

The Hourglass

BULLETIN OF
THE HEBREW CONGREGATION
OF ST THOMAS

NOVEMBER 2020

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November Services and Programs

Parashat Vayera

Genesis 18:1-22:24

6 Erev Shabbat Family Svc, 7 PM AST/6 PM EST
Fri with Cantorial Soloist Luba Dolgopolsky
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82663723544>
Meeting ID: 826 6372 3544

7 Shabbat Morning Worship and Study,
Sat 10:30 AM AST/9:30 AM EST
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/99608524890>
Meeting ID: 996 0852 4890

Parashat Chayei Sarah

Genesis 23:1-25:18

13 Erev Shabbat Service, 7 PM AST/6 PM EST
Fri <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82663723544>
Meeting ID: 826 6372 3544

14 Shabbat Morning Worship and Study,
Sat 10:30 AM AST/9:30 AM EST
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/99608524890>
Meeting ID: 996 0852 4890

Parashat Toledot

Genesis 25:19- 28:9

20 Erev Shabbat Service, 7:00 PM AST/6:00 PM EST
Fri <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82663723544>
Meeting ID: 826 6372 3544

21 Shabbat Morning Worship and Study, 10:30 AM
Sat <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/99608524890>
Meeting ID: 996 0852 4890

Parashat Vayitzei

Genesis 28:10-22-11:25

23 Weekday Morning Service, 10:30 AM AST
Mon Bat Mitzvah of Brooke Kalmanson (LCE)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3407744312>
Meeting ID: 340 774 4312

24 Weekday Morning Service, 10:30 AM AST:
Tue Bar Mitzvah of Keaton Paul Lewis (LCE),
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3407744312>
Meeting ID: 340 774 4312

Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Wednesday, November 25, 2020



For almost 50 years, The Hebrew Congregation of St Thomas and the St Thomas Reformed Church have come together in friendship and fellowship, to observe the American holiday of Thanksgiving.

This year, in the midst of the pandemic, we will pre-record this special service, and "broadcast" it on the Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving. The service will stream at 6:00 PM. Watch for links and more information to come!

Parashat Vayitzei (continued)

Genesis 28:10-22-11:25

25 **48th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service**
Wed of the Hebrew Congregation and the
St Thomas Reformed Church, 6:00 PM

27 Erev Shabbat Service, 7:00 PM AST/6:00 PM EST
Fri <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82663723544>
Meeting ID: 826 6372 3544

28 Shabbat Morning Service, 10:30 AM AST
Sat Bar Mitzvah of James Schragar (LCE)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3407744312>
Meeting ID: 340 774 4312

**Note new "times"
for services
See page 8 below.**

Are You Sure?

Message from Rabbi Michael L. Feshbach



It is a strange challenge, to write these words before November 3 – and to know that you will not be reading them until after then. What will the country look like? What will the world look like? Is it good or bad for the Jews?

And, too: some say we may not know the “results,” even on Election Day.

This, then, seems like just the right time to talk about “not knowing.” At this time of pandemic with no clear end in sight, of transition with no sure sense of direction, I want to share with you some thoughts about uncertainty.

One of the most important teachings I learned at the Shalom Hartman Institute was a perspective on the difference between the time of the Bible and all of post-Biblical life. One might call this the difference between Israelite religion and “Judaism” as we know it now.

This difference goes deeper than the one I often teach – that there is one difference between the people of the Bible and us, that we have something they did not have. Almost as a tautology, that “thing” we have that they did not is... the Bible! It is hard to overstate how important a difference this is.

continued on page 4

As many of you have heard me say, “their” way of coming close to God was by killing sheep. And “our” way of coming close to God is by... reading about them... killing sheep. Their tool is a barbecue. Ours is a book. Which makes what they did a visceral act, and ours a fundamentally literary one.

But what I learned at Hartman was more about the content of the Bible, in comparison to the Talmud and all of subsequent Judaism, rather than the form.

