

Do not be a follower of the majority for evil; and do not respond to a grievance by yielding to the majority to pervert the law. (23:2)

Rashi explains that, when one sees wicked people perverting justice, he should not say to himself, “They are the majority. What will I gain by disagreeing with them?” On the contrary, one must do what is right – regardless of how many people do what is wrong – and regardless of the eventual repercussions. The question is obvious: What would possess a person to do something wrong, just because everybody else is doing it? We do not follow *reshaim*, wicked people. The fact that everybody is acting inappropriately does not make it right. *Horav Meir Soloveitchik, zl*, explains that a *dayan*, judge on a *bais din* might say to himself: “Why bother with the truth? The majority will have their opinion anyway. If my opinion would carry any weight, I would dissent and make a statement, but what value does an unwanted and ignored opinion carry?”

The Torah responds that it is an obligation and moral responsibility to express one’s opinion. The truth matters and one who is reluctant to espouse the truth, will be included together with those who falsify the *halachah*, and pervert the *Torah* way of life. When one is indifferent to *halachah*, he robs us of the truth. The *Torah* considers his inaction to be as if he is actively supporting falsehood. When one remains silent because no one is listening anyway, the only result is in his surrender to fear and apathy. Speaking the truth goes beyond immediate results or recognition. It is about upholding principles and ensuring that integrity remains intact, regardless of external validation. *Chosamo shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu Emes*, “Hashem’s seal is the Truth.” How can a person sway from the truth in response to public opinion? The act of speaking truthfully in its own right has value, even if it takes time for others to recognize it.

A well-known exposition from the *Brisker Rav, zl*, concerns *Iyov*’s silence. Pharaoh convened three top advisors to decide how best to deal with the growing Jewish “problem.” They were *Bilaam*, *Yisro* and *Iyov*. *Bilaam*, true to his character, immediately suggested the complete annihilation of the Jews. *Yisro* ran away. This was his way of dissenting and expressing his distaste for anything evil against the Jews. *Iyov* remained silent. Each received his due, *middah k’neged middah*, measure for measure. *Bilaam*, who wanted to see the Jews die, was later killed. *Yisro* ran away to protect himself and, by extension, voice his dissent to Pharaoh and *Bilaam*’s diabolical plans. He arrived safely in Midyan where he eventually became father-in-law to both *Moshe Rabbeinu* and *Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen*. *Iyov* sadly suffered the most excruciating pain – both physical and emotional – all because he did nothing to voice his opinion.

The *Brisker Rav* asks a practical question: Why should *Iyov* have bothered stating his opinion, if he knew up front that Pharaoh would reject it? Pharaoh wanted to hear one thing: “Death to the Jews.” He left no room for discussion. This was a non-negotiable position; so, what would *Iyov* have gained? The *Brisker Rav* answered, *Veil az es tut vei veint men*, “Because when it hurts, one cries.” *Iyov* should have instinctively expressed his pain over the plight of the Jews.

Since he was silent and did not cry out, Hashem gave him reason to bemoan his fate.

The *Alter zl, m'Kelm* offers a practical analogy to explain why one should not follow the majority when he is wrong. A group of men were standing on the banks of a large river with no way to go across. A large bird flew by, and one of the men grabbed its legs and held on for dear life, as the bird ferried him safely across the river. A number of the people complained to the man, "Why are you doing that?" He replied, "You, too, can do it." After all, because they refuse to hop on the bird, should he remain stuck forever? Likewise, if the majority foolishly errs in *halachah*, it is no reason for one who sees the truth to follow their error. Why should he subject himself to living a lie, when he is the only one living the truth?