

## "For if you will observe this entire commandment that I command you." (11:22)

The *parsha* concludes with a last exhortation to be diligent in keeping *mitzvos*. Indeed, the entire *parsha* seems to focus upon *mitzvah* observance. This prompts *Chazal* to comment, *vcrv ch,f ohruna*. The word *rna*, "to keep," is repeated a number of times in this *parsha*. Why is this issue reiterated? *Chazal* respond with a thoughtful remark, "Perhaps you might say, 'there are elders among us, there are great men among us, there are prophets among us, so what is there for us to keep'." The Torah responds, *iurna, runa*, "You must also keep it, *vru,c ihua kfva*, in our religion, everyone is equal when it comes to the Torah." What is the message of *Chazal*? Is there any question regarding individual responsibility to serve the Almighty?

In interpreting *Chazal*, *Horav Moshe Swift, z.l.*, makes the following observation: In the Jewish way of life, departmentalization is a tragic fallacy. To say that certain Jews must do one thing, while others have different responsibilities, undermines the very foundation of Judaism. To assert that the elders should be the ones to pray and say *Tehillim*, to go volunteer at the hospitals and perform other acts of loving kindness is incorrect. To relegate the study of *Torah* only to the *yeshiva* student is a blatant way of evading one's personal obligation to learn *Torah*. To defer the responsibility to rebuke others to the Rabbi/prophet is another manner in which one avoids his responsibility as a Jew.

The secret of Jewish life is that everyone is equal in *Torah*. All members of the community, parents and teachers, Rabbis and laymen, professionals and *yeshiva* students meld together as one body to serve Hashem. One group of Jews cannot focus only on an individual aspect of Judaism. We must **all** study *Torah*, perform acts of loving kindness, and pray to Hashem thrice daily. In order to maintain a healthy spiritual environment, all Jews must combine their observances. True, some may place greater emphasis on one manner of observance than another, but this does not grant them license to avoid fulfilling their all encompassing responsibility as members of *Klal Yisrael*.