



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Chukas

June 18, 2021

## A Taste of Torah

### Keep Talking

by Rabbi Dov Holczer

This week's parsha discusses the incident known as *mei meriva* (the waters of strife). The Torah tells us that following the death of Miriam, the water that had miraculously emerged from a rock (in the merit of Miriam) ceased to flow. The Jewish People complained to Moshe about the lack of water. Hashem told Moshe to take his staff and speak to the rock, ordering it to give water for the nation.

As described by Rashi's expansion of the verses, Moshe initially followed the orders of Hashem and spoke to the rock, but no water emerged. He then proceeded to hit the rock, and a trickle of water came out. He then hit it a second time, at which point water gushed out, providing sufficient water for the needs of the Jewish People.

Hashem then tells Moshe (Chukas 20:12), "Because you didn't believe in Me to sanctify me before the eyes of the Jewish People - therefore, you shall not bring this congregation to the land I have given them."

There is an enormous amount of discussion among the commentators regarding what exactly Moshe did wrong to warrant this punishment, from the obvious hitting the rock instead of speaking to it to the way he spoke to the Jewish People before hitting the rock, calling them "rebels." The consensus among the various approaches is that whatever the shortcoming, it was a minute error, and Moshe, being of incredibly great spiritual stature, was held to an extremely high standard.

Despite the exacting level to which Moshe was held, it is still important that we try and derive practical lessons

for ourselves at our much lower level; if the Torah has told us the tale, we ought to learn from it. A basic question that emerges from the story is the focus on speaking to the rock rather than striking it; why was this so important?

Rashi tells us that had Moshe spoken to the rock, the Jewish People would have learned a valuable lesson: If an inanimate object such as a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, nonetheless responds to Hashem's orders, how much more so must we humans, who do receive reward and punishment based upon our actions, obey Hashem's orders!

Still, the lesson is unclear. When the rock gave water upon being struck, the Jewish People would still have learned that it is important to obey Hashem's orders. What vital opportunity was lost due to Moshe's failure to speak to the rock?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) explains that had Moshe talked to the rock, even after his initial attempt to speak to it and its failure to respond, a great lesson would have emerged: Keep talking and don't give up, because eventually, the message will penetrate. If a rock, which is not a conscious being, eventually responds to what it is told, how much more hope there is to reach a person, who is capable of intelligent thought and of learning and discerning between right and wrong!.

Let us expand on this idea. By speaking to a person, one can eventually influence the individual to realize, on his own accord, what is correct and right and what is evil and wrong. True, it may take some time for the message to seep in, but with the passage of time and persistence,

*continued on back*

## Stories for the Soul

### Watch Your Words

Rabbi Mordechai Shapiro served as a rav in Miami Beach for decades until his passing. In the early 1950s, he lived in Eretz Yisrael. One Shabbos shortly after his arrival there, he visited the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz; 1878-1953) with his cousin, Rabbi Shlomke Berman, a great Torah scholar who was a nephew of the Chazon Ish.

During their visit, the Chazon Ish asked Rabbi Berman for the time. Rabbi Shapiro was surprised, since on Shabbos, leaving a private domain while wearing a watch is problematic due to the restriction on carrying. Although there was an *eruv* in Bnai Brak that would permit such carrying, many people, including the Chazon Ish and Rabbi Berman, did not rely upon the *eruv* due to various halachic concerns. It was thus strange for the Chazon Ish to ask Rabbi Berman for the time, as he knew that his nephew would not be wearing a watch.

It was then that Rabbi Shapiro recalled hearing that the Chazon Ish often gave reproof to people in an indirect fashion so as not to cause them discomfort, hoping they'd pick up his message. Rabbi Shapiro realized that *he* was wearing a watch, and he surmised that the Chazon Ish wished to indirectly tell him that he should not be relying upon the *eruv*. Rabbi Shapiro thereupon removed his watch and gave it to the Chazon Ish for safekeeping.

The Chazon Ish placed the watch on a bookshelf and, smiling, said, "Good, good, Reb Mordechai! Now that I have something that belongs to you, you will have to visit me again!"

Indeed, Rabbi Shapiro returned to pick up his watch and to visit the great Torah leader. This ultimately

*continued on back*

## Kollel Happenings

### SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM BEGINS NEXT WEEK

The Kollel's Summer Night Seder for Bachurim begins Sunday night. Boys who are out of school join the Kollel's night seder. Refreshments available. Raffles, as well as a weekly stipend for those who attend consistently. Contact Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) for more details.

### SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. The month of Tammuz is sponsored by Reb Moshe Berkowitz in memory of his father, Reb Shlomo ben Reb Aryeh Leib. Thank you, as well, to Denver Human Services for their partnership in this program. For sponsorships and more info, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST FROM THE KOLLEL

A wide variety of Kollel classes and short, inspiring Torah thoughts are now available on many podcast platforms such as Spotify, Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music. You can also access the latest podcasts at the Kollel's website, [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org).

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week's question:** How could hand washing require another hand washing?

**Answer:** If a person washed *mayim acharonim* at the end of the meal in order to recite *Birkas Hamazon*, but decided to eat again, he must make a new *bracha* on the food, as washing *mayim acharonim* creates a state of *hesech hada'as*, or removal of one's mind from

eating further (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 179:1). If the person wishes to eat more bread, he must wash again for the bread before making the new *bracha*.

**This week's question:** How can the recitation of one blessing prevent the recitation of four blessings?

---

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part IV

In addition to his powerful intellect, Meir was also recognized for his great oratorical and leadership skills from a young age. He received *semicha* (ordination) from numerous

rabbonim, including Rabbi Shlomo Mordechai Schwadron, better known as the Maharsham, who was one of the greatest halachic authorities of his time.

---

## A Taste of Torah

*continued from front*

the recipient will internalize the message and improve his behavior.

By striking the rock, however, a very different lesson emerged: If you don't respond to mere words, it is necessary to force a change of behavior. Rather than providing the opportunity for the rock to gradually absorb the will of Hashem and then respond positively, Moshe forced the issue by hitting it. This lesson, that a person can be influenced to change through continuous teaching and influence, rather than forcing a superficial obedience through force, was lost when Moshe chose to strike the rock.

On a practical level, if you think about it, you will realize that often, a person in a position of influence – such as a teacher, a parent, or a communal leader – will try to impart ideas and lessons to those

under his care, only to have those lessons shrugged off or ignored. Over the course of time, though, a balanced repetition of these lessons, life circumstances, and personal introspection will often lead the recipient to realize the truth and wisdom of these ideas.

Two important lessons emerge from what Moshe should have done. One, if you are influencer of others – and most everyone is, in some way, shape or form – never give up imparting the ideas that will, slowly but surely, make an impression upon your listeners. At the same time, we must also be willing to listen and contemplate what we are being taught by others. If we would like to, indeed, be smarter than a rock, we must allow the words of wisdom others share with us to penetrate and change us.

---

## Stories for the Soul

*continued from front*

developed into a personal relationship, from which Rabbi Shapiro gained greatly. In this week's parsha, Moshe is taken to task, according to some commentators,

for criticizing the Jewish People too sharply. Although his reproof was warranted, Hashem punished Moshe for not doing so in a softer manner.

---

To sponsor Torah Weekly, delivered weekly in print and via email to thousands of Jews worldwide, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)  
Denver Community Kollel | 1395 Wolff Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855

[info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) | [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org)

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)