

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at  
Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe  
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## **Chukat**

In this week's Parsha of Chukat, we seem to be in a time machine. We cover in the short span of this Parsha, thirty-eight years of travel. The first part of the Parsha, we read about the Israelites experiences in their second year of freedom from Egypt. However, the second part of the Parsha describes the calamities that took place already, during the fortieth year of travel in the desert prior to ascending into the Land of Canaan. All the thirty-eight years seem to be skipped over and ignored.

Nevertheless, looking carefully at the text, Parshat Chukat briefly makes mention of the different wars that the Israelites engaged in on their journey to the Promised Land. A miracle in itself that this fledgling Israelite people with little or no experience on the battlefield is able to survive such contact and be victorious, especially against battle hardened armies of the region.

In Bamidbar 21:14, the Parsha notes that these military campaigns and wars recorded in the book of the "War of the Lord." What is this book? Where is this book? Why does the Book of the Torah reveal to us the existence of another book?

The Book of G-d's Wars is a very strange

title. G-d and war seems to be opposites. Perhaps the Torah mention this book to enlighten the Jewish people to what is the real battle secret of G-d. The Sifrei in Parshat Eikev(40) writes the known phrase "the book and the sword came down from Heaven together." The Rabbis attribute these words to explain that these are two different ways of battle. They describe two different goals of war and two different philosophies regarding their people who use them. The Rabbis explain that Eisav chose the sword as his weapon. However, Yaakov chose the book. Perhaps teaching us, that the rest of the world chose the SAYIF - the sword as their implements of war while the Jewish people chose the SEFER - the book.

Parshat Chukat may seem to give little reference to those 38 years in the desert, yet with a little deeper look, it may actually be giving the secret of our survival throughout the thousands of years awaiting the Jewish people. Choose the Book as our secret of survival just as recorded during the different battles we had in the wilderness. The Book of G-d's Wars give us insight to what we really supported us to gain one victory after another in the desert. The Jewish people had the Torah – the Book of Hashem which gave us and gives us the advantage. 🏰