



July 4, 2020

יב תמוז תש"פ

Parashat Chukat-Balak – Numbers 19:1-25:9

Stone – p 838 Hertz – p 652 Etz Hayim—p 880

Haftarah – Micah 5:6-6:8

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

Talmud Class—cancelled

Minchah – cancelled

Seudah Sh'lishit—cancelled

Shabbat Ends – 9:11 PM

Thursday, July 9—Fast of the 17th of Tammuz

Fast ends: 8:28 PM (sunset) or 9:00 PM (three stars)

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon – Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com

Rabbi Ephraim Zimand z"l, Emeritus

Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director – tradcong@sbcglobal.net

DAILY SERVICE TIMES—all cancelled until further notice

Shabbat—9:00 AM & 7:00 PM

Sunday—8:30 AM

Monday—Thursday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM

Friday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM

Board of Directors:

Elaine Farkas, President

Paul Tesser, Executive Vice President

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Shelah Feldman

Bill Gold

Gary Golden

Ari Levy

Carol Max

Justin Zeid

*Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know would like to receive membership information, please contact
Chris Brown, Membership VP, at 636-288-5356*

On This Week's Torah Portion – Chukat-Balak

At the end of *parashat Chukat* we have the incident where Moshe Rabbeinu hits the rock to bring forth water, instead of speaking to it, as Gd instructed him to do. In response, Gd tells Moshe (and Aharon), *Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore you will not bring this congregation to the Land that I have given them* (20:12).

The whole passage is rather cryptic. If Moshe wasn't supposed to hit the rock, why did Gd tell him to take the staff? And which rock was he supposed to speak to? What was he supposed to say? Why did such a seemingly minor transgression lead to such major repercussions? What, exactly, *did* Moshe do wrong? And how can we take seriously the charge that Moshe didn't believe in Gd, when he *knew* Gd face-to-face?! The commentators offer many different answers, all of which Or haChaim dismisses as inadequate. Instead, he gives a very long and detailed analysis of the incident, especially Moshe's thinking process in trying to interpret what he was told to do. I will do my best to summarize it briefly, and then discuss it even more briefly.

He begins by quoting a Midrash that lists four sins that the text mentions: (1) *You did not believe in Me*; (2) *You did not sanctify Me* (*Deut* 32:51); (3) *You trespassed against Me* (*ibid*); and (4) *You defied my Word* (20:24 and 27:14). He associates these with four actions during the incident: (1) Moshe struck the rock, which he wasn't told to do; (2) Gd commanded Moshe to produce water from any rock the people wanted (but he stuck with the original rock); (3) Moshe said *Shall we bring forth water from this rock* and (4) Gd told Moshe to speak to the rock, meaning to recite a chapter of Torah over it, but he hit the rock instead.

This Midrash begins to answer some of our questions. Why did Gd tell Moshe to take the staff? Or haChaim answers that the staff is a symbol of Moshe's royal authority, granted by Gd. But he was not told to use it as he had been the first time; this time he was to speak to the rock. Gd assumed that Moshe would understand that if he were told to speak instead of hit, that's what he would do. By *speak to the rock*, Gd meant to recite a chapter of Torah over it. By telling Moshe to bring forth water from "the" rock, He meant whichever rock the people would choose, but Moshe did not do so. (I might add that back in Egypt, Moshe toyed with Pharaoh, asking him *when would you like the plague [of frogs] to end?* Pharaoh said, "tomorrow," and Moshe prayed that Gd take the plague away on the next day, which He did (*Ex* 8:5-10). So apparently this wasn't a completely foreign concept to Moshe.)

Now Or haChaim presents Moshe's perspective. First, the staff – this staff had the Name of Gd inscribed on it and Moshe knew that he could use it to perform miracles, like drawing water from a rock, even without hitting the rock. He had never before been commanded to take the staff and not do anything with it, so the question was, to strike with it or to use it in some other way. In fact, from the exact wording of Gd's commands to Moshe, Moshe thought that Gd was telling him that speaking to the rock would be necessary, but not sufficient, to draw water from it. Something would have to be done with the staff as well, hence the instruction to take it.

As far as speaking to the rock goes, the meaning of that depends on how one interprets the instruction to take the staff. Logically, a rock, which has neither senses nor intellect, could not respond to a command, even from Moshe. However, if it struck by the staff with which Moshe performed the signs and miracles of the Exodus, that could enliven the life force in the rock, and then it could respond to speech. According to Or haChaim, this was Moshe's understanding of Gd's command. The other possibility is that the staff was *not* to be taken to strike the rock, in which case merely commanding it to give water would be insufficient – one would have to recite "a chapter of Torah" over it to have the desired effect.

Moshe was now faced with a dilemma as to whether or not to strike the rock and simply order it to give water, or to speak "a chapter of Torah" over it. Or haChaim explains that Moshe basically took the safe way out, the way that he *knew* would produce water, so that Gd's Name would not be desecrated by a potential failure. Unfortunately, that wasn't what Gd wanted. Gd wanted the greater sanctification of His Name that would have come from having the rock, any rock that the people chose, respond to speech alone. But why? And if that is what Gd wanted, why wasn't He more clear and explicit in His instructions to Moshe?

