



TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

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Affiliated with the

Union for Traditional Judaism

Rabbi Seth D Gordon

Rabbi Ephraim I Zimand, Emeritus

Shabbat Bulletin

June 10, 2017

טז סיון תשע"ז

Parashat B-ha'alotcha – Numbers 8:1-12:16 בהעלותך
Stone – p 774 Hertz – p 605 Etz Hayim – p 816

Haftarah – Zechariah 2:14-4:7 זכריה ב:יד – ז:ז
Stone – p 1182 Hertz – p 620 Etz Hayim – p 837

Kiddush luncheon sponsored by Mel & Bettina Weinberg in honor of
Mel's upcoming 75th birthday

No Talmud Class

Minchah – 7:45 PM

Seudah Sh'lishit

Shabbat Ends – 9:06 PM

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DAILY SERVICE TIMES—week of 6/10

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

Board of Directors:

Kenneth H. Bohm, President
Steve Bell, Executive Vice President
Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President
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(Open) Administrative Vice President
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Chris Brown, Fundraising Vice President
Lori Tesser, Treasurer
Mimi Levy, Secretary
Christy Brick, Sisterhood Representative

Members at Large: Sid Bennett, Bill Gold, Tobie Hupert, Ari Levy, Carol Max, Steven Puro, Dina Rinder,
Iris Salsman, Jerry Tullman, Mark Weinstein, Justin Zeid

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—Behalotecha

One of the strangest (to me) incidents in the Torah is at the end of our *parashah*, where Moses' sister, Miriam, speaks *lashon hara* against her brother, Moshe Rabbeinu. The text is, as usual sparse. Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe because of the Cushite woman he had married. They complained that Gd also speaks to them. Then Gd appeared suddenly to the three of them and ordered them to go out to the tent of meeting, where he informs Miriam and Aharon that Moshe's prophecy is on a totally different level than theirs – Moshe is able to speak with Gd while fully in control of his faculties, while to all other prophets Gd appears in a vision (trance?) or dream. Gd then strikes Miriam with *tzara'at* (a whitening of the skin, traditionally understood as a punishment for *lashon hara*), Moshe prays for her recovery, Gd promises to heal her after seven days, during which the camp remains in place.

The Midrash fills in the back story. This passage occurs right after the passage of Eldad and Medad, who "prophesied in the camp." Zipporah, Moshe's wife, laments to Miriam that she pities Eldad's and Medad's wives, who will now never see their husbands, because they'll have to separate from the women to maintain ritual purity so that they can receive prophecy. Miriam's response is, "Wait a minute – we're prophets and we don't separate from our spouses, what's up with Moshe?!"

The commentators point out that (a) Miriam didn't intend to disparage Moshe, (b) she had already demonstrated her love for Moshe by watching over his little basket in the Nile, (c) Moshe didn't hear her say anything, (d) Moshe was "the most humble man on the face of the earth" and wouldn't have taken offense if he *had* heard it. This indicates how severely Gd views *lashon hara*. Our Sages tell us that *lashon hara* kills three people – the speaker, the hearer, and the person spoken about. In this case, I wonder if the source of the upset wasn't simply Miriam's (and Aharon's) incorrect assessment of Moshe's stature. It was perhaps more a sin of ignorance, or failing to take note of Moshe's pre-eminence.

Ramchal writes:

The yetzer hara's plan was to renew the destruction caused by Chava (Eve) in Gan Eden who was enticed by the serpent. Hashem, however, prevented this destruction by immediately punishing Miriam with tzara'at thereby appeasing the tumah and silencing its claims against Miriam. ...

Further on Ramchal continues:

A person's body is the vessel that contains his inner spiritual essence. A person with a beautiful essence therefore has a beautiful appearance ... Why then do we find so many physically beautiful women whose actions are inappropriate, even more so than women who do not possess this beauty? The reason for this is that the higher the level of inner beauty the more the yetzer hara attempts to incite them to wrongdoing, as our Sages teach us "whoever is spiritually greater than his fellow has a stronger evil inclination than his fellow (Sukkah 52a)....

