

# MINYAN MONTHLY

Volume 9, No. 1

September-October 1995

Tishrei 5756

## RITUAL COMMITTEE REPORT - 7/23/95

--submitted by Ronnie Cohen  
(condensed from minutes)

The Library Minyan Ritual Committee met on July 23 at 7:45 p.m. at the home of Ronnie and Hilda Cohen. Attendees were Ronnie Cohen (chair), Jonathan Friedman, Stan Goldstein, Val Goldstein, Joel Grossman, Avi Havivi, Marshall Kramer, Jody Myers, Paul Nisenbaum, Barry Shapiro, and Ruth Sohn.

Items discussed include: Universal Peace in the Kaddish; Alternative (Library) Minyanim; timing of T'kiah G'dolah on Yom Kippur; Torah Service "Mi Shebeirach" for classes of people (e.g. those with AIDS); and Birkat HaCohanim.

### RITUAL COMMITTEE POWERS

Before addressing the above items, the committee discussed the powers of the Ritual Committee to make policy on ritual issues. In earlier years, the Ritual Committee had a formalized structure and was empowered to make major decisions (after hearings, pollings, etc.) for the Minyan. More recently, decisions have been made through a consensus of the whole. Because of the large size of the Minyan, the committee feels we need to return to a more formalized structure, as in the past.

Following is the unanimous recommendation:

"We recommend to the Steering Committee to determine a way to make the Ritual Committee a duly constituted representative committee, empowered to make ritual decisions for the Library Minyan. In order for this to happen, the governance of the Library Minyan must have a formalized structure."

### "UNIVERSAL PEACE"

The addition of the phrase "al kol yoshvei tevel" to the Kaddish has been proposed, as published in recent editions of the Minyan Monthly. During a lengthy debate, the committee continually returned to the principle, "Individual prayer leaders (shlichei tzibbur, henceforth "shatz") should not make unilateral decisions concerning the liturgy."

All attendees agreed that: 1) there is no written record that this is a by-law of the Minyan, although there is widespread acceptance of the principle; and 2) there is no mechanism or procedure through which a shatz is ever informed of this principle. This resulted in a new shatz adding a phrase on "universal peace." The Ritual Committee Chair discussed this with the Shatz, and attempted to resolve it through publishing of an article in the Minyan Monthly.



## IN FAVOR OF FLEXIBILITY

Some of the attendees discussed their view that the principle of "no unilateral decisions" should not be an absolute one. They believe there is room to discuss where and when in the service we are willing to be flexible. Here is a summary of their points:

1) Over the centuries, as well as today, different Jewish communities developed unique versions of major and minor prayers. Jewish leaders within the domain of "traditional Jewry" have accepted these versions as legitimate. Especially in regions of the world where Jews from many regions gather, there are congregations that allow the shatz to daven according to his/her version. Congregants who do not share the shatz's version may or may not join in, but they treat it with respect.

2) Allowing this diversity adds a certain richness to the prayers. It makes the congregants reflect upon the ideas within the shatz's version and their own, making for a more stimulating prayer service.

3) A community is not just "people who think and pray alike." Another model of a community is "people who think and pray together, and allow the expression of the various traditions among them."

The discussion turned to matters of social etiquette within a diverse community like the Library Minyan. Some of those present felt they could tolerate changes made by a shatz/congregant if they were not motivated by a "political

## REASONS NOT TO DEVIATE

Some of the attendees felt that the principle of "no unilateral decisions" is a good one, for the following reasons: 1) A worshipper regards it as "disruptive" when a shatz adopts any language that is not printed in the prayerbook we use. Currently accepted modification of the adopted text (Sim Shalom) should be printed and handed out.

2) Our liturgy should be determined in advance, and predictable to us, so we can feel comfortable with it and have a successful experience davening.

3) When we allow a shatz to make a unilateral change, we "open the floodgates" for all other changes, which is not a desirable outcome.

4) It is not sensitive to the beliefs and feelings of the congregation for the shatz to change the liturgy without advance consultation and consent. Some changes are considered offensive to some members. The shatz is the mouthpiece of the congregation, and not free to follow her/his private version. The place for individual expression is in the drash, which we do not censor.

agenda." Another pointed out that "political agenda" was a disparaging term, and we have to assume every shatz/congregant has motives as pure as our own. This discussion did not end conclusively, except that all agree we want to coexist peacefully!

