Chesed Committee
and mark it for "Adopt-A-Student"

Name _____

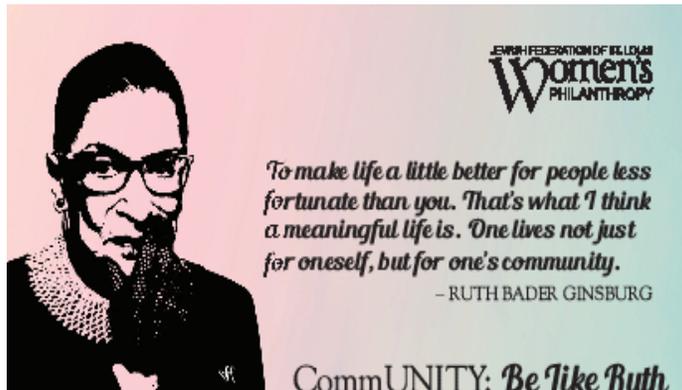
Thank You!!

Be Like Ruth!

A Women's CommUNITY Event

February 18, 2021

7:00 PM on Zoom



Join us for an inspiring evening as we remember and honor Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. RBG was a trailblazer for women, and we will celebrate her legacy along with the many Jewish women's organizations making a difference in our community. Hear from Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt, a friend of RBG, and Officiator of Justice Ginsburg's funeral.

Thursday, February 18, 2021 - 7 PM - Zoom



Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt is celebrated by the Forward as one of the 32 most inspiring rabbis in the country. Last year, she was named one of Jewish Women's International's (JWI) "Women to Watch," a Senior Fellow of the Schusterman Fellowship, a leadership development program for individuals.

At Adas Israel, Rabbi Holtzblatt has revitalized their caretaking (Hesed) and bereavement efforts, co-created the MakomDC adult learning curriculum, launched and leads "Return Again" worship services, and directs the Jewish Mindfulness Center of Washington, which has twice been recognized as one of America's top innovative Jewish projects by the annual Slingshot Guide for Jewish Innovation. Previously, Rabbi Holtzblatt served as the Hillel Foundation Director of Campus Initiatives and as Associate Rabbi at the Yale University Hillel. Rabbi Holtzblatt was also a rabbinic fellow at B'nai Jeshurun in New York. She is married to Ari Holtzblatt and has two children, Noa and Elijah.



Click to Register

Questions? Contact Mackenzie Isringhausen at MIsringhausen@JFedSTL.org or 314-442-3844.

Raising Good Humans

A 4-part workshop for parents of young children (ages 3-5)

A virtual workshop facilitated by Mirowitz teachers



Join us (virtually) for some thoughtful discussion on how to raise children who care about others, who feel empowered to pursue tzedek (justice) and who are committed to Tikkun Olam (the repair of the world).

Sign up for one or all of the sessions.

PARENT & CHILD **1 Kavod** Respecting ourselves and others

Bring your pre-schooler for an interactive Zoom with **Shannon Rohlman**. Together we will explore our diverse identities, including skin color, and how we can express pride as an individual without denying the value of others.

PARENT **2 Tzedakah** Teaching children to be generous

As a parent, modeling charitable acts is a great way to teach your child the value of tzedakah. Join **Rabbi Scott Slansky** to learn how to kick off your family's own tzedakah practice.

PARENT & CHILD **3 Tikkun Olam** Repairing the world

Empathy is a top indicator for personal and professional success, and through understanding others, your children can repair the world! **Laura Johnson** will provide ideas on how you can nurture empathy in your children.

PARENT **4 Hakarat Hatov** Recognizing the good

Gratitude in children is consistently associated with higher levels of happiness and optimism, higher self-esteem and improved resilience. **Val Toskin** will share a few tips you can use to help your child recognize the good around them.



RSVP Free, but space is limited.

mirowitz.org/raising-good-humans

Zoom link provided upon RSVP.

Register at:

<https://mirowitz.org/happenings/whats-new/>

weekly ZOOM planner

Learn with Rabbi Gordon



MONDAYS
9:00 - 10:00 AM

Class is on hiatus. A new class will begin after Pesach - watch for details!



WEDNESDAYS
7:00 - 8:00 PM

Topic:
Parashat HaShavua

Activity:
A look at the weekly Parashah from both the traditional rabbinic and midrashic points of view as well as from modern historians. Recommended: the New JPS translation, but feel free to use any translation.

[Register Here](#)



פרשת השבוע

THURSDAYS
12:00 - 1:00 PM

Topic:
Mitzvah 613

Activity:
More than a "good deed," mitzvah means "command." Teachings from Sefer ha-Chinuch will be provided. This work numbers the mitzvot as they appear in the Torah, adding rabbinic teachings and the author's insights.
Recommended: Have a translation of the Torah with you.

[Register Here](#)

FRIDAYS
TIME VARIES

Topic:
Kabbalat Shabbat

Activity:
Usher in Shabbat with abbreviated services (including L'cha Dodi; though not Shabbat evening services) and Zemirot. Benefits include spiritual ones as we enter Shabbat, congregational togetherness, and learning about what we will sing.

[Register Here](#)



Feb. 12, 2021:
Kabbalat Shabbat begins at 4:40 PM

The 613
Mitzvot
as listed
by the Rambam

PRAYER

All Israelites are siblings, responsible for one another.

If there be among you a needy person, do not harden your heart.

Shut not your hand to your needy siblings,
But surely open your hand to them.

*Blessed are they who consider the poor;
God will deliver them in days of evil.*

Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves,
For all who are threatened with destruction.

*They who shut their ears to the cry of the needy,
Shall one day cry themselves, and not be answered.*

They who give to the poor shall be blessed with abundance,
But they that hide their eyes shall themselves be in need.

*They that are gracious to the needy, honor their Maker,
But they that oppress the poor, blaspheme God.*

Let the poor rejoice in your joy; share with them your blessings.

*Generous hearts shall be enriched, And they that
satisfy others shall be satisfied themselves.*

They who give when well, their gift is gold;
They who give only when ill, their gift is silver;
They who give only in their wills, their gift is copper.

*From You O God, comes our wealth,
And from Your own do we give You.*

Unknown

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Today I bent the truth to be kind and I have no regret, for I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true.

Unknown