



# THE CHEVRA

Young Israel of Fair Lawn  
The Morris J. Kraut z'l Torah Center

Joe Smith - President

## This Shabbat:

שבת פרשת חקת

### Shabbat Parashat Chukat

7 Tamuz 5767; June 22-23, 2007

The Haftorah is read from Judges 11:1-33.

#### Friday

Mincha	7:00 PM
Candle Lighting	8:14 PM

#### Shabbat

Chevra Mishnayos Shiur	8:00 AM
Shacharit	9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema:	9:11 AM (Gra"h)

#### Shiur Pirkei Avot

Mincha	7:10 PM
Shabbat Ends	8:10 PM
	9:24 PM

<b>Sunday</b>	Shacharit	8:30 AM
<b>Monday – Friday</b>	Shacharit	7:00 AM

## Next Shabbat:

שבת פרשת בלק

### Shabbat Parashat Balak

14 Tamuz 5767; June 29-30, 2007

The Haftorah is read from Micah 5:6-8.

#### Friday

Mincha	7:00 PM
Candle Lighting	8:14 PM

#### Shabbat

Chevra Mishnayos Shiur	8:00 AM
Shacharit	9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema:	9:13 AM (Gra"h)

#### Shiur Pirkei Avot

Mincha	7:10 PM
Shabbat Ends	8:10 PM
	9:23 PM

<b>Sunday</b>	Shacharit	8:30 AM
<b>Monday – Friday</b>	Shacharit	7:00 AM

## Tuesday, July 3, 17 Tamuz

תענית שבעה עשר בתמוז

Fast of 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz

## Torah Insights – Harav Shlomo Riskin

### Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Chukat

#### Numbers 19:1 22:1

Efrat, Israel And the Lord said to Moses and to Aaron: Because you did not have faith in Me to sanctify Me before the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore you shall not bring this assemblage into the land which I have given to them. (Numbers 20: 12)

What a difficult and harsh punishment this seems to be specifically in terms of Moses and Aaron for what is seemingly a rather mild refraction. G-d instructed them to take a staff and speak to the rock, after which water would come forth from the rock and provide drink for the thirsty Israelites. Moses strikes the rock instead of speaking to it. Is there that much more of a miracle if the water emerges from the rock after speaking to it than after striking it? And remember that G-d did instruct Moses to take a staff, and that previously G-d had instructed Moses to strike the rock in order to bring forth water from it. Why deprive Moses from his life's goal because he utilized the very staff which G-d had ordered him to take to strike the rock instead of merely speaking to it?!

I believe that the answer to this question as well as the connection between what seemed to be disparate subjects during

the biblical readings of these weeks are to be found once we understand the most profound message our Bible comes to teach. The overwhelming power and significance of love. Let us begin with what is truly the most egregious transgression of the desert, the sin of the scouts. How could G-d have commanded a reconnaissance mission if the outcome could have been so dangerous as to dissuade the nation from setting out to conquer the Promised Land? The answer according to my revered teacher Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik is that G-d did not command a reconnaissance mission. The Bible uses the Hebrew word *vayaturu* rather than the usual and to be expected verb *vayeraglu* (Numbers 13:1). The verb *latur*, as it is made clear slightly further on in the text (Numbers 15:39) means to look at with love-lust as in You shall not look with love-lust after your heart and after your eyes.

G-d wants the Jewish people to love the land of Israel just the way they must love the Torah of Israel which is just the way a bride and groom love each other. That is why both Torah and the land of Israel are biblically called *Morasha*, an unusual term linked to the Hebrew word *morasa* which means engaged, affianced. Just as the powerful love linking bride and groom will make it possible for them to overcome all of the expected challenges and problems which family life of necessity experiences, so must love-lust for land and love-lust for Torah enable the Israelites to overcome the requisite hardship involved in the acquisition of both of these treasures. Hence, just as

our Sages teach us that bride and groom must get to know each other before marriage in order that they may fulfill the Biblical command of loving your life's-partner as yourself (B.T. Kiddushin 41), so did G-d expect that the scouts would bring back the kind of inspiring and exciting picture of Israel that would imbue the Israelites with love-lust for the land.

