

Foreword for the book:

The Oslo Years:

A Mother's Journal

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Foreword

Reading this book will test your feelings' quotient about the People of Israel, the Torah of Israel and the Land of Israel. If, as you read, you get choked up reasonably often, then your grasp of reality is good. If' at some points in your journey through this book, you succeed in being moved to tears, then rest assured, you are a healthy and robust member of Klal Yisroel and you are finely tuned into the tragedy, travail, pain and challenge of our times. The weeping you will experience is of the therapeutic and redemptive kind, like the cry of Mother Rachel. It will end in prayer, hope and the resolve to act with conviction. It will not be the primeval sounds of despair that characterize the mother of Sisra who finally comes face to face with wages of sin and evil.

Ellen Horowitz is a creative writer, a talented painter and a blessed settler with the soul of a Yiddishe Momma. She has lived, breathed, experienced and expressed the depth of genuine Jewish feeling during the past eleven years since the infamous handshake on the White House lawn. September 13, 1993, changed many lives radically, violently and permanently. A day that will live in infamy as an eternal indictment of those who brought the tragedy of the Oslo Accords upon us.

We went into the streets; we demonstrated; we pleaded and we manifested our concern and anguish in many ways. Ellen, in addition to being involved in all of these activities, went to her computer and began typing out article after article graced with profound insights, thought provoking ideas and above all, clarity of vision. While so many of our leaders and citizens at large were stricken with utter blindness, Ellen kept saying it as it is.

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato in his classic ethical masterpiece Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Just) identifies two kinds of moral blindness that result from "the darkness of night."

" ... it may either cover his eye so that he does not see what is before him at all or it may deceive him so that a pillar appears to him as a man or a man as a pillar ... there is yet a second kind of blindness which is far worse than the first and stems from a distortion of their sight, so that they perceive evil as though it were goodness itself and good as if it is absolute evil."

The first source of error is technical in nature. The darkness blurs vision; it conceals what lies ahead and results in confusion and error. Remove the darkness and the result will be the difference between day and night.

The second source of blindness is rooted in the mind. No physical darkness here. No barrier, no blurred vision but rather intellectual conviction born of a skewered, crooked and wrong assessment of the situation fed by a wide variety of prior prejudices, political posture and pathetic "naiveté."

Both of these forms of blindness descended upon the political leadership of Israel and upon large segments of the population on the day of the handshake. The Declaration of Principles more commonly known as the Oslo Accords burst upon the scene and has dominated our lives for the past eleven years.

There were people who saw the dawn of a new day and an end to one hundred years of hostility. In one stroke Yasser Arafat was elevated from world class gangster, the don of modern terrorism to respected statesman and partner in the "peace of the brave."

The man of war became the very manifestation of peace. The olive branch replaced the gun and Israeli politicians were falling over each other to meet with him. The air was festive, festooned with flags and banners. Peace and harmony were breaking out all over. It was finally "the lamb and the lion." Nations vied with each other to host the Palestinian Bolivar, the father of a soon-to-be new nation. The White House was opened wide to him.

But our hearts were breaking from disbelief and pain. How could anyone believe that terrorists would defend the Jewish State from brother terrorists "without the limitations and restrictions of a Supreme Court," as Rabin said? We were incredulous. How could anyone give these killers weapons, rifles, submachine guns, armored cars and ammunition?

When in history did a people bring their sworn enemies back from exile, give them parts of the homeland and provide them with arms? The PLO had been expelled from Jordan and Lebanon and were unwanted in other Arab lands.

We lived with the thought that this is all a bad dream: a nightmare, that any day now will end and we will go back to living normally again.

We were appalled to learn that even within our own orthodox community there were those who looked with favor on what we saw as impending doom. We stood on the highway and at major intersections holding placards: "Don't Give Them Rifles." We demonstrated, petitioned, faxed, e-mailed, wrote, spoke, argued and debated, all to no avail. The people minding the state knew better than we what was good for us.

Darkness had descended. Blindness prevailed.

Only exploding buses, drive-by shootings, suicide bombers, and all out war began to beat sense into some of our people.

The two forms of blindness of the Mesillat Yesharim were clearly manifest. The man in the street really thought that we were on the threshold of a new era. He mistakenly saw killer as man and murderer as partner.

Far more dangerous were and are those who suffer from the virus of intellectual and ideological blindness. The politicians, authors, playwrights, professors and sundry adherents of post-Zionism who practice revision of Jewish history. They see Israel as the arch villain, who stole Palestinian land and created a state on their catastrophe. They are, on the whole, absolutely unrepentant, even now.

