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The Right of Peaceful Assembly

The Right of Peaceful Assembly is one of the civil rights. This freedom expresses the right of everyone to hold and participate in an assembly and to act in its framework, in order to achieve common goals - personal, cultural, religious, economic, social or political. The types of meetings can be on a political, professional, religious or hobby basis. The assembly may be for social purposes only or with the aim of influencing public life.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights obliges States parties to the Convention to respect the civil and political rights of people. Inter alia, the Covenant includes the Right of Peaceful Assembly as set forth in Article 21 of the Covenant.

In the past, the freedom of peaceful assembly was a central target for oppression by dictatorial societies following the enactment of a set of laws that suppressed the freedom to join group associations and democratic organizations. In some cases, all forms of association were forbidden and even criminal, especially workers' organizations.

In spiritual and religious spheres, there has always been encouragement and reinforcement of the Right of Peaceful Assembly. It is a common idea in our literature that "The King's glory is in a multitude of people" (Proverbs 14:28), that is, the greater the number of participants in the sacred service, the greater the praise of the Creator (see Mishnah 3, Chapter 7 of Tractate Berachot (Blessings)).

True success in everything can be achieved only collectively because within the broad framework of the public, all forces complement each other; thereby cancelling the restrictions, which limit the work of the individual to such an extent that only collectively, the individual can fulfill all the tasks assigned to him in cooperation with his fellows.

The source of the law that requires a gathering of ten men for everything sacred, is explained in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah (Scroll of Esther), folio 23b. Something sacred requires ten and there is no congregation less than ten, as it is stated in the Five Books of Moses (Numbers 14:17): "How much longer will this evil congregation" and they were ten men.

This fundamental principle is especially true in matters of prayer and study of the Bible

While the public is praying, it is "an acceptable time", as it is written, "But, as for me, may my prayer to You, O the Creator, be in an acceptable time" – Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot (Blessings), folio 7b – since the Creator is satisfied at that time. One must strive to pray at an acceptable time that is when the public is praying.

The prayer in public is accepted even though the individual worshiper who is amongst them did not concentrate so much on his prayer (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Taanit ("Fast Day"), folio 8a).

The simple interpretation of the term "public prayer" is to pray in a group of ten men. Rabbi Nachman of Breslev adds another depth. A group of men praying together is composed of righteous, average and non-righteous men. Rabbi

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רח' שמואל הנביא 13, ירושלים. ת.ד. 50226. טל: 02-5812210 Tel: 02-5812252 פקס: 02-5812252 Fax: 50226 P.O.B. 50226 Jerusalem Shmuel Hanavi St. 13
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Nachman explains that the secret of public prayer is that the person praying himself is the average person, and when he subdues his physicality, he resembles the non-righteous. When he connects to the Righteous, he resembles the Righteous. Therefore, the public, which is composed of righteous, average and non-righteous men, is complete (Likutey Moharan, Teaching 55, paragraph 5, commentary "Shalom Malchhut" by Rabbi Shalom Arush).

When ten men study the Bible, an influence of the Creator enlightens them with wisdom (Ethics of the Fathers, 3:6).

A person acquires knowledge of the Bible only if he learns in a group since by learning in a group, the participants make each other wiser (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot (Blessings), folio 63b).

Hence, in spiritual and religious matters, only all of us collectively may maintain our continuing aspiration to achieve the lofty goal of sanctifying the Creator's name in the world.

Rabbi Shalom Arush
Head of "Chut Shel Chessed"
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