

BLINDNESS TO TRUTH

by Rabbi Berel Wein

When someone loves and appreciates someone or something and finds that others fail to share that feeling as strongly, one can experience a sense of disappointment and frustration. How can others be so blind and foolish not to see what one sees in that person or object? Moshe loves the people of Israel and the Land of Israel. His love for both is so great that it shuts out the reality of human frailties, deviousness and selfishness that are omnipresent in human societies, even great societies such as the generation of the desert - the dor hamidbar. He is convinced that the spies that he now sends to bring back a report regarding the Land of Israel will see it through his eyes of longing, love and faith.

They will certainly be enthusiastic in their praise of the land, its luscious fruits and stark scenery. They will appreciate God's gift of that land to His people and be everlastingly grateful to tread upon the soil that their patriarchs and matriarchs walked upon. Moshe is certain of this, for otherwise he would not have allowed the spying mission to take place.

But when disaster strikes and the spies' report regarding the Land of Israel is tinged with doubt, criticism and pessimism, Moshe is shocked, amazed and disheartened. His disappointment is not limited to the contents of the report itself but rather his disillusionment is even more profound over the inability of the spies to see things as he sees them. Their blindness to the truth outweighs even their pettiness, selfishness and evil in forming such a negative report regarding God's great gift to the Jewish people - the Land of Israel.

Over the long run of Jewish history there have been two parallel yet contradictory strains in Jewish society. One powerful strain was the undying love and longing for the Land of Israel. In the end, the secular Zionists were not willing to trade the Land of Israel for Uganda. The State of Israel arose in the Land of Israel because Jews did not allow themselves to forget Zion and Jerusalem, even for a moment. The right hands of many tyrants and empires have failed over the centuries but the Jewish loyalty to the Land of Israel never faltered or wavered. These Jewish feelings were in line with Moshe's view of the Land of Israel. But there was and is another strain of attitude in the Jewish world that sees the Land of Israel - and currently the State of Israel - as the problem and not the solution in the Jewish world. The words of Rabbi Meir Simcha Cohen in Meshech Chachma continually ring in my ears - "Woe to those who substitute in their thoughts Berlin for Jerusalem!"

On the two extremes of the spectrum of Jewish society there exist the spiritual heirs of the spies. They see no good in the Land, the State and in effect the people who live in Zion and Jerusalem.

Better in Egypt, the spies said. But it was never better in Egypt and it is this lie, perhaps more than any other statement that challenges Moshe's love of Israel to its very core. Well, unfortunately, 'better in Egypt' still exists in the Jewish world today. Only by seeing things through the eyes of Moshe can we overcome this enemy within our midst.

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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