

11.

Chukat-Balak

Say It Soft. Always.

Effective Leadership Is Always Soft-Spoken



*Dedicated in loving memory of Chana Raskin,
marking her yahrtzeit on 9 Tamuz.*

*May the merit of the Torah study accompany
her soul in the world of everlasting life and be
a source of blessings to her family with much
health, happiness, nachat, and success.*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Chukat

Moses is taught the laws of the red heifer, whose ashes purify a person who has been contaminated by contact with a dead body.

After forty years of journeying through the desert, the people of Israel arrive in the wilderness of Zin. Miriam dies, and the people thirst for water. G-d tells Moses to speak to a rock and command it to give water. Moses gets angry at the rebellious Israelites and strikes the stone. Water issues forth, but Moses is told by G-d that neither he nor Aaron will enter the Promised Land.

Aaron dies at Hor Hahar (Mount Hor) and is succeeded in the high

priesthood by his son Elazar. Venomous snakes attack the Israelite camp after yet another eruption of discontent in which the people “speak against G-d and Moses”; G-d tells Moses to place a brass serpent upon a high pole, and all who will gaze heavenward will be healed. The people sing a song in honor of the miraculous well that provided them with water in the desert.

Moses leads the people in battles against the Emorite kings Sichon and Og (who seek to prevent Israel’s passage through their territory) and conquers their lands, which lie east of the Jordan River.

Balak

Balak, the king of Moab, summons the prophet Balaam to curse the people of Israel. On the way, Balaam is berated by his donkey, who sees, before Balaam does, the angel that G-d sends to block their way. Three times, from three different vantage points, Balaam attempts to pronounce his curses; each time, blessings issue forth instead. Balaam also

prophesies on the end of the days and the coming of Mashiach.

The people fall prey to the charms of the daughters of Moab, and are enticed to worship the idol Pe'or. When a high-ranking Israelite official publicly takes a Midianite princess into a tent, Pinchas kills them both, stopping the plague raging among the people.

I. BREAKING GROUND

Miriam's Well

TEXT 1a

TALMUD TRACTATE PESACHIM, 54A

תניא, עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות, אלו הן:
באר, והמון, וקשת, כתב, ומכתב, והלוחות, וקברו של משה,
ומערה שעמד בו משה ואליהו, פתיחת פי האתון, ופתיחת פי
הארץ לבלוע את הרשעים.

Our rabbis taught: Ten things were created on the eve of the Sabbath at twilight. They are: the well, manna, the rainbow, writing, the writing instruments, the Tablets, the sepulchre of Moses and the cave in which Moses and Elijah stood, the opening of the donkey's mouth, and the opening of the earth's mouth to swallow up the wicked.

TEXT 1b

RASHI, AD LOC.

"באר". בארה של מרים – סלע שיצאו ממנו המים על ידי משה,
ועגול כמין כברה היה, ומתגלגל עמהן כל מקום שהולכין.

“Well”: This refers to the Well of Miriam—the rock from which Moses brought out water. It was round and sieve-like, and it went along with them wherever they would go.

Babylonian Talmud

A literary work of monumental proportions that draws upon the legal, spiritual, intellectual, ethical, and historical traditions of Judaism. The 37 tractates of the Babylonian Talmud contain the teachings of the Jewish sages from the period after the destruction of the 2nd Temple through the 5th century CE. It has served as the primary vehicle for the transmission of the Oral Law and the education of Jews over the centuries; it is the entry point for all subsequent legal, ethical, and theological Jewish scholarship.

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi)

1040–1105

Most noted biblical and Talmudic commentator. Born in Troyes, France, Rashi studied in the famed *yeshivot* of Mainz and Worms. His commentaries on the Pentateuch and the Talmud, which focus on the straightforward meaning of the text, appear in virtually every edition of the Talmud and Bible.

*Water on Demand***TEXT 2a**

BAMIDBAR (NUMBERS) 20:6-8

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מִפְּנֵי הַקְּהָל אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם
וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֲלֵיהֶם.

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

קַח אֶת הַמַּטֵּה וְהַקְּהֵל אֶת הָעֵדָה אֲתָנָה וְאַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ וְדַבְּרֶתֶם אֶל
הַסֵּלַע לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְנָתַן מִמֵּיו וְהוֹצֵאתָ לָהֶם מִים מִן הַסֵּלַע וְהִשְׁקִיתָ
אֶת הָעֵדָה וְאֶת בְּעִירָם.

