

Pesach: Seeing Is Believing

- David Hollander.

Vayar Yisrael Vayaaminu. Seeing is believing. But what kind of credit is due for this? Many times, we don't believe what is before our very eyes. 90 years ago those who thought solution to what they called "the Jewish problem" was to try to make ourselves part of the general culture. Even today there are such Jews. In the days of Moshe Rabenu, at least when they saw something they believed it! Compromise, assimilation, intermarriage, hasn't worked.... Lies that turn out to be truths and truths that turn out to be lies... High time we rose to level of "Vayare, Vayaaminu"

PESACH: SEEING IS BELIEVING

Vayar Yisrael..Vayaaminu. We say,"Seeing is believing". But what kind of credit is due for this? Emuna usually is about things we do not see, but which we accept on the basis of faith! But if one sees the proof before one's very eyes, what kind of yeyasher koach is due? Why are our ancestors to be congratulated that they believed?

The answer is that indeed they do deserve credit. Because many times, especially in our times, people see -- vayare --and yet do not believe. So the Torah stresses that in that case it was exceptional. They saw and they also believed.

What are the examples of people seeing and not believing? For instance, eighty and ninety years ago, there were Jews who believed that the solution to what they called "The Jewish problem" lay in trying to make ourselves as much part of the general culture as possible, and in that way to overcome prejudice, hatred and persecution. Then they could be forgiven for this. True, the Torah warned us against believing this, that we could improve our situation by emulating the Gentiles, saying, nihiye kehol hagoyim. But if they believed that a hundred or so years ago at the turn of the century, one could understand it. Because all the evidence seemed to be in that direction. The few stupid, crazy Jews who warned against that, were considered part of the middle ages....

But today, a century later, how could anybody not believe? Do we not see vayare Yisroel es Mitzrayim mes al sefas hayam? We are one world. Transportation speed and communications ease has made us see things in England and America and elsewhere, that otherwise might not be so easily before our eyes. Understanding what has transpired in those countries, do we not see many of those movements utterly dead and bankrupt? Why don't we act in accordance with that belief? That is the difference between us and the days of Moshe Rabenu. there, at least when they saw something, vayaaminu baHashem ubeMoshe avdo, and they proceeded to sing a song of triumph. We also see the same death in certain movements and ideals, and even so, we do not believe it! There are still people who think they can survive in galut without Jewish affiliation, and more importantly, without Jewish education! There are still people who naively think that intermarriage is not terrible, is not a plague, will pass by, is merely a trend, blinding themselves to the facts.

There are still Jews who think naively, that hiding their Jewishness will grant them safety,

blinding themselves to the fact that Nazi Germany's hidden Jews were soon ferreted out, and that the best safeguard against the growth of anti-Semitism is great pride in Judaism, and great support of Israel, and Jewish learning all over the world.

There was a woman I knew who was so afraid of admitting that she was escaped from Nazi Germany as a Jewish refugee, that she was prepared to ruin the happiness of her beloved daughter who could not marry a kohen if she had been converted; and only the fortunate circumstances of a grandmother still alive and bringing proof, enabled us to prove that the girl was actually of Jewish birth and so we were able to save the happiness of her daughter.

There was a time when people could be perhaps forgiven for believing that the way to save Judaism is to compromise, to adapt, and adopt certain changes. It isn't as though we haven't tried that. We did try that, and it failed! There is no honest person who can say that method has succeeded! Because what group has generations of Jews that observe Yahadus? The people who compromise? Or the people who decided to stand up against the tide? That's the only truly vibrant growing part of our community! In Israel today, where there is more Torah studied than in the cities of Europe in their heyday, and where the religious community is the only one that is increasing greatly, can we not see what is before our eyes? The evidence is in. How is it that we do not act in accordance with it?

About 60 or more years ago, a certain Jew was retired after having worked a number of decades for the Zionist organization. His job was to go all over the country to praise the ideals of Zionism, the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, etc. So they decided, when he was on the verge of retirement, to give him a treat, a trip to Palestine. He had never been there before. When he came back, they made a banquet for him, and he made a speech. Rabosay, ir zolt visen as die ale ligens vos ich hob gezakt vegen eretz yisroel, zeinen ale emes!! Friends, I want to tell you that all the lies I have been telling you for the past 50 years, are all absolutely true!

Here the situation is in reverse. Because here, all the truths turned out to be lies...

And about Israel: Isn't it high time to recognize that the people begin to believe the truth they see before their eyes? Maybe people might have been forgiven twenty years ago talking about Shalom Achshav, trying to get together with the Arabs, saying, "So we'll give them some territory in return for peace. What is so terrible about that... Israel isn't an imperial power, it is not interested in territory. But unfortunately, to our heartfelt sorrow, by this time it is crystal clear to anyone that the Arabs are not interested in territory, but only in eliminating the State of Israel!

Vayare vayaaminu. It is high time that we reached the level of our forefathers who stood there at the time of Moshe Rabenu and believed their very eyes. As long as the evidence is in, let us believe too....

Vayaaminu baHashem ubeMoshe avdo, LET US BE AMONGST THE BELIEVERS TOO!