Tree of Life Shooting Annual Commemoration

2021 Packet

My name is Marnie Fienberg. On October 27, 2018 I lost my wonderful and gentle mother-in-law Joyce Fienberg. She was one of eleven Jewish souls violently taken during Shabbat morning prayers at the Tree of Life Shooting in Pittsburgh, PA. They were part of three congregations in the Tree of Life building: Congregation Dor Hadash, New Light Congregation, Tree of Life * Or L'Simcha Congregation.

As a family member, I look for ways to help our American Jewish Community remember Joyce and the other ten souls. For my family, it is important to remember how they lived as well as how they died. The shooter wanted to kill all Jews and end our Jewish traditions. Our families ask that you remember the eleven souls that were taken from us by actively remembering them by taking a Jewish action.

The eleven lost in the Pittsburgh Shooting are a minyan + 1. Each was at their respective congregations early, before the Torah Service, to establish a minyan for early Shabbat prayers. Being part of a minyan was their regular community service, helping others by enabling the Mourners' Kaddish to be said before the Shabbat Torah service. A minyan is also a gathering of ten or more righteous Jewish adults. This is the light we wish to see our eleven lost souls, a guiding ideal of a minyan + one.

In Pittsburgh, we remember and honor the eleven through a Jewish activity, either through Torah study and/or community service in their honor. Today I ask you, as a President of a Sisterhood outside of Pittsburgh, to participate in your own Sisterhood traditions and dedicate either a Torah Study (see the attached Study Guide for recommendations) or Tikkun Olam-focused community service activity to the memories of our lost ones.

The following study guide is a suggested roadmap for a Torah study. Together, we remember their lives as individuals and as a collective minyan. We hope that each year we can work together to help make them a part of our American Jewish living memory and part of your own synagogue's traditions.

As we say, may their memory be a blessing…

-Marnie Fienberg
Founder, 2 for Seder
2forseder.org

Presented by:

2 FOR SEDER™
Pittsburgh Interfaith Evolution

In partnership with:

10 27 HEALING PARTNERSHIP
2021 REMEMBER REFLECT IN SPIRIT & IN ACTION
1027healingpartnership.org

D'Var

Participation in a minyan is a responsibility, a need and a Mitzvah. As we think of the third Commemoration of the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Shooting on October 27th, consider what each individual was doing in Synagogue before the Torah service when the shooter took their lives and tried to instill fear in the American Jewish community. Their purpose was clear - to support their community by helping to form a minyan. Each time you help to form a minyan, you are defeating the shooter, by taking pride in your Judaism and your community.

Where does the concept of a minyan come from? The first mention of ten holy people is in the story of Noah. He, his wife, sons and daughters only made up eight righteous people - it was not enough to save the world

Abraham, who knows the story of Noah, recalls it when negotiating with G-d to save the people at Sodom and Gomorrah. He starts with a thousand, but, unsure he will find them, begins to negotiate down. He ends his negotiation with ten righteous people - if he can find ten, the cities will be saved. Shockingly, there are not ten to be found, and the unrighteous people are turned to salt.

The leap from Torah to Talmud shows us how the power of ten people together can change everything.

My Mother-in-Law Joyce Fienberg, was one of the eleven taken from us. She would have bristled under the idea that she was a woman of righteousness by forming a minyan. To her, she was simply helping others as they had helped her, getting up a little earlier, picking up a fellow "Minyanaire" on the way and enabling her small Jewish community at the Tree of Life to pray and remember those they had lost. It was her duty and her pleasure to help others, as it was for all the eleven. Each one was there to help their Jewish community.

The lost eleven make up a Minyan plus one. They will forever be our symbol of the power of a daily Mitzvah. Remember them as they lived and as a model for making the world a better place. As a family member I ask you to rise to righteousness and attend one Minyan each year. Dedicate it to the spirit of the eleven.

May their memory be a blessing and an inspiration for all time…

-Marnie Fienberg, October 2021
Founder, 2 for Seder
2forseder.org

Study Guide

Dedication

Before you begin, please read aloud the names of the lost eleven, actively dedicating this time to their memories:

We dedicate this Torah study to the eleven Jewish souls whose lives were taken on October 27th, 2018 while praying at the Tree of Life building in Pittsburgh, PA.

Together we honor their example and will continue to be Jewish with pride and joyfulness.

Joyce Fienberg Richard Gottfried Rose Mallinger Jerry Rabinowitz Cecil Rosenthal David Rosenthal	Bernice Simon Sylvan Simon Dan Stein Mel Wax Irving Younger

May their memories be a blessing...

Torah Study

A minyan is a quorum of ten Jewish adults, critical to having a full service in any denomination of Judaism. The Barechu, Mourner's Kaddish and Kedushah cannot be recited unless a minyan is present.

Where did the concept of a minyan originate? Ten righteous people are said to be needed to save the world. In the Torah, we see at least two cases where this critical threshold was sought after, but not met.

In the story of Abraham and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham remembers the story of Noah where there were eight righteous people, but not ten and G-d destroyed the world. Abraham negotiates with G-d that if he can find ten righteous people, then G-d will allow them to live. Unfortunately, Abraham couldn't find ten righteous people and God destroyed the cities.

Torah Study Reading One:

Genesis 18:19-28; 31-33

Then the LORD said, "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave! I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note."

The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Abraham came forward and said, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? What if there should be fifty innocents within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it?

Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" And the LORD answered, "If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake."

Abraham spoke up, saying, "Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes:

What if the fifty innocents should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" And He answered, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

And Abraham said, "I venture again to speak to my Lord: What if twenty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty."

And Abraham said: Let not the L-rd be wroth and I will speak but this [last] time. Perhaps there will be found there ten. And G-d said: I will not destroy for the sake of the ten. Abraham did not venture to plead for less, reasoning from the fact that Noah, his sons, and their wives (eight altogether), had failed to save their generation, and having sought for but not having found nine in combination with the L-rd.

When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

Torah Study Reading Two:

Genesis Rabbah 49:13 (Talmudic commentary on the Torah)

Rashi's commentary: PERADVENTURE THERE SHALL TEN BE FOUND THERE —

For a smaller number he did not plead because he knew already of two instances where less than ten had failed to save the wicked. He said to himself: In the generation of the Flood there were eight righteous people, viz, Noah, his sons and their wives, and they could not save their generation, and for nine in association with God he had already pleaded but had found no acceptance.

Study Questions

In the story of Noah (referenced by Rashi), there are eight righteous people, both women and men. Abraham seeks to find ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah. Today, in the Orthodox tradition, a minyan is considered ten Jewish male adults. What are your thoughts about this evolution? Why is it ten Jewish adults (without specifying gender) in the Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform traditions?

Without a minyan, the community cannot say the mourner's Kaddish. Why do you think the Talmudic rabbis created this rule? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks?

Creating a minyan is a Mitzvah. Have you ever been part of a small minyan? How did it feel to support your Jewish community in this way?

The eleven lost at the Tree of Life Shooting formed a minyan in their respective congregations at least once each week, sometimes once a day. How often do you go to synagogue to help form a minyan? Perhaps you might create a goal to do this as a group throughout the year.