And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the Tent of Meeting and fell upon their faces; and the glory of G-d appeared unto them.

And G-d spoke unto Moses, saying, “Take the staff and assemble the congregation, you and your brother, Aaron, and speak to the rock in their presence so that it will give forth its water. You shall bring forth water for them from the rock and give the congregation and their livestock to drink.”

Rock of Outrages

TEXT 2b

BAMIDBAR (NUMBERS) 20:9-11

וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַמַּטֵּה מִלִּפְנֵי ה' כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ:
 וַיִּקְהֵלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת הַקְּהָל אֶל פְּנֵי הַסֵּלַע וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם שְׁמַעוּ
 נָא הַמְּרִים הַמֶּן הַסֵּלַע הַזֶּה נוֹצִיא לָכֶם מַיִם:
 וַיִּרָם מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת הַסֵּלַע בְּמַטְהוֹ פַּעַמַּיִם וַיֵּצְאוּ מֵיִם רַבִּים
 וַתִּשְׁתְּ הָעֵדָה וּבְעִירָם:

And Moses took the rod from before G-d, as He commanded him.

Moses and Aaron assembled the congregation in front of the rock, and he said to them, “Now listen, you rebels: Can we draw water for you from this rock?”

Moses raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, when an abundance of water gushed forth, and the congregation and their livestock drank.

TEXT 2c

BAMIDBAR (NUMBERS) 20:12-13

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאַל אֶהְרֹן יַעַן לֹא הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָכֵן לֹא תָבִיאוּ אֶת הַקְּהָל הַזֶּה אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי
 לָהֶם. הִמָּה מִי מְרִיבָה אֲשֶׁר רָבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת ה' וַיִּקְדָּשׁ בָּם.

G-d said to Moses and Aaron, “Since you did not have faith in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly to the Land which I have given them.”

These are the Waters of Strife where the Children of Israel contended with G-d, and He was sanctified through them.

II. LAYERS OF ROCK

The Garden of the Torah

TEXT 3

MIDRASH BAMIDBAR RABAH, 13:16

יש שבעים פנים בתורה.

There are seventy facets to the Torah.

Bamidbar Rabah

An exegetical commentary on the first 7 chapters of the book of Numbers and a homiletic commentary on the rest of the book. The first part of *Bamidbar Rabah* is notable for its inclusion of esoteric material; the second half is essentially identical to *Midrash Tanchuma* on the book of Numbers. It was first printed in Constantinople in 1512, together with 4 other midrashic works on the other 4 books of the Pentateuch.

Explanation #1: A Lack of Faith

TEXT 4

RABBI SHMUEL BEN MEIR, BAMIDBAR (NUMBERS) 20:10

שטעה במה שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: "קח את המטה", ולא האמין שבדיבורו עם הסלע יוציא ממנו מים אלא בהכאת המטה, כמו שעשה ברפידים.

ומה שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: "ודברתם [אל הסלע]", היה סבור שזו היא רצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא לדבר אל הסלע בהכאה במטה . . . והקדוש ברוך הוא הסכים על ידי משה לצאת מים על ידי הכאתו.

ואף על פי כן נענש, שהקדוש ברוך הוא מדקדק עם הצדיקים. וזהו שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: "יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני" על ידי דיבוריכם אל הסלע, לפי שהוא מדקדק עם הצדיקים אפילו כחוט השערה.

Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam) 1085–1158

Talmudist and biblical commentator. Rashbam was born in Troyes, France, to Yocheved, the daughter of Rashi. Rashbam, a prominent member of the Tosafists, authored commentaries on the Pentateuch and the Talmud. Like his grandfather's, Rashbam's commentaries focus on the plain meaning of the Talmudic and biblical texts.

He erred with regard to G-d's instructions to "take the staff": he did not believe that he would bring forth water from the rock by speaking to it but only by striking it, as he had at Rephidim.

As for G-d's instruction to "speak [to the rock]," he understood that G-d wanted him to "speak" to the rock by hitting it. . . . G-d ultimately conceded and brought forth water as he hit it, yet Moses was punished, for G-d is particular with the righteous. Thus G-d told him, "Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me" by speaking to the rock, because He holds the righteous to account for [deviating] even a hairsbreadth.

