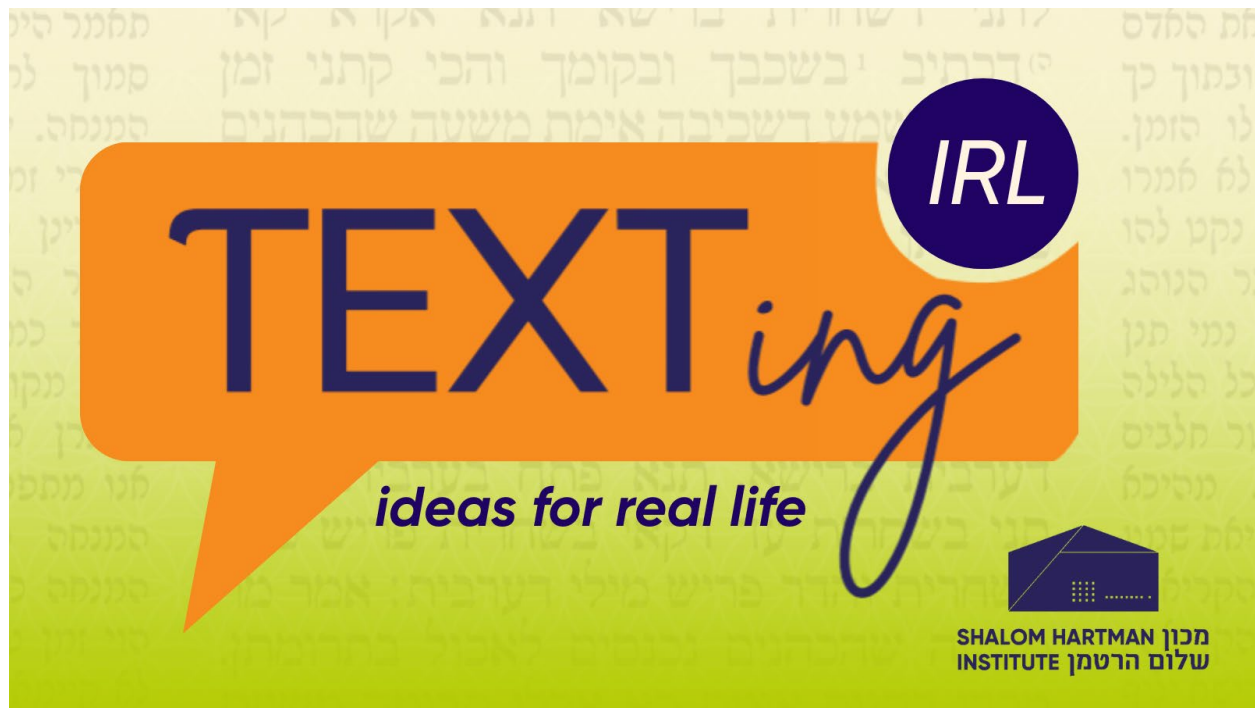




Are Today's Leaders Failing Gen Z?

Elana Stein Hain & Maya Sulkin

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What kind of leadership prepares the next generation, and what kind of leadership makes them lose trust? In this episode of TEXTing IRL, Elana Stein Hain and journalist Maya Sulkin mine Parashat Masei for competing models of leadership through a generation's journey through the wilderness. Against the modern backdrop of AI, campus movements, and generational divides, they ask: Which of these models can still sustain a community? What would it mean to lead not by promising, controlling, or fighting, but by enabling people to grow?

*This source sheet is part of the **July 6, 2026** episode of the podcast **TEXTing IRL - Ideas for Real Life**. Host **Elana Stein Hain** sits down with guests who are accomplished practitioners in their fields to explore how classic and modern Jewish texts can help us wrestle with and act with integrity in the face of the big dilemmas of our time.*

Elana Stein Hain is the Rosh Beit Midrash and a Senior Fellow at the Kogod Research Center of the Shalom Hartman Institute, where she serves as lead faculty and consults on the content of lay and professional programs.

A widely well-regarded thinker and teacher, Elana is passionate about bringing rabbinic thought into conversation with contemporary life. To this end, she hosts [TEXTing IRL](#), a bi-weekly podcast that considers issues relevant to Jewish life through the lens of classical and modern Torah texts; she also teaches [Talmud from the Balcony](#), an occasional learning seminar exposing the big ideas, questions, and issues motivating rabbinic discussions. Elana is the author of [Circumventing the Law: Rabbinic Perspectives on Legal Loopholes and Integrity](#) (Penn Press, 2024) which uses loopholes as a lens for understanding rabbinic views on law and ethics.

