

After several complaints during their first fourteen months in the midbar, the spies return and Bnei Yisroel mutter again. Hashem responds.

עַד־מָתַי לְעֵדָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר הָמָה מְלִינִים עָלַי אֶת־תְּלֹזֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָמָה מְלִינִים עָלַי שְׁמָעְתִּי:

“How much longer to this evil congregation that they will mutter against Me? The mutterings of the Bnei Yisroel that they muttered against Me I have heard.” (Bamidbar 14:27).

Hashem repeats this verse. Hashem already stated earlier, “And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘How long with this nation mutter spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me, with all the signs that I have performed in their midst?’” (Bamidbar 14:11). Further, it says the “evil congregation” muttered but “the muttering of Bnei Yisroel” is what Hashem heard. Why the change in term? After spying the Land the Bnei Yisroel believe the evil mutterings of the spies and cry out to Moshe. Hashem decides that none that saw the wonders and signs of the *yetziyas Mitzrayim* will live to enter the Land. The next generation will be granted that privilege. From here, poskim learn that ten men are required for a minyan. We will discuss why this pasuk is used, where else the halacha can be derived, and the ramifications of deriving it from this pasuk.

Gemara Brochos 21b and Megillah 23b learn, *we learn that ten is the quorum for public prayer. This is derived from the pesukim “How long with this evil congregation...” (Bamidbar 14:27), and from “I shall be hallowed among the Bnei Yisroel.” (Vayikra 22:32). And it says, “separate yourselves from among this congregation.” (Bamidbar 16:21). Just as by Korach rebellion it says “from among” and “this congregation” and by the spies it says “this congregation” and by prayer it says “from among” it is derived that just as by the spies it was ten, so the quorum for public sanctification of Hashem is ten.*

It appears strange to learn out the quorum for a minyan from the Korach rebellion and the spies, especially when the pasuk says *evil congregation*.

Ramban says, *ten is required for a minyan learned from our pasuk alone. A congregation by spies was ten so when needing a minyan, it is ten.*

Rashi says, *our pasuk seems to be referring to Bnei Yisroel, not the spies. The spies were ten but Bnei Yisroel were over six hundred thousand. However, when the pasuk says evil congregation, that portion only refers to the spies. The rest of Bnei Yisroel were not 'evil.' It was the spies that were 'evil' for their slander. Also, as the pasuk says, they were muttering and "I heard." Meaning, when there is a minyan, Hashem hears.*

Sforno says, *didn't Hashem forgive the people? Why is Hashem repeating that they muttered against Him? Hashem forgave the klal but not the spies. Therefore, this pasuk refers to the spies, the ten men. They were punished immediately. Further, he notes the importance of minyan. It has much more effect when it comes from an established minyan, when ten are together. They can affect an entire klall.*

Gur Ariyeh learns, *this pasuk is referring to the spies because it talks about the "complainers." If it would be the entire people, they were the complainants. He also learns the causers of evil are the complainers.*

Rashi, Gur Ariyeh, and the Gemara Bavli say that the word *eida* – congregation - is referring to the ten spies not the entire people there. Thus a "congregation" is ten men.

Bechor Shor (a Rishon who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, in between Rashi and Ramban) says, *why did Hashem kill those forty to sixty? Because that was the fighting age. If they believe the spies and did not want to fight, Hashem had no use for them. They died in the desert. The minyan, bound the people. Those who were with the minyan, they died. Those were abstained from that evil speech and wanted to fight, lived to have the opportunity to fight.*

Birkat Asher asks, *How do we distinguish the words "Eida" and "Kol haEida." In passuk Bamidbar 14:35 it says "I, Hashem, have spoken: Thus will I do to all that wicked band that has banded together against Me: in this very wilderness they shall die to the last man." This "kol haEida Harah" refers to the entire people, because the next pasuk specifies the spies and their punishment.*

As the Torah goes through the next few *perakim* (chapters), it constantly says "eida" and "kol haeida" and it is a difficult to say we can make a gezeira shava from one

word but not the rest of them. It says Eida twenty times. So how can the Gemara learn the gezeira shava from their select pesukim – while ignoring the rest that do not only refer to ten men? There are other ways to learn that ten are required for a minyan.

