



Strength in Numbers

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף וגרד אשר בשערך למען
ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ויראו את יקוק (פרק לא פסוק יב)

There is a well-known parable that describes a father who had a number of sons who were always quarreling. One day the father had enough and decided that something needed to be done. So he called his children and instructed them to bring a bunch of sticks. When they arrived they were told to each take a stick and crack it. Even the youngest child did so easily.

The father nodded and then asked if they were able to break a bundle of sticks. All of the children struggled with the bundle and ultimately conceded defeat. The message was clear; an individual has limited strength and could be broken easily, a group though has powers that can withstand the greatest force.

The Meor V'Shemesh in *Parshas Kedoshim* explains that this is not only in a physical sense. Spiritually as well, a group consisting of a larger number of people serving *Hashem* is able to reach heights that an individual on his own can only wistfully yearn for. The great student of the Noam Elimelech explains that although the Rambam admonishes a person who is dwelling in a land permeated with evil to forsake civilization and settle in an area devoid of the negative influences of society, doing so will only serve to protect him from sinking into the quicksand of sin. To soar heavenward, conquering territories of *kedusha*, a person must connect with a group of Jews whose focus is the service of *Hashem*. Indeed, the *Mishna* states לפי רוב הקהל הן במרכיך – according to the size of the group which is unified in their *avoda* is their ability to break through the ceiling limiting their individual potential to reach exalted floors of holiness.

Throughout the year the Jewish people ascend to the most sublime place on earth. On *Pesach*, *Sukkos* and *Shavuot*, each person brings with him a *korban* to be offered up when he reaches the *Mikdash*. On *Yom Hakkippurim* though, the same paths are filled with people traveling to be part of the *Yom Hakkippurim avoda*. Yet, this time they arrive empty handed. On the year's holiest day, when each person is involved in his personal repentance, only a communal

offering is brought up. Intuitively, it would seem that a person's individual *teshuva* should involve a personal sacrifice. How can one *korban* brought for the entire nation complete the individuals' *teshuva*?

I once heard the following explanation: The Maharal writes that the *teshuva* of *Yom Hakkippurim* is not merely a more intense *teshuva*. It is fundamentally different. Throughout the year when a person stumbles and wishes to right himself, he does by addressing the reason why he tripped. On *Yom Hakkippurim* though, a person sunk into the mire of iniquity does not contend with the sludge. Rather, he strips away his ego and attaches himself to *Hashem*, becoming a more transcendent person. And by doing so, although he did not contend with the mud directly, he is pulled from the mire and the *aveiros* fall away as he elevates himself to lofty levels of purity.

However, a person cannot achieve this alone. On his own, a person is limited by a ceiling. Unassisted, a person will not be able to achieve the *teshuva* of *Yom Hakkippurim*. The only way to accomplish is by seeing one's self as part of a community consisting of Jewish people.

And this is reflected in the single *korban* brought on behalf of the entire nation on *Yom Hakkippurim*. To attain the atonement that *Yom Hakkippurim* offers, *teshuva* cannot be done with individual sacrifices, but in unison – with a single *korban*.

Perhaps this is why the *mitzva* of *Hakhel* is read during this time of year. This *mitzva* instructs the Jewish nation to gather together so that the king could read from the *Torah* for the entire nation. הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף ... ולמען ילמדו ויראו את יקוק. The Meor V'shemesh explains that the *pasuk* should be read: הקהל את העם – You must impress upon the Jewish nation to be a unified entity. ולמען ילמדו ויראו – and the result will be that they will come to true fear of *Hashem* – something that could not be achieved in isolation.

The essence of the *mitzva* of *Hakhel* and the *teshuva* of *Yom Hakkippurim* is ubiquitous. When a person internalizes the message of *Hakhel*, he will enter into *Yom Hakkippurim* equipped to actualize the day's prodigious potential.

Which Chicken?

The intense give and take between the *rebbe* and his *talmidim* was often spoken about in the community. The *rebbe* would explain a line in the *gemara* and one of the *talmidim* would question that approach. This was deflected deftly, but another query was quick in coming. Both *rebbe* and *Talmud* brought proofs and counter-proofs, moved around the room and gestured, as they staunchly defended their respective position refusing to acquiesce to the other's explanation until they were convinced that their understanding was untenable. Each party was driven by the desire to uncover the true intent of the *amoraim*. Each word of *Gemara* represented the most precious commodity and they were completely absorbed in revealing its meaning oblivious to the mundane world that surrounded them.

In the midst of this energetic Talmudic sparring, a young girl entered the room, and waited by the doorway until someone would notice her. It was the instructions of her mother that brought the young girl with a chicken to the chief Rabbi of *Yerushalayim* that day. She came to show Rav Shmuel Salant the chicken that was just slaughtered and inquire about its status. It was only after she reached the building that she realized that she arrived in the middle of the Rav's *shiur*. Unsure of what to do, she stood hesitantly by the doorway and waited.

The Rav and great leader of *Yerushalayim*, always attuned to the needs of others, saw the young girl who was holding a slaughtered chicken. Realizing her predicament Rav Shmuel stopped the debate and turned to the young guest. Smiling, he asked in his warm soft voice, "How can I help you, my daughter?"