Rabbi David Hartman, of blessed memory, taught that the Bible is theocentric. Its main character is God. And through our relationship with that main player, we were able to gain a sense of confidence, and certainty. Bring offerings in the correct way, and the crops will come on time next year.

Do the rites, and banish what is wrong in our lives. Listen to the prophets, and get a sense of what changes we need to make in our society. Cast the oracles, the *umim* and *tumim* carried by the High Priest, and know whether to go to war, or what direction to turn in your journey. Perform this strange act with bitter water, and a suspicious husband can “know” if his wife cheated on him. (Personally, I think that whole deal was a placebo, but that’s just me.)

While the Temple stood and the cult lived and the ritual was all around us, God was tangible, the world made sense, and we knew what to do.

It wasn’t quite “magic” (magic and monotheism are uneasy companions, a topic for another time.) But it worked in ways which seem magical to us now.

Twice, though, the ancient Temple was destroyed: first by the Babylonians, in 586 BCE – though a smaller version was rebuilt 50 years later. And then, the Second Temple, by the Romans, in 70 CE. (Really, that could be considered the Third Temple, given Herod’s expansion of the Second Temple into one of the wonders of the ancient world less than a century before it was razed.)

The Temple burned. Sacrifices ceased. With little to do, priests went from powerbrokers to placeholders, invokers of ancient words at Festivals and, (in traditional synagogues) retaining the symbolic role of the first aliyah, the first set of blessings surrounding the ritual reading of the Torah.

And our spiritual orientation changed. If the Bible was *theocentric*, the Talmud was *anthropocentric*. The main actor was the human community, not God. Its focus is on our discussions, our decisions, our real and ongoing but vitally important struggle to figure out what it is God may want of us.

Thus, in our history, we moved from knowing to asking, from a visible cult to an invisible instinct, from the certain to the uncertain.

And the rabbis of old, the Talmud and the texts which follow, give us a path to coping with the uncertain. It is the path of conversation, of even heated but still respectful argument and disagreement, of working towards consensus, of building strong communities.

Even that was not enough for permanent security, or a sense of communal power. So, then, when history and hatred intervene, when we faced persecution, loss, often we relocated, rebuilt, and began again.

Through challenges faced by few others, we have a continual pattern of determination, and renewal and rebirth.

Jewish tradition claims that there are 613 commandments -- although, of course, it argues over what they are, and lists of said obligations are not identical! But there is agreement about the number. Some are positive ("do this") and some are negative ("don't do that"), but there are 613 commandments.

Which leads to the rhetorical question of... what would the 614th commandment be?

Lightly, with humor, some have said the 614th commandment is: thou shall have no Jewish function without food! Seriously, passionately, philosopher Emil Fackenheim wrote that the 614th commandment is *to not give Hitler a posthumous victory!* That in all that we do, we should act to ensure that Jews, and Judaism, survives, thrives, and carries on in future generations.

But I have heard another answer. It is on the light side, but also very serious. I have heard that the 614th commandment would be this: with all the challenges around us, but remembering what we have been through – **for a Jew, it is forbidden to give up hope!**

I do not know what lies ahead this week. We do not know what the coming days, and months, and years will bring. Chaos, anger and plague are all around us.

But we are the actors. It is in our hand to bring order, or at least make meaning out of the messy stuff of our existence. We live at a time, we face a particular period of great, even grave uncertainty.

We carefully carry on our shoulders and in our hearts a lesson learned over centuries.

We are Jews. We can cope with uncertainty. And: **We. Must. Still. Have. Hope.**



A World Filled with Questions



Message from Marilyn Blackhall, President Hebrew Congregation of St Thomas

As I started writing this message for the Bulletin all that came to my mind were unanswered questions now that we are in a New Year. However, before I begin, I would like to sincerely express my appreciation to all of you who so generously contributed to our Kol Nidre Pledge Appeal and to those who are still sending in their contributions. You truly are making a difference! Thank you so very much!!

And now for the QUESTIONS...because our Congregation's future is simply FILLED with QUESTIONS ...

