

You will grope at noontime as a blind man gropes in darkness. (28:29)

The *Talmud Megillah* 24b quotes Rabbi Yosi who asks: What difference does it make to the blind man whether he is groping around in the afternoon or in the evening?

Regardless of the external light, the blind man's world remains dark. Rabbi Yosi says that he was troubled by this question for some time, until once he was walking through the streets on a very dark night. As he walked, he noticed a blind man groping his way down the street. What was unusual about the blind man was that he was carrying a torch in his hands. "Why carry a torch?" Rabbi Yosi asked. "After all, what can a blind man do with a torch? How does it help him see?" The blind man was far from a fool. He replied, "As long as I walk with a torch, people notice me and lead me away from the various obstacles that might cause me injury." *Chazal* teach us an important lesson: the benefit we derive from something is not always determined by what we see, but rather, by what we do not see. Preventative maintenance is as critical as ministering and offering assistance after the fact.

Horav Shmuel Dovid Walkin, zl, applied this *Chazal* in his *hesped*, eulogy, for the *Chafetz Chaim*: "Every generation is blessed with great, distinguished Torah luminaries. Do we appreciate them? When the *Chafetz Chaim* was alive, did we value his presence among us? Did we expend every effort to benefit from him, to absorb the *kedushah*, sanctity, which emanated from him? Since the answer to these questions are probably 'no,' we must ask ourselves: What loss did we sustain with the passing of the *Chafetz Chaim*? If, for all intents and purposes, we did not really appreciate him, how can we assess his loss to us? We were like blind men who did not see the incredible spiritual light which emanated from him. A blind man really perceives no difference between night and day. If so, what did we lose?"

Rav Walkin continued with his reply, "The incident related in the *Talmud* concerning the blind man carrying the torch is enlightening. The blind man carries the torch not for him to see, but rather, to be seen by others! Thus, he will be protected from whatever obstacles may be in his path. We will apply a parallel to a generation that has Torah luminaries but does not 'see' them, thus precluding the unique opportunity of absorbing their inspiring light.

"While we do not make proper use of the unique opportunity, we still have something left, something to hold on to, something to protect us from the vicissitudes and challenges which confront us every step of our journey through life in exile. The *gedolei ha'dor*, Torah giants of each generation, are not appreciated. While we may not necessarily be infused by their greatness, we can still hold on to them for dear life, so that their presence protects us.

"Thus, *rabbosai*, my friends, the *Chafetz Chaim* was an individual whose spiritual light illuminated a generation. He is gone. His light has been extinguished, and for this we mourn. Indeed, the 'entire

House of *Yisrael* should bewail the conflagration which Hashem has ignited” (*Vayikra* 10:6).