

JUST IMAGINE...

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

The following scripted imagery is intended to answer the following questions.

1. Why does Sefer Vayikra end with the Tochacha (admonitions)?
2. Why were the laws of Shemitah (sabbatical year) and Yovel (Jubilee) given at the end of Sefer Vayikra (Leviticus)?

Keep in mind that the conclusion of Sefer Vayikra took place a mere year after the Exodus. In that year the Jews had experienced the miracles of the Exodus, the parting of the sea, the clouds of glory, the Manna, the Well of Miriam, the giving of the Torah, the sin of the Golden Calf, the process of G-d's forgiveness and the Second Luchos, the construction of Mishkan, the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, and the teaching of Sefer Vayikra. Had they not sinned with the Spies (a mere four months after the construction of the Mishkan), the Jews would have entered into the Promised Land lead by Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam, heralding the beginning of the Messianic era. History as we know it today would have been vastly different.

Maydad: "Eldad! Will you hurry up already! If we don't move it we won't be able to see! Come on! Let's go to the left around the encampment of the Tribe of Yehudah. We can avoid all the people walking along the main avenues leading to the inner camp and the Mishkan."

Eldad: "Maydad! Wow! Do you see all those people? I never get used to seeing all of them walking along the main avenues. Every time Moshe wants to tell us a new law we all gather. Hey! Did you tell Abba that we weren't going with him and Imah? They never get there in time to grab a good spot. The last time we almost missed the whole thing! And remember that scene with Nadav and Avihu? Wow, that was something - it wasn't as bad as Moshe smashing the Egel and all those dead people, but it was pretty bad."

Maydad: I even spoke to Nadav and Avihu one time. They were headed toward the Ohel Moed (Meeting Tent) to speak with Moshe when I ran right into one of them. I think it was Avihu. What a pity they died. They seemed like pretty nice guys, although a bit intense. And remember how Abba always said that they were supposed to be the next in line? They were going to take over after Moshe and Aharon? I wonder why they never got married? Hey, let's push our way in over there next to that important looking guy. Shhh... we're just in time. Moshe is coming out of the Ohel Moed and is about to speak. Wow! Look at his face, it's all lit up - he's not wearing the veil!

Later....

Eldad: That was something! Each time I hear Moshe speak its like another Giving Of The Torah. So many people and everyone so quiet! And all that stuff about good things if we listen to G-d and bad things if we don't. Who would be stupid enough not to listen to G-d! Does he think he has something better to do?

Hope that big guy I stepped on was OK. I stomped on his foot pretty hard. We better get back before Imma begins to worry. Besides, I'm starving! I heard Imma say to Abba that she was gonna make Manna casserole for dinner!

Maydad: Race you to the cloud! Hey watch it, your kicking sand in my face. I'm going to really get you now! Dare you to go into the cloud!

Hey wait! Look over there, to the left of the Mishkan, near Moshe's tent. Isn't that Moshe, Aharon, and Aharon's sons Elazar and Issamer? And that one in the back, isn't he Pinchas, Elazar's son, the non-Kohain? How about the guy inside the doorway - do you think that is Yehoshua? It must be. Abba says that he doesn't budge from Moshe's tent. And the one to the left next to that woman. Could it be Kalev, Moshe's brother-in-law? Wow! That must mean that the woman next to him is Miriam!

Eldad: Hey Maydad! Shhh! Don't let them see us, maybe we can get close enough to hear what's going on...

Moshe: My beloved sister, brother, and Talmidim (students). I've asked you to stay behind so we can begin preparing for our entrance into Eretz Yisroel (the land of Israel). You just heard me deliver G-d's final words before we enter the Promised Land, and I am concerned.

Until now, G-d has taken care of us in a manner that may never again be repeated. At times it has been magnificent beyond description. If we had not witnessed it with our own eyes we ourselves would not have believed it.

At other times we have had to suffer G-d's wrath and disappointment. Those were moments of great pain for us all. Many did not survive, and our relationship with G-d has suffered. We are not today what we could have been had we not sinned with the Egel Hazahav (Golden Calf). Yet, G-d always extended to us His limitless love and grace and we now have both the Torah, and the Mishkan as a sign of His forgiveness.

I am concerned because G-d's message today was different than ever before. This is the first time that G-d has clearly stated the inevitable consequences of our relationship with Him. Never before were we told in such a direct manner the glorious yet potentially disastrous future that awaits our people. I am concerned for how the nation is dealing with G-d's final words.

Do they feel up to the challenge? Are they confident that they can do it? Or, do they fear failure and punishment? It is our job to make sure that the Bnai Yisroel (Sons of Israel) do not become

despondent. They must embrace their potential to be G-d's kingdom of priests. They must believe in themselves as G-d's one and only Holy Nation!

The next few months are going to be very hectic. At G-d's command we will begin to reorganize the entire camp into a new pattern for travel. We will soon begin our final trip to the borders of the Promised Land. We must prepare ourselves and our children to again witness the power and majesty of G-d's revelation.

