

They will stumble over one another. (26:37)

They will become so demoralized and fearful of the enemy that they will flee without seeing where they are going, stumbling over one another. *Chazal* add a new twist to the interpretation of this *pasuk*. They will stumble over each other's sins. Since all Jews are inherently responsible one for another, one Jew will be held liable for the transgression perpetrated by his fellow Jew. We are all components of a large unit called *Klal Yisrael*. We cannot ignore one another's shortcomings.

A visitor once came to the *Volozhiner Yeshiva* and noticed **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl**, delivering a *shiur*. As usual, the lecture was replete with brilliant themes and incredible logic. This person went over to *Rav Chaim* at the end of the *shiur* and said, "It is truly regrettable that you live in Volozhin. Your students will study regardless. Perhaps they might be missing one more *pshat*, exposition, on the *Rambam - nu*; it is not really such a terrible thing. If you would live in Paris or in Berlin, you would certainly be able to affect the spiritual lives of many Jews. Indeed, you might succeed in stemming the tide of assimilation. *Rav Chaim* looked at the visitor. In a strong, clear voice, he responded, "You are mistaken. In fact, my learning here in Volozhin prevents the Jews in Paris and Berlin from becoming *meshumadim*, apostates.

A similar story occurred concerning **Rav Yisrael Salanter, zl** when he heard that in a small town, far from his city of Kovno, home of his famous *kollel*, an individual Jew committed a blatant act of *chillul Shabbos*. He immediately convened his *kollel* fellows, which included some of the greatest *Torah* luminaries. He delivered a scathing lecture on the topic of *Shabbos*, its holiness and the gravity of its desecration. After the *shiur* one of the fellows questioned the reason for the reprimand. He responded that he had heard that *Shabbos* had been desecrated in a town far from them. "*Rebbe*, what does this have to do with us?" was the immediate retort. *Rav Yisrael* answered, "If your *shemiras Shabbos* would be more meticulous, if your observance of the holiness of *Shabbos* was stronger, there would not have occurred this instance of *chillul Shabbos* in that town. You must realize that you are responsible for all of *Yahadus*, Judaism. If someone in Paris becomes an apostate, it is because our spiritual level has waned somewhat. Every Jew has a direct influence upon all the Jews in the world - for the positive and the negative." These compelling words should serve for us, not only as a condemnation and demand, but also as a source of encouragement of our awesome responsibility to all of *Klal Yisrael*.