Gemara Yerushalmi Brochos 7:3 and Megillah 4:4, learns *after going through all the times a minyan is required for public prayer, it derives the number needed for the quorum.* וַיָּבֹאוּ: "And the Bnei Yisroel came to procure rations from among those that came, because there was a great famine in the Land of Canaan." (Bereishis 42:5). And it says, וְלֹא תִסְלַלְוּ אֶת-שְׁמִי קִדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' מִקְדָּשְׁכֶם: "You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people – I Hashem who sanctify you." (Vayikra 22:32). The word תִּזְוֶה is in both pesukim. Just as when the brothers went to buy food, they were ten (Yosph was viceroy and Beinyamin was at home). So, too, when it says to sanctify Hashem's name – public prayer--it is ten men.

When read carefully, our pasuk says "Until when to this evil congregation that they are muttering against me?" They, the evil spies, are muttering. How much longer? Apparently, the spies did not relent; they stuck to their slander. "The mutterings of the Bnei Yisroel that they muttered to me, I heard." The Bnei Yisroel did not slander the Land. They heard the slander and then went to Moshe. "And they put their complaints upon Moshe and Aharon, all Bnei Yisroel, and they said to them, the entire congregation, 'If only we died in the Land of Mitzrayim, or if only we might die in this desert.'" (Bamidbar 14:2). Hashem heard their complaints, that they would want to die in the desert. That wish was fulfilled.

The beginning of the pasuk refers to the spies as *evil congregation*. However, when deriving from the word 'toch,' Bnei Yisroel literally means the great leaders of the ten tribes. There is also another way to learn this. "Then [Boaz] took ten elders of the town and said, 'Be seated here;' and they sat down." (Rus 4:2). When Boaz was about to do the *Yibum* procedure he took ten men. This was not public prayer but it was a public event. It can be derived that Boaz corroborated the custom of having ten for a quorum.

However, there is a good reason to learn out that a minyan can be formed from ten "evil congregants." Birkat Asher brings down a question posed to him and he says, *if*

*we learn a minyan needs ten strictly from 10 tzadikim we would think that ten regular Jews is not enough.*

Thus, the quorum number is learned quite indirectly from the evil congregation – needing both pesukim from the spies and the Korach rebellion to be matched with public sanctification of Hashem. However, it is learned directly from Boaz’s practice – while that verse is only corroboration the halacha – and from Yaakov’s sons that went to buy food. There are a few points to this. Ten men make a minyan regardless of their stature. A great Tzadik cannot make a minyan by himself. He is still only one of ten. An evil man (one not in *cherim*/banishment) still makes up one tenth of a minyan, not less. Hashem listens to prayer of the ten evil men just as He listens to the prayer of ten holy men.

Finally, the minyan effects the whole. What happened to the spies happened to all of them. They also had a great affect on the entire nation. Conversely, a minyan of ten holy men can have a positive effect on the entire *klall*. The spies were from ten different tribes and yet they bonded over their fear and slander. The ten sons of Yaakov worked together to face their past. Yes, they went to get food, but their destiny was to find Yoseph on the high seat of Mitzrayim. They decided his fate together and they came to face their past together. They came together, this time, for good. They came at the bequest of their father and they stuck together. A miyan is just potential. It is ten men. It is up to the members of the minyan (even those from the surplus – after ten are already there) to make the public prayer a sanctification of Hashem’s name.

## BONUS SHTIKEL

Parshas Beshalach can mean “in Shlach.” When comparing the two parshios (sections) we see that Parshas Beshalach is in Shlach. There are many things that parallel each other in these two parshios.

They both commence in perek 13 of their respective seforim (books). This is a mere coincidence because it was not chazal and separated the Torah into chapters.

Hashem did not send Bnei Yisroel straight to Canaan. He took them circuitous. So they should not see war. (Shemos 13:17). In Shlach, they are now spying on Canaan and they do see war coming. Even though they got the Torah already and they saw Mitzrayim wiped out at the *Yam Suf* they still want to return to Egypt. (Bamidbar 14:2).

Yehoshua tells them to hush their reports, that Hashem fights with them and they can win battle. (Ibid 14:7).

When Bnei Yisroel saw the chariots of Pharaoh, they cried out to Hashem. Hashem asked why Moshe was crying out. Just go to the sea. (Shemos 14:10). They cried when they heard the report. (Bamidbar 14:1).

