



July 8, 2017

יד תמוז תשע"ז

Parashat Balak—Numbers 22:2—25:9

Stone—p 856 Hertz—p 668 Etz Hayim—p 894

Haftarah—Micah 5:6—6:8

Stone—p 1189 Hertz—p 682 Etz Hayim—p 915

Kiddush is sponsored by Sisterhood

Talmud Class—6:45 PM

Minchah - 8:00 PM

Seudah Sh'lishit

Shabbat Ends - 9:10 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon – Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com
Rabbi Ephraim Zimand, Emeritus – ravzim@yahoo.com
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director – tradcong@sbcglobal.net

DAILY SERVICE TIMES

Shabbat—9:00 AM & 8:00 PM
Sunday—9:00 AM
Monday, Tuesday & Thursday—7:00 AM & 6:45 PM
Wednesday & Friday—7:00 AM

Board of Directors:

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Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know would like to receive membership information, please contact Membership VP Elaine Farkas at 954-558-1159.

On This Week's Torah Portion—Balak

While on the surface, the whole incident of Balak and Bilaam recounts the actions of particular individuals, it is clear that there is a deeper level, perhaps one might say an archetypal story, beyond the specific incidents. I believe that Ramchal approaches our *parashah*, and indeed all of Torah, from this level.

... and Moav was greatly afraid of the nation because they were great ... And Moav was disgusted in the face of B'nei Yisrael. (22:3)

The verse opens by referring to B'nei Yisrael as "the nation" and concludes by referring to them as B'nei Yisrael. The reference to "the nation" refers to the physical nation, while "B'nei Yisrael" refers to the spiritual root of B'nei Yisrael which rested on the physical nation. Moav greatly feared B'nei Yisrael's spiritual root and that it had the capacity to subjugate all the aspects of *tumah* in which Moav was rooted.

Clearly, Moav and Midian stand for some very primary forces, forces that oppose what Israel stands for. In fact, Ramchal indicates that the combination of the two create a new negative force:

On a deeper level, Moav descended from Lot who was associated with the "left side" of *tumah*, while Midian descended from Yishma'el rooted on the "right side" of *tumah*. Their intent was to merge right and left creating a sense of "perfection" in the world of *tumah*, creating a force which could overpower B'nei Yisrael.

There are several interesting ideas here. First, why is Lot identified with the "left side" and Yishma'el with the "right side"? This is something I can only speculate on. Both Lot and Yishma'el are associated with Avraham Avinu. Yishma'el of course is Avraham's son by Hagar, Sarah's maidservant. Lot is Avraham's nephew, whom he adopted upon the death of his brother Haran. So Yishma'el is closer to the progenitor of Israel than is Lot.

We read in Genesis how Yishma'el is evicted from the family home and becomes a "wild ass of a man." Nevertheless, when Avraham dies, we find that "Yitzchak and Yishma'el his sons" bury him (25:9). From the fact that Yishma'el acknowledges Yitzchak's precedence, the Sages conclude that Yishma'el repented. Lot, on the other hand, separates from Avraham, choosing to "go left" to Sodom and barely escapes its destruction. When he and his two daughters escape to the mountains, the daughters believe they are the last people left on earth, seduce their father, and give birth to Moav and Ammon. We have discussed in earlier essays that these dubious origins of Mashiach (through Moav via Ruth) are meant to "fool the Satan." Here, I simply want to suggest that, compared to Yishma'el, Moav can easily be assessed as coming from the "left side" of *tumah*, and Yishma'el from the "right side." Nevertheless, both come from *tumah*.

The other concept I want to examine is the idea that Moav and Midian sought to create a kind of "perfection in the world of *tumah*." They sought to do this by combining the "left side" and the "right side." This idea of combining the right side and left side to create something more perfect is quite common in Jewish thought; it is at the basis of the Tree of Life imagery in Kabbalah. In the seven "lower sefirot" the top three, *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet* form this structure.

As we have seen from the very beginning of our year with Ramchal, *chesed* is associated with the "right side" (of *kedusha*, of course) and *gevurah* (*din*) is associated with the "left side." *Chesed* is associated with male energy, flowing, rushing, impetuous; while *din* is associated with female energy, quiet, steady, giving form and structure to the flow of male energy. The combination of the two, when properly balanced, the flow not too much and the boundaries not too rigid, gives rise to *tiferet* – beauty, harmony, perfect integration. This perfect integration is able to reflect the perfectly integrated state of the transcendental basis of all life.

I think this is what Ramchal is saying here: the same process is going on, on the side of *tumah*. And if this process were to be successful, it would in fact pose a very formidable challenge. Scripture, however, indicates that in fact, the process of integration on the side of *tumah* was not successful. When the envoys first approach Bilaam to hire him, they are described as the "elders of Moav and the elders of Midian" (22:7). Bilaam tells them to stay overnight and that he would report back what Gd would tell him. The verse continues, "... and the leaders of Moav stayed with Bilaam" (v. 8). The Rabbis had a tradition that the Midianites were aware that if Bilaam needed to consult with Gd overnight, that he would not be successful, so they simply left, taking with them the possibility of joining the left and right sides of *tumah*.