Stony Decision

TEXT 5

NACHMANIDES, BAMIDBAR (NUMBERS) 20:8

מאחר שצוה "קח את המטה" יש במשמע שיכה בו, ואלו היה רצונו בדבור בלבד מה המטה הזה בידו. וכן במכות מצרים שאמר "וְהַמֶּטֶה אֲשֶׁר נִהַפֵּךְ לְנַחֵשׁ תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ", והוא להכות בו.

Having commanded [Moses] to “take the staff,” there is an implication that he should hit something with it. If G-d wanted only speech, why would there be a staff in his hand? So it was for the plagues in Egypt, [when G-d tells Moses,] “The staff, which transformed into a snake, take it in your hand”—the purpose was to use it for hitting.

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Nachmanides, Ramban) 1194–1270

Scholar, philosopher, author, and physician. Nachmanides was born in Spain and served as leader of Iberian Jewry. In 1263, he was summoned by King James of Aragon to a public disputation with Pablo Cristiani, a Jewish apostate. Though Nachmanides was the clear victor of the debate, he had to flee Spain because of the resulting persecution. He moved to Israel and helped reestablish communal life in Jerusalem. He authored a classic commentary on the Pentateuch and a commentary on the Talmud.

TEXT 6

SHEMOT (EXODUS) 17:1-6

וַיִּסְעוּ כָּל עֵדֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּדְבַּר סִין לְמִסְעֵיהֶם עַל פִּי ה' וַיַּחֲנוּ
 בְּרִפְדִּים וַאֲשֶׁר מֵיַם לְשִׁתְּתֵי הָעָם:
 וַיִּרֶב הָעָם עִם מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָנוּ לָנוּ מַיִם וְנִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה
 מַה תִּרְיִבוּן עִמָּדִי מַה תִּנְסֹן אֶת ה':
 וַיִּצְמָא שָׁם הָעָם לַמַּיִם וַיִּלֶן הָעָם עַל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַה זֶה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ
 מִמִּצְרָיִם לְהָמִית אֹתִי וְאֶת בְּנֵי וְאֶת מִקְנֵי בְּצָמָא:
 וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' לֵאמֹר מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לָּעָם הַזֶּה עוֹד מֵעַט וְסִקְלָנִי:
 וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה עֲבֹר לִפְנֵי הָעָם וְקַח אֶתֶּה מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִטָּה
 אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיתָ בּוֹ אֶת הַיָּאֵר קַח בְּיָדְךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ:
 הִנְנִי עֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ שָׁם עַל הַצּוּר בְּחֹרֵב וְהִפִּיתָ בְּצוּר וַיִּצְאוּ מִמְּנוּ מַיִם
 וַשְׁתֶּה הָעָם וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

The entire community of the Children of Israel journeyed from the desert of Sin to their travels by the mandate of G-d. They encamped in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.

So the people quarreled with Moses, and they said, "Give us water that we may drink."

Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test G-d?"

The people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and they said, "Why have you brought us up from Egypt to make me and my children and my livestock die of thirst?"

Moses cried out to G-d, saying, “What shall I do for this people? Just a little longer and they will stone me!”

And G-d said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you [some] of the elders of Israel, and take into your hand your staff, with which you struck the Nile, and go.

“Behold, I shall stand there before you on the rock in Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, and the people will drink.” Moses did so before the eyes of the elders of Israel.

Explanation #2: The Rebel Yell

TEXT 7

MIDRASH PESIKTA DERAV KAHANA, §14

למה היה משה דומה? למלך שמסר את בנו לפידגוגו ואמר לו:
"אל תהי קורא לבני מורה".

מה הדין לישנא "מורה"? כהדין לישנא יוני צווחין לשטיא
"מורוס".

פעם אחת הקרה וקרא אתו "מורה". אמר לו המלך: "כל עצמי
הייתי מצוה אותך ואמרתי לך 'אל תהי קורא לבני מורה', ואת
קורא לבני מורה; לית עיסקא דערום מהלך עם שטיא".

כך כתיב 'ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן ויצום אל בני ישראל -
מה צום? אמר להם: "אל תהיו קורין לבני 'מורין'".

