

Synagogue, Landsmanshaft & Society Memory

For congregational and communal histories where official minutes tell only part of the story.

This is preparation, not homework. You do not need complete dates, perfect memory, or a box of scanned records. Circle what helps. Leave the rest. Uncertainty is part of an honest history.

Before we speak

- Identify founding families and later waves of members.
- List rabbis, presidents, sisterhood, brotherhood, gabbaim, teachers, caretakers and volunteers.
- Note building changes, mergers, neighbourhood shifts and closures.
- Look for unofficial memory: kitchens, card tables, choirs, youth groups, disputes and acts of kindness.

Gather only if it is easy

- Minutes and bulletins
- Yizkor or anniversary books
- Class, choir, board and event photographs
- Membership lists and cemetery records

Prompts worth thinking about

- Who actually kept the place running?
- What happened after services?
- Which conflict changed the congregation?
- What did children remember differently from adults?
- What deserves to survive beyond the building?

Set your boundaries first

Before the interview, decide what may be explored, what should be handled carefully, and what is off limits. You can change those boundaries later. A useful history does not require surrendering privacy.

After the first conversation

No quotation is given before the first conversation. If the project is a fit, use the Story Mixer to show the balance you want - emotional depth, humour, intimacy, historical context, voice and boundaries. I then assess the actual scope and normally send a written quotation within 24 hours.

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