It will not be easy. Each revelation, each miracle, imposes greater awareness and responsibility on us demanding even greater devotion and commitment. We must be sure that they are ready. We must be sure that we are ready.

Right now the situation in the desert is unique. It is specially designed for teaching the nation about G-d. We are all in close contact and proximity with each other. From the very young to the very old, all of us can touch the Shechina (G-d's Presence).

Take for example those two young hooligans hiding behind the tent. Eldad! Maydad! Get over here. Do not be afraid. Did you think you could hide from me? Come, sit and join us. Take your curiosity and make it real! Be like my beloved Yehoshua who never leaves my side. Who knows, one day you too could become a leader and a Navi (prophet)!

As I was saying, our present situation is unique. Soon enough, with G-d's help, the likes of Eldad and Maydad will not have the opportunity to hide behind the tents of leaders and prophets and hear the word of G-d.

Three times a year they will come to G-d's dwelling place, and if they are lucky get a glimpse of their leaders and teachers. Therefore we must recognize and understand what we have here in the desert and what we will need once we cross the Yarden (Jordan River) into the land of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yakov.

First of all, today's lesson. Eldad and Maydad, tell me what you understood from the words I spoke to the entire nation just a short while ago? I saw the two of you pushing your way to the front - and by the way - you might want to apologize to Nachshon the son of Aminadav. It was his foot that you trampled on in your push to the front; and trust me, even the foot of the Prince of Yehudah hurts when you step on it!

Eldad: Your Majesty!

Moshe: No Eldad, you may refer to me as Rabbeinu - our teacher.

Eldad: Rabbeinu, the thing that stuck in my mind was all the good things that will happen if we listen to G-d's Mitzvos. You said, I mean G-d said, that we would be the strongest. We would chase our enemies and one of us would be strong enough to beat a thousand of them!

Maydad: Yeah! That would be really cool!

Moshe: Oh! My dear, dear, children! How wonderful you both are. Do you hear their innocence and purity? Do you sense their intrinsic Bitachon (trust) and Emunah (belief)? They did not even hear the whole second part about illness, famine, exile, and punishment. The pure of heart only hear the good, never the bad!

Eldad: Ah, Rabbeinu? With your permission, both my brother and I heard the second part as well. We know that there has to be punishment if we are bad. It's just like with our Abba and Imah. If they tell us to do something we have to listen, or else we go to bed without our portion of the Manna. Without punishment who would ever listen to their parents? However, we know that the second part will never happen because everyone will always listen to G-d. Who would be crazy enough to go against the word of G-d?

Moshe: Come here my children. I have here a silver $\frac{1}{2}$ Shekel for each of you. I want you to have them and to remember this moment. You have given me tremendous strength and optimism. You have taught me to trust the goodness of our people. They will not fail! Come, let me give each of you a kiss and then quickly run home to your parents. It is time for dinner and your mother may begin to worry.

Moshe: My dear friends, do you see what this desert is all about. This is what we sang about after the parting of the sea. "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him!" Here in the desert even the young can see G-d. If only all of us could be so clear about what is right and what is wrong!

Now back to the topic at hand.

Listen as I explain the tools G-d has already given us to make the transition from the desert to the land. This experience of the desert must remain at the forefront of our consciousness. Soon we will cross into the land, build homes, plant fields, and appear to live as all the other nations. However, we are not as all the other nations. We live and die by the word of G-d.

Therefore, every seven years there will be a Shemitah. The fields will lay fallow and yet you will have enough to eat. No different than it now is in the desert. Instead of working the land we will study and teach. As a nation we will relive the miracle of G-d's manifest presence.

Instead of clouds of glory we will have the hills of Judea. Instead of the Well of Miriam we will have the sweet waters of the Yarden. Instead of Manna we will have wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates, and olives.

However, we must tell the people about this now! Let them know that the truths of the present will be revisited, not just in seven years, but in seven times seven years! And at the end of each seven year cycle we will all gather in G-d's chosen home, men, women, and children, and reunite in a collective reenactment of Mattan Torah (the Giving Of The Torah).

At the end of the seven cycles of Shemitah we will celebrate a second year, the Yovel. The miracle will be twice as great, and G-d's presence will be twice as manifest. Reminiscent of the 50th day

after the Exodus (when G-d gave the Torah) when we freely committed ourselves to serving G-d, all indentured slaves will be freed, ancestral properties will revert back to their original owners. Once again the year will be celebrated by the entire nation in freely given service of Torah study and Mitzvos.

However, at the same time we must review with the nation the truths so simply accepted by Eldad and Maydad. There are consequences to our actions. If we listen to G-d and do His Mitzvos, we will be the leader among the nations and we will live lives of blessing and health. However, if we do not follow in His ways, we will be chased from our land and be the scourges of history. Our indifference to G-d will be punished by His indifference to us.

Come my beloved nation; let us greet our destiny with strength and courage! Let us not be afraid. We are a strong and good people and I for one must trust that goodness. Despite the challenges past and future we will endure. No! More so than endure, we will grow and prevail. With pride in the past, pride in the present, and pride for the future we are truly G-d's kingdom of priests and holy nation.

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