



B'Minyan: Being Counted In Community & Counted On for Shiva

Shomer Collective Educator Fellowship - Final Project
Forrest Yesnes



This resource was created as part of the Educator Fellowship, which was generously supported by The Covenant Foundation.

B' Minyan: Being Counted In Community and Counted On for Shiva



Background and Vision

In Jewish tradition, one becomes a legal member of a *minyan* – a group of Jews who can participate in and access particular rituals in a group of ten – once they become *B'Mitzvah*. This program is a gathering to help 7th grade students continue to find their place in Shir Tikvah as they embrace their newfound titles of *B'Mitzvah* and emerge in the community as Jewish adults who can and should be part of a *minyan*.

Goals and Objectives

- 7th graders will further understand their status-change in the community, so that they feel grounded in their lives as emerging Jewish adults. This will happen as they are celebrated for their accomplishments and as they hear about and explore what it means to be a Jewish adult at Shir Tikvah.
- 7th graders will feel called to participate in shiva minyanim, so that they know how to support fellow congregants. This will happen as they learn about shiva coordination and listen to stories about showing up for someone when they experience a death.

People

7th graders, their parents/guardians, the Director of Education, and a representative from the Caring Committee.

Space and Materials

We gathered over dinner. Additional materials needed: Text Study per person (attached).

Program Outline

1) Welcome

2) Text Study about Minyan and Discussion about Being Counted In and Counted On

Together we study the following texts:

- B'reishit 18:23 and B'reishit 18:32 - 18:33
- Mishnah Megillah 4:3
- Quote from Shmuel Kogan

3) Brainstorming and Introducing Shiva Responsibilities

Students are invited to pair up and brainstorm connections between now being part of *minyan* and ways they can be counted in and counted on in congregational life. As they share their lists to the wider group, the Director sooner than later guides them toward the topic of *shiva minyan*. They revisit *shiva* origins and norms and share the big next step: being part of *shiva* coordination.

4) Shir Tikvah's Caring Committee

A representative of the Caring Committee storytells about the impact of showing up during a *shiva*, and shares practical information about plugging into *shiva* responsibilities. They answer questions.

5) Conclusion

The Director acknowledges this learning and the assuming of responsibility with some pomp, gratitude, and blessings.



Considerations for the Program

- As recent B'Mitzvah, students can be trusted to do this learning on their own. At the same time, it is crucial to engage their parents/guardians in this work - least of all because students still rely on them parents for basic transportation. Be strategic each year about which parts of this program are just for students and which parts include their adults.
- Potential growth areas for this program include involving students in *bikur cholim* - visiting the sick - opportunities, engaging them in a reflection project about their legacy, and learning more texts about supporting through death.

Minyan Text Study

1) Avraham negotiates with G!d about Sodom and G'morrah

G!d is disappointed by the behavior of people living in Sodom and G'morrah, and plans to wipe them out. Avraham advocates for them, negotiating with G!d:

B'reishit 18:23

וַיָּגֵשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֵף תִּסְפֶּה צְדִיק עִם רָשָׁע

“Avraham came forward and said, “Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?””

The negotiation continues down from 50.

B'reishit 18:32

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי יְחִר לֹא יֵחַר לְאָדָנִי וְאֶדְבַּרְהָ אֶת־הַפֶּעַם אֲוִלִי יִמְצְאוּן שָׁם עֵשָׂרָה
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֵשָׂרָה

“And he said, “Let not my lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?” “I will not destroy, for the sake of ten.””

B'reishit 18:33

וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמִקְוֵמוֹ

“Having finished speaking to Avraham, G!d departed; Avraham returned to his place.”



2) A list of what we don't do without ten people

Mishneh Megillah 4:3

“One does not recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Sh'ma; nor does one pass before the ark to repeat the Amidah prayer; nor do the priests lift their hands to recite the Priestly Benediction; nor is the Torah read in public; nor does one conclude with a reading from the Prophets [haftarah] in the presence of fewer than ten. And one does not observe the practice of standing up and sitting down for the delivery of eulogies at a funeral service; nor does one recite the mourners' blessing or comfort mourners in two lines after the funeral; or recite the bridegrooms' blessing; and one does not invite others to recite grace after meals, i.e., conduct with the name of G!d, with fewer than ten present.”

10

3) The Potential of the Individual Jew

Shmuel Kogan

“Upon pondering this concept for a moment, one comes to realize a great truth: the power of each individual Jew. There can be a group of nine of the greatest Jews, people who complete all of the commandments and understand the depths of the Torah’s secrets, yet they do not have the ability to complete a minyan on their own. However, add to the group the simplest Jew, someone who perhaps cannot properly read their prayer nor do they really understand what they are saying, yet when they walk into the room they have now transformed the entire group and made them complete – a minyan. It is because of this person that the group is now able to recite those parts of the prayer that can be read only with a minyan. Never underestimate the potential of the individual Jew.”



Questions and Discussion

The above texts are just a few examples of where 10 and the importance of a minyan come into play in Jewish tradition. Now that you know some origins of minyan...

- 1) Why do you believe it matters to have a quorum of **ten** individuals for certain practices in Jewish life?
- 2) Which **text** is sticking with you the most right now?
- 3) How does minyan **already** play a role in your life at Shir Tikvah, in classes, at events? How might the above texts inspire us **more** in our lives at Shir Tikvah, in classes, at events?
- 4) What does it mean to be **counted in**? When have you counted? How did you know? What does it mean to be **counted on**? When have you counted on someone? When has someone counted on you?
- 5) There is a common phrase used in our tradition: **“Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh”** or “All of Israel are responsible for one another.” What do you think that means? What does that have to do with our discussion?



For more Jewish wisdom and resources on death and dying, visit www.shomercollective.org.