וכיון שהקניטוהו על מי מריבה, אמר להם משה: "שמעו נא
המורים". אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: "כל עצמי הייתי מצוה אתכם
ואמרתי לכם 'אל תהיו קורין לבני מורים', וכיון דקרית 'מורה' לית
עיסקא דערום מהלך עם שטיא".

To what was Moses analogous? To a king who placed his son under the charge of a tutor and instructed him, "Do not call my son a *moreh*."

What does *moreh* mean? It is like the Greek word one shouts to a fool, *moros*! [*Moros* being the Greek word for dull, slow, or stupid.]

Once, it happened that the tutor called [the boy] *moreh*. The king said to him, "With all my soul I ordered you and said, 'Do not call my son a *moreh*,' and yet you call him a *moreh*! A wise man has no business with a fool."

So it is written, “And G-d spoke to Moses and to Aaron and commanded them to the Children of Israel.” What did He command them? He told them, “Do not call My children fools.”

Once they antagonized him at the Waters of Strife, Moses said to them, “Hear now, you *morim!*” G-d then said to him, “With all My being I commanded you and told you, ‘Do not call My children *morim.*’ Now that you have called out ‘*moreh,*’ a wise person does not go along with a fool.”

III. DIGGING DEEPER

The Mystical Substrate

TEXT 8

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON,
LIKUTEI SICHOT 30, P. 17

ידוע מאמר חז"ל שהתורה היא מהדברים ש"קדמו לעולם", וכאמרם "אלפיים שנה קדמה תורה לעולם". כלומר, למרות שאין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו ו"פשוטן" של דברי תורה הוא כפי שהתורה נלמדת בעולם הזה הגשמי דוקא – מכל מקום "קדמה תורה לעולם", כי בכל תיבה ותיבה שבתורה יש (גם) פירוש פנימי ורוחני, כפי שהתורה נלמדת בעולמות עליונים רוחניים (שלמעלה מעלה מענינים גשמיים).

ומובן, שכלל זה חל לא רק על ציווי התורה, אלא גם על סיפורי התורה. דעם היות שכל סיפור שבתורה אירע בפשטות בכל פרטיו כפי המסופר בתורה, מכל מקום, מכיון שהתורה קדמה לעולם, על כרחך צריל לומר שגם סיפורי התורה מכילים תוכן רוחני בהתאם למציאות התורה בעולמות עליונים.

[ואדרבה – כמאמר הידוע שהתורה "מדברת בעצם בעליונים ורומזות בשניות בתחתונים": לא רק שדברי תורה יכולים להתפרש גם לפי תוכנם הרוחני (כפי שהתורה היא "בעליונים"), כי אם להיפך: מקור והתחלת התורה הוא "בעליונים", ומשם "יורדה" ונשתלשלה התורה עד למטה ובגשמיות. ולכן, "בעצם" מדברת התורה בעליונים וברוחניות, אלא כש"יורדת" למטה בעולם הזה, ניתנה להתפרש בפירושה הפשוט כפי שהוא "בתחתונים"].

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson **1902–1994**

The towering Jewish leader of the 20th century, known as "the Lubavitcher Rebbe," or simply as "the Rebbe." Born in southern Ukraine, the Rebbe escaped Nazi-occupied Europe, arriving in the U.S. in June 1941. The Rebbe inspired and guided the revival of traditional Judaism after the European devastation, impacting virtually every Jewish community the world over. The Rebbe often emphasized that the performance of just one additional good deed could usher in the era of Mashiach. The Rebbe's scholarly talks and writings have been printed in more than 200 volumes.

As is well known, our sages have taught that the Torah "preceded the world"; as they put it, "The Torah preceded the world by two thousand years." In other words, despite the fact that Scripture never departs from its literal interpretation, and the "literal" meaning of the Torah is the primary way it's learned in this physical world, still, "The Torah preceded the world." Every single word of the Torah

(also) possesses an esoteric, spiritual meaning, which is how the Torah is learned in the upper, spiritual worlds (which lie far beyond material matters).

Obviously, this rule is not only true of the Torah's commandments, but also of the stories in the Torah. Though every story in the Torah occurred literally, as related in the Torah, in its every detail, nevertheless, inasmuch as the Torah preceded the world, it follows that the stories of the Torah also possess spiritual meaning appropriate to the form it takes in those supernal worlds.

