



TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

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Affiliated with the Union for Traditional Judaism

Rabbi Seth D Gordon



June 26-27, 2026

יב תמוז תשפ"ו

Candlelighting 8:11 PM

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

Sweet Treats **Kiddush** is sponsored
by the congregation

Shabbat ends 9:11 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon - Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director - traditionalcong@gmail.com

WEEKDAY AND SHABBAT SERVICES

Tuesday - 6:45 PM

Shabbat - 9:30 AM

Board of Directors:

Governance Committee:

Florence Schachter, Chair

Marty Levy, Vice-Chair

Ken Bohm, Ellis Frohman, Ron Green,

Dina Rinder, Mindy Strauss

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President

Mark Weinstein, Ritual Vice President

Marty Levy/Mindy Strauss,

Education Co-Vice Presidents

Dina Rinder, Membership Vice President

Steven Puro, Administration Vice President

Chris Brown/Justin Zeid, Building & Grounds

Co-Vice Presidents

Ron Green, Fundraising Vice President

Barbara Levin, Treasurer

Mimi Levy, Secretary

Past Presidents:

Kenneth H. Bohm, Phil Brick

Members at Large:

Maureen Brodsky

Stanley Estrin

Bill Gold

Gary Golden z"l

Jack Heller

Sid Levin

Ari Levy

Carol Max

Florence Schachter

We welcome new members!

If you or someone you know would like to receive membership information,
please contact our office at 314-576-5230
or traditionalcong@gmail.com

On This Week's Torah Portion - Chukat-Balak

In the first of this week's two parashiot, Chukat-Balak, we learn of the law of the Parah Adumah--the Red Heifer.

In Numbers 19:14, the Torah states: זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה, אָדָם כִּי יָמוּת בְּאֵהָל, כָּל הַבָּא אֶל הָאֵהָל, וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בְּאֵהָל, יִטְמָא, שְׂבַעַת יָמִים, This is the law, regarding a person who dies in a tent: Anything that enters the tent, and anything that is in the tent, shall be defiled for seven days.

From parashat Chukat we learn that a Jewish person who comes in contact with the dead, either by directly touching a dead body, by standing within four cubits of a dead body, or being under the same roof as a dead person, is rendered ritually impure for seven days. Until the defiled person has been purified with the waters of the Red Heifer, he/she is forbidden to enter the camp of G-d--the Tabernacle, or the Temple in Jerusalem.

The ritual of purification requires the impure person to approach the Tabernacle or Temple, be sprinkled with the waters of the Red Heifer on the third day and the seventh day, and immerse in a mikveh on the night of the eighth to achieve complete absolution.

It is interesting to note that there are varying degrees of ritual impurity. If a first-degree ritually impure person, one who has come in direct contact with a dead body and has not yet been purified, touches another person, that second person as well is rendered impure until nightfall, when he/she must wash their clothes and immerse in a mikveh. Vessels and foodstuffs may also become impure by coming in contact with the dead or contaminated persons of the first or second degree.

The laws of ritual impurity are extensive and complex. They, in fact, seem to be incomprehensible, especially today, when most of these laws are no longer observed. The only areas of ritual impurity that apply today, are the prohibitions for a Cohen (someone of priestly descent) to come in contact with the dead, and the menstruant woman, who is considered in a state of ritual impurity until she goes to the mikveh.

While the laws of ritual impurity may seem obscure, obtuse and irrelevant, in truth, they play a key and vital role in Judaism and Jewish life, because these laws represent Judaism's way of underscoring the ultimate sanctity of human life. In fact, it may very well be, that the principle of the sanctity of human life, is the bottom line of all of Jewish life! It has been cogently argued that every single one of the 613 mitzvot, as well as all the derivatives of those mitzvot, can be traced back to the principle of the sanctity of human life.

Since Judaism regards nothing more sacred or more sanctified than human life, there is nothing more contaminating or defiling than death. Therefore, anyone who comes in contact with death, is automatically defiled.

