

## Then he herded them into a ward for a three-day period. (42:17)

Was it really necessary to herd all the brothers into the lock-up? He could have taken one, and it would have sufficed to send a message. The *Brisker Rav*, *zl*, cites the *Yerushalmi* in *Terumos* (12), “A group/caravan of men were traveling and were accosted by a gang of non-Jews demanding that they give up one of their own. They said, ‘We want one Jew whom we will kill. Otherwise, we will kill all of you!’ The *halachah* is clear that we may not give up a Jew under any circumstances –even if it means that everyone will die. Therefore, all the brothers had to be locked up together until Yosef himself designated Shimon as his prisoner. We do not give up a brother, despite the threat of the pain of communal annihilation.”

In the city of Brisk, a Jew was falsely accused of falling asleep during his assignment as security guard. Accusing Jews falsely of anything was common fare for the rabid anti-Semites of Eastern Europe. They were easy targets. The man was quickly condemned to death, with the sentence to be carried out on *Rosh Hashanah*. The condemned Jew made a last request: he wanted to speak to the *Brisker Rav* and recite *Viduy*, last confession, to him. The judge was a “cultured” man of the law. He could not refuse a dying man his last request. He dispatched a few soldiers to the main *shul* to accompany the *Brisker Rav* to the prison. The men entered the *shul* shortly before *tekias shofar* and asked the *Rav* to accompany them to the prison. The *Rav* refused to come. One does not ignore government soldiers. They attempted to frighten him into acquiescence by threatening to kill every Jew in Brisk. This did not deter the *Rav* who continued in his obstinate refusal. A short while later, another group of soldiers was dispatched. These were officers, much more distinguished in rank than the previous agents. The *Rav* continued in his refusal. He would not budge. They threatened him once again, that they would take out their vengeance against the entire Jewish community. The *Rav* ignored them. A few hours passed, and a distinguished group of officers presented themselves at the *shul* and asked who the *Rav* was. The *Brisker Rav* replied, “I am the *Rav* of Brisk.” They informed him that it was no longer necessary for him to come. The prisoner’s sentence had been commuted.

After the officers left, the *Brisker Rav* explained the reason for his obstinacy in the face of the clear and present danger to him and every Jew in the community, “The prisoner is innocent of any onus of guilt. He did nothing to warrant the death penalty. Had I gone with them, I would have met with the prisoner, listened to his *Viduy*, perhaps comforted him, but in no way could I have prevented the execution. In other words, as a result of my meeting with him, I would be hastening his death. With regard to their threats to kill the entire community, *halachah* is clear: We do not give up a single Jewish soul, even at the expense of others.