

## "And while the Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they found a man gathering sticks on the day of Shabbos." (15:32)

*Rashi* explains that the *Torah* is relating *Bnei Yisrael's* shame. They had observed the first *Shabbos* in the desert, and on the second *Shabbos* an individual profaned it. Why were *Bnei Yisrael* held responsible for this isolated act of *chillul Shabbos*? Indeed, they had done everything possible to ensure that the sanctity of *Shabbos* not be desecrated. The *Sifri* states that Moshe had even designated guards throughout the encampment to caution people regarding *chillul Shabbos*.

When the people saw this man pick up the sticks, they admonished him not to continue his desecration of *Shabbos*. When he ignored their warning, they seized him and brought him to Moshe to decide his fate. Upon hearing the verdict from Hashem, Moshe instructed *Bnei Yisrael* in the manner of execution. What more could *Bnei Yisrael* have done? Why, then, is all of *Klal Yisrael* collectively held accountable for this singular act? Should the entire nation have been condemned for a single person?

*Horav Yosef Z. Salant z.l.* offers a profound explanation for this enigma. A unique aspect of *Shabbos* distinguishes it from other *mitzvos*. On the first *luchos*, tablets, the *Torah* enjoins us to observe *Shabbos* with the word *zachor*, *remember the day of Shabbos*. On the second set of *luchos*, in contrast, the commandment is expressed with the word *shamor*, *guard the Shabbos*. *Chazal* state that the words "*zachor*" and "*shamor*" were both said in one utterance.

*Horav Salant* explains that one must do everything in his power to prevent others from desecrating *Shabbos*. One who has the ability to prevent others from desecrating *Shabbos* and does not, is viewed as if he personally profaned *Shabbos*! The reason for this is that *zachor* admonishes the individual to observe *Shabbos*. *Shamor*, on the other hand, indicates that he is responsible for collective observance, being watchful that others observe *Shabbos*, as well. Since these two words/*mitzvos* were said in one utterance, an individual is held accountable for another Jew's *chillul Shabbos* as if he personally had transgressed! Transgressing "*shamor*" is tantamount to transgressing "*zachor*"!

In the incident of the "*mekoshesh*," why wasn't the man prevented from carrying out his transgression? The guards should have immediately seized and subdued him physically, thereby thwarting his reprehensible act. Although Moshe appointed guards, they were regrettably inadequate to deter this travesty. Consequently, *Bnei Yisrael* were collectively derelict in this first instance of *chillul Shabbos*. If there was anything humanly possible for them to have done in order to prevent this *aveirah*, sin, they should have done so. Since they did not, they were obligated to accept complete responsibility as if they had been personally compliant. These words are striking and should inspire each one of us to accept our communal responsibility.