There was yet a third kind of blindness that even Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato could never have imagined because it is so irrational and defies definition. It is a blindness that is self-imposed, carefully planned and executed with a strange and eerie kind of perfection. I call it "turning a blind eye" (willful blindness). With the arrival of Arafat and his gang of fellow terrorists at the very outset of the implementation of the Oslo Accords, the violations began. Weapons were being smuggled into Palestinian areas; the size of the police force began to grow far beyond the agreed-upon limits; no effort was made to fight terrorism which was dramatically on the increase.

The very first commitment made by Arafat, which was to amend the PLO Covenant that calls for the destruction of Israel, was never done. For a number of years, the farce of "Yes, we will amend the Covenant" went on but, in fact, nothing ever happened.

With all this going on, we would have expected a freeze in all negotiation, a cessation of all contacts until the violations were corrected. We had even been promised by our politicians that violations of the accords would, in fact, mean an immediate halt to all further steps. But that didn't happen. Instead operation "turn a blind eye" went into full swing. The policy was to find excuses for Arafat, explaining away his conduct, even to the point of vehemently denying the facts.

The tragic comedy of getting the PLO to condemn terrorist attacks was a macabre farce. Israel and the U.S. had to literally squeeze a meek, mousy, meaningless condemnation out of him. Then the shouts of joy and jubilation resounded through the Left. "See," they said, "he is opposed to terrorism."

We had warned in September, 1993, that the Palestinian-held areas would become cities of refuge for killers whom we could not pursue there because of our commitments. That's exactly what happened. Then came the phony arrests of terrorists, who went in one door and out the other. All calls for extradition were emphatically rejected. And we did nothing. We found excuses for him.

We predicted every one of the violations and then some. Even Yitzchak Rabin said that the Accords "had more holes than Swiss cheese," yet the blind eyes kept turning.

It was maddening. Any self-respecting country would have immediately frozen all contacts and agreements until there was full compliance. Any government fully committed to the protection of its citizens would have gone in with full force and destroyed the terrorist infrastructure; but, that was not to be. It was maddening. Strangely enough, those who most wanted the Accords to succeed would have benefited the most from decisive response to violations. There would have

been some chance for a limited period of relative calm. But foolishly, they failed to demand compliance and recklessly apologized, made excuses and lied.

The "blind eye" farce peaked with Arafat's Johannesburg Mosque speech. The tape of that tirade was brought to Israel and translated. Arafat made it clear that he was out on jihad and that all agreements were only tentative, until they could break them. This should have shaken the portals of power but it didn't. "Jihad," our wise men told us, means to wage a war for peace, by peaceful means only, and whatever else he said was meant to placate the masses. Arafat was an honorable man. He was our partner in the peace of the brave.

There was yet a fourth kind of blindness, one born of ignorance. The danger of this inability to see is rearing its dangerous head again. Unfortunately, the mistakes of the past, I fear, are going to be made all over again.

In every struggle, it is absolutely vital to know as much as possible about the enemy. What are his most basic and fundamental beliefs? What are his real goals and objectives? This is all necessary in order to be able to assess the extent to which he is reasonably capable of compromise. What are his real "red lines" that cannot and therefore will not be crossed?

In the past eleven years, we should have done what we failed to do earlier and that is to learn as much as possible about Islam. It would have saved us much heartache, disappointment and most importantly, lives.

We would have then been able to view the Israeli-Palestinian divide in a far more realistic manner. We would have learned that from the enemies' point of view the struggle is not about territory at all, nor is it merely to end "the occupation."

We would have learned that the war is religious in nature and that's why they call it the "Al Aksa War." One of the basic beliefs of Islam is that land once held by Moslems remains theirs forever. Nothing in the world can change that.

Moshe Sharon, a professor of Islamic History at Hebrew University, writes, "The Koran sees the world as divided into two – one part which has come under Islamic rule and the one part which is supposed to come under Islamic rule in the future ... There is a division which is very clear. Every single person who starts studying Islam knows it. The world is described as Dar-al Islam (the house of Islam) - that's the place where Islam rules, and the other part which is called Dar-al Harb - the house of war." "Land for Peace" is, therefore, not a policy or plan but an empty slogan of Israeli and American creation that holds no currency in the Moslem world. Thinking that by ceding some land one can achieve an end to the conflict is a pitiful and pathetic joke - and it's on us. Those who coined the "Land for Peace" idea were living in a fantasy world of their own making. The Arabs can never relinquish their "sacred rights" to Tel Aviv, Haifa, Acre and all of Jerusalem. That is precisely why at Camp David Arafat rejected Barak's generous offer of a Palestinian State on 98% of the liberated territories.

Another one of the "truisms" in this conflict is that the Arabs "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." That's really nonsense. If they are offered anything less than everything, it's not an opportunity at all.

