

# The More, The Holier

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“How long will this evil congregation persist, complaining about Me?” (Numbers 14:27).

The following may only be performed in the presence of ten men: the repetition of the introduction to the Shema; praying as a minyan; the Blessing of the Kohanim; reading the Torah; reading the Haftorah; ... the blessing of the bridegroom; invoking God’s Name in the invitation to say the Grace after Meals. How do we know that at least ten are required? From the verse “How long will this evil congregation persist?” Without Yehoshua and Kaleb, they were ten (*Megillah* 23b; see Rashi).

Every year it strikes me as being curious and ironic. From two of the most anti-communal episodes in the Torah—this week’s mutiny of the spies and next week’s rebellion of Korach and his congregation—we Jews learn the *halakhah* that to perform a public *davar she-be-kedushah* (sacred function/service) a minyan (quorum of ten adult Jewish men\*) is required. Some might say it’s Divine humor. (God does laugh; see Psalms 2:4). It certainly can be seen as Divine compassion—their very mistake, misusing the power of community to strip and distance the Jewish people from glorifying God, is transformed into being the necessary forum for sanctifying God’s Name.

Reb Noson writes about the power of community and the

importance of being actively involved in any mitzvah Jewish people are performing. This is important in and of itself. It is doubly important to note this in regard to an overall Breslov outlook. Why? Since Breslov literature greatly emphasizes the individual's connection with the tzaddik, and the individual's *hitbodedut* (private prayer), one who doesn't actually have the good mazel to live in proximity to other Breslovers (or other Jews, for that matter) may think that community is a nice extra, but not of primary importance. Think again. We have this, à la Reb Noson:

God's way and the human way aren't always parallel. The more people move into a neighborhood, the more congested it gets. The more people enter a room, the more crowded it gets. Space becomes tighter and tighter. But in *kedushah*, when another person joins the minyan, the prayer grows dynamically. Just as *Sefer Yetzirah* teaches that five "stones" (letters) build 120 "houses" (words) and six build 720, Rebbe Nachman teaches that each person who joins a minyan, or any mitzvah, increases the power of the minyan and the mitzvah.

And not only the power, but the extent as well. Because not only are there many, many more words when a letter is added, but each word is longer. Similarly, when you join in community to do a mitzvah, the mitzvah's *kedushah* and power are vastly intensified and its reach, in this world and upper worlds, is greatly extended. So, run—don't walk—to shul to pray, and to a *beit midrash* to study. Your presence, each time, is an incalculable contribution to the building of Jewishness and to the delight of Heaven. This is especially so if there wouldn't be a minyan without you!

Yes, if you do the same mitzvah by yourself, you will be rewarded. If you do it. But a solo mitzvah is puny in comparison; the community's mitzvah is tremendously diminished; and you will be MIA, out of the picture, an absence that can never be made up (*Kohelet Rabbah* 1:15).

A personal connection with the tzaddik is a necessity, time for yourself is critical. But don't forget: No Jew is an island. Be involved with a genuine Torah community!

\* In case I need to allay your feminist indignation, the mutinous spies are called, and thus define, a "congregation." Since that congregation consisted of ten Jewish adult men, so does every future Jewish congregation. Nothing to do with patriarchal sexism, just cut-and-dry exegesis.

*a gutn Shabbos!*

*Shabbat Shalom!*

–Based on *Likutey Halakhot*,

*Nizkei Shekheinim* 4:8