

From the Parnas

By Mark I. Wolfson

One of the most important features of a full-service synagogue is having a consistent morning minyan. There are several important reasons for this. One is that on a regular basis there are people who have an obligation to say Kaddish, which can only be recited with a minyan. Another is that we have an obligation to read the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays in addition to Shabbat, which again is not permitted without a minyan.

The word "synagogue" comes from Greek, meaning "house of assembly", which means it's a place where people get together. In Hebrew, it's referred to as a Bet Knesset, also meaning a "house of assembly". Certainly a primary reason to get together or assemble is in order to pray as a group, though the other, at least as important reason to gather in the synagogue is to learn. To learn about Judaism, to learn about Torah, to learn from Chazal - the sages of the Talmud and medieval commentators like Maimonides and Rashi, as transmitted and taught through our own knowledgeable Rabbi's, teachers, and colleagues. In Yiddish, the building is referred to as a "shul", meaning "school", reflecting that this a place where people come to learn.

Over the past year or so, we have been struggling to get the required 10 men in order to have a minyan to say Kaddish and read the Torah. Over the past few weeks, Eli Gabbay has been working tirelessly to bring together a consistent minyan. He has been very successful, enticing people with important, engaging, and fascinating classes held for 10-15 minutes over breakfast following the service.

Recent classes have included:

- The story of David and Goliath
- The story of Onkelos, the righteous nephew of the Roman Emperor Titus who destroyed the second Temple in Jerusalem. He converted to Judaism and wrote his Targum, an exposition on the basic meaning of the Torah as received by Rabbi Eliezer.
- An archeological show and tell which included artifacts from ancient Israel
- A short lecture by our own Prof. Steven Friedell, professor of law at Rutgers University, on the subject of medical malpractice in Judaism.
- A discussion led by Mr. Eli Gabbay on the meaning of the fast of the 17th of Tammuz

In the coming days, we will have many interesting classes, including:

- Friday morning our own Mr. Daniel Cohen will give reflections on Rosh Hodesh

- Monday Eli will lead a discussion on the origins of King David
- Many more to come

Finally, we have released a new feature on the Mikveh Israel website (<http://www.mikvehisrael.org>) where people can sign up for the minyan. There is a place to sign up for regular weekdays, or regular days of the month, or a specific day. If requested, there will be a reminder sent by email or text message.

Please help the minyan to continue to be strong and consistent. Go to the website and sign up for as many days as you are able. Here is the direct link:
http://www.mikvehisrael.org/e2_minyan_join.php.

With everyone's support and participation, we can build a strong minyan every day, and increase the learning, the knowledge, and the community support in the congregation.