(On the contrary, as suggested by the famous adage, "The Torah speaks primarily of the upper world and alludes secondly to the lower worlds," not only can the words of the Torah also be interpreted along spiritual lines [as the Torah exists in "the upper worlds"], but the reverse: The origin and beginning of the Torah is in "the upper worlds." It was from there that the Torah "descended" and devolved below into material form. Thus, the Torah is "actually" speaking in spiritual terms, in the "upper worlds," but when it "comes down" below into this world, it can be interpreted in a straightforward manner, relative to the "lower worlds.")

Explanation #3: Water=Torah

TEXT 9

RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI, TANYA, LIKUTEI AMARIM, CH. 4

ולכן נמשלה התורה למים מה מים יורדים ממקום גבוה למקום נמוך כך התורה ירדה ממקום כבודה שהיא רצונו וחכמתו יתברך ואורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד ולית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל, ומשם נסעה וירדה בסתר המדרגות ממדרגה למדרגה בהשתלשלות העולמות עד שנתלבשה בדברים גשמיים וענייני עולם הזה שהן רוב מצות התורה ככולם.

Thus has Torah been compared to water: Just as water descends from a higher to a lower level, so has the Torah descended from its place of glory, which is His blessed will and wisdom; [for] the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one and the same and no thought can apprehend Him at all.

From there [the Torah] has progressively descended through hidden stages, stage after stage, with the descent of the worlds, until it integrated into material matter, comprising almost all of the commandments of the Torah.

**Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi
(Alter Rebbe)
1745–1812**

Chasidic rebbe, halachic authority, and founder of the Chabad movement. The Alter Rebbe was born in Liozna, Belarus, and was among the principal students of the Magid of Mezeritch. His numerous works include the *Tanya*, an early classic containing the fundamentals of Chabad Chasidism; and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, an expanded and reworked code of Jewish law.

Drawing Wisdom from the Rock

TEXT 10

RABBI DOVBER OF LUBAVITCH, SHAAREI ORAH, GATE OF CHANUKAH 24A

דענין הפלפול כבר נמשך על ידי משה שהכה בסלע במטהו, שעל דבר זה נענש . . . כי אם היה אומר אל הסלע, לא היה פלפול כלל, אך שינה את הציווי, "ויך את הסלע במטהו פעמים", זהו ענין הפלפול.

דהסלע הוא הצור הקשה מבחינת העלם יסוד האש, שהוא בחינת ההעלם והקושי, כמו הקושיא שקשה כסלע להסתיר האור . . . אך בהכאה זו על הסלע במטה משה, יצא מי החכמה מתכלית ההעלם לגילוי אור, שזהו תכלית הפלפול . . . בחשך ילך עד שיגיע לאור.

Rabbi Dovber of Lubavitch (Mitelers Rebbe) 1773-1827

Rabbi Dovber was the eldest son of and successor to Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi and greatly expanded upon and developed his father's groundbreaking teachings. He was the first Chabad rebbe to live in the village of Lubavitch. Dedicated to the welfare of Russian Jewry, at that time confined to the Pale of Settlement, he established Jewish agricultural colonies. His most notable works on Chasidic thought include *Shaar Hayichud*, *Torat Chayim*, and *Imrei Binah*.

The concept of the *pilpul* [a method of study] was introduced by Moses when he hit the rock with his staff, for which he was punished . . . for had he spoken to the rock, the *pilpul* would not exist. However, he deviated from the instructions and "hit the rock with his staff twice," which is [an allusion] to the idea of the *pilpul*.

The rock refers to a hard flint stone, which is spiritually derived from the hidden element of fire, and so represents a state of concealment and hardness. Likewise, [as the Hebrew words for "hard" and "question" are related,] a question [*kushia*] is hard [*kasheh*] like rock in that it represents a concealment of light. . . . when Moses hit the rock with his staff, the waters of wisdom emerged from a state of utter concealment to revealed light, which is the purpose of the *pilpul* . . . to walk in darkness until one reaches light.

Explanation #4: Heart of Stone

TEXT 11

MIDRASH KOHELET RABAH, 1:38

הלב מתחזק, שנאמר "ויחזק ה' את לב פרעה"; הלב מתרכך, שנאמר "אל ירך לבבכם" . . . הלב אוהב, שנאמר "ואהבת את ה' אלוקיך בכל לבבך"; הלב שונא, שנאמר "לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך"; הלב מקנא, שנאמר "אל יקנא לבך וגו'". . הלב נקרע, שנאמר "וקרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם"; הלב הוא כאבן, שנאמר "והסרותי את לב האבן מבשרכם".

