

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

PARASHAT RE'EI-2019

פרשת ראה—5779

HaShem is telling us, through Moshe, “See, I place before you on this day, a blessing and a curse. The blessing will come by observing the Mitzvot, and the curse will come if we don’t observe the Mitzvot”. A difficulty in the opening pasuk is that the word “Re’ei”—see—is written in the singular, while the word “Lif’nei’chem”—before you—is written in the plural form. Why is this so? One answer often given is that the purpose of this change is to highlight the impact that the actions of an individual has on the collective tzibbur, the entire nation, as elaborated by Rambam in Laws of Teshuvah.

I would like to suggest another explanation that I heard from Rav Kahanman. The blessing and the curse are revealed to everyone, but only rare individuals actually see and appreciate the reality of the Brachot. People may enjoy many blessings in their lives, but simply take them for granted, not recognizing the Yad HaShem, the hand of GD. Others may encounter difficulties in life, and not realize that they are receiving a divine message that they need to change something in their life. GD is here calling on each individual to look closely and internalize, to understand what is happening before their eyes. The ability to apply such insight is a stage on the road to prophecy. In Sefer Shmuel 1 (9:9) we find the Navi referring to himself as a “ro’eh”, one who sees, and indeed, we are told, “a prophet was earlier called a “seer”.

A prophet, before he became a recognized prophet, was a seer, someone who could look at events before him and see their true meaning. Someone who had this ability was poised to become a prophet. Moshe saw the *sneh*; not an unusual sight. Many people passed by, saw the *sneh* and went on their way, without noticing that the *burning bush* was unusual. The *bush* was burning, but not consumed by the fire. Moshe saw something unusual, thus he was a seer before becoming the Great Navi of HaShem. That was the beginning of a Moshe-GD relationship. GD, then, is calling on us to look at events occurring in our lives in a way that will lead to observance of the Torah and a closer relationship with Him.

At the end of the parasha, we are commanded to make a pilgrimage three times a year to the Beit HaMikdash, to appear before GD. This same Mitzva also appears in parashat Mishpatim and In Ki-Tisa, but different expressions are used in reference to “appearing before GD.” In Mishpatim we find the expression to appear “El P’nei HaAdon HaShem”, referring to GD as the Master of the universe. In Ki-Tisa, He is referred to as P’nei HaAdon HaShem Elokei Yisrael, the particular GD of the Jewish people, and in our parasha He is known as “Hashem Elokecha, Your personal GD who possesses particular providence over each individual. This Mitzvah of pilgrimage, then, as presented in our parasha, calls on each of us to renew, three times a year,

our personal relationship with HaShem. In this way, we will better be able to apply the insight we are called upon to see, and the events occurring before us in a meaningful way.

Shabbat Shalom , from Yerushalayim, Rabbi Aharon ziegler