

"And you will grope at midday, as a blind man gropes in the darkness." (28:29)

In the *Talmud Megillah 24b* Chazal offer a profound insight into this *pasuk*. They question whether a blind man discerns day from night. They recount that Rabbi Yosi had an experience that provided him with an answer to this question. He once met a blind man walking in the dark, holding a torch. "Of what use is the torch to you?" asked Rabbi Yosi of the blind man. He replied, "When the torch is in my hand, people see me and keep me from falling into the pits." Rabbi Yosi then understood the *pasuk's* message. It predicts a time when people will walk around like blind men at night, stumbling, because no one can see to help them avoid the obstacles.

Moshe shares with the people the tragic punishment that awaits those who rebel against the *Torah*. He presents an image of a blind man who is groping helplessly in the dark. He now suffers doubly from his own helplessness, as well as from the lack of a companion to ease his plight.

Indeed, this has been the lot of the Jew throughout time immemorial. He has been subjected to the most inhuman and bestial persecution, where no one in the "free-world" surfaced to ease his plight. We have only to look back a short time to the European Holocaust, in which six million Jews were slaughtered while a world remained silent. The Jew has suffered throughout the ages in darkness. He has stood alone, groping, reaching out for someone to help, someone to hold on to, but as usual - they had all disappeared.

We were locked away in the dirty ghettos, isolated from a world which did not care. Even when we cried out, when our screams of pain and torture went the stillness of the night, the world simply did not heed. This was the fulfillment of the curse - no one would care. Even today there are those who would revise history; to extinguish our torch, so that once again our suffering will have been ignored or -- worse -- eradicated from history. This will, regrettably, continue as long as we "deserve" our curse.

There is yet another aspect to the problem. At least in the story, the blind man made every attempt to be seen. What about the Jew who is groping but does not want to be seen? What about the Jew who has assimilated his religion so that he does not stand out as a "blind man"? Nothing is as pathetic as the individual who is challenged but refuses to acknowledge it. The internal problem of the assimilated Jew presents a new type of "blind man" - one who does not want to be seen. It is one thing if our enemies refuse to look at our plight; it is completely another situation if we seek to delude ourselves by ignoring the problem. The torch is our *Torah*, our banner which we must vigilantly cherish in order to retain that ability to transmit it to our successors.