

He became King over Yeshurun when the numbers of the nations gathered – the tribes of Yisrael in unity. (32:5)

Hashem is *Klal Yisrael's* King in the fullest sense only when the nation acts like a *klal*, united in each individual's conviction and obedience to carry out His Will. When we received the Torah at *Har Sinai* it was as *ish echad b'lev echad*, "One man with one heart." The nation was unified as one. We pray for that day to return. Unity among Jews is all-important. Without it, we cannot exist as a nation under G-d. Great *tzaddikim* have gone out of their way to promote *achdus*, unity. *Horav Moshe Epstein, zl*, the *Admor* of *Ozrov*, was a well-known Torah giant whose encyclopedic knowledge of all aspects of Torah was legendary. Yet, despite his distinguished status, he made time every day to study *Daf Yomi*, the folio-a-day program, initiated by *Horav Meir Shapiro, zl*, in which all Jews learn and participate together in experiencing unified Torah study. He was a scholar who did not need to set aside time for Torah-study. It was his life. Yet, he wanted to learn a topic that many Jews throughout the world were learning. He did the same concerning the *Mishnah Yomis* and *Halachah Yomis*, in which every day Jews throughout the world studied one *Mishnah* or one *halachah*. He wanted to be part of the *klal*, general community.

The inclusion of an individual in a group plays a dual role. On the one hand, he is relegated to suffering from the same negative decrees that affect the larger community – regardless of his own personal merit. On the other hand, by associating oneself with the larger group, he derives the benefits of the group – regardless of his personal merit. In the *Talmud Berachos* 30a, *Chazal* teach, "A person should always associate himself with the community." *Rashi* explains this as reference to one's prayers, maintaining that they be articulated in the plural form, rather than the singular. By praying for the public welfare, everyone is immediately included. Thus, no one individual needs personal merits in order to benefit from the prayers.

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, explains that the community is not viewed as merely a collection of individuals, but rather, as a new entity exceeding the combination of the merits and strengths of the individuals of which it is composed. He cites the *Derashos HaRan* who supports this idea from the fact that *Moshe Rabbeinu* was punished for referring to *Klal Yisrael* as "the rebellious people." While as individuals each one deserved this ignominious title, the nation, as a whole, did not deserve to be described in this way. *Moshe* was unjustified in referring to them by this label.

While *Chazal* make their statement concerning being part of the community with regard to prayer, it applies to the entire gamut of human endeavor. Indeed, as *Rav Chaim* notes, isolating individuals from the umbrella of "community" is the ploy of the *yetzer hara* to make them easy prey to succumb to temptation. As soon as *Yaakov Avinu* was left alone, *Va'yivasair Yaakov levado – va'yei'aveik ish imo*, "and a man [came and] wrestled with him" (*Bereishis* 32:25). This, as *Chazal* point out, was *Eisav's* guardian angel who had previously been powerless to ensnare *Yaakov* in his web, since he was never alone. He was surrounded by family. With them, *Yaakov* was safe. Once he was isolated, however, he attracted the forces of evil.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* concludes with the famous *Chazal* in the *Talmud Kiddushin* 30b, “If this abominable one has begun bothering you, draw him into the *bais ha’medrash*.” This is a reference to the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, who is beginning to overpower an individual. His salvation is to draw the *yetzer hara* into the house of Torah-study. Why? The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the *bais ha’medrash* is a place of community, where everyone is involved in the support of the same goal and objective. The despicable *yetzer hara* is powerless when he confronts the community. His strength peaks when there is a dearth of numbers. The merit of the many Jews in the house of study, all focused on studying Hashem’s Torah is so strong that it renders the *yetzer hara* helpless.

In his *Michtav Mei’Eliyahu*, *Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl*, explains that the role of community has great efficacy, especially in the area of prayer. In fact, it is desirable for one to pray for his friend in sickness or in trouble. He can even hope for a positive Heavenly response to his prayer. He does not have to be a *tzaddik*, righteous person, to entertain this hope. His simple concern for his friend, coupled with his sincere prayers on his behalf, can create new merit and, ultimately, a new revelation of Hashem’s glory in the world. It is this extra merit that might make the difference in tipping the scales in his friend’s behalf.

Furthermore, any individual can pray for the whole community, thereby increasing the merits of the whole community. Most of our prayers are founded upon this principle, and, for this reason, *Chazal* formulated our prayers in the plural. Every individual prays for the whole community, and his prayers are, therefore, exponentially more valuable in this form than if every individual would have merely prayed for himself. In this form each prayer is purer, because it is devoid of selfish interests. Thus, communal spirit is fostered, adding to its merit and consequent efficacy.