

All of us, sons of one man are we. (42:11)

The Egyptian viceroy (Yosef) had a hard time believing that ten brothers, an entire family, were required to come down to Egypt to purchase food. If it was a question of assistance, one or two brothers could have gone with a few servants. Why did all of the brothers leave their individual families if the job could have been carried out by a few brothers? *Ramban* explains that, being brothers, their father, Yaakov *Avinu*, wanted them to remain together. It was not a matter of strength in numbers; it was just that Yaakov did not want the members of his family separated from one another. This was despite the danger of traveling and spending time away from their usual learning sessions. Apparently, family harmony, in which the brothers remain closely bonded to one another, took precedence.

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, derives from here the overriding importance of *achdus*, unity, love among members of *Klal Yisrael*. It is worth putting oneself into a *sakanah*, danger, and even allowing him to minimize the time devoted to learning Torah, as long as *achdus* is not impugned. *Achdus* is a defining criterion for success in Torah. One who does not get along with others or does not really care about others has difficulty achieving success in Torah. Torah belongs to *Am Yisrael*, a collective gift to the entire nation. We are all members of this august group. To negate or be selective in whom one considers “worthy” of his friendship is a strike against his success in Torah.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* goes on to teach an important lesson with regard to *achdus*. There are those who claim to be committed to *achdus* and *ahavas Yisrael*, but care only about the totality of *Klal Yisrael*. When they are asked to assist the *klal* – they are ready. What about the “little guy,” however, who is also a part of *klal Yisrael*? Do they care about each individual as part of the whole – or do they care only about the whole? The *mitzvah* of *ahavas Yisrael* is to love each individual Jew. The *mitzvah* of *achdus Yisrael* is to care about each individual Jew as part of the whole *Am Yisrael*. Having said this, we should ask ourselves: Are we fulfilling this *mitzvah* correctly?

In an alternative exposition, *Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*, cites the *Divrei Yisrael* (Modzitz) who explains that the brothers all traveled together to Egypt so that they could be assured of having a *minyan*, quorum, for *tefillah*. *Tefillah b'tzibbur*, communal prayer, transcends the prayers of an individual. The *Bais Aharon* (Karlin) teaches that when one prays with a *minyan*, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, is present, thus elevating and granting greater efficacy to one's prayers. The *Zohar HaKadosh* observes that when one prays alone, the supplicant is scrutinized by Hashem as to his worthiness. A communal request does not pass through such a demanding channel. An individual's *tefillah* as part of that of the community will be accepted.

The *Yismach Yisrael* wrote in a letter to his *chassidim*, “I request from those who are involved in business to always *daven* in the *bais chassidim* (the *bais hamedrash*) – and never miss. Even if there is no *minyan* and they will be compelled to wait for one, they should wait. (Obviously, they should recite *Tehillim* or learn Torah.) I guarantee this will not cause them a loss. On the contrary, it will engender blessing in their *parnassah*, livelihood. This will also train their children... to go twice

daily to the *bais hamedrash*.”

The *Kaminitzer Mashgiach* (*Eretz Yisrael*), *Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl*, was meticulous concerning *tefillah b'tzibbur*. He would instruct *chassanim*, prior to marriage, never to pray alone at home, claiming that this was the first step on the path to deviating from a Torah lifestyle. Even if there is no *minyán*, one should make the effort to pray alone in the *shul*, because: A) the *shul*'s ambiance is more conducive to prayer, thus causing the supplicant to express greater devotion and feeling; B) if one prays alone at home, it will lower his esteem in the eyes of his wife. He once inquired of a six-year-old child how his *abba* puts on *Tefillin*. The child proceeded to demonstrate how his father puts on *Tefillin*. *Rav Moshe Aharon* then went over to the father and rebuked him for *davening* at home. How else would a six-year-old boy know how his father puts on *Tefillin*?

Rav Moshe Aharon Stern once said (concerning a young married man whose presence at *minyán* was, at best, sporadic), “If my daughter was engaged to a boy, and I was informed a week prior to the wedding that he did not regularly pray with a *minyán* – I would not break the engagement. Had I known from the outset that this was the case, however, I would never have agreed to the match in the first place. A boy who does not come to the *yeshivah* to pray is not serious.”

Incidentally, his attitude concerning late arrival at *minyán* was no different: “How can a person be late for prayers? If the *Kohen Gadol* who came to serve in the *Kadosh HaKodoshim*, Holy of Holies, would have tarried for even an instant, the consequences would have been devastating.”

Apparently, for some, the designation *talmid chacham/ben Torah*, embodies more than purely Torah erudition. It defines the entire demeanor of the individual.