

A NATION SEEKING VALIDATION

by Rabbi Berel Wein

The fact that the Torah has seen fit to provide such a detailed narrative about the visit of the father-in-law of Moshe to the camp of Israel at the beginning of their sojourn in the desert of Sinai, teaches us a valuable lesson in life and human behavior. The truth is that all of us want to be validated by others. It is not enough that we believe in our cause or that we know what type of person or nation we want to be – it is necessary that others recognize this as well and express it to us and validate our emotions, policies and life values .

This is expressed in all areas of human endeavor. The validation from others is a form of emotional therapy and conviction reinforcement that human beings desire and seek. It is the key as to why so many people pursue publicity, even publicity that is questionable and not necessarily positive. People desire to be recognized. Simply being ignored leads to depression and other severe consequences.

One of the problems that schools often encounter is that they are rarely able to validate the feelings and accomplishments of all their students. There is only one valedictorian and not everyone can get an 'A' in every subject. Resentment often results, and insecurities can lead to rebellion and even violence from this lack of validation. There was once a school of psychology that simply had the therapist repeat everything the client said. This was supposed to bring about a feeling of validation that would bring the patient to a more stable view of one's self and of the world generally.

The Jewish people have witnessed great and powerful miracles. They had been delivered from centuries of Egyptian bondage and from experiencing the waters of the sea split before them. They were eating 'manna' that fell from heaven daily, which was enough to sustain them physically and spiritually. They have the greatest leader in the history of mankind, our teacher Moshe, as their leader. Yet, Jewish tradition teaches us that they did not really feel comfortable with themselves until a person from the outside – the very outside, a former idolater – came and confirmed to them the godly powers that they had witnessed and the correctness of their belief in the universal God of Israel.

It has always been that the Jewish people craved validation from the outside world for principles and beliefs that we know to be valid and correct but with which we feel uncomfortable unless others are willing to agree with us on these matters. Moshe realizes this and therefore he will plead with Yitro to remain with the Jewish people and enter the land of Israel with them. Moshe says to him that he will be the eye of Israel. If he validates the land of Israel as a Jewish homeland, the Jews will do so as well. So deep was their need for validation from the outside. We should think about

these matters when considering our own pursuit of validation from the non-Jewish world.

Shabbat Shalom,

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