

"And it came to pass when he heard the words of this curse that he bless himself in his heart saying: 'I shall have peace, though in stubbornness of my heart do I walk that the water be added (unto him) with the dry.'" (29:18)

Rashi explains that Hashem will increase the retribution against the infidel in the following manner: The sins he had committed inadvertently, which in the past had been overlooked by Hashem, would be added to the accounting of his deliberate sins. He cites *Targum Onkelos* who concurs that the unintentional sins would be added to the intentional ones. We must endeavor to understand the intensity of this punishment. What is really so harsh about this punishment?

The *Satmar Rebbe z.l.* offers a novel interpretation of this *pasuk*. *Chazal* explain that this "curse" and *bris*, covenant, refer to the agreement Hashem made with *Klal Yisrael* regarding "*arvus*", mutual responsibility between Jews. "*All Jews are responsible for each other*," is more than a popular dictum extolling the virtue of caring one for another. It is essentially Hashem's mandate to *Bnei Yisrael*. It suggests more than merely keeping us together; it represents the bond that distinguishes us from all other nations. It also delineates our filial obligation for the spiritual welfare of our brethren.

Whoever witnesses or is aware of his brother's iniquity is charged by Hashem to protest and steer him in the correct path. To transgress this mandate is to sever his bond with the Almighty. Regrettably, due to personal *negios*, vested interests, some individuals "look aside" and refrain from getting involved. Their desire to distance themselves from "*machlokes*," controversy, is their overriding concern / excuse. After all, "*gadol ha'shalom*," peace is all important.

These people are mistaken. Their cowardice, inspired by their ignorance of *Torah*, is the basic factor in their "forbearance." In his commentary on *Pirkei Avos*, *Rabbeinu Yonah* addresses *Chazal's* imperative of "*Do not be friendly with a wicked person*." He writes, "One who befriends a *rasha*, evil person, shares in his iniquities." Consequently, a *rasha's* friend may be held liable for many sins. This holds true even if he derives no benefit from his "friend's" destructive activities. How true are the words of *Chazal*, "*Woe is to the rasha and woe is to his neighbor*."

This, suggests the *Satmar Rebbe*, is the *pasuk's* message, "*And it came to pass the words of this curse*." Let us turn to consider an individual who becomes aware of his obligation to protest against those who would transgress Hashem's *Torah*. He should not "*bless himself in heart saying, 'I shall have peace!*" Thus, he refrains from carrying out his mandate saying, 'I am a man of peace! How can I take action in such a way that will endanger my relationship with my friends?'"

Hashem responds to such an individual by transforming his inadvertent sins into premeditated sins. One who has the ability to "help" his brother by pointing out his spiritual shortcomings, but defers

from doing so, becomes a "silent" partner in his iniquitous activity. Ultimately, he must share in the consequences of his action.