



January 10-11, 2025

יא טבת תשפ"ה

Asara B'Tevet

(Fast of the 10th day of Tevet - Siege of Jerusalem, 587 BCE)

Fast begins at 7:19 AM on Friday, January 10

Fast ends at 4:58 PM

Candle Lighting 4:40 PM

Parashat Vayechi ויחי Genesis 47:28 - 50:26

Stone - p 268 Hertz - p 180 Etz Hayim - p 293

חזק חזק ונתחזק!

Chazak chazak v-nit'cha'zek!

May we be strong and strengthen each other!

Haftarah First Kings 2:1-12 מלכים א

Stone - p 1145 Hertz - p 191. Etz Hayim - p 313

Kiddush following services
is sponsored by the Congregation

Shabbat ends 5:41 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon - Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director - traditionalcong@gmail.com

WEEKDAY AND SHABBAT SERVICES

Sunday - 8:30 AM

Tuesday - 6:30 PM

Shabbat - 9:30 AM

Board of Directors:

Governance Committee:

Florence Schachter, Chair

Marty Levy, Vice-Chair

Ken Bohm, Ellis Frohman, Ron Green, Dina Rinder

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President

Mark Weinstein, Ritual Vice President

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Ari Levy

Carol Max

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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 - Vayechi

At almost every stage of fraught encounter between Joseph and his family in Egypt, Joseph weeps. There are seven scenes of tears:

1. When the brothers came before him in Egypt for the first time, they said to one another: "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us" ... They did not realise that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. Gen. 42:21-24

2. On the second occasion, when they brought Benjamin with them and, deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep: He went into his private room and wept there. Gen. 43:29-30

3. When, after Judah's impassioned speech, Joseph is about to disclose his identity: Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Gen. 45:1-2

4. Immediately after he discloses his identity: Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Gen. 45:14-15

5. When he meets his father again after their long separation: Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father, Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. Gen. 46:29

6. On the death of his father: Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. Gen. 50:1

7. Some time after his father's death: When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. Gen. 50:15-17

No one weeps as much as Joseph. Esau wept when he discovered that Jacob had taken his blessing (Gen. 27:38). Jacob wept when he saw the love of his life, Rachel, for the first time (Gen. 29:11). Both brothers, Jacob and Esau, wept when they met again after their long estrangement (Gen. 33:4). Jacob wept when told that his beloved son Joseph was dead (Gen. 37:35).

But the seven acts of Joseph's weeping have no parallel. They span the full spectrum of emotion, from painful memory to the joy of being reunited, first with his brother Benjamin, then with his father Jacob. There are the complex tears immediately before and after he discloses his identity to his brothers, and there are the tears of bereavement at Jacob's deathbed. But the most intriguing are the last, the tears he sheds when he hears that his brothers fear that he will take revenge on them now that their father is no longer alive.

In a fine essay, "Joseph's tears" Rav Aharon Lichtenstein suggests that this last act of weeping is an expression of the price Joseph pays for the realisation of his dreams and his elevation to a position of power. Joseph has done everything he could for his brothers. He has sustained them at a time of famine. He has given them not just refuge but a place of honour in Egyptian society. And he has made it as clear as he possibly can that he does not harbour a grudge against them for what they did to him all those many years before. As he said when he disclosed his identity to them: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you . . . God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God." Gen. 45:5-8

What more could he say? Yet still, all these years later, his brothers do not trust him and fear that he may still seek their harm.

(Continued next page)

This is Rav Lichtenstein's comment: "At this moment, Yosef discovers the limits of raw power. He discovers the extent to which the human connection, the personal connection, the family connection, hold far more value and importance than power does – both for the person himself and for all those around him." Joseph "weeps over the weakness inherent in power, over the terrible price that he has paid for it. His dreams have indeed been realised, on some level, but the tragedy remains just as real. The torn shreds of the family have not been made completely whole."

On the surface, Joseph holds all the power. His family are entirely dependent on him. But at a deeper level it is the other way round. He still yearns for their acceptance, their recognition, their closeness. And ultimately he has to depend on them to bring his bones up from Egypt when the time comes for redemption and return (Gen. 50:25).

Rav Lichtenstein's analysis reminds us of Rashi and Ibn Ezra's commentary to the last verse in the book of Esther. It says that "Mordechai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by most of his brethren" (Est. 10:3) – "most" but not all. Rashi (quoting Megillah 16b) says that some members of the Sanhedrin were critical of him because his political involvement (his "closeness to the king") distracted from the time he spent studying Torah. Ibn Ezra says, simply: "It is impossible to satisfy everyone, because people are envious [of other people's success]."

