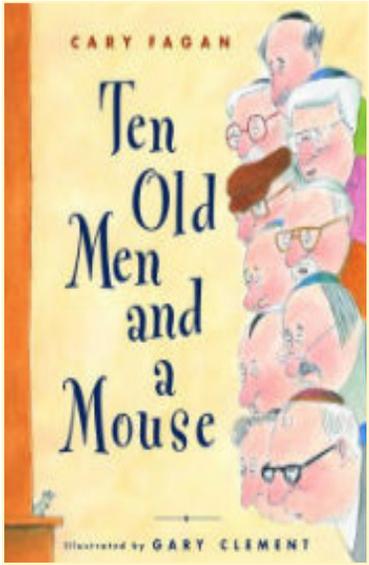


# Ten Old Men and a Mouse

written by  
Cary Fagan

illustrated by  
Gary Clement



{ How do you show up for others? }

## A Perfect Ten

The ten old men in this book show up at synagogue every day, morning and evening, “each day the same.” Why? Praying — especially in a group of ten, called a minyan in Hebrew — is central to their Jewish practice. Certain traditional prayers, including prayers of celebration and grief, cannot be said unless they are said in the company of ten people. This is a powerful way to build community, and it has been part of the glue of Jewish community around the world and over time. Some synagogues require a minyan to be ten men (old or otherwise); many others include adults of all genders. No matter where people are on the spectrum of observance, a big part of Jewish life is showing up for one another, metaphorically and literally. To learn more, visit [pjlibrary.org/tenoldmen](http://pjlibrary.org/tenoldmen).

## HANDS ON!

### Make a Mouse House

Most of us prefer mice to live outdoors, but the old men in this story love having a mouse in their synagogue. Part of the fun is creating a “snug little place” for their mouse to live. You can do that even if you don’t have a mouse living in your house.

- Supplies:
- Empty plastic milk jug
  - Scissors
  - Felt-tip markers, stickers
  - Old magazines, dollhouse furniture, bits of old fabric

Ask a grown-up to cut out one side of a milk jug to create a wide door and a window. Decorate the outside with markers and stickers. Now furnish the inside just the way the old men in this story do: cut out pictures from old magazines to tape onto the walls, put a piece of old fabric on the floor as a rug, and add a bed and a table using old dollhouse furniture or simple blocks. If you like, you can place your mouse house outdoors. Put a little piece of cheese or a dollop of peanut butter on the table, and maybe a real mouse will move in!

## Of Mice and Men

When the men in this story discover the mouse, they immediately begin to relate to her. One says the mouse is laughing; the other notices that she needs an evening nap (“like me”). Pretty much every living creature shares some primary needs in common, which may be partly why Jewish tradition requires us to show animals basic care. In Hebrew, this value is known as tza’ar ba’alei chayim — literally, “preventing animals from suffering.” After a shaky start, the men in this story live up to this value by making sure the mouse is safe and sound in her new country home. They even make her an honorary member of their minyan! Now that’s above and beyond.

## Be Fruitful

The mouse may not really be a member of the synagogue minyan, but she can perform an important mitzvah (“commandment” or good deed). After all, the very first mitzvah in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is p’ru ur’vu, be fruitful and multiply. Soon enough, baby mice overrun the synagogue! But later, the mouse returns by herself — her children have grown up and moved away. “An old story,” the men say, who can now relate to her more than ever. No wonder their minyan means so much to them ... and to the mouse, too.

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**TAKE** a close look at one of the illustrations in this book. What do you think the men are feeling? Why do you think they feel that way?

**THE** mouse in this story never talks. How do the men communicate with her? How do you communicate with animals?

**IF** you were taking care of a mouse, what do you think you would like doing? What might not be as fun?