When do we open for live services at the Synagogue? Should we change the time of services since we are on Atlantic Standard Time and many of you have just changed to Eastern or other Standard Time Zones. (see page 8). If we do not make the change, will many from off-island still be able to Zoom services with us an hour or two (or more) earlier?

How can we safely conduct life cycle events for off-island people who come to St. Thomas and want to resume celebrating their weddings and B'nai Mitzvah in our Synagogue?

How do we safely conduct our Martin Luther King Service in January where we honor well deserving high school students and host their families. This usually creates a full house, often with over 100 in attendance.

How do we electronically prepare our Sanctuary so that we can still Zoom services for those new friends we have made from off island who want to continue attending even after the pandemic is over?

How can we re-build our membership having lost so many people who have moved away?

Will we be able to continue funding our Synagogue with revenues so diminished?

Can we find grants to help us recreate our museum bigger and better than before? And how do we finish restoring our cemetery and building for the future?

How do we get more young families to be a part of us so that we can have a religious school, and provide children's activities, as families move back after the pandemic?

AND FINALLY, will we be able to we reconcile our feelings about the person who is elected President (as this bulletin is written before the election results are finalized)? There is so much emotion, it is difficult to fathom a peaceful outcome.

There are so many more questions to pose ... but our Rabbi, our Board, Congregation, and Chai Members...must all find solutions, positive answers and maintain the will to go on and become better and better. And this, I am determined to do with everyone's help, counsel and advise. So, if you have answers or comments, or even further questions, please send them to me and I will share them.

Most of all, let us stay connected and strive to find the silver linings of this pandemic; let us adapt to the changing times and make sure that our Judaism not only survives but thrives dynamically. May we successfully let down our walls and open up to the questions that life is giving us.



A Timely Note about the timing of services

One of the most challenging questions for Reform synagogues, everywhere, is what time to hold Friday night services. That question is more complicated for us, streaming services now, with so many of participants from all over the world!

This is
a wonderful thing!
We love bringing people together,
and we welcome everyone!

But now that the time has "fallen back"
on the mainland, and we did not change our clock,
we are "out of synch" with the community coming together online.

**We are, then, going to try an experiment.
For November, this month, Friday night services
will begin at 7:00 PM Atlantic Standard Time,
6:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.**

Saturday morning will begin at 10:30 AM AST, 9:30 AM EST

**We want to "keep" our new connections with each other!
For feedback or reactions, please write to info@synagogue.vi.
"See" you soon!**

Save the Dates but Watch for Details: Two Special Chanukah Moments in mid-December

Night of a Thousand Menorahs
Friday, December 11, 2020,
probably at 6:00 PM AST

We are looking for a safe place, and the right way to come together in person, for a festive observance of the First Night of Chanukah, with a Family Service, songs and celebration, and lots of latkes!



Even if we are able to gather in person,, the service will still be streamed as well. It will be wonderful to be together even in that format. But we are just not sure how the latkes will taste online, unless you make your own!
Watch for more detail in the December *Hourglass!*

Shabbat and Chanukah Morning Service,
also including the B'not Mitzvah of
Ariel Rosenthal and Lyra Rosenthal
Saturday, December 12, 2020, 10:30 AM AST



Whether in person or by Zoom, with details still to be determined, we are thrilled to invite you to join us as Lyra Jean Rosenthal and Ariel Lynn Rosenthal are called to the Torah as B'not Mitzvah, on Saturday morning, December 12, 2020, in a special service beginning at 10:30 AM.

Even if some of us are able to be in the Sanctuary, this service will also be broadcast on Zoom, using Meeting ID 340 774 4312.

While we host many wonderful "destination" Life Cycle Events, this is the first Bar or Bat Mitzvah of members of our congregation in several years. Please join us for this special occasion!

