



Devarim

Words of encouragement

From the Parsha of Devarim we have wonderful words of encouragement for the Jewish people right now.

Moshe declared 'Hashem elohei avotechem yosef aleichem kachem elef pe'amim'. May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers 1000 times over.

The Midrash intriguingly, tells us that this is a blessing, that the numbers of the Jewish people will be from one end of the world through to the other end of the world.

We will number so very many. And why is that? It's because Moshe didn't say 'eleph pa'am' 1,000 times, he said 'eleph pe'amim' 1000 times. So what is the difference between 'eleph pa'am' and 'eleph pe'amim'?

In the Sefer Bina Le'atid he explains beautifully, you see, had it been eleph pa'am it would have been 1000 times more. So, there were 600,000 then and that means there would be over all the years 600 million. But no says the Midrash, 'eleph pe'amim' means, take the current number and double it, and then double it again, and again, and do that 1000 times, and then you will get the total number of the Jewish people through the ages.

There is a fable from the 13th century in Persia, which tells us how the King of Persia summoned the creator of the game of chess, and he said to him, "I enjoy your game so much. How can I reward you? I'd like to give you just any gift you want".

The creator of chess said, "okay I have an idea. Please ask your servants to create an enormous chessboard. In the first square, place one grain of wheat and then double it on the second square, and double that on the third: from two to four to eight, to sixteen and so on. Once they've filled all sixty four squares, please ask them to put the grains of wheat in sacks and to deliver it to my home."

"Is that all you want?" asked the King? And the man said, "yes, that will be sufficient." So they tried it. And after a while, the chief of the granary of the Royal court came to the king, and he said, "Your Majesty, there isn't enough wheat in your entire kingdom to fill up all these squares!"

Mathematicians will tell us, that the total number of grains of wheat needed for that is eighteen quintillion – that is more than 200 times the amount of wheat that's produced in the entire world, in any given year. That is the Bracha that Moshe Rabbeinu gives to the Jewish people over all ages.

Eleph Pe'amim – doubles a thousand times, which means there will be so many Jewish people despite the intentions of our enemies who might want to see otherwise. The Jewish nation will continue to live, to thrive, to grow with the blessings of Hashem.

What a wonderful Bracha for us to read on the eve of the fast day of Tisha b'Av. During these exceptionally challenging times, from the Parsha of Devarim we learn yet again, Am Yisrael Chai.

Shabbat Shalom.