Miriam, a great woman in her own right, spoke sarcastically about Moshe in a way not befitting her lofty character. Her great spiritual level magnified the harm her improper speech caused in the spiritual realms. Our Sages in fact point out many who spoke disparagingly about Moshe, yet the only one punished for this was Miriam. The others were on a simple level and therefore their actions had less of an impact.

The *yetzer hara* is the "evil inclination," that part of our personality that draws us towards the physical and ephemeral, and away from the spiritual and eternal. It is associated with the body, since the body is the part of our individuality, which is drawn toward the physical. This does not make the body evil of course – the body is necessary for the soul to interact with the physical world. It means that the body's drives present a challenge to the soul to stay in charge of the body, rather than to let the body be in charge of the soul. If human beings are to have free will, it is inevitable that there must be a *yetzer hara* and a *yetzer hatov* ("good inclination") more or less in balance, so that we have actual choices to make.

What is certainly clear is that wrong action undertaken by a great person is much more harmful than that of a person of lesser spiritual stature. By greater or lesser, we mean closer or more distant from Gd. Now since Gd is the ultimate source of energy and intelligence in the cosmos, one who is closer to Gd is able to draw more effectively on this power and intelligence. Therefore, any action taken is more powerful, whether it be for good or the opposite. This is why Darth Vader was so interested in turning Luke Skywalker to the Dark Side: "The Force is strong in this one." Substitute the *yetzer hara* for Darth Vader, Miriam, or any highly developed person for Luke and *kedusha* for the Force, and you have Ramchal's point exactly. Precisely because the stakes are so high, Gd is more exacting in His judgment of the behavior of a *tzaddik* than he is of a more ordinary person. Thus, even the hint of *lashon hara* on Miriam's part was punished rather severely.

Personally, this last point gives me pause. Am I ready to be judged so precisely by Gd? Certainly not. Fortunately (?) there's not much chance of such a judgment on me, because I'm nowhere near Miriam's or Aharon's or Moshe's level. Nonetheless, as we grow, we do get to higher and higher levels and we do need to be progressively more careful with our thoughts, speech and action. Growth and evolution are built into the nature of life. We have no choice but to grow to higher levels of spiritual development. Yes, there are risks; even Moshe Rabbeinu made mistakes. But the risk of stagnating, or worse, descending, is far greater.

Shabbat Shalom! Rafi Rabinoff

UPCOMING EVENTS

Reminder: **Minchah/Arvit services will begin at 6:45 PM through the end of July.** As always, we need your support to ensure a minyan.

Sunday, June 11 Softball game: TradCong vs. B'nai Amoona, 5:00 PM, JCCA Field #1. Come out and support our team!

Through June 13 Rabbi & Marian Gordon will be out of the office. Angela will be here most mornings from 9:15 AM—12:00 PM.

Thursday, June 15 **Annual Congregational Meeting**, 7:30 PM

Get your tickets now!

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 quickly, 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!

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 **NEW** website www.traditional-congregation.org



PRAYER

O God, our Parent, forgive us that we so often
give our best to the wrong things.

*Sometimes we put far more enthusiasm and thought and effort
into our pleasures and our games and our amusement
than we do into our work.*

Sometimes we keep our best behavior for strangers
and our worst behavior for our own homes;

*And often we treat our nearest and dearest with a
discourtesy and disregard we would never show to strangers.*

Sometimes we get irritated and annoyed and angry about things
which in our calmer moments we know do not matter.

Sometimes we lose our temper in an argument about trifles.

Sometimes we allow very little things
to cause a quarrel with a friend.

*Help us to see what is important and what is unimportant, so that we
may never forget the things that matter, and so that we may never
allow the things which do not matter to matter too much.*

William Barclay (adapted)

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't
change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.

Maya Angelou