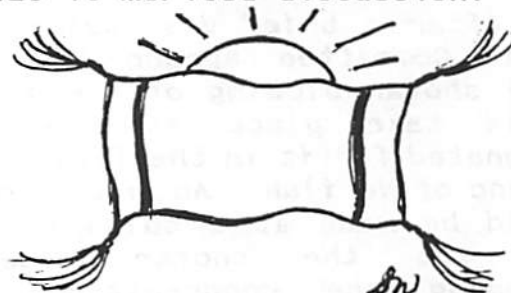
From the vantage point of a relative newcomer who was familiar with Minyanim/Havurot on the East Coast, Avi Havivi suggested that the Library Minyan is unique among the havurot because it is so large. He noted that in comparable situations in New York and Philadelphia, growing havurot have at certain points split in order to a) maintain small-size davening communities and b) offer people more choices of davening styles. He and others noted that the Library Minyan has a very diverse constituency and is of sufficient size that we could subdivide into a number of different minyanim, each offering a somewhat different flavor of davening.

At one point the Minyan seriously considered offering such alternatives once a month, but the idea was never actualized. There was general agreement that the present situation -- in which quite diverse constituencies try to construct one common service that will satisfy everyone all the time -- is not a healthy or realistic one.

In the meantime, the attendees reached consensus on the following:

"We expect the shatz to follow the text of Sim Shalom except for those modifications we have already allowed. But the Ritual Committee wants to discuss where we will be flexible in the liturgy and where we will not. This discussion must wait until a response is received regarding our recommendation to the Steering Committee."

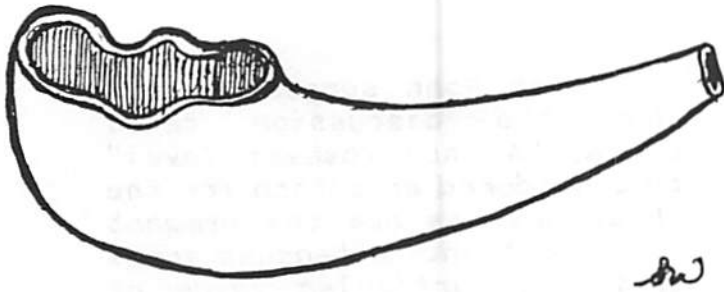
Ruth Sohn suggested that when the discussion takes place, "Al Kol Yoshvei Tevel" be considered an option for the shatz just as now the eemahot are an option. Attendees agree that the particular value of the phrase had not been discussed at the meeting, and that it merited discussion.



#### TRADITIONAL-EXPERIMENTAL MINYAN

Jody Myers informed the Ritual Committee that she and Ruth Sohn submitted a proposal to the Temple Beth Am Ritual Committee to establish traditional-experimental minyan to meet once-a-month at Beth Am. It will provide greater flexibility in exploring a variety of issues in relation to prayer, allowing creativity within the broad theological context of the Conservative movement. That committee approved it, and the minyan will begin this fall after the holidays. The attendees speculated on the effect this will have on the liturgy of the Library Minyan.

Stan Goldstein added that this announcement related to the item he had asked be placed on the Agenda: Alternative Library Minyanim. He indicated that the main arguments in favor of such a move had been advanced by Avi Havivi in the previous discussion, and that such a possibility should be kept in mind by members of the Minyan.



## BIRKAT HACHOHANIM

In our discussion of Birkat Hachochanim, much of the discussion centered around technical issues, such as: How can an egalitarian minyan have a ceremony which is, by Biblical injunction, supposed to be male-centered? If we extend this to women, how is a woman cohen defined (i.e. bat cohen [daughter of a cohen], eishet cohen [wife of a cohen], etc.)? Or should the bracha be recited by the functional equivalents of cohanim, i.e. rabbis, shlichei tzibbur, the elected leadership of the minyan? Furthermore, are there requirements of ritual observance to be expected of those who give the blessing?

There was some discussion that the addition of birkat hachochanim would add some awe and majesty to the service, which many felt to be desirable. Indeed this was the main point of Rabbi Netter in his drash on the topic.

Although there was some discussion about establishing a subcommittee to begin the actual work of looking into the Rabbinical Assembly position on this, and to begin considering it seriously, there was also fear that such a discussion could unleash powerful, and potentially divisive tensions within the Minyan. After due consideration, the committee decided not to pursue the idea at this time. If individuals are strongly in favor of it, they may make their feelings known through drashot, articles in the Minyan Monthly, etc.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

## TEKIAH GEDOLAH ON YOM KIPPUR

After a brief discussion, the Ritual Committee agreed that the final shofar blowing of Yom Kippur should take place at the time designated for it in the liturgy, at the end of Ne'ilah. An announcement should be made at a suitable spot prior to the shofar blowing, reminding the congregation that Ma'ariv will follow the shofar blowing as the first mitzvah of the next day.



