

And five of you will pursue one hundred and one hundred will pursue ten thousand. (25:8)

Anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of mathematics understands that the ratio presented above is inconsistent. If five Jews can pursue a hundred enemies, then the ratio of one to twenty should translate into a hundred Jews pursuing two thousand. The *pasuk*, however, does not say that. It writes that one hundred Jews will pursue one thousand of the enemy! Rashi cites the *Sifri* that infers that when people work as a group, when more people are united in serving the Almighty, the consequences of their actions are much more significant.

A *mitzvah*, when performed by a large group, has a greater impact than one which is observed by an individual. The *Chofetz Chaim* proves this from the *mitzvah* of *zimun*, the introductory blessing recited before *Bircas HaMazon*, grace after meals. When three men *bentch* together, they say, "*Nevareich*," "we will bless". When ten men *bentch* together, they say "*Nevareich le'Elokeinu*", "we will bless to our G-d." When one thousand *bentch* together, the blessing changes to "*Nevareich l'Hashem Elokeinu Elokei Yisrael*", "we will bless Hashem, Our G-d and the G-d of *Yisrael*." The aggregate power of a multitude of Jews is remarkable. There is no fixed ratio for correlating the effect of a few Jews who observe *mitzvos* to the combined effort of many. Consequently, one should always seek to include himself in the *tzibbur*, communal effort of *mitzvah* performance.

There is a story told about a scholarly *meshulach*, fund-raiser for the Slutzker Yeshivah, who came to the *Chofetz Chaim* regarding his desire to change vocations. It seems that his financial situation at home had improved. Now he wanted to retire and take a position as *rav* in a smaller community, enabling him to study *Torah* on a more consistent basis. He explained to the *Chofetz Chaim* that while he did find time to study *Torah*, because his mind was so involved in his overwhelming responsibility to the *Yeshivah*, he found it difficult to concentrate on his learning and even on his daily *tefillos*. Instead of concentrating on his prayers, he was thinking of the best manner in which to approach a specific wealthy donor. In a different setting, in a more relaxed atmosphere, he would be able to study *Torah* and *daven* to Hashem on a much loftier plane.

The *Chofetz Chaim* wished the fund-raiser success in his new endeavor and bid him farewell. Just as he reached the door, the *Chofetz Chaim* called to him, "Would you by chance know the price of a pair of shoes?" The man, taken aback, responded, "I really have not purchased a pair of shoes in quite some time, but I would venture that they are about ten rubles." Just before he opened the door to leave, the *Chofetz Chaim* asked him, "How much profit do you think the shoemaker makes on a pair of shoes?" Dumbfounded by the *Chofetz Chaim's* behavior, the *meshulach* responded, "I really do not know; I never was a shoemaker."

It was not over --- yet. "Let us attempt to calculate the shoemaker's profit." After factoring in the cost of leather, labor and various overhead expenses, they arrived at a handsome profit margin

for the shoemaker. Just as the *meshulach* was about to leave for the third time, the *Chofetz Chaim* turned to him and asked, "Are these the only shoes available for the consumer, or are there other types of shoes?" "Well, there are custom made shoes and factory made shoes." "Which are more expensive?" "The custom made shoes are more expensive, since much more meticulous labor is involved in making them."

"If this is the case, the shoemaker must do quite well, even better than the owner of the factory." "No, *rebbe*, on the contrary," the fund-raiser responded, "it is the factory owner who is really wealthy. True, his profit margin is reduced in comparison to the shoemaker, but he produces thousands of shoes, many more times the amount made by the shoemaker."

The *Chofetz Chaim* now turned to the *meshulach* and said, "You would do well to heed your own words. You would like to retire from what truly is a demanding job, so that you will no longer be distracted from *Torah* study and *tefillah*. You are probably right in assuming that your personal growth will be enhanced. Your work on behalf of the *Yeshivah* benefits hundreds of young men who will be enabled to study and pray as a result of your efforts. Can you compare your personal achievement to the incredible benefit you avail *Klal Yisrael*?"

While this thesis in no way is meant to encourage one to sacrifice his personal learning for every communal endeavor, it simply demonstrates the extreme importance of communal work and the overwhelming benefit of *koach ho'rabim*, the power of a multitude of Jews.