



Ki Tavo

We Can Always Stand Tall

Despite campaigns of demonisation, we can always stand tall.

There is a fascinating connection between stones and the Jewish people. In Parshat Ki Tavo, for example, our nation was commanded with the mitzvah “v'chataftah al ha'avanim haeleh”- “write all the words of the Torah on these stones”. Just as we were entering into the Holy Land, stones had a position of prominence. Similarly, at the end of the book of Bereshit, when Yaakov was just about to pass away, he refers to his beloved son Yosef as being “even Yisrael”, “the stone of Israel”.

Targum Onkelos has a wonderful commentary on this which he says that the word ‘even’, stone, is actually a composite word, it is made up of two different terms ‘av’ and ‘ben’, making ‘even’. Av is father, a parent, ben is son, a child. And therefore, Onkelos explains, Yaakov was saying to Yosef that thanks to your leadership, parents and children, people of all generations in Egypt and around the world have been blessed by you.

But I believe that there is an added implication of this. A stone is indestructible in the face of natural elements. So too, Jewish tradition can never be destroyed if

we convey the beauty of our heritage faithfully from parents to children through all ages.

Being compared to a stone, therefore, is a reference to Jewish survival. And now we can understand, with this in mind, a reference to stones in the psalms of Hallel. “Even ma’asu habonim hayetah l’rosh pina”, “the stone that the builders have rejected has become a cornerstone”. This is a description of, sadly, so many instances in Jewish history when the builders and sustainers of civilisations have preferred to leave the Jews out. However, despite their efforts, we have continued always to be the cornerstone of our civilisations. It is significant that this verse, this message appears in our Hallel, our songs of joyful praise and the message to us is despite the thoughts, the efforts, the intentions of those who have malevolent intent with regard to Jews, Judaism and the

State of Israel, we must always stand tall and be proud of who we are and what we are about.

Shabbat shalom.