Joseph and Mordechai/Esther are supreme examples of Jews who reached positions of influence and power in non-Jewish circles. In modern times they were called Hofjuden, "court Jews," and other Jews often held deeply ambivalent feelings about them.

But at a deeper level, Rav Lichtenstein's remarks recall Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, an idea that had huge influence on nineteenth century – especially Marxist – thought. Hegel argued that the early history of humanity was marked by a struggle for power in which some became masters, and others became slaves. On the face of it, masters rule while slaves obey. But in fact the master is dependent on his slaves – he has leisure only because they do the work, and he is the master only because he is recognised as such by his slaves.

Meanwhile the slave, through his work, acquires his own dignity as a producer. Thus the slave has "inner freedom" while the master has "inner bondage." This tension creates a dialectic – a conflict worked out through history – reaching equilibrium only when there are neither masters nor slaves, but merely human beings who treat one another not as means to an end but as ends in themselves. Thus understood, Joseph's tears are a prelude to the master-slave drama about to be enacted in the book of Exodus between Pharaoh and the Israelites.

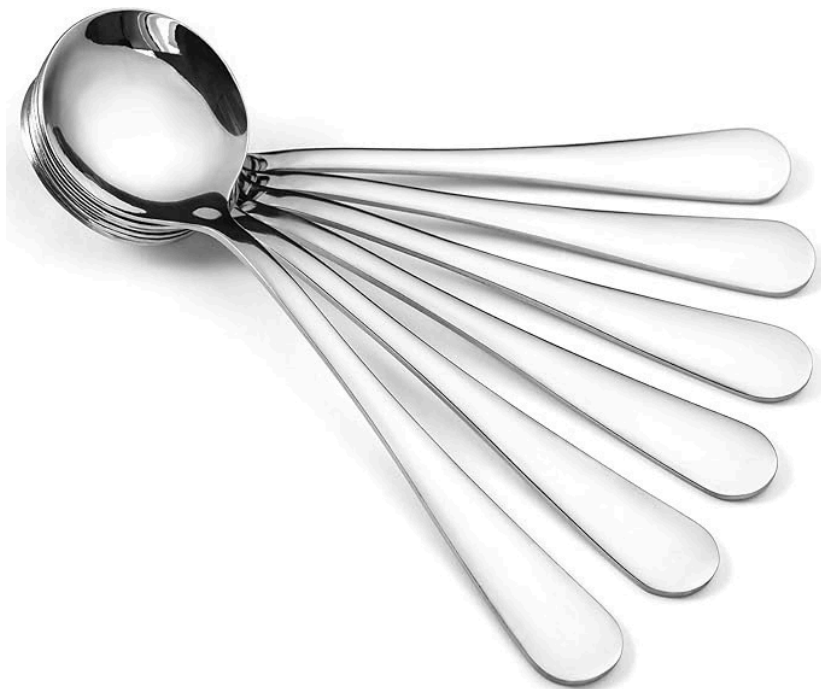
Rav Lichtenstein's profound insight into the text reminds us of the extent to which Torah, Tanach, and Judaism as a whole are a sustained critique of power. Prior to the Messianic age we cannot do without it. (Consider the tragedies Jews suffered in the centuries in which they lacked it.) But power alienates. It breeds suspicion and distrust. It diminishes those it is used against, and thus diminishes those who use it.

Even Joseph, called "Yosef HaTzaddik: Joseph the Righteous" weeps when he sees the extent to which power sets him apart from his brothers. Judaism is about an alternative social order which depends not on power but on love, loyalty and the mutual responsibility created by covenant. That is why Nietzsche, who based his philosophy on "the will to power," correctly saw Judaism as the antithesis of all he believed in.

Power may be a necessary evil, but it is an evil, and the less we have need of it, the better.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Save the Date!
Sunday, February 23rd



A TASTE OF SOUP
2025!

Beautiful NEW Tribute Cards are Now Available!!

