

Parshas Chukas

This week's Parsha, Chukas, is layered with many narratives, specifically the opening, which discusses the laws of the Parah Aduma, and later, the death of Aaron Hakohen. The connection between the two relates to last week's Parsha Korach, where Korach attempted to disrupt the lineage with his idealistic ambitions. Korach's threat to the nation was his attempt to make inappropriate claims about how Hashem and Moshe established the camps and the laws. Although his perspective on some level had credence, it was unacceptable. Therefore, it makes sense that the next Parsha, titled Chukas, solidifies the laws as they are written and explains why they are given. Ultimately, it is because Hashem said so, and no modification is required based on a contrary feeling.

The next Parsha is Chukas, and the laws of Para Aduma, which have no explanation except for doing it because Hashem said so. The statutes of Para Aduma relate to the sanctity of the nation and the roles the Kohanim play in maintaining that. And that process is divine and given by Hashem.

The Gemara in Avoda Zara relates that more credibility is given to someone who follows a command than to someone who voluntarily does something good for someone else. This is a counterintuitive idea to some, because if you view yourself and your existence with a "yesh," then you think all your actions are to be rewarded. If you voluntarily do a kindness for someone on your own, although valuable, it was really about you. Whereas, when

you do something for someone because they asked you, it means you genuinely love them, because you are willing to do what they ask. How much more so, when Hashem asks us to do something, and we do it, i.e., a mitzvah, we receive more credit for doing it correctly according to Halacha, and because Hashem asked it of us. The alternative gives room for a Korach to come along, and based on his own emotions, he opted to try to change, only to find himself where he wound up, in a pit.

By Chukas, following Korach, Hashem and the Torah remind us why we do what we do. Furthermore, by discussing Aaron Hakohen's passing (among other themes), the Torah reminds us that the system in place is because Hashem made it so, and it locked in Aaron's place as the Kohen Gadol, as Hashem intended.

Our own *Yeshusdike* outlook can feel good to ourselves, as it is self-directed and selfish, whereas following the Torah for Hashem, with *Bittul*, one serves Hashem, and does more toward bringing Mashiach.

Good Shabbos