The heart hardens, as it says, "And G-d hardened Pharaoh's heart"; the heart softens, as it says, "Do not let your hearts be soft." . . . The heart loves, as it says, "And you shall love the L-rd, your G-d, with all your heart"; the heart hates, as it says, "Do not hate your brother in your heart"; the heart envies, as it says, "Do not let your heart be envious." . . . The heart tears, as it says, "Tear your hearts and your clothes"; the heart is like a stone, as it says, "And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh."

Kohelet Rabah

A Midrashic text on the Book of Ecclesiastes. Midrash is the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature. The term "Midrash" is derived from the root *d-r-sh*, which means "to search," "to examine," and "to investigate." This particular Midrash provides textual exegeses and develops and illustrates moral principles. It was first published in Pesaro, Italy, in 1519, together with 4 other Midrashic works on the other 4 biblical *Megillot*.

TEXT 12

RABBI SHLOMO YOSEF ZEVIN, LATORAH VELAMOADIM, CHUKAT

לבו של אדם תכונות שונות לו . . .

דרכי ההשפעה על האדם אף הן שונות. לא הרי אופן ההשפעה על מי שיש לו לב רך, לב נקרע, כהרי אמצעי השיכנוע למי שיש לו לב מתחזק, לב קשה כאבן. יש שצריכים לדבר אליו בדברים טובים, דברים נחומים, ויש שצריכים להרעים עליו בדברים קשים כגידים, ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה.

והדבר תלוי אף בהמשפיע. יש ועצם טבעו של המשפיע הוא להרעיף טל תחיה וגשמי נדבות, מתוך אהבה ומתוך השתתפות, מתוך אחוה ומתוך חמלה. ויש שהמשפיע הוא זועם וזועף, מקל חובלים בידו לעקר ולשבר ולמגר ולהכניע, ותמיד הוא זורק מרה.

**Rabbi Shlomo
Yosef Zevin
1890–1978**

Editor in chief of the *Talmudic Encyclopedia*. Rabbi Zevin was born in Kazimirov, Belarus, and was ordained by numerous prominent rabbis, including Rabbi Yosef Rosen of Rogatchov and Rabbi Michel Epstein. In 1934, he immigrated to Israel.

There are all kinds of different types of hearts. . . .

The means of influencing a person are similarly varied: The way one might influence another with a soft heart or a broken heart is altogether different from the means of persuasion one might use for someone whose heart is harder, with a heart like a rock. Some people need to be addressed with positive, gentle, and comforting words; for others, one must speak in thunderous tones, with words as hard as nails, “with a firm hand and an outstretched arm.”

The influencer himself also determines [which means of persuasion are employed]. For some in positions of influence, it is in their very nature to speak in words that drip like dew and the gentle rain, out of love and in a spirit of sharing, with a sense of fraternity, and out of compassion. Some influence by raging and storming, speaking as though with a rod in hand, to “uproot, to break, to crush, and to subjugate,” who hurl nothing but harsh invective.

TEXT 13

SHEMOT (EXODUS) 32:9

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה רְאִיתִי אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עַם קָשִׁי עֲרָף הוּא.

And G-d said to Moses, "I have seen this people and behold! They are a stiff-necked people."

*Gently Does It***TEXT 14**

RABBI SHLOMO YOSEF ZEVIN, LATORAH VELAMOADIM, CHUKAT

ועל כך נענש. מנהיג ישראל, ומנהיג שמכחו ניזונים כל מנהיגי ישראל עד סוף כל הדורות, צריך לדעת אף לדובב את הסלע. "לא בחיל ולא בכח" מובנו אף בנוגע כלפי פנים, כלפי צינורות ההשפעה המותאמים לכלי הקיבול של העם, ויהיה קשה עורף כמה שיהיה. "כי אם ברוחי", בדברים רכים.

וזהו הלקח של מי המריבה לדורות: "אתפשטותא דמשה בכל דרא" תמיד צריך לדעת למצא את נתיבות ההשפעה על הדור באמצעות הדבור הרך, אפילו שיהיה הדור קשה כסלע.

