

BRING US CLOSER TO THE LAND OF OUR DREAMS

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM spoke to Moshe and Aaron, saying, "How much longer will **this evil (AIDA) congregation** who are causing to complain against Me [exist]? The complaints of the children of Israel which they caused them to complain against Me, I have heard. (Bamidbar 14:26-27)

this evil (AIDA) congregation: This refers to the spies; from here we derive that a congregation ("a minyan") numbers [a minimum of] ten. — **Rashi**

What constitutes a(n) (AIDA) congregation? We need a(n) (AIDA) congregation, a Minyan for all matters of public holiness ("davar shebekedusha"), to read the Torah, to say Kedusha, Kaddish, Barchu, to repeat Shemona Esrei, to make Sheva Brochos, and the list goes on. Rashi spared us a few steps in the math equation. From a series of seemingly disconnected verses a thread of common words are joined and using the Torah as a self-referential dictionary our Sages build a bridge to the definition of a Minyan.

In one verse it is written, "And I shall be sanctified (b'toch) **among** the Children of Israel". In another, by the incident with Korach G-d tells Korach, "... separate (m'toch) from **among** this **evil (AIDA) congregation**." From the connection between TOCH and TOCH – among and among, we learn to link the concept of G-d being sanctified- to a congregation. Now the size of that congregation, an AIDA, is derived from the Meraglim, the spies. There were twelve spies and two remained loyal and remained clean from the evil report that discouraged the masses. So when the verse states, "How much longer will **this evil (AIDA) congregation** who are causing to complain against Me [exist]?" we get the final puzzle piece that a Minyan is minimally a group of ten.

It's a wonder that we learn how to sanctify HASHEM from these evil and disgruntled groups! There must be a good reason or two.

In the 2nd of the Ten Commandments the following pronouncement is made, "You shall neither prostrate yourself before them nor worship them, for I, the Lord, your God, am a zealous God, Who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, upon the third and **the fourth generation** of those who hate Me, and [I] perform loving kindness to **thousands [of generations]**, to those who love Me and to those who keep My Commandments. (Shemos 20:5-6)

Alert to the fact that there are not 2000 generations Rashi explains, "It is thus found that the measure of reward [from God] exceeds the measure of [His] retribution by [the ratio of] one to five hundred, for this one is for four generations, and that one is for two thousand generations."

Incredibly, that statement is only meant to demonstrate and deliver the mathematical ratio that HASHEM is 500 times more rewarding than punishing. First thing to learn is- before we complain about how bad things seem we should first notice 500 ways that life is working well. That should quiet the complainer within.

Also, when discussing the consequences of not performing Bris Mila or not partaking the Korbon Pesach, the Chidushei HaRim infers in the positive direction from the harsh result in the negative. If one is "cut off" for failing to comply with these two Mitzvos, then 500 times more so one is attached, connected, bonded for their performance.

Maybe we can employ the same logic regarding a Minyan. If ten people were able to discourage an entire nation, delaying the entering of the Land of Israel for 40 years, and frustrating a generation then how much more so in the positive direction, at least 500 times more so, when ten men join to sanctify the name of HASHEM publicly, will that serve to inspire an entire nation, raise our highest hopes, and **bring us closer to the land of our dreams.**