Birthdays and Anniversaries

November Birthdays

Jared Falek	Nov. 8
Roger Minkoff	Nov. 12
Benjamin Friedman	Nov. 14
Diane Krasnick	Nov. 15
Steve Berlin	Nov. 16
Cristina Friedman	Nov. 16
Daniel Feshbach	Nov. 17
Naomi Laing	Nov. 19
Peter Rosen	Nov. 19
Dorothy Isaacs	Nov. 20
Lane Sell	Nov. 25
Mark Isaacs	Nov. 26
Bonnie Weinberg	Nov. 27
GG Steiner	Nov. 29

November Anniversaries

Mitchell and Thuy Rieder Nov. 21



רפואה שלימה

A complete
recovery to:



Robin Adler
Laurie Allen
Charles Arthur
Pauline Balsam
Alan Brostein
Quinn Copps
Yigal Ehrlich
Jared Falek
Gina Talia Farahnick
Marci Finkelstein
Julie Friedman
Marilyn Grishman
Violet Adelaide Johnson
Sheri Levson
Linda Lewensohn
Steven Markowitz

Tom McCoy
Sheldon Minion
James Nicholson
Maria Grace Nicholson
Erick Pedersen
Rosa Pupko
Dorothy Ring
Monte Rosenthal
John Schenkel
Ruth Schloss
Maxine Shayna Stark
Bill Stein
Robert Tunick
Rachel Wallace
Andrea Weibel
Rona Wolfson

Please be in touch with us to let us know of any updates.
Hopefully we will hear from you with good news, of recovery
and a return to health for you or your loved ones.
You can write us at info@synagogue.vi.

We remember former members and those who are dear to our members.

Week of November 1-12

Monroe Abrams, Harold Borden, Anne Sefres Cohen, Lilly Brust Gach, Sharon A. Garelick
Hilda Goldberg, Minnie Kaplan, Caroline Kaufman, Ambassador Henry Kimelman, Robert Kreke
Simon Maslan, Juliette Rachel Monoson, Gov. Ralph M. Paiewonsky, Barnett Ben Rosen
Rabbi Moses D. Sasso, Joseph Wachsberg

Week of November 13-19

Howard Brandstatter, Miriam Brizdle, Elizabeth Gurewitz, Jacob (Jack) Leibowitz
Joan Nelthropp, Marat Portnov, Pauline Rosen, Ralph E. Schneider, Ida Shapiro
Barnett Tunick, Elias J. Weibel, Goldie Weinstein

Week of November 20-30

Louise Becker, Rosalyn Berg, Philip Isaac Berman, Mariette Itta Evelyn, Sara Fox
Murray Friedland, Bebe Berner Grbinich, Hannah Halpern, Sigmund A. Kimelman, Abraham Machover
Thelma Ruth Watson Maguire, Beatrice Manck, Harry Mark, Reuben Philip Orenstein
Rebecca Paiewonsky, Howard L. Rosov, Rabbi Stephen Alan Schaefer, Irving S. Schwimmer, Theodore Tunick

**We remember our Chai Members
and those who are dear to our Chai Members**

Week of November 1-5

Hyman Chudnofsky, Ely Eber, Morris Fein, Gertrude Gerson, Simon Greenberg, Ivor Isakov, James Joy III, William Keilin,
Joseph Leinoff, Melvin Lieber, Max Linner, Ruth Mednick, Jerome Moskowitz, Albert Nappen, Frank Neuman,
Dorothy Niskar, Kay Nixon, Max Noble, Rose Plevner, Faye Press, Jacob Relkin,
Francoise Richards, Seymour Rose, Sam Rosenberg, Stephan Rosenzweig, Harry Saltz, Karen Schwartz
Rebecca Snyder, Ethel Solomon, Perri Sova, Racheal Spizz, Estelle Susaneck
Stuart Susaneck, Jordan Testa, Siegfried Weitzenkorn