Marshall McLuhan once said wisely, "I wouldn't have seen it, if I hadn't believed it." He challenged what we have been taught since early childhood that "seeing is believing." "Not so," says McLuhan, "but rather the opposite - we are capable of seeing only what we believe."

A takeoff on McLuhan brings us to the fourth form of blindness. I call it: "they can't see because they don't believe." The architects of Oslo were all secular, non-observant and non-believing Jews who were incapable of understanding the depth of Moslem religiosity. Having themselves abandoned Judaism and possessing a negative attitude toward religion, they were simply unable to perceive a truth that was staring them in the face.

The ultimate goal of Islam is jihad. Bernard Lewis writes, "One of the basic tasks bequeathed to Moslems by the Prophet was jihad (striving or conflict). According to Islamic law, it is lawful to wage war against four types of enemies: infidels, apostates, rebels and bandits ... only the first two count as jihad."

Samuel P. Huntington (Clashes of Civilizations) writes:

"Increasingly, Muslims attack the West not for adhering to an imperfect, erroneous religion, which is nonetheless a 'religion of the book,' but for not adhering to any religion at all. In Muslim eyes, Western secularism, irreligiosity and hence immorality are worse evils than the Western Christianity that produced them. "

Those who do not believe were and still are at a distinct disadvantage. They simply don't inhabit the same world of religious devotion as their enemies do: and, hence, can't see the reality of the situation.

It is certainly depressing to know that the possibility of lasting peace is not a real option. But on the other hand, once we know it, we can begin to think more clearly and creatively in the search for real alternatives instead of living in a make-believe world.

Finally, we have to painfully acknowledge the existence of a fifth kind of blindness that is more pervasive and more destructive than all the rest: those who don't even look at all. Indifference and apathy are rampant, especially amongst Jews everywhere. There are those who are not involved, not interested, caught up in their own lives and don't turn to look at the situation here: and, if they occasionally look it is superficial, hasty and prone to parrot the opinions that are considered politically correct. It is difficult to think independently when bombarded by the barrage of opinion pieces churned out by forces inimical to the best interests of Israel. It's just easier and far more convenient to have a few pat quotes and intelligent-sounding, stale statements that leave the impression of concern, and leave it at that.

We can't afford to be blind. We have to know the truth and face it. We dare not live in intellectual ivory towers that are disengaged from reality. We turn a blind eye at great risk to all of Israel. Those who have lost their faith and belief are best advised to begin the journey back to Judaism.

The prophet Isaiah says (9: 11):

הָעָם הַהֹלְכִים בְּחֹשֶׁךְ, כְּאוֹר אֹר גְּדוֹל: יִשְׁבִּי בְּאֶרֶץ צְלֻמֹת, אֹר נִגַּח עֲלֵיהֶם.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen great light; those who dwelled in the land of the shadow of death, light has shone upon them."

I believe that Isaiah is expressing the thought of the Mesillat Yesharim. The nation that walks in darkness and cannot see the obstacles and pitfalls ahead need only a big burst of light and everything becomes illuminated.

But these others, who dwell in some kind of pseudo-intellectual world full of shadow and think that they see better than others, will need to go through a process of light slowly shining upon them until they get it.

The Talmud records a difference of opinion between the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel with regard to the performance of Hanukkah candle lighting. Beit Shammai is of the opinion that on the first night we light eight candles, then seven, until the last night, we light one candle. Beit Hillel says that we begin by lighting one candle and keep adding another candle each night until we light eight candles. I would like to suggest that Beit Shammai sees the light of the Menorah as banishing the darkness of ignorance, apathy, the inability to see the consequences of our actions. One big burst of light and the road ahead can be seen clearly, so as to avoid the obstacles and pitfalls. Once seen, it is possible to diminish the intensity of the illumination night by night.

Beit Hillel, on the other hand, addresses the blindness that is fed by the mind, the intellect that has gone astray. For that blindness, a process of re-education is necessary. One dose of light, a little more and even more, until the mind is able to penetrate its self imposed darkness and break free of its fetters.

Reading this book is guaranteed to lead to blessed clarity of vision, the desperate need of our time.

Let us pray for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (65: 19):

וְגִלְתִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם, וְשִׁשְׁתֵּי בָעַמִּי; וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע בָּה עוֹד, קוֹל בְּכִי וְקוֹל זִעְקָה.

"For, I will rejoice over Jerusalem and exult with my people and there will no longer be heard in it the sound of weeping and the sound of alarm."

We, who live in this city, have learned to live with weeping and sirens of alarm. We have become finely sensitive to the sound of an ambulance. One ambulance and we take note; the second ambulance siren immediately following and we know that murderous madness has struck again. Enough. Rejoice, oh G-d, in Jerusalem and exult with your people.

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