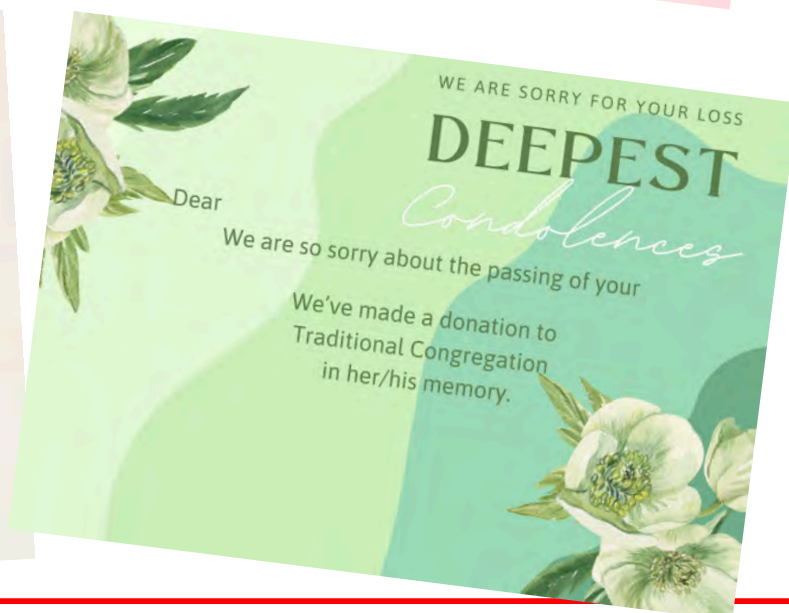
Cards can be created for any occasion! For a minimum donation of \$7.00, a one page digital card will be emailed to your recipient. For an additional \$5.00, a second page can be created with your personalized message! Recipients can reply directly to you through a link provided with the card!

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<https://www.traditional-congregation.org/donate>

or contact Marian at: traditionalcong@gmail.com

*(Recipients do not need to be members of Traditional - they just need to have an email address.
Send cards to your friends and family!)*



Happy Birthday to:

Shabbat, 1/11 Joel Schraier
Sun, 1/12 Susan Schwartz
Tues, 1/14 Steve Bell
Wed, 1/15 Gayle Berwald
Fri, 1/17 Sid Levin
Gary Wilson

Happy Anniversary to:

Tues, 1/14 Joe & Lori Zeid Ingram - 7th

Refuah Sh'leimah to:

| | |
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| Stanley Becker (Shmuel Shlomo ben Mindel) | Rafi Rabinoff (Rafael ben Leah) |
| Muriel Beckerman (Yehudit bat Rochel Leah) | Miriam Roth (Miriam bat Elana) |
| Ann Bohm | Iris Salsman (Shaina Sara bat Golde Malke) |
| Ken Bohm (Chaim Mordechai ben Sara Leah) | Louise Saltzman (Leah Fradel bat Malka) |
| Darren Chervitz (Yehuda Meyer ben Sifka Gitel) | Bruce Schwartz (Hersh Ber Tzvi ben Zelda Tema) |
| Beth Golden (Batya bat Sara) | Joan Schwartz (Zelda Tema bat Gitel Reina) |
| Richard Hack (Tzvi Aharon ben Chaya Sarah) | Lester Schwartz (Lazar ben Miriam) |
| David Pencak (Dovid ben Chaya Ruchel) | Bettina Weinberg (Etkah Simcha bat Rivka) |

The following yahrzeits are observed this week:

This **Shabbat** Meyer Kaplan, grandfather of Mimi Levy
Robert Silver, father of Caryn Brody

Sunday Sue Raiffie, friend of Sandy Rich
Arthur Roufa, father of Steve Roufa

Wednesday Nancy Movshin, mother of Maureen Brodsky

Friday Robert Bohm, cousin of Ken Bohm
Marcia Narter, sister-in-law of Ceil Tobin
Frances Squire, aunt of Steve Puro

Next **Shabbat** William Kagan, father of Nina Radman

*May their souls be bound up in the bonds of eternal life
and inspire us to noble and consecrated living.*

PRAYER

Reverence for God is the root of the wisdom,
And the branches of wisdom are long life.

*Flee from sin as from a serpent,
For it will bite you when you come near it.*

As water will quench a blazing fire,
So kindness will atone for sin.

*My child, do not defend the poor of their living;
Do not make the eyes of the needy wait long.*

Do not pain a hungry heart;
Do not anger a person in distress.

*Listen to what a poor person has to say,
And return a peaceful and gentle answer.*

Do not be known as a whisperer;
Do not set an ambush with your tongue.

*Do not indulge in too much luxury,
And do not be tied to its expense.*

Do not put off turning to God;
Do not postpone it from day to day.

*Forgive others their wrong doings,
Then your sins will be forgiven when you pray.*

From the Wisdom of Ben Sira

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Life is not lost by dying; life is lost minute by minute, day by dragging day, in all the thousand small uncaring ways.

Stephen Vincent Benet