

This Is Why the Bible Feels So Dry When You Read It

A friend once sent me a video of an artist on YouTube. The man stood in front of a crowd with a large canvas in front of him and as he talked to the people, he was brushing colors onto the canvas. He continued to share the story that he was telling and as he did, he dipped his brush into more colors and continued to paint those colors onto the canvas. For those who were watching and listening, the story was meaningful and emotional, yet seemed disconnected completely from the abstract piece of art that was being created in front of their eyes. The story continued and his painting continued, until just as the artist was sharing the final phrases of the story, he added one last brushstroke and suddenly spun the picture he had painted upside down. In one gasp of appreciation and understanding, the audience immediately saw the piece of art in a way that not only connected with the story they were being told, but actually added beauty, insight and depth to the story.

For many people, reading the Bible can seem just like the process of this artist's work. Too often when we read the Scriptures, the words don't seem to line up with what we are seeing happening before our eyes. We, like the people in the artist's audience, have difficulty seeing the beauty in some of the Torah because it seems more like an abstract work with colors and textures that do not seem to go along with the story that we hear as we read along.

The problem isn't the artist or even the artwork. Every color and stroke G-D has painted and continues to paint of the canvas of history is exactly where it is supposed to be brushed. The problem is that humanity has turned upside down and our viewpoint no longer allows us to see the picture from the correct perspective.

It is for this reason that many believers find the majority of the first five books of the Bible, "The Torah," to be lifeless and boring, even though they are in fact a beautiful mural of the story of G-D's love for all mankind. It is my hope that as you read this article today, at least a portion of the picture of the Torah will spin around and come into focus for you. If it does, and your perspective and vantage point begin to change in time, the whole Torah and the entire Bible will spin into focus. You will not only hear G-D's love as He speaks to your heart, but you will see the mural He has painted with every stroke of the quill as writers of old penned them under the power, anointing, and direction of His Spirit.

The Torah is a history of the world from beginning to end, and that history is told over and over, one page at a time. Every word written adds more color to the picture, and every phrase written provides more depth and contrast to help us see the fullness of the story as it is retold. To lay the foundation for what I am saying, let's simply look at the first words of each of the five books of the Torah.

The book of Genesis begins with the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1, TLV). So, Genesis begins by introducing us to G-D. The book of Exodus begins with the words, "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came into Egypt with Jacob, every man with his family" (Ex. 1:1). " Exodus begins with the word "and," connecting us to the book of Genesis, which introduced us to G-D. Exodus introduces us to the children of Israel, who are in bondage because they went to Egypt. The book of Leviticus begins again with the word "and." "And the L-RD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying" (Lev. 1:1, MEV). The "and" connects Leviticus to Exodus and Genesis as the picture continues to be painted. In Leviticus, G-D calls Moses from inside of the Tent of Meeting while Moses is outside of the Tent of Meeting. We are introduced to a G-D who is inviting His people into His home.

At this point, we have been introduced to G-D. We have been introduced to His people in bondage in Egypt. We have been introduced to G-D calling to man. The book of Numbers also begins with “and.” “And the L-RD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai in the Tent of Meeting on the first day of the second month in the second year after they went out from the land of Egypt, saying” (Num. 1:1). The “and” in Numbers connects the book of Numbers to the book of Leviticus. In Leviticus, we are introduced to Moses as one who has entered G-D’s home.

So, in Genesis, we are introduced to G-D. In Exodus, we are introduced to G-D’s people in trouble/bondage. In Leviticus, we are introduced to a G-D who invites His people into His home. In Numbers, we are introduced to a G-D who has welcomed His people into His home.

The Book of Deuteronomy begins with the words, “These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab” (Deut. 1:1). Deuteronomy, like Genesis, does not begin with the word “and” because it is the conclusion of the story being told in the Torah. What story, you may ask? The same story told with every word and every stroke of paint: the Gospel.

Genesis tells us about G-D. Exodus tells us we are in bondage. Leviticus tells us G-D wants us to dwell with Him. Numbers tell us how we dwell with Him. Deuteronomy tells us to tell others about Genesis through Numbers so they can participate in Deuteronomy themselves. You see, the Torah isn’t a bunch of commandments and a burden too heavy to carry. The Torah is our history, yours and mine. Each word is a stroke of color that introduces us over and over to G-D. And when we view it from the right perspective, we are impacted by the beauty and intricacy of the Good News in every word and phrase that G-D loves us so much that He wants to spend eternity with us.

{eoa}

Eric Tokajer *is author of* With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity, OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry, #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer *and* Jesus is to Christianity as Pasta is to Italians.