

LEAD TORAH They were them; We are us

To be sure, there's a grammar problem with the title, but it's a small problem compared with what the Torah presents in this week's sedra.

To repeat an idea we've presented in the past... The Torah is speaking to us. All of us - throughout the generations, from AFTER the generation of the Midbar. We cannot judge that generation; we don't know what life was like then; and the Torah doesn't tell us everything - so we don't really have enough information to judge.

And, we are not supposed to. The Torah is speaking to us and tells us part of the story - the part from which we are supposed to learn lessons.

Just to illustrate, there is a pair of p'sukim back in Lech L'cha. The Torah tells us (16:16) that Avra(ha)m was 86 years old when Yishmael was born. After the blank space of a few letter-widths, we have 17:1 telling us that Avra(ha)m is 99 years old.

There's a gap of 13 years. What happened during that time? Not relevant to us. How can we be sure? Because the Torah didn't tell us anything about those 13 years.

Because the Torah is not a diary or journal or complete history book we cannot consider what it does tell us as mere events that occurred more than 3300 years ago.

It's as if the Torah keeps reminding us that these are not once-upon-a-time, a long-time-ago stories. Every thing the

Torah tells us is for NOW.

We need to constantly ask not just what did the Torah tell us about, but why did it tell us such & such.

Since we left Egypt, back in B'shalach, we've been told about complaints and misdeeds of the people. Last week, with Cheit HaMeraglim, G-d mentions (not a strong enough word) that we had irked Him ten times. That's not just a number - that's is a full group of episodes.

And look what we find in Parshat Korach - a revolt that results in a high body-count... and things aren't finished yet. More problems to come.

We try to figure out what their problem was. But we cannot. The real question is - How do we act? What do we say? Do we too rebel?

The answer, sadly, is, we haven't changed much. The meraglim are still with us... and so are the Korachs (and the Datans...). With our perspective of thousands of years, we need to wake up and figure out what we should do.

