

Parshas Shoftim

This week's *Torah* portion, *Shoftim*, begins with the command to appoint judges and officers over the people. "*Shoftim v'shotrim titen lecha* - Judges and officers you shall place over yourself." The commentaries ask the question, "Why does the *posuk* (verse) use the singular form of *lecha* (to you) and not *lachem*, the plural? Isn't this a command to the entire people to have judges and officers in their midst?"

The use of the singular form is intentional and conveys a subtle message. This *parsha* is usually read at the beginning of the month of *Elul*, the month of preparation before *Rosh Hashana* where introspection is emphasized in order to create a plan of self-growth for the coming year. In order to stay the course, if systems, reminders, and safeguards are in place, one is more likely to be more zealous in the performance of *mitzvos* and successful in resisting temptations and negative influences.

The *Torah* is telling us that at times each of us needs to appoint judges and officers over ourselves individually. Each of us needs reassurance and guidance to stay the course and continue to grow as Jews in our daily lives. Parents, *Rabbis*, teachers, family and friends play a key role in helping all of us develop and be honest with ourselves. May we all have an uplifting month in getting ready for the coming New Year.