

*Why do we need ten people (a minyan) to have weekday services?*

The actual number is derived from the story of Joshua, Caleb and the 10 Spies who scouted the Land of Israel in the Book of Bemidbar (Numbers). There were 12 spies in total, but 10 return from scouting the land and bring a negative report. Joshua and Caleb refuse to join them and advocate for faith in God and that his promised gift of land will be good.

God calls the 10 spies an evil "congregation." So, when the rabbis are looking for the number that makes a "congregation" they follow the 10 from this story (Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 23b). Yes, it seems ironic that we would derive the number for our sacred congregations from this negative group, but maybe there is a hidden meaning in there somewhere for us all to ponder. I'm accepting theories.

In fact, any group of Jews can pray together. That minimum number of 10 (or we sometimes have 9 and count the Torah as 1) is only to be able to say certain prayers that address God's holiness directly. That includes the mourner's kaddish. Why require a minyan to say the mourners prayer? It insures that at a time when someone may feel alone or just in need of some support, a community will be there surrounding them (new allowable grammatical agreement) and supporting them.