



Re'eh

A Person or a People?

Parshat Re'eh commences "re'eh anochi noten lifnechem hayom bracha uklala" - "you (in the singular), must see that I'm placing before 'you' (in the plural), on this day, a blessing and a curse." So, who is Hashem addressing? Is it me, or is it all of us? Fascinatingly, the commencement of the following sedra has the same phenomenon.

"Shoftim v'shotrim titein lecha bechol shareacha" - "you must place judges and bailiffs, (that's you in the singular), in all of your, (in the plural), gates."

And once again, it's difficult to make sense of it. But perhaps what Hashem wants us to know is that I as an individual, am part of one cog of my nation and therefore I have a dual existence and accompanying that, a dual responsibility. I live for myself and I live for the entire people.

This is a phenomenon which occurs often in the book of Devarim, expressed most clearly through the two paragraphs of the Shema. The first in the singular, the second in the plural, conveying the message that the same mitzvot which are presented in those passages must be carried out by ourselves as individuals but that we have a responsibility for the whole nation as well.

This is a key message of Devarim and I believe that it is always relevant, but I can hardly recall a time when it's been more relevant than right now. And that is because everyone is living as individuals, within our own family structures but, at the same time, we are so conscious in every moment of every day of the plight of the state of Israel, under threat for its very existence, together with a worrying, sharp rise in antisemitism right around the world.

And I've been so extraordinarily impressed with Jewish people throughout the world, seeing their altruism, their kindness, their selflessness, and their giving nature. And it's not just being concerned and worried, they are taking action, helping, trying to do something about the situation.

The prophet Hoshea so beautifully describes the people of Israel as being like the sand of the sea. "V'haya mispar Bnei Yisrael k'chol hayam". But why the sand of the sea? Surely just describing them as sand would have been enough? I think the prophet is telling us that, like the sand of the sea which are tiny grains but compacted together like mud, set as one entity. We are individuals but we're part of one united, strong, great nation.

So therefore, let us continue to live up to the aspirations of what Hashem demands of us, to do our best as individuals and at the same time to do our best for our people, and through our people, to do the best for our world.

Shabbat Shalom.