



January 24-25, 2025

כה טבת תשפ"ה

Candle Lighting 4:55 PM

Parashat Va'era וארא Exodus 6:2 - 9:35

Stone - p 318 Hertz - p 232 Etz Hayim - p 351

Haftarah Ezekiel יחזקאל

28:25 - 29:21

Stone - p 1149 Hertz - p 244 Etz Hayim - p 370

Kiddush following services
is sponsored by the Congregation

Shabbat ends 5:56 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

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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 - Va'era

Moses is the quintessential prophet in the Jewish tradition. Moses's job, like the task of all other prophets, is to convey the word of God to the people. He fulfills this role, the Torah tells us, in exemplary fashion: "Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses" (Deut. 34:10). Moses is not just the paradigm for all prophets that follow, he is the best in the business. But if Moses is supposed to serve as the first and foremost prophet—that is, to be the expert at telling people what God wants from them—why would God choose a mouthpiece who has a speech disability?

Moses wonders about this himself when faced with his first task as a prophet, which is to beseech Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage: "How then should Pharaoh heed me—who gets tongue-tied!" (Exod. 6:12). Moses has already pointed this issue out a few chapters earlier, protesting that he has "never been a man of words" and is "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (4:10). And in verse 6:30 he again repeats that he is tongue-tied and wonders how he can get Pharaoh to listen to him. As surprising as it is for God to choose a prophet who has difficulty speaking, God's response to Moses after the third time he points out his disability is perhaps even more surprising: God promises Moses, "See, I place you in the role of God to Pharaoh, with your brother Aaron as your prophet" (Exod. 7:1). What does it mean for Moses to be in the role of God? And why is this God's response to Moses's concerns?

Most classical commentators believe that "in the role of God" refers to some position of power that Moses will hold in Pharaoh's eyes—for instance, that he will be seen as a judge, according to Rashi, or even as a kind of god or other heavenly being, per Ibn Ezra. I would like to offer an alternative read, however, and suggest that God mentions "the role of God" not because Pharaoh is going to be impressed by Moses, but rather in order to reassure Moses by offering a useful analogy. "The role of God" here, in the context of the verse taken as a whole, is the role of someone who needs assistance with speaking. Just as God is a being who speaks through a prophetic agent, so too will Moses have his own mouthpiece, his brother Aaron. God is thus simply explaining to Moses that just like God can't and doesn't speak directly to most people, so too Moses does not have to do all the speaking himself.

God not only reassures Moses that he will have support, but also admits to Moses that God's own role is one that requires assistance, too. God's response to Moses is thus a demonstration of true empathy. Consider the difference between a child asking for help and the parent saying "Sure, you can have help," as opposed to a parent saying "Sure, everyone needs help sometimes—I know I do!" God understands what Moses needs because God needs the same things. In fact, God seems to suggest that, astonishingly, to require assistance is part of what it means to be in the role of God!

This radical theological idea also fits with an earlier exchange between God and Moses. The first time Moses mentions his worries, God responds: "Who gives humans speech? Who makes them dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, God?" (4:11). Again, we might wonder: How is this statement meant to assuage Moses's concerns? God may have made Moses the way he is, but how does that help Moses feel better about being asked to step into a role that will publicly highlight his speech disability? There is even something potentially disturbing about this verse, in its gesturing at a theology in which people should simply "accept their lot" and not complain or ask for help, as well as its use of categories that do not reflect the experiences of people with disabilities themselves. (The category "dumb" is typically considered to be offensive as well as inaccurate.)

Again, however, I would like to offer an alternate reading of this verse. We know that God reveals God's glory by making humans who are physically different from one another, as the Mishnah states: "When a human stamps several coins with one seal, they are all similar to each other. But the supreme Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed be God, stamped all people with the seal of the first human, and not one of them is similar to another. Therefore, each and every person is obligated to say: The world was created for me" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). And we also know that God made humans *betzelem elohim*, in the image of God. Perhaps, then, God is reminding Moses of that: all humans are created by God, humans are physically diverse, and therefore all humans in all their differences are created in God's image.

Being created in God's image, then, does not mean that humans are endowed with some kind of divine perfection, but rather that humans are granted both abilities and disabilities, and that this mirrors something essential about the divine as well. It may seem strange to consider God as having a disability, perhaps even a kind of speech impediment. Yet this is also a potentially powerful way to conceptualize a God who gave the Torah through a revelation that was incomplete and in need of human interpretation. To be godly, then, as well as to be human, is to have both power and limitations, to be both abled and disabled. In that case, a prophet with a speech impediment is not a person with a flaw to be overcome, but rather the truest representation of the divine voice.

***Shabbat shalom,
Dr. Sarah Wolf***

Dr. Wolf is Assistant Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary



IF YOU DON'T EITHER, WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!!



