

Chukat: Moshe and Israel, One

- Nisson Shulman.

Messengers to Edom and the Emorites, in name of Moses, in name of Israel, then reversed, to indicate the identity of Moses with Israel and Israel with Moses. After so much machloket, as they approach the Promised Land they are finally united, because for the Promise to be fulfilled, this unity is required.

HUKAT: Moshe and Israel, One

From Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, A”H, Chief Rabbi of Johannesburg, “Sparks From the Anvil” (I have put it into outline form)

1. “And Moses sent messengers” (Numbers 20:14.)

Two appeals to kings of barrier territories. Each is refused.

Edom: Kinship, therefore they were not permitted to use force, and they were refused passage. So they had to circumvent....

Emorites, marched out to attack Israel. We met force with force. We routed them, and because of it took possession of what is now Jordan.

2. A significant difference in the introductory sentence. Rashi points it out and explains.

Edom: "And Moses sent messengers...."

Emorites: "And Israel sent messengers...."

This is important in itself. It is more significant in that both are repeated later. And there, in each case the heading is reversed!

Edom: And Israel sent messengers,....

Emorites, and Moses sent messengers....

3. Not accidental!

Rashi: To emphasize the complete identification of Moses with Israel and Israel with Moses. MOSES IS ISRAEL, AND ISRAEL IS MOSES! The leader and the followers were united.

4. More force in the context. Eight depressing chapters immediately preceding these incidents, the most sordid and depressing in the Torah. Unrestrained, unrelieved record of quarreling, disputes, rebellion against authority, lust for the fleshpots of Egypt, Aaron and Miriam's murmuring against Moses, the spies, Korach. Each widening the gap between Moses and Israel.

Moses is not Israel, and Israel was not Moses.

Now, nearing the Promised Land, they have learned to overcome this and were at one with each other. It was a pre-condition for the entry and conquest of Eretz Yisrael...

(It is still a pre-condition, now more than ever)

(Submitted by Nisson Shulman)