

## **“And say to him (Pharaoh), “Hashem, G-d of the Ivriyim, (Hebrews), happened upon us.” (3:18)**

Hashem instructed Moshe *Rabbeinu* to approach Pharaoh on behalf of the Jewish People. This is the first time that an address is to be made to a gentile king in the name of the Jewish People. We find the plural derivative of the word *Ivri* in a form, *Ivriyim*, with two ‘*yudin*,” which never occurs again. Elsewhere, it is always written as *Ivrim*. *Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l.*, posits that the character which is defined by the word *Ivri* is herein underscored. The word, “*Ivriyim*,” emphasizes not only the character that marks the people as a whole, but one which characterizes each individual member. The word *Ivri* was first used in connection with Avraham *Avinu*. He had the courage and fortitude to leave the whole world *b’ever echad*, on one side, while he stood firm in his belief in Hashem— on the other side. *Ivriyim* bespeaks the nature of his descendants. They, too, have inherited his unique courage and conviction.

Hashem instructed Moshe to make his demand on behalf of the *Ivriyim*, thereby implying the notion that in each individual Jew the entire nation is represented. Each single Jew has the courage and tenacity to stand alone, if necessary, against the whole world, to represent and even carry on the Jewish nation himself. The gentile nations are quite often described by a symbol of an animal. It is their symbol of strength. Conversely, *Klal Yisrael* is pictured as a tree. An animal can be killed with one movement, a shot or a stab. A tree, however, reproduces itself, and every part of it has the possibility of representing the continuance of life of the whole unit. Even if the root is severed – a branch, a twig, or a bud is quite sufficient to revive the destroyed plant, granting it continued existence.

Moshe said to Pharaoh, “We are *Ivriyim* – not *Ivrim*. The spirit that moves me to speak is not within me alone, but in the elders and in the lives of every individual Jew. We do not let ourselves be destroyed. We endure, because in every individual spirit, the courage and the determination of the whole is reproduced.” *Klal Yisrael* is a collective unit, composed of individuals who each are a microcosm of the totality.