

Parshas Chukas-Balak

This week we have joined two Parshas- Chukas and Balak. Chukas begins with a law for which there is no reason other than us performing the Mitzvah because that is what Hashem, our master expects of us. The first Rashi (quoting Midrash Tanchuma) on the posuk 19:2 explains this. The world and Satan will provoke the Jews about their commandments, stating there needs to be a reason for the Mitzvos we do; therefore, this Parsha begins with the word “Chok”- that is, we are doing these laws because Hashem demands this of us. This is a real-world problem in that we live in a time where we are inundated with what seems like truthful material about how the world ought to be, that religion is terrible¹, and that the Torah is antiquated. Still, we are reminded not to succumb to these temptations. Chukas follows Shelach and Korach- where the antagonists had sound logical reasoning behind their claims against the path of Hashem². The Torah is precise in recounting the narratives, not for the historical retelling but for something more profound. That- Rashi tells us- because we will be taunted for not having logic- or somehow being guilted into explaining to the world why and what it is we are doing what we are doing (For example, it is possible to explain Shabbos as a time to get together with family or take a break from the grind-as the reason for Shabbos-this may be a derivative benefit of keeping

¹ I am specifically focused on Judaism.

² With the Meraglim, I will point out two reasons 1) they didn't want to enter into the land that would cause them to become distant from Hashem (i.e., they will now have to toil the land, whereas in the desert, even their clothes grew on them and or 2) the enemy that occupied the land was too strong, and they believed that they wouldn't be able to

Shabbos-but the reason we keep Shabbos is that we are commanded to.)

The Alter Rebbe adds that the law of the Parah Aduma is the single most important example of a law that represents our faith and service to Hashem. Meaning the premise of all laws even ones that seem to have reason are performed because Hashem told us.

With this faith we can be strong against the outside forces of the world. Which connects us to the second parsha- Balak-where an outside force tried to curse us. The curses were turned to blessings. The observation of the bracha was “Mah Tov Oholecha Yaakov”. This was a novel experience for Balak and Bilaam-that people respected their neighbours and lived differently than the rest of the world.

Therefore the lesson of these two parshas is with strong faith-we differentiate ourselves from our adversaries.

Good Shabbos.

overcome them. With Korach-all his 'claims' against Moshe and Hashem optically seemed reasonable. But for both the Meraglim and Korach- even if we give them the benefit of the doubt on their intentions- their method was wrong. The Torah is precise in recounting these narratives for the purposes mentioned above.