

“Double Vision”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

The Midrash teaches that God said to Moses: "You see with single vision, but I see with double vision." God sees not only the Israel that will accept the Torah, but also the Israel that will build the golden calf. Unlike God, Moses does not yet see both the merit and the failings of this newly freed nation.

Developing that double vision is crucial; the essayist Hazlitt wrote that man is the only animal that laughs and weeps for he is the only animal struck by the difference between what things are and what they ought to be. This is required of a leader — Moses must cherish an ideal while never losing his hold on the reality before him. Again and again he will be called upon to both love the people and also to rebuke them.

"Like all dreamers," wrote Sartre in his autobiography, "I confused disillusion with truth." Cynicism is easy and illusions are comforting. What is difficult is to maintain the balance between the two, keeping in mind both human failings and human grandeur. We are better than we fear but not yet so good as we hope. Faith helps us to recognize our shortcomings but also enables us to measure our aspirations. To be fully human, we need double vision.