



# Shoftim

## Until the last hostage

For as long as a single hostage, alive or dead, remains in Gaza, the Jewish people will be incomplete.

We learn this from the Parsha of Shoftim in which Hashem tells us “Tamim tihiyeh im Hashem elokecha” - you the Jewish people must be tamim, which translates as whole, complete, perfect with the Lord, your God.”

Fascinatingly, in Psalm nineteen, verse eight, we read ‘Torat Hashem temima’, the Torah of Hashem is temima. It's that same word, 'complete', whole, perfect. Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan of Kovno beautifully said that from here we learn 'Yisrael v'oraita chad hu' - the Jewish people and the Torah are one, because the same term is used in order to describe both. But what's the message of it?

Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan went on to say, in the same way that if one single letter of the Torah is pasul, if it's rendered unfit, then an entire scroll becomes unfit to be read. So too, if one single Jewish person is suffering, then we as a nation are incomplete.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains this on a deeper level, introducing the Talmudic concept of 'kvil mukaf'. What does this mean in regard to writing a Sefer Torah? In a Torah scroll there needs to be spaces between the words, but in addition, there need to be tiny spaces between the letters of each word. If a single letter is joined with ink to the letter before it or after it, it's pasul and the Torah is pasul.

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So, what we therefore see in a Torah scroll is that each letter is independent of others and therefore stands as itself, and at the same time, it is an indivisible part of the word which it is part of. So too, the Rebbe said, each one of us lives as individuals but at the same time we are part of our great nation.

With broken hearts, we continue to lament the awful situation of the hostages in Gaza. And it is because of their plight, and so many others who are suffering, that we as a nation are currently incomplete. Our focus is on them, our prayers are for them.

May Hakadosh Baruch Hu bless them to come home swiftly and safely, may peace reign and may we, the Jewish people, speedily be complete once again.

Shabbat Shalom.