



Dec. 1, 2014

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The Weekly Newsletter from the Center for Jewish Life

Upcoming Calendar

To view the full program calendar of events, [click here](#).

- December 3 [Challah Making for Adults: sold out!](#)
- December 5 [Friday Evening Services, Popcorn & Bourbon](#)
- December 6 [Tot Shabbat](#)
- December 14 [Annual Hanukkah Bash](#)
- December 16 [Community Candle Lighting in the Park](#)
- December 18 [JCP YOUth: Middle School Doughnut Night](#)
- January 9 [Friday Night Lights](#)
- January 10 [JCP YOUth: Middle School Rock Climbing](#)
- January 11 [JCP YOUth: K-2 Bowling at Chelsea Piers](#)
- January 11 [JCP YOUth: 3-5 Bowling at Chelsea Piers](#)



God in Your Face

A Note from Rabbi Jason

Dear Friends,

Family is complicated. Children become parents yet remain their own parents' children. Close relatives can be estranged from one another because of misunderstandings or because of really problematic behavior. Sometimes, family is taken for granted in a way that makes us feel comfortable, affirmed, connected. And sometimes, family is taken for granted in a way that triggers anger and resentment. I have little doubt that in the wake of Thanksgiving weekend, each of us will be exposed to some complications of family dynamics, either within our own family, or through the stories of friends who return from challenging weekend experiences.

This week's Torah portion, *Vayishlach*, begins as Jacob prepares himself to see his brother Esau, whom he has not seen since they were younger men and Jacob absconded with their father's blessing. Now they come to meet one another in very different circumstances; Jacob arrives with nearly a dozen children and their collective four mothers, and Esau arrives with an army of 400 men. Jacob adopts a defensive posture for his family, splitting everyone into groups so that at least one group could escape in case of trouble. Meanwhile, he remains alone, "*and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.*" It seems, however, that this "man" is not just any man. Jacob will not let him go until the man agrees to bless him, and the man blesses Jacob with a new name, *Yisrael*--Israel, a name that the text loosely interprets as "one who struggles with God."



The reunion between the brothers is emotional: hugs and tears. Jacob tells his brother Esau that to look upon him is "like seeing the face of God." What a powerful thing to say to your closest relative--your twin brother--with whom you have not spoken for years.

It remains unclear exactly who the "man," or the seemingly Divine being, was the night before. Was it an angel? Jacob's alter-ego? His own fears incarnate? Perhaps the text allows us to interpret freely, as it links the idea of struggle to the encounter with the Divine. While it can be wonderful to have easy experiences in life, sometimes it is the challenges we face that remind us that we are really human. In a way, it may be that the times that we struggle the most can lead us to the times we feel most connected--to family, friends, and community.

Warmly,



Rabbi Jason

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Sign Up to Volunteer for a Shift at the Hanukkah Bash!

The Hanukkah Bash on December 14 is just 2 weeks away, and we need your help by volunteering for a shift! The first shift is from 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM and the second shift is from 12:15 PM to 1:30 PM.

Please sign up either by emailing allison@jcpdowntown.org with your time preference, or by [signing yourself up on this Google doc signup sheet](#).



Featured Photo

A modern Menorah of jam jars from our 2013 Community Candle Lighting!

Join us this year for our [Community Candle Lighting in the Park](#) at Washington Market Park on Tuesday, December 16!



Featured Event

JCP Hanukkah Bash
Sunday, December 14
11:00 AM - 1:30 PM

Celebrate the magic of Hanukkah on Sunday, December 14. Make your own Hanukkah candles, watch a magic show, eat latkes and jelly doughnuts!

Stay Connected.



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