

## Joel Schwartz

I began attending the Ohr Kodesh morning *minyan* early in 1999, after my father's death. After a few months as a regular, I recall mentioning to some of the other regulars that a daily *minyan* would be a good location for a TV sitcom: you have your regulars, who appear every day, and your "guest stars," those who show up only rarely. I had in mind, though I did not mention, the then-popular sitcom *Cheers*.

Another regular, Andy Silberstein, the default Torah gabbai of the morning *minyan* (and father of our current member Michelle) picked up on this theme, responding almost telepathically by adapting the *Cheers* theme song: just as the Boston bar was the place where "everybody knows your name," the daily *minyan* is the place where (if you attend often enough) "the *gabbai* knows your [Hebrew] name."

That, I think, is part of the great appeal of being a morning *minyan* regular. You not only get to spend time searching for God; you also get to spend time enjoying fellowship in a small community, in which you don't need to drink alcohol to have everybody know your name.

## David J.G.

Like many 21st-century American Jews, I rarely attended daily services. After a parent died, though, I was moved to follow our tradition of reciting *Kaddish Yatom* the Mourner's Kaddish at daily *minyanim*.

When my dad died in 1996, I had rarely put on my *Tefillin* and never led a service, but I started to lay *Tefillin* daily, and, when I moved to Silver Spring and started attending Ohr Kodesh in 1997, Sam Salzburg, z"l, called me to lead.

"But I can't," I protested.

"You'll be fine," he assured me, and he stood by to get me through, over time making sure I acquired the skill.

After the 11 months of *Avelut*/mourning, I had, as I liked to tell folks, picked up a "bad habit" - To be sure, I slacked off a bit over time, but when asked to commit to at least one day a week - I chose two - eventually landing back at daily.

Having picked up this "bad habit," it now accompanies me wherever I go. Attending *minyan* in the town or our travels is a great way to experience the variety of Jewish expressions across the globe. On my first visit to Istanbul, I planned a day of visiting the Jewish sites, starting with attending *Shacharit*/morning service at The Ashkenazi Synagogue (now attended by mostly Mizrahi shopkeepers). After services, I was wrapping up my *tefillin* and two fellows started yelling at each other in increasing volume and passion - soon they came to blows - and no one appeared to be doing anything. Another "minyanaire" approached me and said, "Don't mind them, they do this every morning."

Another morning, in another place - the Sierra Nevada foothills for an international music camp, I rose early to daven and donned my *tallis* and *tefillin* as a young woman and her little child walked by, the child said, "Mommy, what's he doing?"

Being the good hippie mom she was, she answered, "He's meditating, and his mantra is 135 pages long." And there lies one of the delights of our tradition. Do we recite the same passages three times per day, every day? No - it's *never* the same - even the passages that are ostensibly the same are never the same. There is so much richness and depth to the service. Even after all these years words and phrases I'd never particularly noticed will pop out, gain new meaning, become touchstones and guides.

And then there is the fellowship of being a regular *minyan* attendee. To be with our community engaging with our liturgical traditions, greeting friends and comforting mourners is a fine way to begin and/or end the day.

It doesn't have to be daily - though you might pick up "a bad habit" - but you too can and should learn the joys and pleasures of attending the OKC daily services. Look forward to seeing you there.

## **Sharon G-K.**

It was winter break and a call went out that Heitzi Epstein's father had died and they would need extra help ensuring her *shiva minyanim* had enough congregants, as many people were away that week. I messaged Heitzi my condolences and that I was so sorry I could not help because I also would be out of town; I was going to Boston to help my daughter recover from a minor surgery.

As I was saying *Kaddish* for my mother, I asked my daughter if there was a daily evening *minyan* nearby. She inquired about the nearby shuls and found out that there was a *shiva minyan* taking place a few blocks from where she lived.

With the address and time in hand but no idea of the people's names, I ventured out. There's an awkward moment when entering someone's home to recite the *Kaddish* and not knowing anyone there. All you know is that you're entering a place where Jews are gathered to pray and hoping you will be welcomed. When I arrived, prayers had already begun. I stayed unobtrusively near the back, reciting the *Kaddish* when the time came. Afterward, the mourner began to share. My ears perked up as I heard him mention he had just traveled back from Washington, D.C. for the funeral... then I heard him mention his sister Heitzi. I couldn't be with Heitzi at her *shiva minyan* but had serendipitously ended up at her brother's *shiva minyan*.