The principle of the sanctity of human life is reflected in many of Judaism's laws and rituals. A Jew, upon waking in the morning, recites a brief prayer known as מוֹדֵה אֱנִי--"Mo'deh ah'nee," Thank you G-d for restoring my soul, then washes his/her hands, alternating each hand three times, in the same manner in which hands are washed after visiting a cemetery. Washing in this manner, after rising from sleep, in effect, affirms the principle of the sanctity of human life. After all, sleep and unconsciousness are the closest thing to death that a person experiences.

Reciting blessings over foods, again reaffirms the principle of the sanctity of life, reflecting our deep appreciation to the Ultimate Provider for our nourishment. Not eating meat and milk together emphasizes that a human being who takes an animal's life in order to eat meat, should not at the same meal drink milk--the substance that would have

continued next page

sustained that animal's life. Of course, the regulations of charity, caring for the poor, the infirm, the widow, not causing undue pain to animals, all play a powerful role in advancing the principle of the sanctity of human life, as well as teaching respect for animal life.

In effect, Judaism maintains that each time a person comes in contact with death, that person is reduced as a human being. Judaism is especially concerned that frequent contact with death, will render those who survive particularly indifferent or inured to human life.

The challenge faced in the 21st century to maintain an exalted respect for human life, may in fact be greater than at any time in human history. Because of today's modern technology, the volume and rapidity of reports of death, is far greater than ever before. It is not uncommon for people to read about major accidents, with hundreds of victims, and simply turn the page. Reports of earthquakes and tsunamis, with hundreds-of-thousands of victims, may disturb us for several hours or several days, and then be quickly relegated to the ash heap. The fact that leaders of large metropolitan areas in the United States like New York City proudly celebrate the "decline" in the number of murders, while hundreds of people are still murdered annually in these cities, is nothing less than "obscene!" All this, only goes to underscore how quickly human beings are reduced by the constant exposure, indeed overexposure, to human suffering and death.

If some form of the laws of Parah Adumah were still practiced today, requiring those who are exposed to death travel to Jerusalem, or to some "special" location, to undergo a ritual affirmation of life, there is little question that people would not be as lackadaisical and indifferent to the principle of the sanctity of life, as much of society is today.

This is why the ritual of Parah Adumah must not be allowed to pass into obscurity. It is not enough to read this text twice a year as part of the annual cycle of the Torah reading (a second reading of this text takes place on parashat Parah, after Purim). It is important that we see the implications of Parah Adumah in every one of the mitzvot and rituals that we perform.

My friend, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, has made an acute observation regarding the sanctity of human life, noting that most people are annoyed when the sounds of fire engines or ambulances disturb their peace and tranquility. He suggests, that whenever such alarms are heard, it is proper to utter a silent prayer that the rescue vehicles reach the victims in time, and that, hopefully, no one will be seriously ill or hurt. It is this heightened awareness and sensitivity to the sanctity of human life, that the Torah rituals constantly try to reinforce.

The primacy of human life, is an important lesson, that is probably more relevant today, than at any time in human history.

May you be blessed.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

Rabbi Buchwald is director of NJOP, an independent, non-denominational, non-profit organization established in 1987 in response to the spiraling losses of Jews from Jewish life due to assimilation and lack of Jewish knowledge.

You are Invited!

4th of July
Shabbat

Traditional
Congregation

Deli Kiddush

following 7/4/26 services

sponsored by
Rabbi & Marian

RSVP with names of all
attending to:
traditionalcong@gmail.com

Statements have been mailed out.

As the summer period is the most difficult for our bank account, we kindly ask you to make a prompt payment on your account so we are able to pay *our* bills.



Info re: **Rosh HaShanah Greetings cards and Yizkor Memorial Book** listings will arrive in your mailbox soon. We don't want anyone to be left out, so please don't put off responding.
(See "*Thought for the Moment of Silence*" on back cover.)

TIA!!

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