But alas, the very antithesis occurred because the scouts never really understood the Divine purpose of their mission. The Israelites are doomed to die in the desert, the exalted vision of the exodus has fallen upon rocks of despair, and rebellion disputation and argument breaks out against the leadership of Moses. Fascinatingly enough however all dispute and disagreement are not at all denigrated by our Sages. All argumentation for the sake of heaven will ultimately continue (and lead to eventual peace) and all argument which is not for the sake of heaven will not ultimately continue (and will not lead to eventual peace). Argument for the sake of heaven is like the argument between Hillel and Shamai. Argument not for the sake of heaven is like the argument between Korah and his cohorts ( Mishnah Avot 5,20) The argumentation of Korah was grounded in his hatred of Moses and therefore will only destroy; the argumentation between Hillel and Shamai is grounded in their search for truth and desire to serve G-d best, and therefore must lead to greater wisdom and even love between the disputants. A married couple are called beloved and loving friend; friends often engage in dispute because no two people see everything eye to eye. But if the basis for every dispute is to strengthen the love relationship and arrive at the best possible way to create a family, then that is the kind of difference which leads to unity and dissension which brings even greater love. Hence we find so very often that the academy of Hillel gives in to the academy of Shamai or that the academy of Shamai gives in to academy of Hillel. The goal of their

disputes was always truth and peace, understanding and love.

The Biblical subject just prior to Moses' striking of the rock is the red heifer, a ritual commandment which does not seem to be rooted in logic. Indeed, the 613 commandments of our bible are usually divided between mishpatim and hokim, the former based upon reason and the latter based upon certain faith commitment which leads us to accept from G-d even that which we do not understand. Permit me a brief analogy, if my wife has had a particular difficult day during which she hasn't eaten anything at all, and then asks that I buy her an ice cream, fulfilling her request can hardly be termed an act of love; I imagine any person in difficult straits who would ask of me a similar thing would reasonably expect that I do the favor. But if, apropro of nothing my wife would exclaim that although she has just had dinner she feels in the mood for an ice cream and I run out to fulfill her request – as illogical nutritionally as it may be- that would be a sign of love. Similarly it is the hok which is specifically not based upon logic that demonstrates the special love that the Israelites have for G-d.

Whereas the language of power is the language of the staff which strikes, the language of love is the language of the tongue that speaks. What makes us specifically human is our ability to speak and communicate – especially to communicate in a loving fashion. Indeed, the Abarbanel interprets the very name Havah, the name which the Bible gives to the first woman, as coming from the Hebrew which means to express in words. Adam did not find satisfaction in his relation with the animals with whom he could not communicate verbally; he only found such satisfaction with Havah, his life's partner with whom he could speak. And certainly there is a profound connection between Havah and Ahavah the Hebrew word for love. The Book of Numbers is called in Hebrew Bamidbar, and a dabar, is a shepherd – who nurtures his

sheep in the desert with sounds and words rather than hitting and striking (dabar from dibbur ). Enemies are struck at, just as Moses struck and smote the Egyptian taskmaster who was enslaving the Hebrews; that same Moses communicated the loving commandments of G-d with the words of the Ten Commandments (Aseret Dibrot, dabar, dibbur). Those whom we love and whom we wish to nurture must be related to with words and not strikes.

G-d did not punish Moses when the great prophet struck the hard rock (a metaphor for the stiff necked Israelites), he demonstrated that he no longer loved his people and therefore could not lead them.

### **By Shlomo Riskin Shabbat Shalom**

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Chancellor Ohr Torah Stone  
Chief Rabbi - Efrat Israel

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### **SHABBAT SHALOM**