Class # 34– Parshat Chukat - Anger: How to deal with life challenges?

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qaAKxJp0EM>

1. Why is Adam Sandler [Happy Gilmore] yelling at the ball?
2. After banging yourself on some piece of furniture, have you ever hit the furniture in anger?
3. Why do people get anger?
4. What is anger?

Rambam, Laws of Character Traits, Ch.2:3

There are temperaments with regard to which a man is forbidden to follow the middle path. He should move away from one extreme and adopt the other….

Among these is arrogance….

Anger is also an exceptionally bad quality. It is fitting and proper that one move away from it and adopt the opposite extreme. He should school himself not to become angry even when it is fitting to be angry. If he should wish to arouse fear in his children and household - or within the community, if he is a communal leader - and wishes to be angry at them to motivate them to return to the proper path, he should present an angry front to them to punish them, but he should be inwardly calm. He should be like one who acts out the part of an angry man in his wrath, but is not himself angry.

The early Sages said: Anyone who becomes angry is like one who worships idols. They also said: Whenever one becomes angry, if he is a wise man, his wisdom leaves him; if he is a prophet, his prophecy leaves him. The life of the irate is not true life.

Therefore, they have directed that one distance himself from anger and accustom himself not to feel any reaction, even to things which provoke anger. This is the good path.

This is the way of the righteous: They accept humiliation, but do not humiliate others; they listen when they are shamed, but they do not answer; they do this with love and are joyous in their sufferings. Of them, [Judges 5:31](http://www.chabad.org/15813#v31) states: "And those who love Him are like the sun when it comes out in its strength."

1) Why is anger equated with Idolatry?

2) When should a person be angry? Or show anger?

3) What is meant by the “life of the irate” is not a true life?

Parshat Chukat - Ch. 20:1-13 - *Miriam's Death; Lack of Water*

20:1 In the [first month](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3144), the entire Israelite community came to the [Tzin Desert](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3145), and the people stopped in [Kadesh](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3146). It was there that [Miriam died](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3147) and was buried. 20:2 The people did not have any water, so they began demonstrating against Moses and Aaron. 20:3 The people disputed with Moses. 'We wish that we had died together with our brothers before God!' they declared. 20:4 'Why did you bring God's congregation to this desert? So that we and our livestock should die? 20:5 Why did you take us out of Egypt and bring us to this terrible place? It is an area where there are no plants, figs, grapes or pomegranates. [Now] there is not even any water to drink!' 20:6 Moses and Aaron [moved away](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3148) from the demonstration to the Communion Tent entrance, and [fell on their faces](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3149). God's glory was revealed to them.

*Water from the Rock*

20:7 God spoke to Moses, saying, 20:8 'Take the [staff](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3150), and you and Aaron assemble the community. [Speak to](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3151) the [cliff](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3152) [in their presence](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3153), and it will give forth its water. You will thus bring forth water from the cliff, and allow the community and their livestock to drink.' 20:9 Moses took the staff [from before God](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3154) as he had been instructed. 20:10 Moses and Aaron then assembled the congregation before the cliff. 'Listen now, you rebels!' shouted Moses. 'Shall we produce water for you from this cliff?' 20:11 With that, Moses raised his hand, and struck the cliff [twice](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3155) with his staff. A huge amount of water gushed out, and the community and their animals were able to drink.

*Punishment of Moses and Aaron*

20:12 God said to Moses and Aaron, 'You did not have [enough faith](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3156) in Me to [sanctify Me](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3157) in the presence of the Israelites! Therefore, you shall not bring this assembly to the land that I have given you.' 20:13 These are the [Waters of Dispute (*Mey Meribhah*)](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3158) where the Israelites disputed with God, and where He was [[nevertheless](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3159)] [sanctified](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=20#C3160).

The Eight Chapters of Maimonides,– end of Ch. 4 [Maimonides’ Introduction to his *Commentary on Avot*, the *Eight Chapters* , has long been lauded as the best introduction to Maimonides' philosophy, perhaps the best introduction to medieval Jewish philosophy as a whole]

Thou knowest, also, that God said to our teacher Moses, the master of former and later ages, "Because ye have not confided in me, to sanctity me", "because ye rebelled against my order at the waters of Meribah", "because ye did not sanctify me". All this (God said) although the sin of Moses consisted merely in that he departed from the moral mean of patience to the extreme of wrath in so far as he exclaimed, "Hear now ye rebels" etc., yet for this God found fault with him that such a man as he should show anger in the presence of the entire community of Israel, where wrath is unbecoming. This was a profanation of God's name, because men imitated the words and conduct of Moses, hoping thereby to attain temporal and eternal happiness. How could he, then, allow his wrath free play, since it is a pernicious characteristic, arising, as we have shown, from an evil psychic condition? The divine words, "Ye (Israel) have rebelled against me" are, however, to be explained as follows. Moses was not speaking to ignorant and vicious people, but to an assembly, the most insignificant of whose women, as the sages put it, were on a plane with Ezekiel, the son of Buzi. So, when Moses said or did anything, they subjected his words or actions to the most searching examination. Therefore, when they saw that he waxed wrathful, they said, "He has no moral imperfection, and did he not know that God is angry with us for demanding water, and that we have stirred up the wrath of God, he would not have been angry with us". However, we do not find that when God spoke to Moses about this matter He was angry, but on the contrary, said, "Take the staff . . . and give drink to the congregation and their cattle". We have, indeed, digressed from the subject of this chapter, but have, I hope, satisfactorily solved one of the most difficult passages of Scripture concerning which there has been much arguing in the attempt to state exactly what the sin was which Moses committed. Let what others have said be compared with our opinion, and the truth will surely prevail.