

November 22, 2014
Congregation Agudas Achim
Shabbat Toledot
Centennial Volunteer Thank You Shabbat

D'var Torah

Shabbat shalom.

Here we are, reading about yet another dysfunctional family. Sibling rivalry, each parent valuing one child above another. Esau the hunter, Jacob the stay-at-home, quiet, studious son. Esau preferred by his father Isaac, Jacob by his mother Rebecca. Rivalry so strong that Esau leaves the family. Of course, this is all part of God's plan for our people, but still....

We are not even through Genesis and there is already plenty of material here for Woody Allen and Sigmund Freud.

Family!

Sometimes we refer to ourselves as the “CAA family.” As we learn in the Torah, being a family can be difficult. At CAA, we avoid the challenges we see in this week’s parsha, by valuing the diversity among our members.

We value

- ♣ those whose creativity bring us new melodies, exciting programs, beautiful centerpieces, delicious onegs and even flash mobs in an indoor tent;*
- ♣ those who are physically able to build a sukkah and those who wave the lulav in it;*
- ♣ those who help customers in our gift shop and those who purchase items there to enhance their Jewish holidays;*
- ♣ those who know how to cook for the Yom Kippur break fast and those who thank them for the nourishment they provide us;*
- ♣ those who can lead us in joyful song during services and during bentching and those whose voices add to our prayers;*

- ✧ those who help out in the office stuffing envelopes and those who write generous checks; And who says the same person can't do both – as well as embody many of the other traits we are highlighting.

We value

- ✧ *those who have the knowledge and dedication to teach our children and those who drive the children to religious school;*
- ✧ those who have been members forever and those who bring fresh ideas from the places they just left behind;
- ✧ *those who were born Jewish and those who chose to be Jewish and those who are not Jewish and value the faith of a loved one;*
- ✧ those who are learned and those who are learning;
- ✧ *those who help us through hard times with a kind word, a hug, a meal, and those who need our help;*
- ✧ those who get up early so that there are 10 at morning minyan, and those who fight the traffic on Mopac so that there are 10 at evening minyan and those who are saying kaddish and need a minyan;
- ✧ *those who are spiritual and those who are practical and those who are both;*
- ✧ those who are willing to take on leadership roles and those who work to make our dreams for CAA a reality and those who archive our history.

No one is cast into the wilderness of Edom. Instead, we cherish all the talents, skills, brains, brawn, hearts and hands within our community. Each person brings his own self to this place. Each person can find her niche. All are treasured for who they are. It is because of this variety among us that we are such a vibrant congregation, one that will flourish as we enter our 2nd century. Our diversity enriches all of us.

It is because so many people stepped forward to volunteer their special talents that our centennial year was a success. Our goal was to get everyone in the congregation to participate in at least one centennial event. Maybe we did not get everyone, but we got pretty darn close.

We are so appreciative of all those who volunteered their time, talent and treasure to make this a year to remember. The names of those who volunteered are in the Shabbat program. Please excuse us if there are any omissions. We offer a very special thank you to Sigrid Levi-Baum for organizing this thank you Shabbat.

Thank you Rabbi Blumofe for your guidance, suggestions and support throughout this year and every year. The entire CAA staff helped us every step of the way, always with a smile. Thank you. We also take a moment to remember the centennial honorary chair, Tank Rubinett. His example and his values are standards we try to live up to.

Thank you, also, to Dana Winer for giving Diane and me the opportunity to work with so many wonderful volunteers in our CAA community. And Diane and I are especially happy to have gotten to know each other.

Thank you.

Shabbat shalom.