She earned her doctorate in Religion at Columbia University and is an alumna of the Yeshiva University Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS) as well as the Consortium in Jewish Studies and Legal Theory Graduate Fellowship at Cardozo School of Law. She also served for eight years as a clergy member on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, at both Lincoln Square Synagogue and the Jewish Center, has taught at the Wagner School at NYU, and sits on the board of Sefaria: A Living Library of Jewish Texts.

Elana is currently living in Jerusalem with her family.

Maya Sulkin is a reporter for *The Free Press*, and host of [Confessions](#). Her reporting focuses on the ideological capture of university campuses and why young people are drawn to radical movements. She also writes about Gen Z, technology, and how AI will shape her generation. She previously served as the company's Chief of Staff—a job she landed by sending a cold email to Bari Weiss from her dorm room at Columbia University.

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Bamidbar Rabbah 23:2

זֶה שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב (תהלים עז, כא): **נָחִיתָ כְּצֹאן עֹמֵד בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן**, מֶה נָחִיתָ, נוֹטְרִיקוֹן הוּא.

That which the verse said: **“You have guided Your nation like a flock in the hands of Moses and Aaron”** (Psalms 77:21) – what is *“nahita”*? It is an acronym.

נָחִיתָ, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר **נִסִּים** עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּהֶם, **חַיִּים** נָתַתָּ לָהֶם, **יָם** קָרַעְתָּ לָהֶם, **תּוֹרָה** נָתַתָּ לָהֶם, וְעַל יְדֵי מִי עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.

“You led. . .” Rabbi Eliezer says: *Nun* – You performed **miracles** [*nisim*] for them; *het* – You gave them **life** [*hayim*]; *yod* – You split the **sea** [*yam*] for them; *tav* – You gave them **Torah**. And through whom? Through Moses and Aaron.

דָּבָר אַחֵר, נָחִיתָ, רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אָמַר **נִפְלְאוֹת** עָשִׂיתָ לָהֶם, **חַירוֹת** נָתַתָּ לָהֶם, **יְמִינָךְ** הוֹשִׁיעַ אוֹתָם, **תִּלּוּי** רֹאשׁ נָתַתָּ לָהֶם, עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.

Another interpretation: *“Nahita”* (Psalms 77:21) – Rabbi Yehoshua said: *Nun* – **wonders** [*niflaot*] You performed on their behalf; *het* – You gave them **freedom** [*herut*]; *yod* – **Your right** [*yeminekha*] saved them; *tav* – You gave to them the ability to **hold their heads high** [*tilui rosh*], through Moses and Aaron.

וּרְבוּתֵינוּ אוֹמְרִים, נָחִיתָ, **נִבְיָאִים** הִעֲמַדְתָּ מֵהֶם, **חַסִּידִים** הִעֲמַדְתָּ מֵהֶם, **יְשָׁרִים** הִעֲמַדְתָּ מֵהֶם, **תִּמְיִמִים** הִעֲמַדְתָּ מֵהֶם, עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.

Our Rabbis say: *Nun* – You established **prophets** [*neviim*] from among them; *het* – You established **pious ones** [*hasidim*] from among them; *yod* – You established **upright ones** [*yesharim*] from among them; *tav* – You established **faultless ones** [*temimim*] from among them, through Moses and Aaron.

דָּבָר אַחֵר, נָחִיתָ, רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר, **נִוְרָאוֹת** עָשִׂיתָ בְּשׁוֹנְאֵיהֶם, **חַירוֹן** אֶף שָׁלַחְתָּ בָּהֶם, **יָדְךָ** הִלַּחְמָה אוֹתָם, **תְּהוֹמוֹת** כָּסִיתָ עֲלֵיהֶם, עַל יְדֵי מִי עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.

Another interpretation: *“Nahita”* (Psalms 77:21) – Rabbi Akiva says: *Nun* – You performed **awesome deeds** [*noraot*] against their enemies; *het* – You sent **enflamed wrath** [*haron af*] against them; *yod* – **Your hand** [*yadekha*] waged war against them; *tav* – with the **depths** [*tehomot*] You covered them. Through whom? Through Moses and Aaron.