I would like to suggest the following. The first incident of water from the rock took place at the beginning of the 40 years of wandering in the desert. These 40 years of wandering were a time of open miracles – clouds that shielded the people from the elements, a miraculous well that traveled with them and gave enough water for a city the size of metro St Louis, but with cattle and flocks as well, and food that fell from heaven. Embarking on this journey, Moshe was told to demonstrate Gd's power over nature, which he did by striking the rock.

Now, at the end of the 40 years, the nation is about to enter the Land of Israel, where they will lead a "normal" existence, plowing, planting and reaping. Now it is not sufficient for Gd to be master of nature. Now *we* must become masters of nature. And Moshe was supposed to show them how – by "reciting a chapter of Torah." How would that work? We know that the "supernal Torah" is structured in the transcendent basis of all creation, and its vibrations are the virtual vibrations of the transcendent as it manifests itself.

I think what Torah and our Sages are telling us is that if we can stimulate the appropriate vibrations we can create a kind of resonance effect in physical creation, which allows us to create the physical outcome that we desire. And this recitation cannot be simply a rote reading of a string of syllables – it must come from the level of Torah itself, as established in the awareness of the one doing the recitation. Only then are all levels of creation stirred and the resonance effect can produce results even on the crude, physical plane. In other words, we need to internalize Torah to the extent that the vibrations of our own consciousness are the vibrations of Torah, and then we will work in harmony with Gd and with nature to enjoy all the blessings of heaven and earth, as Gd promises us time and again.

Shabbat Shalom!
Rafi Rabinoff



Zoom Schmooze

Monday, July 13

7:45 - 9:00 PM

(stay for all or drop in anytime)

**Catch up with TradCong
friends and shoot the breeze!!**

Registration not required, but please
RSVP to Dina: dinarinder@icloud.com

www.Zoom.com

Meeting ID: 891 0506 1510

Password: 537872

Dial in number:

312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

**Join Rabbi Gordon on Zoom!
Something for everyone!**



Mondays, 9:00 - 10:00 AM

The history of the Jewish people. Newcomers are welcome to join us!

[Register here](#)

Wednesdays, 7:00 - 8:00 PM

A look at the weekly Parashah from both traditional rabbinic and midrashic points of view as well as modern historians.

Although we would love you to join us for all classes, you can join the lesson for that week's reading. Recommended: the New JPS translation, but feel free to use any translation.

[Register here](#)



The 613 Mitzvot

Thursdays, 12 - 1:00 PM. Bring your lunch!

More than a "good deed," mitzvah in a deeper and truer sense means, literally, command.

Teachings from Sefer ha-Chinuch will be provided; this work numbers the mitzvot as they appear in the Torah, adding rabbinic teachings and the author's own insights. Recommended:

Have a translation of the Torah with you.

[Register here](#)

Fridays, 6:30 - 7:00 PM.

Abbreviated services (including L'cha Dodi; though not Shabbat evening services) and the singing of Zemirot. Benefits include spiritual ones as we enter Shabbat, congregational togetherness before Shabbat, and learning about what we are singing.

[Register here](#)



**VIRTUAL LEARNING
WITH
RABBI GORDON**



What'cha been up to? Inquiring minds want to know!

Send us your photos, stories, poems, drawings, doodles of your life during COVID. Knitting like a fiend? Send pics of your projects! Learned some new computer skills? Tell us all about!

Ask your kids and grandkids to contribute, too!

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

FROM THE DESK OF MARIAN GORDON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

314-576-5230 TRADCONG@SBCGLOBAL.NET

WE'RE TAKING YOUR TEMPERATURE!

YOUR EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE, THAT IS!

Hello, everyone,

I'm excited to announce the launch of a new Traditional Congregation project. We're rolling it out now, with plans to complete it before Rosh HaShanah. And we're asking you to contribute - no money required!

In this crazy time we're all experiencing, we'd like to compile a digital Book of Reflections - and you, your children and your grandchildren are all invited to participate!

We hope you'll contribute!!! Please send us your thoughts, your scribbles, your artwork - through writings, photos of your drawings, paintings, needlework, mask-making, or home projects, poetry, family photos, songs, etc. - whatever medium you prefer! We'll compile them into a digital book that we'll send out to our member families in time for the High Holydays.



What are some of the things you've personally experienced and felt during the pandemic?

How was Pesach different for your family this year?

What have you been doing to keep busy, to help others, to stay healthy?

What are you sad about - and what are you grateful for?

You are welcome to submit as many entries as you'd like.* They can be mailed to our office, or emailed to me at tradcong@sbcglobal.net. You can start sending in submissions immediately; the final date we can accept them is July 24.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Marian

*By submitting your work, you give permission to Traditional Congregation to publish it.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS JULY 24!

PRAYER

O Lord,
You are a consolation to your creatures,
For in moments of forgetting,
We but call mind your care,
And we are comforted.

*When we hope no more,
A pattern in the snow
Reminds us of your loving kindness.*

Your dawns give us confidence,
And sleep is a friend.

*Our sorrows dissipate
In the presence of an infant's smile,
And the wise words of the old
Revive our will-to-wish.*

Your hints are everywhere,
Your signals in the most remote of places.

*You are here,
And we fail words to say,
"Mah Tov!"
How good our breath,
Our rushing energies,
Our silences of love.*

Danny Siegel

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Anger is the only thing to put off till tomorrow.
Slovakian Proverb