

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Mensheviks (not to be confused with the Evil Communist Bolsheviks) took over the Russian government after the first World War. For the first time in decades Russian Jews could breathe a little and they enjoyed freedom. Everyone was happy; people were earning a living, especially those Jews who were fortunate enough to be in the diamond and jewelry business. The following story is told by a Jew who lived in that era.

"I, myself, was in diamond trade and things were going very well indeed, Every morning I was at my office in the diamond exchange at eight o'clock, and I was busy all day. One morning I happened to get up early and decided to go to my office to get some paper work done. I had my valise of diamonds and jewelry with me as usual.

As I was walking, I heard someone yell out, "A tzenter, a tzenter!" I turned and saw a man standing outside the small doorway of a tiny synagogue. He was looking for a tenth man to complete a minyan (prayer quorum of ten males over thirteen). When he saw me turn towards him, he shouted to me, "Come in, come in, we need you for a minyan!"

Realizing that I had some time to spare, I went in to be the tenth man. But, when I got inside, I saw that there were only three other men besides myself and the man at the door, who by now had resumed his searching for a "tzenter."

"What's this?" I said. "I'm not the tenth, I'm the fifth. It will take all morning to get ten men in here" "Now don't worry!" he called back. "Lots of Jewish people walk these streets every morning. We'll have a tenth man in no time.

Frustrated that he had "trapped" me, I began reciting Tehillim (Psalms) for the next ten minutes. By that time all he had managed to find was one more person. I began to leave, but he started pleading with me. "Listen, it's my father's yahrzeit; I have to say Kaddish. Please stay. I'm trying to get the minyan together as fast as I can."

"I can't stay any longer," I protested. "I must be in my office at eight o'clock. And that's right now!," At that point the man became nasty. "Listen," he said, "I'm not letting you out! I have yahrzeit; I have to say Kaddish! As soon as I get ten men together, we'll get it over with and you'll be able to go!"

I didn't want to agitate him any more, so I reluctantly went back to saying some Tehilim, another ten minutes passed and he had corralled only two more men. I began making my way towards the door again. This time he turned around from the doorway just as I was making my way past him. He pointed a finger at me and said, "If you had yahrzeit for your father, then you would want me to stay! Right? And I would stay! Now I want you to do the same for me!"

His pointing out to me how I would feel if I were in his shoes suddenly made me feel different about the situation. I resigned myself to losing part of the morning and decided, come what may, I would remain. About 8:30 he finally got his ten people together. I thought he would say a mishnah and then Kaddish. But no, he started near the beginning of the davening, right after Korbanos, with the first Kaddish D'Rabanan.

Impatient and exasperated, I looked at my watch and calculated at this rate I would not get to my office until well after nine o'clock. A number of times I looked around to see if an eleventh man had wandered in, so that I could leave and there would still be a minyan. No such luck. I was stuck there until they finished davening.

Once we finished, the man who had yahrzeit thanked all of us profusely, served some cake and whiskey and then let us leave. I began making my way to the office, still carrying my valise full of jewelry. When I came within two blocks of my building, a man I knew ran over to me, frantically waving his hands.

"Quick, get away!" he yelled at me wildly. "The Bolsheviks took over the government today and some of them came in and killed the Jews in the diamond exchange. They're now busy looting as much as they can. Run for your life!"

I did run for my life. I remained hidden for a few days and eventually I was able to get out of Russia. That was my reward for the mitzvah of being part of a minyan. You can well imagine what would have happened to me had I left the minyan early!" (P. 34 The Maggid Speaks, Rav P. Krohn)

We read about the power of prayer in this week's parsha. The Torah tells us about how the Jews cried out to Hashem in prayer, due to the oppression they were experiencing in Egypt. As the verse tells us, "...they cried out. Their outcry... went up to Hashem. Hashem heard their moaning and Hashem remembered His covenant with Avrohom, Yitzchok, and with Yakov." (Shemos 2:23-24) From here we see that Geulah, the redemption from Mitzrayim - Egypt, began when the Jews cried out in prayer to Hashem.

The ideal place to pray is in a shul with a minyan. In fact, the Rambam, of blessed memory rules that "prayer with a minyan is always heard [by Hashem], even if the minyan contains sinners, Hashem will never be disgusted by the prayer of the many [in a minyan]. Therefore one must join a minyan, and must not daven alone as long as he can daven with minyan... [furthermore,] any person who has a shul in his town and does not daven there with a minyan, is deemed to be a bad neighbor." (Hilchos Tefilla 8:1)

The Chofetz Chayim writes in the Mishna Berurah that one who davens with a minyan will merit long life. (Shulchan Aruch, Oruch Chayim 90, M.B. 39). We saw this concept in the amazing story which we told above. Let us all therefore dedicate and rededicate ourselves to davening with a minyan whenever possible. Through davening with a minyan, Hashem will surely take us out of this Gulus, just as He took out the Bnai Yisroel from Mitzrayim through their prayers. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**