



WHY NOT MINYAN?

By Faye Wolf

Sometimes I am asked why I would go to minyan if I didn't have to. The question to me wasn't why, but why not? By way of personal history, I started to attend daily evening minyan for a family member that needed to say Kaddish but could not attend due to failing health. That 30 day stint with the 'Kaddish Klub' opened my eyes to the benefits of coming together for prayer on a daily basis. Following the 30 days, I committed to one evening a week to be there to make a minyan for those that needed to say Kaddish. (Many of you know that since then, I have rejoined the 'klub' and am upholding the commitment to say Kaddish for my father).

So why not go to minyan? Well, there seemed to be some good reasons. At first I thought, "how could I rearrange my very busy schedule especially around the dinner hour?" Amazingly, it all came together. I made it clear to others that this was not negotiable. Evening minyan is a short service. The service is usually 15-20 minutes--very doable. It was much easier to work in than I initially thought. After the initial shuffling of tasks, it all worked, and to my surprise, to my benefit. It didn't become something extra that I had to do. Instead, it became something that I was looking forward to. I didn't have to show up with bells on. I just needed to show up.

Remember the old buzz phrase "me time"--trying to carve out those few minutes to do whatever it is that recharges you? **Why not** minyan for "me time"? Prayer to me is a form of meditation, a few quiet moments of reflection that keeps me centered for the evening, bringing the rest of the day to a focus that I wouldn't have if I wasn't there participating. Sure, I could try to imitate that at home, but seriously, do I? There is always a distraction. Communal prayer has benefits, and private meditation has benefits, and you get both of those with the evening service. All in a short time span.

Of course there was that nagging voice that said "but wait, you don't know your way around a service. You don't read Hebrew. How will you know what to do?"

No problem. **Why not** learn? There was always someone there to give me the correct book. Page numbers are always announced. English is right there next to the Hebrew. And, I was introduced to the transliterated book that is also available in the chapel. If I wanted one-on-one guidance, that was available also. There is always a friendly face (actually, at least 9 other faces on any given day) to assist. And you will catch on. Believe me, if I can figure it out, you can too. I'm not an expert, and I still don't read Hebrew, but I can follow the service now, and it has meaning for me.

Grieving is a process. Eleven months seems like a long time at the onset. During the grieving process it is important to be with others, even if it is for just a short time. **Why not** minyan for that? I can't think of anything more welcoming than friendly faces in a non-judgmental, respectful, casual atmosphere.

Is there someone I need to say a micheberach for? A prayer to help? Did something bad or something good occur? **Why not** take it upon myself to say these prayers, instead of calling upon someone else to do it? At some point I realized that it is my responsibility, and the excuses of why it shouldn't be me became just that, excuses. Once I saw how easy it was to attend evening services, it becomes automatic to take on the responsibility. And now that I realize how important it is to make sure there is a minyan for those that need it, when my 11 months of Kaddish is up I plan to attend at least once a week.

For the small price of 20 minutes, this is what I get; a sense of community, an increase in my knowledge of Judaism, focus, doing a mitzvah, and a sense of accomplishment. All that for just showing up.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss my experience at minyan, at yammi@comcast.net, or for questions about minyan in general, contact Nancy Kaplan at nancyellen879@att.net.