SEE THE REALITY

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Seeing is believing and the first word in this week's parsha is r'eih - see. The Torah is evidently of the opinion that belief can be obtained by seeing life and events. There are things that are self-evident, and that by viewing those events one can make a correct and cogent choice between blessing and curses, between good and evil and between eternal life and mere human mortality.

The prophet Isaiah portrays the non-believers and doubters as being sightless people - blind to reality and history. Especially in our time when the ideologies of the past century that led so many millions astray and that also had a disastrous effect on the Jewish people as a whole have been proven worthless, it takes a particular form of sightlessness to continue to somehow believe in them. Even a cursory glance at Jewish history will reveal that the survival of the Jews as a people and as a force for civilization in the world is inextricably tied to its faith and observance of Torah values and lifestyle.

And if one only looks and correctly sees the situation of Israel and the Jews in the world today, one must be struck by the accuracy of the predictions for Israel as recorded in the book of Dvarim thirty-three hundred years ago. By seeing things clearly and correctly, one can choose blessing and eternal life for one's self. And that is true for the totality of Israel and indeed for all of mankind as well.

At the conclusion of Moshe's life, the Torah informs us that he "saw" all of the Land of Israel and also foresaw all of the events that would befall the people of Israel there "even until the last day." It is interesting to note that the Lord saw fit, so to speak, to show him the future and let him see it with his own eyes rather than just tell or describe it to him. Seeing it impresses its reality to Moshe's human eyes. Moshe is the symbol of farsighted vision in Jewish history. Therefore, he is the greatest - the father, so to speak - of all prophets.

When Jeremiah is told of the coming destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, he is not informed of it by a declaration of God. Rather, the Lord, so to speak, asks him: "Jeremiah, what do you see?" It is by seeing the impending catastrophe with his own eyes that Jeremiah is able to give focus and passion to his message of warning to the people of Israel.

Seeing however requires more than good eyesight. It also implies an understanding of what is being seen, a backdrop to the actual item scene. And that is why the study of Torah, the understanding of the story of the Jewish people is so vital for our time and current circumstances. The Torah is

essentially our spectacle to correct distorted vision and blind spots. It bids us to see clearly and correctly. We would be wise to don those spectacles and thereby choose blessing and eternal life for ourselves.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com

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