

## See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing that you listen. (11:26,27)

Noticeably, the Torah begins with *Re'eh*, see, in the singular (instead of *Re'u*) in the plural form; then, it writes *lifneichem*, before you, in the plural (not *lifanecha* in the singular form) and concludes with, *asher tishme'u*, plural that you listen (not *tishma*) singular. In his *Aderes Eliyahu*, the *Gaon*, *zl*, *m' Vilna*, explains that the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, are spoken to *Klal Yisrael* in the singular, because when they stood at *Har Sinai*, all of *Klal Yisrael* were standing *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, as one person with one heart. Their unity was complete. Thus, Hashem spoke to them as one unit. Likewise, here, *re'eh*, see, is spoken in the singular, because all the Jewish People stood melded together as one unit. Regarding *lifneichem*, before you (in the plural), *Klal Yisrael* is addressed in the plural, with each individual having before him his individual *bechirah*, choice. "Will I listen or will I not listen?" In this case, being part of a group can prove to be counterproductive, if the majority of the group is not prepared to listen. Thus, Hashem says: "The choice is yours individually. Even if the majority strays, do not follow. The decision is yours individually, exclusive of the sway of the majority of the people."

*Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel*, *zl*, offers an alternative explanation. Veritably, the entire *parsha* should have been written in the plural, because Hashem was speaking to the entire nation. It begins in the singular – *re'eh* – to teach that herein lies a message to be conveyed to each individual or community. When the message is for the individual, it carries greater weight and, as a result, the individual takes it much more seriously. *Rav Finkel* quotes an incident that occurred concerning the *Brisker Rav*, *zl*. It was during World War II, and the bombings over Poland had begun. The *Brisker Rav* was in dire need of *hadassim*, myrtle branches, for his *lulav*. However, he did not seek just any *hadas*; he wanted those that would conform to all of the imposed stringencies that Brisk placed on the branch. It happened to be that *Horav Menachem Ziemba*, *zl*, was in the ghetto with the *Brisker Rav*. He asked the *Rav* if it were necessary to observe all of the stringencies during a time in which life and death were hanging in the balance. Perhaps now would be a time for the *Rav* to be *mekabel*, accept, a regular kosher *hadas*, without all of the *pitchifkes*, details. The *Brisker Rav* immediately replied, "There is no such thing as a 'good' time or 'bad' time. The *mitzvah* must be carried out in its entirety at all times. War is not an excuse to relax one's *mitzvah* observance."

The *Brisker Rav* added, "If Hashem would ask one thing of a Jew, to do something for Him, find a set of *hadassim*, is there any question that immediately every Jew would drop everything and search for these *hadassim*? The reason we lack the proper emotion necessary to execute a *mitzvah* properly is that we do not realize that Hashem Himself is commanding/asking us to carry out the *mitzvah*; Hashem is speaking to all Jews. This is not a selective *mitzvah*. This is not the only *mitzvah* of the Torah. This *mitzvah* has been a constant command for thousands of years. This is not the very first time that we have been commanded to do this. The Torah is teaching us that we must view every *mitzvah* that we are about to perform as a personal enjoyment which is

reiterated on that very day by the Creator Himself. This can be derived from the *pasuk* in *Krias Shema*: *V'hayu ha'devarim ha'eileh*, 'And these matters (that I command you,') *asher Anochi metzavcha hayom*, 'today' (*Devarim* 6:6). These: only this/these one *mitzvah*; I, Hashem Himself, command you, only you; today, not thousands of years ago. Therefore, each and every day, the Torah should be in our eyes as a brand new command. Regardless of 'last year's' command, today is this year. If we would sense this concerning every *mitzvah*, then, the difficult circumstances notwithstanding, we would be only too happy to carry out His will."

I think this might be the underlying meaning of "living Torah." Our Torah is not an archaic relic of the past, as some of the secularists would have us think. Our Torah is very much alive, with its Divine Author, Hashem, speaking to us constantly. When we open a *Chumash* and read the words, it is Hashem speaking to us – now.