



# The Morei Derech Beth Sholom Project Temple Beth Sholom of Roslyn

ROSLYN HEIGHTS, NY

## WHO ARE THE LEARNERS? THE TEACHERS?

- Morei Derech – Guides or “Jewish Life Coaches”
- Dorshei Derech – those they teach
- Rabbi, Assistant Rabbi and Director of Lifelong Learning
- Occasional guest speaker

Morei Derech are congregants further along in their Jewish journey who are interested in learning more and in sharing their knowledge and experience with others. Most have kids in high school or are empty-nesters. Dorshei Derech are people with younger families who've indicated a desire to deepen their Jewish engagement. They may be identified through their participation in Shabbat Family Study or through the nursery school. Some volunteer on their own. Both Morei Derech and Dorshei Derech are asked to participate as couples in the model if they can. This approach stems from the belief that this is ultimately a family journey. Currently 15 people participate as Morei Derech. In the first cohort, Cohort Alef, 17 participated as Morei Derech and 14 as Dorshei Derech.

## WHEN DOES THE MODEL TAKE PLACE?

- Over the course of a two-year cycle
- Twice a month on Thursday evenings for two hours, including minyan
- Occasional Shabbat dinners
- May meet on Sunday mornings when Dorshei Derech enter cohort next year
- Several alumni events during the year

Having completed an initial two-year cycle with the first cohort – Cohort Alef, the model is in year one of its second cohort – Cohort Bet.

## WHERE DOES THE MODEL TAKE PLACE?

- Thursday night meetings at the synagogue
- Shabbat dinners in participant's home
- Sh'ma Salon in people's homes

Holding the bi-weekly meetings in the synagogue enables both facilitators and participants to be present for minyan.

## HOW IS THE LEARNING DESIGNED?

- In year one of a cohort, Morei Derech study with the Rabbis and the Director of Lifelong Learning.
- In year two of a cohort, the Morei Derech become facilitators of the learning process for the Dorshei Derech.
- Sessions include an opening connection question, introduction of the topic for that evening's study, and some form of shared learning (eg. in hevruta, think-pair-share, jigsaw).
- Curriculum based on 4 pillars – Shabbat, holidays, tefila, and hadracha (leadership development).
- The curriculum remains the same for both Morei and Dorshei Derech, although the Dorshei Derech may spend more time on fundamentals of Jewish Study.
- Flexibility in the curriculum allows room for additional areas of focus as the need emerges.

The curriculum is designed to deepen knowledge and consider how to live each of the content areas. Participants grapple with questions such as, “How do we make Shabbat in our lives?” and “How do we take the concept of rest and infuse it into our Shabbat practice?” For the Dorshei Derech, hearing the Jewish journey stories of the Morei Derech empowers them to make considered decisions about their own family's Jewish living. Participants want the rabbi to be there with them on the journey, but they also look to the life of experience of the Morei Derech who have “been there”.

## WHY IS THE LEARNING DESIGNED THIS WAY?

- To create a path to leadership in the congregation through study.
- To create a cadre of lay people who can answer congregant questions about Jewish living that they may not feel comfortable sharing with the clergy or professional staff.
- To model the move away from frontal learning at the adult level as well as in the school.

The model follows the pillars of learning outlined in the vision – Shabbat, Family, Learning Opportunities, Community, and Mitzvot. It provides a starting point for the participants to explore their own relationship to Shabbat and Mitzvot in the context of a learning community.

## KEY FIRST STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

- Cultivation of first cohort and curriculum most important first steps
- Rabbis and Director of Lifelong Learning had certain people in mind but many needed some convincing that they were right for the model

Making room for people to ask why they were being asked to participate allowed the clergy and the Director of Lifelong Learning to address questions of “worthiness”. Sharing the struggles of living a Jewish life is core to the Morei Derech model. These initial conversations modelled that the struggles themselves have validity and that sharing them can actually help others in their own Jewish journeys.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR MOREI DERECH

- Morei Derech falls under the purview of the congregation’s Board of Education
- Current Vice President of Board of Education participated in Cohort Alef.
- Did have an advisory board at some point, but now the participants themselves provide key feedback and input as the model continues to evolve

## BUDGET/RESOURCES

- Congregation utilized funds from Legacy Heritage grant during the first two years to cover costs of books, meals, even a lulav and etrog
- Now in third year, most Morei Derech paid for their books, an optional \$60 fee
- Curriculum written while grant money still in place
- Primary cost is in the time of the clergy and Director of Lifelong Learning

## INTEGRATION OF MOREI DERECH PARTICIPANTS AND LARGER CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Working to address that question so that the Morei and Dorshei Derech do not become a separate community
- Some participants want to continue their learning, have been willing to engage in “journey counseling” to determine their next steps
- Others not interested in formally committing additional time

## IMPACT ON LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONGREGATION

- Sh’ma Salon created to respond to Cohort Alef participants who wanted to continue their study.
- Morei Derech have a sense of mission, know they can reach out to younger families.
- Working with the Dorshei Derech gives Morei Derech a sense of hope for the future of the congregation.
- Some participants have moved into leadership positions within the congregation.
- Valuable opportunity for the rabbis and the Director of Lifelong Learning to engage with congregants.

While the impact on the congregation as a whole remains unclear, both teachers and learners benefit from the creation of a learning community rich in study and connection.