## MI SHEBEIRACH FOR AIDS SUFFERERS

Some people have expressed to the Chair of the Ritual Committee their offense at Mi Shebeirach being said for "all those suffering from AIDS" during the Torah Service, as it appears to confer a special status on this group, as opposed to others suffering from equally widespread and terrible afflictions, such as cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, etc. The issue was discussed and it was resolved that one should be able to have a Mi Shebeirach said for whomever one wants.

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## **MINYAN LIST UPDATES**

Please communicate all changes and updates of the Minyan List to:

Ira Grossman  
6507 W. Olympic Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90035

(213) 651-1633 - home  
E-Mail address: sigman @ metcom.com

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## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:**

Dear Editor:

This is in response to the announcement regarding the singles Casino night at Mogen David in the recent Minyan Monthly. I feel that the Minyan Monthly is not the appropriate forum to advertise activities (let alone fundraisers!) from other synagogues and/or religious institutions, unless they are associated with Temple Beth Am, e.g. Camp Ramah and the UJ. However, I do not object to these types of activities being announced at shul. The Minyan Monthly should remain focused on Minyan, Temple and school activities.

Sincerely,

Sandra Braun

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Dear Sandra:

I see your point; however, as a recently "single and looking" congregant, I know I was always grateful to hear of singles' events, fundraisers or otherwise, no matter

what the source. I feel our obligation to our single members should prevail over such internecine rivalries. However, if others in the Minyan feel as you do, I will certainly bow to majority opinion. Thank you for bringing up the topic; it was a consideration that had never occurred to me!

Sincerely,

The Editor

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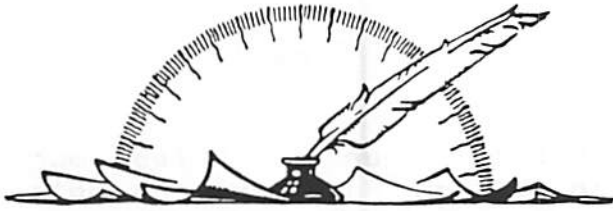


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## **TORAH GABBAI ('IM) NEEDED**

The position of Torah Gabbai is still unoccupied. The job consists of orchestrating the Torah service at least once a month, and lining up others to do it whenever possible. Good Hebrew reading skills are required, and Torah reading skills are recommended though not essential. Call Arnie Wuhrman for more information, (310) 657-5533.

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## **MINYAN TREASURY DWINDLING**

--submitted by Sandra Braun

Our Library Minyan treasury is dwindling. As a group, the Library Minyan does not sponsor fundraisers, nor do we receive large amounts of contributions from our members or outside sources that are deposited to Library Minyan accounts. I would like to propose that the Library Minyan raise money during the year for general funds as well as for specific events. If we had more money in our treasury, we could have Minyan sponsored kiddushim on a regular basis. We would even have funds to help out our "mother" shul when they are in need. Did you know that our treasury pays for a portion of the child care at Shabbat and holiday services? Where will the money come from when we run out of funds?

Following are some ideas that have crossed my mind. I'm sure we can come up with other ideas that can be both fruitful and fun.

### **1. CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE MINYAN MONTHLY:**

I think it's time we should consider charging a nominal fee (depending on size) for this service. If the person or organization placing the ad will have financial gains due to a sale or rental of real estate, goods or services, he/she/they should pay for the advertisement. It may also be deductible! Did you know our newsletter costs the synagogue \$60-\$100.00 for each publication? In this way, we can help the shul pay for the costs of our newsletter.

### **2. SPONSOR A SHUL-WIDE FUNDRAISER:**

It was suggested by members of the Minyan, who are also parents of Pressman Academy students, to co-sponsor the Purim Ball with the school's PTA. We may not make a lot of money, but we'll have a lot of fun as a community. This year's dance is scheduled for March 4, 1996, with a live 50's band!

### **3. CONTRIBUTIONS:**

Make it easy for Library Minyan members and guests to our synagogue by providing pre-addressed envelopes at our services. People can make a contribution for having an Aliya, child care, or a kiddush fund, etc. A contribution can also be made in honor of or in memory of someone. AND, when making a donation to the Library Minyan, make sure the check is made out to "The Library Minyan". The cost of having these envelopes printed is nominal.

If you have responses or ideas of your own, feel free to let me know, or respond in the next issue of the Minyan Monthly.