Save the Date!
Sunday, February 23rd



A TASTE OF SOUP
2025!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!

Friday evening, 3/21/2025

We'll be hosting a Shabbat experience
with YPD St Louis!

**Plan to join us on
Friday evening, March 21
for YPD Shabbat Shalom!**

Young Jewish professionals from the community
will visit Traditional and enjoy
Shabbat services and dinner -
and you can, too!

More information will be sent out -
for now, save the date!



ALL ORDERS ARE DUE IN THE OFFICE BY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14!

traditional congregation presents

PURIM 2025



fulfill a mitzvah and support our shul

ALL ORDERS ARE DUE BY
Friday,
February 14,
2025

a fun gift box including hamantashen is delivered to all congregants

Enclosure card lists the names of those who contributed in recipient's honor.

Send baskets to friends/family who are not Traditional members. (U.City, Olivette, CC, Clayton, Chesterfield areas only)

Create your gift list by checking the names of members in whose honor YOU wish to contribute (see list on other side).

Royal Sponsors Special supporters underwriting the project, with recognition as a <i>Royal Sponsor</i> on all shul member gift boxes, and other media.	\$360
The Whole Megillah Your name appears on all shul member gift boxes	\$180
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THANK YOU!	

Send this Order Form (front & back) and full payment to Traditional, 12437 Ladue Rd, 63141; or pay online at www.traditionalcongregation.org/donate and email form to traditionalcong@gmail.com.

Order Forms and payment are due by 2/14/25

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME(S) BELOW AS IT SHOULD APPEAR ON GIFT ENCLOSURE CARD:

Questions? Call the office (314.576.5230) or Nikki Goldstein (314.807.2055) or Mimi Levy (314.852.1698)

Contact Marian if you need another copy of the member list to make your selections: traditionalcong@gmail.com

Drivers will be needed to deliver Mishloach Manot on Purim day, March 14. Please let Marian if you're able to help: traditionalcong@gmail.com

In the Community...

Greece's Jews and the Holocaust

Presented by Nicholas Doumanis, Professor and Illinois Chair in Hellenic Studies, University of Illinois Chicago

Thursday, February 6, 2025 7 p.m. reception; 7:30 p.m. event
Century Room A, Millennium Student Center, University of Missouri-St. Louis



The Holocaust claimed the lives of nearly nine out of ten Jews living in Greece, the highest percentage of any occupied territory in wartime Europe. In this lecture, Prof. Nicholas Doumanis will explore why the largest community, that of Thessaloniki, suffered disproportionately, while most Athenian Jews were saved. Prof. Doumanis will also discuss Jews who fought in the Greek resistance, the experiences of Greek Jews in Auschwitz, and how survivors were treated upon their return.

Professor Nicholas Doumanis, Professor and Illinois Chair in Hellenic Studies, teaches world history at the University of Illinois Chicago. He specializes in modern European history, mainly southern Europe and particularly Greece. He is also interested in the history of the modern Greek diaspora.

His publications include his prize-winning *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean* (Macmillan, St Martin's, 1997), which is an ethnographic study of Greek islanders living under Italian colonial rule, and a book on Italian nation formation. He has also written a book on Greece since antiquity, and a study of Muslim-Christian coexistence and everyday life in the Ottoman Empire before the advent of nationalism.

This event is free and open to the public and is presented by the Hellenic Government-Karakas Family Foundation Professorship in Greek Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, in cooperation with the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago.

Will You Be the Winner of a Trip to Israel??

- Participants must be at least 18 years old to purchase a raffle ticket.
- Each ticket costs \$100.00 and can be purchased online or in person at B'nai Amoona.
- There are only 140 tickets available for sale; one individual may purchase no more than 5 tickets.
- The raffle drawing will be held on March 1, 2025, at the B'nai Amoona 140th Celebration.
- Ticket holders do not need to be present to win.

To enter:

<https://www.bnaiamoona.com/form/24israelraffle>

140th Congregation B'NAI AMOONA

**Diane and Paul Gallant
ISRAEL RAFFLE**

Purchase a raffle ticket (or 5!) for a chance to **WIN:**
**Two (2) Round-Trip Tickets to Israel
A Four (4) Night Stay at a Jerusalem Hotel**

The raffle drawing will be held on March 1, 2025,
at the B'nai Amoona 140th Celebration.
Ticket holders do not need to be present to win.

All proceeds from the raffle will support B'nai Amoona Congregation

PRAYER

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and crave help.

We need one another when we are in the deep waters of temptation and a strong hand might pull us out.

We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose and cannot do this alone.

We need one another in our defeats, when with encouragement we might strive again: and in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our bliss.

And we need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

We best live when we bring to one another our understanding and our solace.

George Odell

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

To succeed it is necessary to accept the world as it is and rise above it.

Michael Korda