

Make a minyan  
Mike Harrison

A few months ago, Sue Pavane approached me with an idea to have a special Shabbat to recognize and honor all our Minyanaires who regularly attend and support our daily minyanim. I thought it was a great idea and well deserved. Then she informed me that I would have to speak and I replied “now that’s not such a great idea.” I am not comfortable speaking in front of an audience. I am a doer. Words like organizer and coordinator are adjectives used to describe me not, speech-giver and her response was too bad, you are going to do this. She confiscated my passport and here I am. My hope is that after this speech I will never have to spend time organizing a minyan again. I can at least dream...

As today is designated as a day to recognize and honor our daily Minyanaires I would like to thank all of you who do respond regularly to my texts asking for help. I would be lying if I said that it did not get frustrated when I do not get enough replies. You are invaluable and well appreciated and therefore I would publicly like to Thank you.

Minyan was not a daily part of my life growing up. We moved into the area and joined SRJC in 1995. My attitude was that they do not need me as there are others who will attend and besides “I have no time”. My belief has always been that time does not happen, but you make it happen. I certainly did not practice what I preach.

I will begin by telling a bit about my experience and end with my thoughts for the future. I will try to be as brief as possible. At least that is what I was told, but after writing all this out it looks like it will be brief plus.

In 2005, I experienced the unfortunate loss of my mother. It was then that I made up my mind to attend minyan every day, twice a day for the 11 months of mourning as something I wanted to commit to. Being the dedicated, regimented, and committed person that I am, I decided to commit and make this work. I structured my daily schedule around minyan. As many of you know, I am also committed to going the gym, where you will find me every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, without fail, and I was not giving that up. During that time of my life, I owned, or was a part owner, of a few retail discount stores in the Bronx and this consumed much of my time as I worked (9:30am to 7:30pm, six days a week).

I made the following adjustments to my daily schedule. Be at the gym by 5am which enabled me to attend morning minyan at 6:45am. I also made sure that I left my store by 7:15pm in order to be at evening minyan at 8pm. These changes enabled me to maintain my workout schedule, and my work schedule, and attend daily minyanim twice a day, every day, in order to achieve my goal. By prioritizing getting to minyan, I was successful.

I soon became one of the regulars. Soon thereafter I was approached by the Horowitz Boys (Manny and Ike), the original minyan stalwarts who many of you recall as well. They both

coaxed me into taking the next step along my minyan journey which was to lead the service. My starting point was the Maariv service and soon thereafter I progressed on to the Shacharit Service. This was the turning point and foundation of my involvement and dedication to the minyanim.

In years prior we had many fully committed daily regulars whom we could count on to be there and we almost never missed a minyan. Breakfast was prepared, and eggs were cooked by volunteers on a daily basis, which added a nice touch after the service. Minyan became something I looked forward to attending every day. Davening and seeing the familiar faces everyday along with the camaraderie and discussions afterwards over breakfast was a great start to the day.

I found being a part of the daily minyan to be a very rewarding experience. Realizing that I was helping out and making a difference for others as well who were in need of a minyan in order to recite Kaddish. Fast forward to today (now 19 years and counting) I still attend whenever we have an in-person minyan. The rewarding feeling of helping has remained a part of me as well and I still look forward to seeing everyone there as well. We may not have breakfast on a daily basis, but we do have breakfast on Sunday mornings and it's a big highlight of my week, something I look forward to, we have bagels and coffee and interesting discussions (as it's been said) we try to solve the world's problems.

Currently, as is the case in many shuls it's difficult to get commitments from congregants to attend on a regular basis. We are, more often than not, successful on most days, Monday and Thursday at 6:45 am and Sunday morning at 9am. Unfortunately, too often lately we find ourselves a few short and are not able to read Torah or recite Kaddish. Rosh Chodesh whether it's 1 or 2 days further adds to the need for help. Minyan is an important and necessary component of daily Jewish Life and is needed at some point in time by everyone but the decision to prioritize and attend must be done willingly and voluntarily to maintain our minyanim.

We are using two means of communication to reach out to the congregation in the hope that we can, in advance, secure at least 10 on a regular basis. I would be relieved to have to send out texts for help. Whats's app was introduced as a non-invasive way to contact people with advance notice or even at a moment's notice when we have the need. Simply download the App on your phone and join the group.

(<https://chat.whatsapp.com/ChAqpFsukLs2u6phKql71d>). When you see the message for help, if you are able simply text back that you will be there. We had a nice amount who volunteered and signed up which was appreciated but results have not been so great. As part of signing up there is a responsibility and commitment attached which is to be available from time to time as much as life permits. Unfortunately, our current list does not result in enough participation and needs a refresh so please consider signing up and making the commitment to do your share of helping. Every one person counts and makes a difference.

Recently we added another option which is a digital sign-up sheet, available to you on the homepage of our website [www.srjc.org/minyan-sign-up](http://www.srjc.org/minyan-sign-up). You simply log on and add the days you are available. This way we know in advance how many we will have on any given day, and you can easily work into your schedule. It's a simple and easy process. As a matter of fact, consider making it a routine. Log on at end of each month and sign up for days you will attend in the following month. You will then be able to plan your time around the days you have chosen and be able to keep your commitment. And remember, If *you* wish to a minyan that is not on a regularly scheduled day, please contact Rabbi Cohen, [Rabbi@srjc.org](mailto:Rabbi@srjc.org) or me at [MHarrison@budgetblinds.com](mailto:MHarrison@budgetblinds.com) and we will ensure you have one.

I can attest to the fact that commitment does not happen by itself, it requires an effort and a sacrifice on everyone's part to prioritize minyan in your life. At least give it a try along with some serious consideration so we can welcome you to be a part of daily minyan family. I promise it will be a very rewarding and satisfying experience.