The little girl stammered awkwardly as she struggled to respond to the great Rav while his *talmidim* looked on. Eventually the words came out in a whisper. "Her mother had sent her to the Rav's house to find out about the status of the bird." Rav Shmuel motioned to her to bring him the chicken and he would check the bird right then. He took the bird from the young girl and began to examine it. The room was quiet as the Rav of *Yerushalayim* checked the various

parts of the bird. When he finished checking it, he handed the chicken back to the girl who was waiting expectedly.

"Please go back home and tell your mother that she had made a mistake. Accidentally, she had mixed up the bird with a different one and ended up sending the wrong bird to be checked. Please ask her to send the other chicken which was slaughtered today and I will check that one.

After half an hour the girl returned holding a second freshly slaughtered bird. Immediately, she was ushered in to Rav Shmuel who took the bird from her and began to probe its various parts. After a minute, he returned the bird to the girl and issued his ruling. Happily, the girl took the bird, muttered a "*shkoyach*" and skipped homeward.

The moment the girl left the room, the steady hum of whispering people filled it. No longer did the words of the *Gemara* capture the attention of the *talmidim*. They were too overcome by what they just experienced. How did their *rebbe* know that a second chicken was slaughtered today? Was this proof that he possessed divine inspiration?

Rav Shmuel heard the whispering and understood immediately what the commotion was about. Before proof of his spiritual prowess left the sacred room where he learned, the Rav of *Yerushalayim* quickly attempted to dispel any such notion. "There was no *ruach hakodesh* nor prophecy displayed today," Rabbi Shmuel smiled humbly, "When I looked at the first chicken and I examined it thoroughly I saw that there was no question regarding its status. Now, every *Yerushalmi* woman knows when a chicken does not have a *shaila*. So immediately assumed that there was a second bird which was slaughtered today for this family, and only one of them had a question. Because of the pressure and confusion of not knowing whether the bird was *kosher* and may be eaten, the wrong chicken was sent to me to examine. All I did was ask that the family send me the correct chicken...."

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Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

(Part Two)

Hadassim

- The *hadass* must be three *tefachim* (9-12 in 23-30 cm) tall (תרכ"א). Only the branch itself is included in the measurement. Therefore, if the branch is three *tefachim* tall but not all of it is covered with leaves or the leaves extend beyond the branch making the branch 3.5 *tefachim*, the *hadass* is still measured at three *tefachim*. (שם, משנ"ב, א, ערה"ש שם, א)
- If the top of one row of leaves do not reach the bottom of the row on top of them, the *hadass* is *kosher*. (מרו"ק הובא בשע"ת תרמו, ג למד מלולב שזה פסול, אכן הביכור"י שם, כד, והחזו"א קמ"א, ואחרים מכשירים זה)
- The stem of the *hadassim* leaves should be in rows of three (משולש). Even if the leaves are not the same height and therefore do not extend upwards equally, as long as the stem from where the leave grow out from are in the same row, the *hadass* is *meshulash*. (קובץ הלכות עמ' רפב הע' ז)
According to some opinions

this means that if the stems meet at any point the *hadass* is משולש (חזו"א, ועי' בקה"י, ליקוטים על מס' סוכה). Others maintain that as long as it looks as if the stems are together that is sufficient. (קובץ מבית לוי הלכות) (קובץ הלכות ועי"ש שאין צריך לזה עיון רב, וכן ראיתי נכתב בשם הרב שלמה מילר שליט"א)

- Ideally, all three *tefachim* of the *hadass* should be *meshulash*. However, as long as the majority of the *hadass* is *meshulash*, the *hadass* is *kosher* for the *mitzva*. (תרמו, ה) This is determined by measuring the area of the branch which is *meshulash* and not by whether the majority of leaves are *meshulashim*. (שם, משנ"ב, יח, ערה"ש שם, ה, ודלא כדעת הגר"י שם, ג) The branch between the rows of leaves which are *meshulash* contribute to majority, even if the leaves do not cover the branch. (קובץ הלכות) The majority of leaves which are *meshulash* do not need to be together. Many groups of *meshulash* areas can be combined to create the majority. (פרמ"ג משב"ג, שם, ט, בה"ל שם ד"ה ולעיכובא)

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In this week's Parsha, Moshe writes Sifrei Torah before he leaves this world. Here are interesting facts about writing implements.

- Around 2,500 pencils can be made from one average tree.
- Pencil leads contain no lead - just graphite and clay.
- The president of the United States signs bills every time with a different pen and that pen is never used again for signing.
- A regular BIC ballpoint pen can draw a line that's about 2 kilometers long. That's more than 6 times longer than the height of the Eiffel tower and double the height of the Empire State building.

RIDDLE



When is it possible to be called up for an *Aliyah* when there is no *minyán* present in *shul*?

Please send in your answers to yrothbart@halachainstitute.com. Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: What *halacha* is derived from the *parsha* of *Amalek*?

ANSWER: The *Shulchan Aruch* (137, 4) writes that if nine *pesukim* were read at *krias haTorah* on Monday or Thursday, then as long as three *pesukim* were read in each *aliya*, "they do not need to reread". The proof to this is that "*Parshas Amalek*" consists of only nine *pesukim*. (See *Mishna Berurah* who brings *shitos* which disagree with this *p'sak*).

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

There was no winner last week.

Under the leadership of the Rabbonim of H.I.T.
Rabbi Yacov Felder, Chairman

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