

NEVER ASSUME, ALWAYS PREPARE

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Too much self confidence is also a detriment. Moshe sends forth the leaders of the tribes of Israel to search out the Land of Israel and report back to him. He gives them specific instructions as to what their report should contain and confidently awaits their successful return from their potentially hazardous mission.

It apparently never dawns upon him that these chosen leaders are capable of bringing back a negative report about the Land of Israel and that they would, in spite and resentment, publicize such a report and incite the people of Israel to rebel against Moshe's leadership and God's Providence.

Moshe never imagines that the leaders of the tribes of Israel would somehow view the land of Israel differently than he does. To Moshe it is the Promised Land, the land of the forefathers of Israel and of Jewish destiny and future. But the men sent to bring back the report to Moshe - except for Calev and Yehoshua - see only the problems and difficulties that will confront the Jewish state.

Moshe glimpses eternity and they see only giants and fearsome warriors. Moshe longs for entry into the Land of Israel and they are ready to return to Egyptian bondage. Moshe's confidence in the people and their erstwhile leaders is shattered. And Moshe's confidence in his own self and in his judgment of people and circumstances is now weakened and self-doubt creeps into his psyche. Moshe's frustration and disappointment is palpable in the parsha reading. Moshe's generation is doomed.

Every person in a position of leadership and responsibility, especially younger people who are in such positions, experiences the same pitfall that Moshe experienced in this week's parsha. I remember that as a fledgling young rabbi I attempted to bring a well known yeshiva into our community and establish a branch of its main institution. Our community then badly needed such an educational institution in its midst.

I presented the plan at a public meeting called by me to advance this plan. I thought to myself "Who could oppose a yeshiva, so desperately needed by our community?" So in my naiveté I did not prepare adequately for the meeting nor did I make phone calls to the supporters of the yeshiva to show up and be prepared to fight the battle. I was supremely confident that everyone saw the issue my way and through my vision for the community.

I was therefore shocked to hear the torrent of verbal abuse and opposition to the yeshiva project voiced at the meeting and the whole plan collapsed. I had assumed that everyone would see the

matter through my eyes and hold my vision to be correct. Years later and in a different community I was able to establish a yeshiva, also over many naysayers, but this time I was prepared and had a much better feel as to how true human nature works.

I could not assume that anyone else would see the situation quite as I did and therefore this time I prepared the meeting properly. Moshe assumed the best and was unprepared for what actually occurred. Naysayers always abound. We always have to prepare properly to overcome them and their objections.

Shabat shalom.
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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