

RABBI JACK'S MESSAGE IN A MINUTE



So many of us are aware of that part of our biblical history when we "wandered in the desert" for forty years. This precarious fate was prescribed by God in this week's Torah portion called "Shelach". It was viewed as a punishment, because of the people's lack of faith and the resulting fear of proceeding towards Canaan after they heard the negative report of the scouts that were sent to explore their eventual homeland. The long awaited arrival was now going to be delayed by four decades. Why such a lengthy sentence?

One of the standard explanations is that forty years was the ancient calculation of "a generation". Adonai realized that the current population of Israelites only knew, and therefore acted within a slave mentality. Thus, a new generation born in freedom would be better suited to inherit the promise of the Promised Land, more likely to construct a society in line with the aspirational doctrines of the Torah. Those who were oppressed would be too traumatized by their bitter experiences and memories to be a nation that would serve as a beacon of holiness and justice. It would take the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of those who left Egypt to eventually fulfill their side of the covenant. The lesson the Almighty is trying to convey is that people need the tincture of time to learn and embrace the true beauty of the possibilities of liberation. What an amazingly relatable message.

As we inch our way to being free of the grip of this pandemic have we had sufficient time during our isolation to appreciate what goodness our prior openness could have allowed?

And, as we continue to watch and experience, astonishingly, the struggles our country faces still as a consequence of slavery and degradation, have we, as a nation had enough years to understand the divine imperative of equality? Like the meandering Hebrews in Sinai, let's pray that the wandering in both our personal and national wilderness will soon come to an end.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Jack