



## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 18 | Chukas | Sichas 3

### **The Question:**

In the desert, a miraculous well provided the Jewish people with water, and the miraculous “clouds of glory” provided them with protection, direction, shade, and even laundered their clothes. The well was in the merit of Miriam, and the clouds were in the merit of Aharon. (*Taanis* 9a) When Miriam died, the well dried up, yet it returned in the merit of Moshe. The Torah tells of how the people clamored for water. G-d told Moshe to bring forth water from the rock. Moshe did so, albeit not as G-d specified, and the well once again provided water to the people. (*Bamidbar* 20:2 ff)

When Aharon died, the clouds of glory departed as well. (*Rashi* to *Bamidbar* 21:1) Clearly, the protection afforded by the clouds was still needed, so it stands to reason that they also returned in Moshe’s merit. Yet nowhere does the Torah allude to the return of the clouds, or to any complaint of the people about their absence. How is this possible?

### **The Explanation:**

In his commentary, Rashi sometimes refers to the clouds as “clouds of glory,” (*Bamidbar* 20:29) and sometimes simply as “clouds.” (*Mechilta*, *Beshalach* 13:21)

This implies that there were two different sets of clouds that performed different functions. The “regular clouds” provided the people with all of their necessities — protection from enemies, shade, direction, and so on. The “clouds of glory” provided them with dignity and honor by performing services for the Jewish people such as cleaning their clothes.

With Aaron's death, the clouds of glory departed, but the clouds that provided the people with their bare necessities remained in Moshe's merit.

### **Permitted but Still Protected:**

This clarifies Rashi's comments regarding the departure of the clouds of glory. The Torah relates that the "Canaanite king of Arad... heard that the children of Israel had arrived," and the king of Arad went out to wage war with them. (*Bamidbar* 33:40) Rashi comments that "it was the news of Aaron's death that he heard, for the clouds of glory had withdrawn, and he thought that permission had been granted to wage war against Israel."

But why does Rashi say that the King thought that "**permission** had been granted" to wage war with the Jews, and not the more straightforward explanation of this phenomenon — their protection was rescinded, and so they were vulnerable to defeat? But this was not the case. Their protection still remained; it was only their dignity, which was provided by the clouds of glory, that departed. The Canaanites had "permission" to wage war, but they were not guaranteed victory.

### **Forever a Leader:**

The reason that the clouds of glory did not return in Moshe's merit is because Moshe's role was strictly to provide the Jewish people with their necessities. The loftier benefits that the clouds of glory conferred was not among Moshe's responsibilities.

But Moshe ensured that the people would have whatever they needed at all times. Even when he passed on, he saw to it that the manna would last until they entered the land of Israel, and that they would be close to a water source. For this is the way of true Jewish leaders: They provide their people with all of their needs, even when they are no longer with their flock physically.