



All of Israel Are Responsible for Each Other

Parshas Nitzavim - Vayelech

The immigrants came to Israel, but no one gave them proper attention. The authorities were overwhelmed and unable to cope with the thousands of Jews coming from Yemen and the other Arab countries; in lieu of proper housing they were placed in temporary tin structures.

My father, Rabbi Yisrael Grossman, could not bear to see their suffering and living conditions, he also observed the spiritual deterioration that the younger generation was experiencing. He went to their camps and collected the youth who wished to receive a Torah education. He established a school for them in Lod. The work was not easy, and he received no funding, and so he had to teach while at the same time trying to raise funds. He would go from *Shul* to *Shul* every Shabbos, and received support along the way.

One Shabbos father came home depressed and depleted. After two years of hard work he had just learned that that one of the students had decided to leave the Yeshiva. He was a top student who left for a Kibbutz. In those days it was not easy to enter a Kibbutz, but father did not give up and went to meet the young man at the end of Shabbos. He of course was not admitted into the Kibbutz, but was able to infiltrate it early Sunday morning.

In our weekly parsha we learn about the mutual responsibility Jews have towards each other. "You are all standing this day before the Lord, your G-d the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel, your young children, your women, and your stranger who is within your camp, both your woodcutters and your water drawers, that you may enter the covenant of the Lord, your G-d, and His oath, which the Lord, your G-d, is making with you this day."¹

Ohr Hachayim asks why there is need for such detail in the verse? Why not just say "all of Israel"? He continues to ask – "that you may enter the covenant

of the Lord, your G-d" – what covenant does this relate to?

He answers that the covenant in question is the covenant between the Jews, that each Jew is responsible to do his outmost to support other Jews and help them in any way possible. Therefore, Moshe detailed the various walks of life in Jewish society. Everyone retains a spiritual level and is obligated to act in kind: "Rav and Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Habiba taught: Whoever can stop his household from committing a sin but does not, is included (in terms of responsibility) for the sins of his household; if he can stop his fellow citizens, he is included in the sins of his fellow citizens; if the whole world, he is included in [the sins of] the whole world."²

The verse can be understood as follows: "**Leaders of your tribes**" – your leaders who are responsible for everyone. "**Your elders and your officers**" – everyone responsible for his family. "**Every man of Israel**" – each person is responsible for himself.

This teaches us that the more lofty and closer to G-d you are, the more responsibility you have towards each Jew. This was the motivation and drive that was behind my father's actions.

My father went from house to house, searching for his student. My father finally tracked him down. He tried to open the door, but it was locked. He put his head through the window and shouted: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our G-d; the Lord is one." The youngster crawled out of the window and stated: "I am with you Rabbi." The Kibbutz members got hold of my father and escorted him out of the Kibbutz.

His student was true to his word and snuck out in the middle of the night. He came to my father's home and received a warm bowl of soup and much love. He grew to become a teacher, and every time I meet him I remember again the significance of mutual responsibility.

¹ Dvarim 29:9 - 11.

² Talmud tractate Shabbos 54b.