It mentions the pillar of fire and pillar of clouds that guided Israel. (Shemos 14:19). In Shlach it mentions how if Hashem were to destroy the Bnei Yisroel then Egypt would hear and what would become of the Nation that Hashem guided through pillar of cloud and fire. (Bamidbar 14:14).

Hashem tells Moshe that Mitzrayim will know that Hashem is the Lord when he drowns them in the Yam Suf. (Shemos 14:18). Moshe tells Hashem that if He destroys the Bnei Yisroel then the nations of the world will think Hashem powerless to have them survive in the desert. (Bamidbar 14:16).

When they crossed the *Yam Suf* it says and they were believers in Hashem and Moshe His servant. (Shemos 14:31). In Shlach, Hashem asks Moshe “when will they finally believe me? Why do they continually test me?” (Bamidbar 14:11).

The Bnei Yisroel cry out for meat and for water and for bread. They want to go back to Egypt. (Shemos 15:24). They ask that if they can just return to Egypt so their wives and daughters are not taken as slaves. When the Israelites are thirsty Moshe tells Hashem

that they will pelt him with stones for they are hungry and thirsty and complaining. (Ibid 15:3). Bnei Yisroel threaten to pelt Calev and Yehoshua with stones for their defending the Land. (Bamidbar 14:10).

When it talks about the *manah* it says place it before Hashem. (Shemos 16:33). But at that time there was no mishkan. It was to be put where Hashem resided and then in the Mishkan (in the Aron). And it says, this is what the Bnei Yisroel ate for forty years. (Ibid 16:36). However, not until Shlach do we know that it was 40 years of wandering. (Bamidbar 13:33). Hashem forgives the Bnei Yisroel, but says they will wander 40 years to die out.

The Mana is referred to as tasking like honey cakes. (Shemos 16:31). In Shlach, the land was flowing with milk and honey. (Bamidbar 14:8).

Moshe asks Yehoshua to do battle for Israel. His name is full with the *yud*. (Shemos 17:9). In Shlach it also refers to Yehoshua with the *yud* but the *yud* was added on by Moshe. Hoshea to Yehoshua. (Bamidbar 13:16).

Bnei Yisroel does battle with Amalek. (Shemos 17:8). After hearing they will die in the desert many Bnei Yisroel went up to do battle with Canaan to enter the Land. Amalek came down and struck them down. (Bamidbar 14:45).

Moshe trained Yehoshua for battle. Asking him to gather men and do battle with Amalek. (Shemos 17:9). That was prep for when he chose men and did battle in Moav and Ammon and Canaan.

The reason these two parshios are so similar is because one can see the contrast of how a people go out to how a people go in. When starting something new, it is can be very similar or different to how it ends. One must have the same motivations, the same reasons, and the same enthusiasm to finish strong and correctly. It is not enough to start strong but one must also finish strong. If the doer loses sight of the goal, then he or she can sputter and never make it to the finish line.

This is not surprising. Gemara Brochos says, *it is taught in a baraisa with regard to the few that are destined to be redeemed: Rav Simai says that it is stated: "And I will take you to Me as a people" (Shemos 6:7), and juxtaposed to that verse it is stated: "And I will bring you into*

*the land” (Shemos 6:8). The Torah compares their exodus from Mitzrayim to their entry into the Land. Just as during their entry into the land only two of six hundred thousand entered the Land, as they all died in the wilderness except for Caleb and Joshua, so too, during their exodus from Mitzrayim, in terms of the ratio, only two of six hundred thousand left Egypt and the rest died there.*

Then Rava says something frightening: *And likewise, that will be the situation in the messianic era, as it is stated: “And she shall respond there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the Land of Mitzrayim.” (Hoshea 2:17). The ultimate redemption and the geulas Mitzrayim are juxtaposed, indicating that in the messianic era too, only few will survive.*

Beshalah is in Shlach because the beginning is also defined by the end. Shlach ends with: “I am Hashem, Your Lord, who took you out of the Land of Mitzrayim to be your Lord; I am Hashem, your Lord.” (Bamidbar 15:41). This Harkens back to Beshalach. Hashem took Bnei Yisroel out. This was the time to finish and go in, finish the journey. Parshas Shlach ends off with Shema. Ultimately, watching one’s eyes from going left or right, keeping our eyes on the prize (the goald), is a key to finishing strong. *Tzitzis* serves as that reminder. That will help one to finish strong.