## MINYAN COMMITTEES/CONTACTS

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Val Goldstein (310)837-5503  
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Torah Honors  
Alan Broidy (213)933-8894  
Eric Lesin (213)933-3096  
Art Metz (310)276-6905

Drashot  
Rachel Green (213)938-8110  
Cathie Lippman (213)658-6917  
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Carl Sunshine (213)934-7889

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Minyan Guide  
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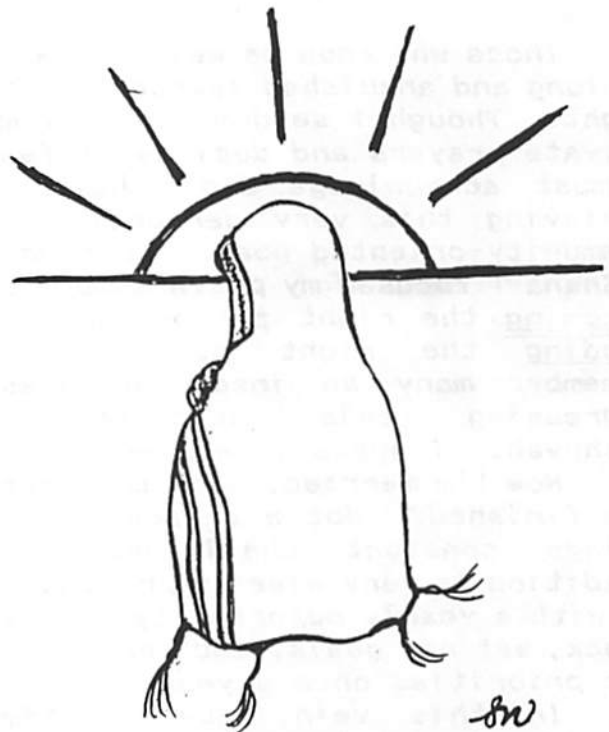
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Shiva Minyans  
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DON'T FORGET WE'RE STILL COLLECTING  
CANNED AND PACKAGED FOODS FOR  
\*\*\*SOVA\*\*\*  
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## Editor's Column

--by Sharon Williams-Wenger

A new year has arrived already. This month's issue is full of news, mostly in the form of the Ritual Committee report (pp. 1-4), which discusses many changes, large and small, being considered for the Minyan. Please read through each section carefully; responses are welcome and encouraged, both to the committee members, and through the forum of drashot and/or the Minyan Monthly.

For me, the year brings many changes, both personally and professionally. If you were at the aufruf last month, you know about my marriage to Neil Eric Wenger, August 20, 1995. Neil and I met at a Brandeis weekend just after last year's High Holidays, and we were thrilled to share our joy with friends at the minyan.

Those who know me well, know of my long and anguished search for Mr. Right. Though I seldom speak of my private prayers and desires, I feel I must acknowledge G-d's help in achieving this very personal, yet community-oriented goal. Last Rosh HaShana I focused my prayers more on becoming the right person than on finding the right person. I remember many an inspiring drash addressing this approach to t'shuvah. I guess it worked!

Now I'm married, does that mean I'm finished? Not a chance! Life brings constant challenges; our tradition is very wise in presenting us with a yearly opportunity to take stock, set new goals, and reevaluate our priorities once a year.

In this vein, due to time considerations at work and home, I am relinquishing some editorial responsibilities of the Minyan Monthly to Sandra Braun, who has graciously offered to publish the newsletter on her Mac. I will, however, stay on as a contributing editor, so feel free to contact me about article ideas or contributions, especially during the transition period. I'd like to thank all those who contributed news, articles, suggestions and assistance during my two years as lead editor, especially Michelle Wolf and Diane Winocur. Thanks also to Norm Greene for his encouragement and contributions!

We are lucky to be in a Minyan where we are constantly challenged to grow both spiritually and intellectually, and to listen respectfully to all opinions advanced by our diverse membership. I have yet to hear a drash in the Minyan that did not open my mind to new vistas, challenge some unexamined position, or introduce an idea I had not yet thought of. This is one of the things I value most about our Minyan. May it continue to be so in the coming year.

I sincerely hope the suggestions for alternate Minyanim will not threaten this greater spirit of cooperation and acceptance that has been a hallmark of the Minyan, at least in the eight years I have been associated with this celebrated group. On the other hand, I welcome the chance to try some alternative forms of worship, such as the new "Ohr Zaruah" Minyan, which will meet once a month in Pilch Hall, starting October 21. See p. 3 for more details, or call Jody Myers or Ruth Sohn.

I look forward with all of you to the coming year. May we all be inscribed and sealed for good in the Book of Life, as we dedicate ourselves anew to study, prayer, mitzvot and tzedakah, making each day another step toward our ultimate goal of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world.

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**SHANAH TOVAH!!**

