

A MESSAGE FOR THE GENERATIONS

by Rabbi Berel Wein

One of the most bitter curses that the Torah describes in the tochacha that forms such a major portion of this parsha itself is that one's labor and efforts, even all of one's life struggles and sacrifices, will turn out to be empty, fruitless, of no purpose or benefit. We all work in life to achieve certain goals - financial, personal fulfillment, family serenity, and the wish to be remembered and appreciated. There is therefore perhaps nothing in the tochacha that is as deflating and saddening as the statement that all of our efforts will be for naught, all of our ambitions, ideas and struggles ultimately pointless and of no lasting value.

It is clear to most of us, not particularly blessed with enormous wealth or unique creative genius, that there are relatively few ways that we can make our mark on the world and our lives purposeful. One of those ways however is in building family ties and harmony. People are able to see their accomplishments in the accomplishments of others if those others are their offspring or close relatives.

That is the reason that family relations, especially parent-child relationships, are so delicate and emotional. For even if one feels that one's efforts in life have been successful, we feel that the verdict on our achievements is yet to be rendered and that it depends upon the continuing success of our future generations as well. And therefore the words of the tochacha are truly frightening for it portends that the future generations can undo all previous achievements of their predecessors. We are all too bitterly aware that this is true especially in our generations.

This inconsonance between generations is emphasized further in the tochacha when the Torah describes "that your children shall be given to another nation and that you will be powerless to prevent it." The Torah refers here not only to actual enslavement and imprisonment of one's children but it also implies being given to a foreign, non-Jewish culture and way of life. The effects of the secularization of the youthful generations of Eastern European Jewry and of American and Israeli Jewry are so serious as to be almost catastrophic.

Our generation and times are left to pay the bill for those previous defections from Jewish life. And, what the appeal of false ideals that overwhelmed the Jewish street then did not destroy, the Holocaust - described in minute detail in the tochacha - completed. If it were not for God's promise that ends the tochacha, that Israel will survive and rejuvenate itself, we would almost be without hope or comfort. But it is the sad fact that the tochacha, in all of its awful prophecies and events, has literally taken place before our eyes. And, this paradoxically gives us the hope and promise for the

better times that God's promise extends to us.

As we contemplate the shambles of the tochacha that surround us currently, we may take hope in the future- that the times of peace, spiritual accomplishment and serenity of soul will also be literally fulfilled in the great and good year that is about to dawn upon us and all of Israel.

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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