

You are all standing today... for you to pass into a covenant of Hashem, your G-d, and into His oath, that Hashem, your G-d, forges with you today. (29:9,11)

Chazal teach that when *Klal Yisrael* accepted the oath at *Har Gerizim* and *Har Eival* – *naasu areivim zeh la'zeh*, “They became guarantors one for another.” The principle, *Kol Yisrael areivim zeh la'zeh*, “All Jews are guarantors for one another,” is the foundation for many *halachos*, laws, which relate to Torah observance for the individual and the community. We must care for one another, because we are responsible for each other. This is the novel idea that was declared at *Arvos Moav*, the Plains of Moav. We wonder what is so novel about this idea that had not been indicated previously by the *mitzvah* of *Ho'cheiach tochee'ach es amisecha*, “You shall reprove your fellow” (*Vayikra* 19:17). Indeed, the *mitzvah* of rebuke was given at *Har Sinai*, while the oath at *Arvos Moav* was later. What was supplemented by the oath that had not been included in their original acceptance of the Torah?

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* writes that *Arvos Moav* added a new dimension to our collective responsibility for all Jews: We must make sure that no Jew fall into a situation from which he cannot extricate himself. We have to prevent a fellow Jew from falling prey to sin. Anyone who can prevent his brother from sinning and does not, transgresses the oath taken at *Arvos Moav*. *Kulchem*, “all of you,” each and every Jew, according to his ability, must see to it that the other Jew does not sin. Obviously, the heads of the Tribes, the spiritual leaders of each generation, those whose power extends beyond their grasp, have a much greater responsibility. Like everything else in life: it goes with the territory.

In *Parashas Ki Savo* (*Devarim* 27:26) the Torah writes: “Accursed is one who will not uphold the words of this Torah, to perform them.” The members of *Klal Yisrael* accepted upon themselves – with a curse and with an oath – to uphold the entire Torah. The *Netziv*, *zl*, comments that this was primarily the acceptance of the Covenant at *Arvos Moav*. He adds that the words: *Asher lo yakim*, “Who does not uphold,” refers to anyone who does not endeavor to uphold the Torah through others. In other words, if I do not make sure that my friend keeps the Torah, it is a stain on **my** observance. Regardless of what I must do – I have to try to make my brother observe the Torah. It is not enough for **me** to be *frum*, observant. I must, likewise, concern myself with the religious plateau of other Jews. I may not lock my door, close my eyes, stuff my ears, and act like the proverbial “three monkeys” – as if everything is fine. In fact, it is not fine, and I am part of the problem.

At the conclusion of the Covenant at *Arvos Moav*, the Torah gives us a reason for the initiative: “In order to establish you today as a people to Him and that He be a G-d to you” (*Ibid.* 29:12). The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that this *pasuk* serves as the rationale for the Covenant at *Arvos Moav*. A Jew might question carrying the weight of responsibility for his brother. One would think that the average Jew carries enough of a load just seeing to it that he himself remains observant and

committed. To worry about everyone else might be asking a bit much. To this concern, the Torah responds, *L'maan ha'kim oscha ha'yom lo l'am*, "In order to establish you today as a people to Him." Unless Jews care about one another's spiritual welfare, the nation will eventually disintegrate. One day, it will be a simple slip in obedience; the next day, it will be a slight *aveirah*, sin. If this slippage is not immediately addressed, the entire nation can fall apart. The future of *Klal Yisrael* is based upon the spiritual solidarity of its people. If we allow our spiritually deficient brother to falter, the nation will splinter and eventually lose its singularity and distinction. Whatever Hashem does for us – or demands of us – is for our own good, so that the nation will prosper.

We must remember that *Klal Yisrael* is one large collective body of Jews. When one member sins, it harms the entire body. Every transgression that is committed causes the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, to distance itself from us. If **we** will not be responsible for our brothers – who will?