



August 19, 2017

כז אב תשע"ז

Parashat Re'eh - Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17 ראה
Stone – p 998 Hertz – p 799 Etz Hayim – p 1061

Haftarah – Isaiah 54:11-55:5 ישעיה
Third week of Consolation
Stone – p 1199 Hertz – p 818 Etz Hayim – p 1085

*Kiddush luncheon is sponsored by Eric & Elaine Farkas
in memory of Eric's mother, Anna Farkas*

Talmud Class—6:00 PM
Minchah – 7:30 PM
Seudah Sh'lishit
Shabbat Ends – 8:34 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
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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—Re'eh

... and you stray from the path that I command you today, to follow other gods... (11:28)

... anyone who worships idols, see now, he has strayed from the entire path which Israel has been commanded to follow.

From here the Sages said: "Whoever believes in idolatry is the one who denies the Torah in its entirety." (Rashi *ad loc*)

Why is idolatry equated with denying the entire Torah? To answer this question, we must understand what Torah is, and what idolatry is.

Torah, of course, must be understood on many different levels. On one level we understand it as a system of laws, a way of structuring society and regulating individual behavior for maximum growth and evolution. On a deeper level, Torah is the story of the way Gd creates and manages the world. Our esoteric tradition tells us that Torah is the "blueprint of creation" – the sounds that are Torah actually mirror perfectly the finest impulses with which Gd creates the finite out of His own infinite essence. In all these cases however, the underlying presumption is that Gd is all that there is – *ayn od milvado*.

How does Gd create? We have discussed the Kabbalistic notion that Gd somehow "contracts" Himself in order to leave "space" for the finite to exist. I want to touch on another issue here, that has substantial contemporary relevance. That is the issue of whether there are laws of nature or not. Now all of science and technology is based on the assumption, seemingly borne out by common experience, that nature acts lawfully. Nevertheless, what we actually observe are really only correlations between events; logically speaking there is an opening to say that in fact Gd's policy in running the world is to follow these patterns almost all the time. The times when He apparently relaxes this policy are what we call "miracles."

Now this idea that Gd decides what to do with the universe on a moment-to-moment basis may seem, on the surface, to be just a cheap way of explaining away the miracles recorded in Scripture, but it does have some basis in normative Jewish thought, and no less a Rabbinic luminary than Ramban supports the idea. In the morning service we extol Gd as the One Who "in His goodness renews daily, perpetually, the work of creation." In Ramban's view, the primary reality in creation is Gd's Will, and that is expressed everywhere and at all times. In fact, all of creation is a miracle, in the sense that Gd Wills it to be that way. Most of the time Gd wills things to continue in their regular patterns. Sometimes He pulls back the curtain, so to speak, and shows us, through some alteration in the course of nature, that His Will is all that there is and patterns are merely apparent.

Now as you can imagine, as a physicist I'm not sold on the idea that the regularity we see around us is a complete illusion. Certainly the idea that Gd creates the universe "at every moment in time" cannot be meant literally, since time itself is part of the created universe. We understand this today because of Einstein's Relativity, but even hundreds of years ago it must have been clear that if there is no space and no objects to move about in space, there is no concept of time either. On the other hand, if Gd is all that there is, then it is equally clear that Gd did not simply set up the universe to run according to natural law, wind it up, and let it go on by itself. Certainly "everything exists according to His Word."

I believe that the answer to this apparent contradiction has to do with the state of consciousness from which we evaluate the situation. From our ordinary waking state of consciousness we perceive that nature is indeed regular, and this regularity has a mathematical precision that allows us to control the material world to a remarkable degree. We say that there are indeed laws of nature. It is at this point that we can get into trouble. If we start attributing existence and power, independent of Gd, to anything in nature – the laws of nature, the stars, the planets, the sun and moon, this is idolatry.

In fact, according to Maimonides, this is how idolatry got started. People recognized that Gd had "delegated" powers to the sun and moon and to the laws of nature. They felt that just as one honors a king by honoring his ministers and governors, so they would honor Gd by honoring the sun and moon and constellations. This is the slipperiest of slippery slopes. Soon enough, they stopped honoring Gd and just honored the ministers and governors. They got caught up in the parts and lost sight of the Wholeness hiding behind the parts. Whether Maimonides meant this to be an actual historical regression, or more of a logical and spiritual regression, I don't know, and I don't believe it really matters. The bottom line is that idolatry is characterized by loss of the infinite whole and its replacement by finite, limited values.

What Torah demands of us is that we rise above the level of finite boundaries and experience the Wholeness of Gd to the greatest extent that we can. When we live that level of Wholeness, we experience that Gd is the only, all-pervading Reality, and His whole creation is, so to speak, nothing more than His own internal dynamics. From this point of view, there are indeed no laws of nature, only Gd's Will. All existence exists only on that basis. Ascribing power to anything other than Gd is completely ridiculous, because nothing even has *existence* outside of Gd, let alone power. But we cannot live this state if we are putting our attention on boundaries. We have to take our attention beyond boundaries to Wholeness. Life according to Torah is life suffused with Divine Light. I believe it is in this sense that we can understand how idolatry and Torah are just diametrically opposed to one another.

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!



DON'T FORGET TO REMEMBER...



Let us know you'd like to be included in our congregational Rosh Hashanah greeting card.
LAST CALL!!

Order your lulav and etrog!
5% discount on all paid orders received
by August 10.
Last day to order is August 31



August 22, Cards vs. Padres

5 tickets have become available. If you would like to join us (\$60/person), please contact Marian, tradcong@sbcglobal.net
There are still opportunities to sponsor the game; please send your donation to 12437 Ladue Rd, 63141. *Thank you!!*

Last but not least—

Please remember to pay your shul financial obligations during the summer months.
We need and appreciate your generous support!!

Thank You for your Support!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, August 22 **TradCong Goes to Busch Stadium**, 7:15 PM. There are 5 tickets that are not spoken for at this point; if you would like to purchase them, please contact Marian at 314-576-5230 or tradcong@sbcglobal.net.

Shabbat, August 26 **Bar Mitzvah of Alex Levy**, son of Ari Levy and Stephanie Cogan. Kiddush luncheon is sponsored by Ari and Stephanie, all are welcome.

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.

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.

The Jewish Federation has once again provided a grant to congregational rabbis to be used for emergency financial needs of congregants. If you are in need of funds, please contact Rabbi Gordon in confidence at Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com or 314-576-5230.

*A Gift from the STL Jewish Light through the JCA Charitable Foundation: If you are 65 or older and do not have the means to receive the Jewish Light, you are eligible for a **free**, one-year subscription to the Jewish Light. Three ways to sign up: Go to www.stljewishlight.com/jcagrant, or call them at 314-743-3660, or contact Marian for registration help, 314-576-5230.*



Visit our website www.traditional-congregation.org

PRAYER

Show me the suffering of the most miserable;

So I will know my people's plight.

Free me to pray for others;

For you are present in every person.

Grant me courage to serve others;

For in service there is true life.

Give me honesty and patience;

So that our dreams will be alive among us.

Let our dreams flourish and grow;

So that we will never tire of the struggle.

Let us remember those who have died for justice;

For they have given us life.

Help us love even those who hate us;

So we can change the world.

Prayer of the farm workers' struggle – Cesar Chavez (Adapted)

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of joy you must have somebody to divide it with.

Mark Twain