

# Parsha Pearls

Mishpatim 5768

## **Do not follow the majority for evil. (23:2)**

When Rabbi Chaim of Brisk (1853-1918) spoke about Zionism, he gave the following parable: Once there was a town in which there was a well that had been closed and sealed for as long as anyone could remember. It was common knowledge that the water of this well was poisoned, such that anyone who drank from it would go insane.

One day, a group of distinguished doctors came to town, and they heard about the well. "We must investigate this well for ourselves," they said. As they were distinguished doctors, the townspeople could not refuse them, and so they agreed to open the well for them. The doctors performed tests on the water, and determined that there was nothing bad or poisonous about it; the water was perfectly safe to drink. People began to drink from the well, and they indeed became insane. As more and more people drank and went insane, these insane people began to look at the sane people who had not drunk from the water as insane. For such is the way of insanity: those who suffer from it believe themselves to be normal and everyone else to be insane. The sane people, of course, told the insane people that they had gone insane, but their words went unheeded.

Now that the well was open, more and more people drank from it, until there were left only a small number of people, or perhaps one person, who had not

drunk. The whole town shouted at this tiny minority, "Lunatics! Lunatics!" There came a point where these few individuals stopped and reconsidered: "Perhaps the whole town is correct and we are the lunatics, and we must drink from the well water and heal ourselves."

But then they reassured themselves with the following logic, "We still remember the days when the well was closed and sealed, and everyone knew that the water was poisoned and whoever drank from it would go insane. If so, then we must be correct. We are normal and sane, the others are all insane, and we will not drink from the well."

If this parable applied long ago, in Rabbi Chaim Brisker's time, it applies all the more to our day and age, when unfortunately the majority of the Jewish people are Zionists. Sometimes anti-Zionist Jews experience moments of weakness, when they wonder if perhaps they are insane and it is the Zionists who are normal Jews. To regain their bearings, they must continually look back at the previous generations of Jews who all believed in the coming of moshiach, who all believed that the redemption was exclusively G-d's domain, who all believed that Jews were in exile because G-d wanted them there. They must read the classic Jewish commentaries and works of previous centuries, and realize that it is not they

but the Zionists who are the anomaly in Jewish history.

This is what Shlomo Hamelech taught us in Shir hashirim (1:8), "If you do not know, O most beautiful of women, then go in the footsteps of the flock, and pasture your kids among the dwellings of the shepherds." Rashi explains, "If you, My people, who are the most beautiful of the nations, do not know

where to go to pasture your flocks safely among the threatening nations of the world, follow the imprints of the footsteps of the flock: study the ways of your forefathers in previous times, who accepted My Torah and kept My charge and My commandments, and walk in their ways, for only by virtue of this will you be able to pasture your kids among the nations."