Week of November 6-12

Edna Beck, Jennie Bernstein, Viola Biars, Mary Birn, Joyce Bronner, Leon Burke, Josef Ben Feldman,
Elly Fonoroff, Adolph Friedman, Morris Fuchsman, Louis Gerstel, Minnie Goldberg, Sonia Goldstein,
Edith Goranson, Benjamin Gordon, Laurette Healy, Celia Hochman, Jenny Hubberman, Carol Jaffe
David Jeffries, Basia Bas Kaplan, Minnie Kaplan, Betty Kirschner, Joseph Kirschner, Robert Kreke,
Barton Loeb, Carole Lokker, Alexander Lorintz, Holly Lowe, Irving Matos, Carole Mirkin, Mary Pomper,
Jennie Prensky, Phyllis Redelheim, Joan Rosen, Florence Rosenberg, Mary Rosenberg, Shirley Rubinstein
Herbert Ruff, Helen Russ, Andor Schafer, Noel Schmerman, Rose Segal
Maurice Silver, Max Slater, Samuel Solomon, Reuben Spizz, Abraham Steinberg, Sandy Swan
Lorraine Tilley, Ruth Unger, Louis Wohl, Michael Yarusky

Week of November 13-19

Sylvia Abramson, Simy Aflalo, Miriam Azer, Estelle Chaifetz, Jules Charlowe, Muriel Cutler, Jack Engel,
Jack Forest, Nathan Ginsberg, Anna Gold, Sol Goldberg, Bella Goodman, Kay Goodman, Herbert Gordon,
Ruth Hendler, Sarah Herling, Jacob Hubberman, Harold Jacobs, Morris Jacovsky, Rose Jaffe
Shirlee Kaplan, Elliot Kapstein, William Karol, Mary Kassirer, Hilda Lerner, Laurie Levy, Bessie Lewis,
Tamy Lipsius, Albert Lonstein, Freda Mogul, Ray Niedergang, Louis Pinchuk, Pauline Querido, Adele Ridner, Joseph
Rosen, Morris Rosenberg, Anna Sandler, Alice Scher, Dolores Schneider, William Schneider, Faye Schwartz, Joseph
Shapiro, Florence Shear, Dolores Sobel, Albert Solomon, Serena Taub, Soledad Weinberg, Dr. Zayne Wilk

Week of November 20-30

Rose Achtel, Jacob Axilbond, Morris Bellows, Miriam Bloom, Harriet Berg, Ruth Bernstein, Sherry Blumenthal
Mildred Breggar, Rosalyn Brickman, Alice Browdy, Esther Cohen, Myra Cohen, Robert Dolitsky, Lillian Dorfman
Sidney Dorfman, Joseph Dworman, Sigfried Elias, Ruth Epstein, Richard Fink, Abraham Firestone, Scott Forest
Paul Gerson, Solomon Gerson, Yetta Goldberger, Edith Goldfarb, Blanche Goldstein, Sandy Green, Marilyn Grob
Luce Henschel, Arthur Herman, Sylvia Ivey, Abe Kay, Steven Keene, Betty Kohn, Leo Kornblath, Bernard Kornell
Bernice Lauwasser, Samuel Levin, Rita Lifson, Abraham Mandel, James Nash, Gert Noble, Sylvia Nochimson
Joe Orbuch, William Orlan, Helen Paradise, Sandra Pichosky, Edith Pinchuk, Samuel Resnic
Ettie Robinson, Joseph Rosen, Luyba Rubinshteyn, Harry Schneider, Rose Slan, Gary Solomon
Jeffrey Spears, Philip Strauss, Albert Tannenbaum, Shirley Young



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**Our sincere thanks and deep appreciation
to our many supporters.**

A full list of our New Chai Members (Annual and Lifetime), General Supporters, as well as those who have contributed to our funds (including Rabbi Feshbach's Discretionary Fund) will appear in the next issue of *The Hourglass*.

Thank you all!



HOURGLASS

Shalom and welcome
to a place where history and destiny meet,
where looking up, and looking down, and looking around
all tell a tale unlike almost any other.

We have come together here,
as a community and as a congregation,
in spirituality and study and service,
one generation to the next, since 1796
— and in our current building since 1833.

In coming together now, you step into that tradition,
and help write the next chapter in our ongoing story.

Rabbi:	Michael L. Feshbach
Administrator:	Stella Minion
Docent/Gift Shop Manager:	Agnes Rampino
Custodian:	Michael Fuertes

The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas

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