For this he was punished. A leader of Israel, a leader whose example empowers every subsequent Jewish leader until the end of time, must know how to coax even a rock. "Not by force, nor by strength" [these words, spoken to the prophet] also refer inwardly, to those channels of influence directed internally, to the Jewish people themselves, no matter how stubborn they may be, [and as the verse concludes,] "but with my spirit," that is with gentle words.

This is the everlasting message of the Waters of Strife: "The extension of Moses in each generation" [that is, every Jewish leader] must always know how to find the path to influence his people through soft language, even should the generation be as tough as a rock.

Say It Soft

TEXT 15

KOHELET (ECCLESIASTES) 9:17

דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנִחָת נִשְׁמָעִים מִזַּעֲקַת מוֹשֵׁל בְּכִסְיָאִים.

The words of the wise are heard [when spoken] softly, more than the shout of a ruler of fools.

TEXT 16

TALMUD TRACTATE SHABBAT, 34A

שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים צָרִיךְ אָדָם לֹמַר בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ עֶרֶב שַׁבַּת עִם חֲשֻׁכָה:
עֲשֵׂרְתָם, עֲרַבְתָּם? הַדְּלִיקוּ אֶת הַנֵּר.

אָמַר רַבֵּה בַר רַב הוֹנָא: אֵיךְ עַל גַּב דְּאָמוּר רַבֵּנן שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים צָרִיךְ
אָדָם לֹמַר וְכוּ', צָרִיךְ לְמִימְרִינְהוּ בְּנִחוּתָא, כִּי הִיכִי דְּלִיקְבְּלִינְהוּ
מִינִיה. אָמַר רַב אֲשִׁי: אֲנָא לֹא שְׁמִיעַ לִי הָא דְרַבֵּה בַר רַב הוֹנָא,
וְקִיִּמְתִּי מִסְּבָרָא.

There are three things a man must announce before the onset of Shabbat: Have you given tithes [on the appropriate foods]? Have you prepared the *eruv* [halachic enclosure]? Lit the candles. . . ?

Rabah the son of Rav Huna said, “Though a man must say three things, they must be said softly so that they may be accepted from him.”

Rav Ashi observed, “I had not heard this [statement] of Rabah the son of Rav Huna, but understood it by logic.”

Conclusion: Social Media Influencers

TEXT 17

ANGELO ANTOCI, ET AL., "CIVILITY VS. INCIVILITY IN ONLINE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS: AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH," PLOS ONE 11, NO. 11 (2016)

There is growing evidence that “online incivility” is spreading across social networking sites (SNS) making them a potentially hostile environment for users . . . [i.e.,] interaction[s] that can range from aggressive commenting in threads, incensed discussion and rude critiques, to outrageous claims, hate speech and harassment.

The Pew Research Center has documented the rising incidence of incivility in SNS-based interactions: for example, 73% of online adults have seen someone being harassed in some way in SNS, and 40% have personally experienced it. 49% of SNS-using adults have seen other users behaving cruelly, 60% witnessed someone being called offensive names, and 53% had seen efforts to purposefully embarrass someone. 92% of Internet users agreed that SNS-mediated interaction allows people to be more rude and aggressive, compared with their offline experiences. . . . The Facebook “Pages” and the Twitter accounts of actors of public interest such as political parties, magazines, and celebrities provide a typical setting for online incivility. . . .

TEXT 18

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON,
TORAT MENACHEM 15, P. 144

כאשר דברי המוסר מיוסדים על אהבת ישראל, אזי הגישה כולה היא באופן אחר לגמרי - שלא באים לומר לו מוסר, כי אם לשמרו ממכשול כו', וכיון שכן, הרי אין זה "דברי מוסר", כי אם 'מעמידו על האמת', ובמילא, הדיבור כולו הוא באופן אחר לגמרי - בדברים נעימים, דברי נועם ודרכי שלום.
ובאופן כזה, הנה, לכל לראש, רואים במוחש שבדרך זו מצליחים במדה גדולה יותר - שמתקבלים הדברים.

When words of rebuke are predicated on *ahavat Yisrael* [love for a fellow Jew], then one's entire approach is radically different; instead of reproaching, one wishes only to protect the other person from error, and so on. In this case, it's no longer giving "words of rebuke" but putting the other person on the right path. It follows, then, that the way one speaks is also radically different—gently, with pleasant words and ways of peace.

In this manner, then, first and foremost, it is easy to see that this approach is far more likely to bear tangible results—that one's words will be received.

