**Class # 37 - Parshat Chukat – Miriam and Women Power!**

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

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**Teen Elephants Gone Wild -** <https://youtu.be/n4pvluisHa4?t=414>

1. The mystery of the slaying of rhinos in the game reserve was solved. The murderers were the teenage elephants. Why did they kill the rhinos?
2. What was the solution?
3. What was the cause of the problem?
4. How does animal communal life reflective of human communal life?

*Miriam's Death; Lack of Water*

20:1 In the first month, the entire Israelite community came to the Tzin Desert, and the people stopped in Kadesh. It was there that Miriam died 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 from the demonstration to the Communion Tent entrance, and fell on their faces. God's glory was revealed to them.

**Water from the Rock**

20:7 God spoke to Moses, saying, 20:8 'Take the staff, and you and Aaron assemble the community. Speak to the cliff in their presence, 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 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 with his staff. A huge amount of water gushed out, and the community and their animals were able to drink.

20:12 God said to Moses and Aaron, 'You did not have enough faith in Me to sanctify Me 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) where the Israelites disputed with God, and where He was [nevertheless] sanctified.

**Ralbag comments:**

5. As we read this Ralbag identify what point is most surprising?

**There was no water for the People:** The death of Miriam was placed next to the episode of complaints over the lack of water. This teaches us that the death of the righteous makes an impact….[How?] The story teaches us that if Miriam would have been alive, she would had been able to offer counsel to Moshe and Aaron when G-d instructed them to “Speak to the Rock”. Miriam could have saved them from stumbling in this Mitzvah, for she was a Prophet as well as she was older than Moshe and Aaron and they would honor her by taking her advice.

(ב) **ולא היה מים לעדה** – הנה סמך זה לסיפור מיתת מרים, להעיר שמיתת הצדיקים עושה רושם……או יהיה הרצון בזה להעיר שאלו היתה מרים בחיים היו נמלכים בה משה ואהרן במה שציוה ה׳ יתעלה אותם ׳ודברתם אל הסלע׳ (פסוק ח), והיתה היא סיבה לשומרם מהיכשל בזאת המצוה, כי היא היתה נביאה גם כן, והיתה גדולת השנים מהם, ויִדמה שהיו חולקים כבוד לה לקחת עצה ממנה.

**RAMBAM, Laws of Character Traits, Chapter 6:1-2**

It is natural for a man's character and actions to be drawn after by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of behavior. Therefore, he should associate with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds. Conversely, he should keep away from the wicked who walk in darkness, so as not to learn from their deeds.

This is [implied by] Solomon's statement ([Proverbs 13:20)](https://www.chabad.org/16384#v20): "He who walks with the wise will become wise, while one who associates with fools will suffer." Similarly, [[Psalms 1:1](https://www.chabad.org/16222#v1)] states: "Happy is the man who has not followed the advice of the wicked."

A person who lives in a place where the norms of behavior are evil and the inhabitants do not follow the straight path should move to a place where the people are righteous and follow the ways of the good.

If all the places with which he is familiar and of which he hears reports follow improper paths, as in our times, or if he is unable to move to a place where the patterns of behavior are proper, because of [the presence of] bands of raiding troops, or for health reasons, he should remain alone in seclusion as [[Eichah 3:28](https://www.chabad.org/16459#v28)] states: "Let him sit alone and be silent."

If they are wicked and sinful and do not allow him to reside there unless he mingle with them and follow their evil behavior, he should go out to caves, thickets, and deserts [rather than] follow the paths of sinners as [[Jeremiah 9:1](https://www.chabad.org/16006#v1)] states: "Who will give me a lodging place for wayfarers, in the desert."

2) It is a positive commandment to cleave unto the wise and their disciples in order to learn from their deeds as [[Deuteronomy 10:20](https://www.chabad.org/9974#v20)] states: "and you will cling to Him."

Our Sages [questioned the nature of this command for] is it possible for man to cling to the Divine Presence? They [resolved the difficulty,] explaining this commandment to mean: Cleave unto the wise and their disciples.

Therefore, one should try to marry the daughter of a Torah Sage and marry his daughter to a Torah Sage, eat and drink with Sages, do business on behalf of Sages, and associate with them in all possible ways as [[Deuteronomy 11:22](https://www.chabad.org/9975#v22)] states: "to cling to Him."

Similarly, our Sages have directed [us], saying: "Sit in the dust of their feet and drink in their words thirstily."

6) How is our vulnerability to communal influences the same as elephants and in what way is mankind different?

7) What is the challenge in selecting right friends?

8) Two opportunities - [a] Mendel shabbaton idea before the Chabura program and [b] recruiting others