

Cling to This Promise When You Battle the Same Trial Yet Again

In Judaism, a portion of the Torah is read each week in a cycle that allows for reading through the entire Torah each year. Recently, we began to read the book of Numbers, and I began to realize how relevant this book is, especially to the believer in Yeshua (Jesus). When we think about this book and the events within it, we find that almost this entire book exists because of the failure of the Israelites to trust and obey G-D.

Think about it. The Israelites had been redeemed by the absolutely amazing miracles of G-D: the ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. They gathered at Mount Sinai and heard the voice of G-D speak to all of them. Not just the high priest or even the entire priesthood, but every person from the youngest to the oldest heard the voice of G-D proclaim what has become known as the Ten Commandments, the very foundation of the national covenant with Israel. They are then led to the border of the land of promise and are supposed to follow the cloud and fire as G-D delivers the land into their hands by driving out their enemies.

The book of Numbers begins with the counting, or census, of those who would make up Israel's army, continues with instruction for how they will function and gives a reiteration of the need for holiness (separateness or distinctions) for all the people of Israel. Then, we reach chapter 13, which should have been a chapter of victory and praise, as Israel receives a report that everything in the Land is exactly as G-D said. Instead, fear overtakes Israel, and the result is 38 more years of wandering in the wilderness.

You may ask, how is this relevant to us today as believers? The first and possibly most important thing to notice is that when the Israelites failed in their faith, G-D didn't toss them aside and start over with another group of people. Instead, He demonstrated great love, grace and mercy, providing a space for spiritual growth and repentance. During these extra years of journey, G-D never once rejected Israel as His people, neither did He rescind the promises He had made to them. For those of us who at times struggle with doubt and fear, this should be a huge encouragement. G-D is long-suffering and faithful, especially when we are not.

Second, G-D continued to provide for the Israelites supernaturally while they were on their extended trip. He didn't say to them, "Well, you guys blew it, and as a result you are going to have to fend for yourselves." He didn't stop blessing them, and He didn't change His plan to give them the land. In other words, Israel was afraid because they didn't believe they could defeat an enemy that was larger and stronger than they were. Their fear was misplaced because G-D said He was going to defeat and drive out the enemy before them. Instead of violating His word, G-D allowed them time to learn to trust Him completely, and during that time, He continued to provide for their physical needs. He continued to show them that, with His help, they could defeat any enemy.

Both of these concepts are important lessons for us. The first one teaches us that no matter how much we struggle with trust and faith, G-D's promises are sure, and He will do all He has said. G-D promises to finish everything He begins, or as Philippians 1:6 says: "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The second concept helps us understand that G-D will help us to build up our faith in Him. If our faith is weak in areas, He will provide opportunities for us to exercise our faith. Sometimes that looks as if we go through the same crisis in

our lives over and over and over again. Just as the Israelites traveled back to the same locations in the wilderness, this was not to punish them nor is it to punish us. Rather, it is to strengthen us.

So be encouraged. You may be in your personal book of Numbers, traveling on a path that is the result of your stumbling in faith. On this journey, remember these two things. Always remember that during the entire journey, you will remain a child of the King, and He will always be with you. As it says in Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and of a good courage. Fear not, nor be afraid of them, for the Lord your God, it is He who goes with you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you."

And in Hebrews 13:5b, "For He has said: 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.'"

And always remember that you will make it. In other words, keep going, and even though your personal book of Numbers may have more chapters than it might have if you had walked in perfect faith, every chapter will show victory and strengthening of faith that you can use to share with others. After all, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 reminds us: "You are our letter written in our hearts, known and read by all men. For you are prominently declared to be the letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on human tablets of the heart." {eoa}