

The Reason Abraham, Isaac and Jacob Sinned—And How Our Generation Is Following Suit

This week, I continue traveling across Israel, and one thought that keeps traveling through my mind is how often the different characters we read about in the Bible walked and re-walked over the exact same places. We see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob journeying in the same location through the wilderness and valleys that we later read about Joshua and Caleb walking. We continue to read about King David and the prophets traveling in the same locations and even in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we read about these same valleys and mountains.

This historical truth caused me to wonder if the differing generations looked at where they were and where those before them were and wrestled within their minds with the idea that the people of G-D didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

Think about it: Generation after generation walking back and forth over the same pieces of property. The people prospered at times, were then overtaken by their enemies and dispersed from Israel, only to return once more to start what appeared to be the same cycle over again.

It would only be human to wonder if it was all just pointless. It has often been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result. Yet, we find the children of Israel continuing to journey north, south, east and west over the same ground, doing the same things year after year.

You may be reading this and wondering to yourself, *How is this relevant to me today?* After all, you may never make a trip to Israel. (Although, I hope everyone reading this will—it is a

life-changing trip). Let me try to answer.

Over the past few months, I have been dialoging with both ministry leaders and young people with a desire to be involved in ministry about the generational differences in thoughts and mission mindsets. Now, before I go on, let me say these same conversations went on in my parents' generation, my generation and in my children's generation and will continue to take place in the generations that follow.

Each generation, just as the generations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is traveling the same journey over the same ground with the same goals. Yet, each generation with the advances in education, technology and experience believes they can improve the way they journey and bring about better results than the generation before. The younger generation looks at the traditional form of congregational worship and involvement with skeptic's eyes. They want to make a real difference. They want to change the world. They want to feed the poor, clothe the needy and more. And as with every generation they look down at their feet metaphorically and see they have been asked to walk over the same ground one more time and, as with every generation before, they want change.

It was when I stood in the city of Beersheba I realized that while desire to solve the world's problems is admirable and is extremely biblical, sometimes we forget the reason the Israelites walked over the same ground over and over is that land was the land G-D gave them. The land is their inheritance. Just as G-D established community worship and congregations, G-D established weekly Shabbat gatherings and Holy Day convocations.

While these old-fashioned journeys may be what the generations before us did, walking the same journey over and over, the journey was designed and the map provided by G-D. Yes, we have failed to do what we could to change our world many, many times. Yes, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the older

generation has failed and left a legacy that has been less than perfect to the next generation. And yes, the upcoming generations must keep the vision of doing better, achieving more and seeing real change in our world.

But, this must be done by staying within the boundaries establish by G-D. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob didn't fall into sin because they were journeying within the promised land or because they were in the "same old place." They sinned because they didn't do the right things while they were where G-D placed them. Likewise, the failures of the body are not because of the structure of congregations or because of Shabbat and Holy Day commemorations. Our generations' failures are because we are not doing what we were commanded to do within and outside of our congregations.

It isn't about changing G-D's plan; it's about following His plan. {eoa}

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