2015

Temple Beth-El

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O
n Sunday November 22nd, I attended a
Jewish service at Temple Beth El located
at 601 North Parham Road in Richmond,
Virginia. This was not a normal Shabbat
Service that is held in a Synagogue. This ser-
vice was called a Morning Minyon and was set
up in what looked to be a school. The Morning
Minyon lasted for about forty-five minutes and
started at 9 A.M.

When I arrived to Temple Beth El with
Kennedy, a girl who is also in Human
Spirituality, we were introduced to the
Principle of the school to make sure that it
was okay for us to observe. Luckily, the Rabbis
were happy for us to watch and observe and
everyone made us feel very welcomed. They
even allowed us to sit at a table in the back
so we could take good notes throughout the
service. At first when you walk in, you would
not guess that you were in a Jewish Temple,
but in the room where the service was held
it was quite obvious. In the room where the
service was held, there were two flags; an
American Flag and a flag for Jerusalem. Behind
these flags was the Star of David. Everyone
was given a Torah, which had English trans-
lations included making it very easy to follow
along to the prayers. I was comfortable im-
mediately because several of the men at the
service came over to introduce themselves to
Kennedy and I. One man sat with us the entire
service and translated the prayers into a deep-
er meaning so we truly understood what the
Jewish religion was about.

At Morning Minyon Services, there must be a
crowd of ten people to begin. At this Morning
Minyon, there were thirteen people including
Kennedy and myself and the majority of the
crowd was older white men. Everyone was
dressed pretty casually in jeans and button
downs. The men wore kippahs (caps) of all
different colors. The rabbis wound a black
strap seven times around their arms and then
placed the strap around their head during the
tefillah prayer, which is a way they communi-
cate with God.

At the start of the service, there was a prayer
said about being thankful for the daily renewal
of our lives. This prayer is called the “Birkest
Ha- Shaltar”. Then, immediately, the second
prayer, “Kaddish D'Rabbanan” was prayed.
This prayer blesses people studying the Torah
and people who have passed away. After this
prayer, the Psalm of David was read aloud by
the Rabbi. Then, the “Mourner's Kaddish” was
said to pray for the peace of those that have
found heaven. Following this, the prayer called
“Barukh She-Amar” was sung which praised
the “eternal, compassionate creator”. After this
prayer, a Psalm of Praise was read and then
the Psalms of David were repeated. Chants of
history about Abraham, their prophet, and the
Exodus were said after the Psalms of David
were read again. Throughout the service there
were prayers for wisdom, health and pardons
of sins. There was also what they called a
“greedy “ prayer that prayed for a blessed year,
love for their God and how he gave them all that they needed. Throughout the service many men sang along with the prayers the rabbis were singing into the microphones. One man standing in the back even danced along to the prayers. Everyone was so happy to be present in that moment and I loved being able to witness the love in the room.

Although I am not Jewish or very religious at all, in that moment I connected with the prayers they were singing out. The service was small, but was the most welcoming service I had attended all semester. At the end of the service, they all conversed about someone’s trip they were leaving for that afternoon and the football teams they were rooting for that night on television. The atmosphere was so very family-like and everyone was accepting of everyone’s daily life outside of Temple.

My impression after witnessing a Jewish service was that these people were so strong in their faith and belief in God. Through all of the discrimination and hardship thrown directly at their religion, they still praised God for how wonderful he made their lives. The crowd in the service I attended was nothing but grateful and gloriously happy.

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