

EVERYONE LOVES A PARADE

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

The Jews had been in the desert for 13 months. The Torah had been given. The Golden Calf had been worshipped and destroyed. The Mishkan (Tabernacle) had been constructed. Sefer Vayikra (Book of Leviticus) had been taught. Moshe was commanded to count the working force of the nation, and each tribe was assigned their exclusive place in the camp and in the travel line-up. Shevet (Tribe of) Layvie was separated from the rest of the nation to work in transporting the Mishkan, and they were ready to enter the Promised Land.

The first two and ½ Parshios: Bamidbar, Naso, and ½ of B'haloscha are focused on preparing the Jews to enter the Land. The transition from the desert to the Land would be traumatic, and the Bnai Yisroel needed to be prepared. Therefore, the key features of these two and ½ Parshios is transitionary aids and strategies. Whether the census, the individual placements of the tribes, or the selection of Shevet Layvie, the focus is securing the nation's relationship with G-d in the aftermath of the desert experience. Therefore, G-d decided to have a parade.

Parades serve many different functions. In many instances, such as most of our parades, they are forms of entertainment. "Everyone loves a parade." In other situations, they are intended to engender awe, respect, trust, confidence, and a sense of security. At other times, a parade allows the general public to show their appreciation for their heroes, or to commemorate past events and achievements.

In order to accomplish the intended theme of a parade, great attention must be given to the organization and presentation of the participants. Spectators should be able to line the parade's route and understand the role of each participant. Some will be followers and some will be leaders. Some will appear to be more significant than others. The costumes and decorations should help the spectator, as well as the participants, to understand both the individual functions as well as the overall theme of the parade. In many ways, a parade is a living and breathing organizational flow chart. If a corporation should decide to have a parade, the spectators should be able to identify the various different departments, the general and executive administration, and most importantly, the product and vision of the corporation.

The first two and a half Parshios of Bamidbar describe the intended glorious parade of the Jews as they were to enter into the Promised Land. A census of every tribe was taken, and their specific place in the camp was assigned. The tribe of Layvie, and later on the children of Aharon, were separated out from the general population and accorded special attention, because their charge

was to be the focal point of the entire parade - the Mishkan. The identifying banners and the call of the Shofar and trumpets rallied each tribe to its special place, or called a halt to the parade's movement. The appointments of the surrounding clouds and the leading pillar of fire added on awesome and frightening specter to the advancing parade. The sheer numbers of the entire nation alone, 3 million strong was overwhelming and majestic. This is the scene that the beginning of Bamidbar describes.

What would have been the outcome if the intended parade had happened as intended? What would have happened if the Spies had not undermined the nations trust in G-d, and the nation would have not had to wander the desert for 38 additional years?

We are told that, "The actions of the forefathers are a foretelling for the children." Avraham's forced journey to Egypt, after which he was sent away with great wealth, mirrors the entire sojourn of the Jews in Egypt and their hurried exodus bearing with them the wealth of Egypt. Yakov's 20+ years of exile, hardships, and success mirrors the exile and persecution of his children, and their survival, throughout the millennium. The boundless courage and devotion of Avraham and Yitzchak at the Binding of Yitzchak foretold the countless sacrifices that we would be able to make throughout history for the sake of sanctifying G-d's name.

Where can we find a precedent for the intended parade of the Bnai Yisroel into Eretz Yisroel within the personal histories of the Avos - forefathers?

At the end of Sefer Bereishis (Genesis) (50:6-11), Yoseph was granted permission by Pharaoh to bury Yakov in the land of Canaan. The text of the Torah describes the general scene. Yoseph and his brothers, all of Pharaoh's courtiers and palace elders, the elders of Egypt, a chariot brigade and horsemen, all accompanied Yakov to his rightful resting-place in the Cave of Machpelah. The Torah describes it as, "...a very imposing retinue... a great imposing funeral." The Torah records that upon reaching the banks of the Yarden (Jordan), at a place called Goren Haatad - the Bramble Barn (50:10), the Canaanites witnessed the majestic and imposing retinue accompanying Yakov's bier. They then proclaimed, "...Egypt is in deep mourning here."

The Medresh is more elaborate in its description of the funeral and tells the following scene. When the funeral procession arrived at the edge of the Yarden, the 31 kings who led the city-states of Canaan arranged themselves in opposition to the burial of Yakov. Yoseph, who was the viceroy of Egypt and represented the awesome power of Egypt, took his crown and placed it upon Yakov's coffin. When the 31 kings saw that the crown of Egypt rested upon Yakov's coffin, they all removed their own crowns and placed them upon the coffin of Yakov, joining the funeral procession and the public mourning.

Yakov's funeral procession was the, "The actions of the forefathers that were a foretelling for the children.

Just as all 12 sons were present and arranged around the body of Yakov, so too were all the Bnai

Yisroel in this week's Parsha, arranged around the Mishkan, and bearing the bones of the twelve sons for re-burial in Eretz Yisroel.

Just as the elders of Egypt accompanied Yakov to Canaan, so too many of the elders of Egypt threw their lot with the Jews and accompanied them out of Egypt.

Just as 31 kings of Canaan initially arranged themselves in opposition to Yakov's rightful claim to be buried in the land of his fathers', so too did the inhabitants of Canaan plan their strategies for stopping the Jewish occupation of Eretz Yisroel.

Just as the 31 kings were overwhelmed by the spectacle of Yakov's burial, and understood that they were mere caretakers of the land awaiting the rightful return of Yakov's sons to their land, so too would have been the reaction of the inhabitants of Canaan. They would have witnessed the awesome spectacle of G-d's parade and their initial resistance would have disappeared. They would have realized that the Bnai Yisroel were the true master of the land and would have immediately subjected themselves to the rule of Moshe and the Bnai Yisroel. There would have been no need for prolonged warfare and resistance. Instead, the Bnai Yisroel would have occupied the land with the full acquiescence of the Seven Nations. They would have built the Bais Hamikdash (Temple). Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam would have been their teachers, and the era of Mashiach would have begun. Instead, the Spies returned with their negative report, the Bnai Yisroel lost faith in G-d, and the intended parade was sent on a 38-year detour.

The lesson of Bamidbar is obvious. Each and every one of us, as well as the nation and the world as a whole, have a defined destiny. Whether or not we will accomplish our individual or collective tasks is dependent on a complex equation of interdependent circumstances and destinies. In the end, G-d's intentions will be realized, however, each decision we make collectively and individually can have a telling effect on the future of our children's children, and all of humankind. If we each accept our G-d given position within the never-ending parade of history, we are assured that the foretelling of our fore-Fathers actions will be realized in a timely and complete fashion.

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