Since *tumah* is the force of dis-integration, it is not surprising that an attempt at integration on the side of *tumah* would fail. Perhaps this is another example of the self-limiting nature of evil. Before we get too complacent, however, we should remind ourselves that evil can do a considerable amount of damage before it limits itself – Bilaam may have failed to curse the Israelites, but he did catalyze the disastrous breach of morality that led to 24,000 deaths at the end of the *parashah*. The best way to battle *tumah* is to align our individual awareness with the transcendental source of *kedusha*, and by so doing integrate our own mind, body, emotions and spirit into a structure that most perfectly reflects that *kedusha*. This will enable us to deal gracefully with any challenge the *tumah* may present us.

Shabbat Shalom!
Rafi Rabinoff



AN EVENING OF PAINTING

6:30 PM
WINE & NOSH
7-9 PM
PAINTING
INSTRUCTIONS



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SAMANTHA
BRICK

WEDNESDAY
JULY
12

\$25 PER PERSON
INCLUDES ALL
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PLEASE RSVP
BY JULY 7
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314-576-5230

Mark Your Calendar... for a Calendar Meeting!



Monday, July 17
7:15 PM

Open to all who would like to schedule an event on our calendar. Event and committee chairpersons and Board VPs are particularly encouraged to attend, as is anyone who has a program/fundraising/educational idea for the 2017/2018 year.

Refreshments will be served!

Please RSVP to Marian or 314-576-5230.

If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like to schedule a program on the calendar, please contact Marian prior to July 17.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, July 11 **Fast of 17th of Tammuz**, 3 weeks begin.

Wednesday, July 12 **An Evening of Painting.** Join us at 6:30 for wine and nosh; from 7:00-9:00, Samantha Brick will teach us how to paint on canvas—you'll take home your masterpiece! \$25/person includes wine, refreshments and all materials! We still have spots available, RSVP 314-576-5230 or tradcong@sbcglobal.net.

Monday, July 17 **Calendar Meeting**, 7:15 PM. Get your event/program on our 2017-2018 calendar. Have a program you'd like to see us do? Get it on our calendar! Open to all, refreshments provided. Questions/RSVP to Marian, 314-576-5230, tradcong@sbcglobal.net.

Monday, July 31 **Tisha B'Av** begins, service times to be announced including chanting of Eichah.

Tuesday, August 22 **Cardinals Game & Dinner**, see below. Only a handful of tickets remain, so don't wait to order!

The Jewish Federation has once again provided a grant to congregational rabbis to be used for emergency financial needs of congregants. If you are in need of funds, please contact Rabbi Gordon in confidence at Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com or 314-576-5230.

*A Gift from the STL Jewish Light through the JCA Charitable Foundation: If you are 65 or older and do not have the means to receive the Jewish Light, you are eligible for a **free**, one-year subscription to the Jewish Light. Three ways to sign up: Go to www.stljewishlight.com/jcagrants, or call them at 314-743-3660, or contact Marian for registration help, 314-576-5230.*

Get your tickets now—Only a few seats are still available!

Tuesday, August 22 TradCong goes to the ballgame! Cards vs. Padres, 7:15 PM. Enjoy the game from your seat in a luxury suite, plus dinner from Kohn's! This is a \$155 value—yours for just \$60/person! Tickets are going fast, only 40 tickets are now available, first-come, first-serve, don't wait to order!! Send your check for \$60/person to TradCong, 12437 Ladue Rd, 63141; or order online at www.traditional-congregation.org.

You can help underwrite Traditional night at Busch Stadium!

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|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Managers | \$5,000 and up | (includes 10 tickets) |
| Pitchers | \$1,000-4,999 | (includes 4 tickets) |
| Catchers | \$750-999 | (includes 2 tickets) |
| First Base | \$500-749 | (includes 2 tickets) |
| Second Base | \$200-499 | (includes 1 ticket) |
| Third Base | \$100-199 | |



To join the team, please contact Jerry Chervitz, 314-574-0456. Thank you for your support!



Visit our website www.traditional-congregation.org

PRAYER

Parent of the strong and the weak,
Before You even the strongest are weak.

*God of all wisdom and knowledge,
Before You even the wisest is a speechless child;*

You fill the heavens with Your majesty,
And yet reveal Yourself in a lowly bush.

*Fill us with pride,
Which will keep us from self-humiliation,
But purge us of the pride
Which leads to self-exaltation.*

Remind us that we are only human,
So that we may be most human.

*Keep us mindful of our littleness
So that we may strive for true greatness.*

Help us to see how dependant we are
Upon You and upon one another.

*May we fulfill the teaching of Your prophet;
To do justice, to love mercy,
And to walk unobtrusively with our God*

Unknown

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

No mind is thoroughly well-organized
that is deficient in a sense of humor.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge