

THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF A TORAH SCROLL BY SHARON BALL, TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

You may already know that Temple Beth El in Port Jervis has disbanded. They own a beautiful building, built in 1957, which will be sold. The proceeds will go to Temple Sinai to sustain the remaining 12 members who have all been given life memberships there. At one point Beth El had 240 members. In the meantime the building is being rented by Easter Seals' Project Discovery.



In April, I reached out to a former member of Temple Beth El wondering what they were doing with their Torah Scrolls after they sell the building. Temple Beth Shalom (TBS) has 4 scrolls, but only one of them is Kosher and a few of the others are beyond repair. It was suggested we speak with Julius Greenberg, Beth-El's President of many years. TBS Co-President Wendy Cedar started the conversation with him and after a few emails back and forth, we were invited to come to Port Jervis to check the scrolls out. At the time we were not sure exactly what that meant.

Wendy, Gail Conklin, my husband Rich and I met Julius in Port Jervis. We were immediately taken with the beauty of the building. As you can see from Gail's wonderful pictures, this was a sanctuary anyone would love to pray in with 3 stained glass windows on both sides.



We walked up to a bimah 3 feet up from the ground, reminiscent of the old TBS bimah. And there behind amazing doors were 5 KOSHER Torah scrolls, all bought new in 1957. Rich asked Julius to recommend which a Torah, he did, and we could hardly believe our eyes. It was magnificent with strong dowels and



clear writing on clean parchment. Julius then said, "I assume you'll be taking this with you today..." We were at a little loss for words, but immensely appreciative. Julius said it was their intention to try to find homes for their scrolls locally. Then Gail took more pictures and we looked around for a bit at the many, many years of mementos, pictures and Judaica throughout the lobby.

We loaded the scroll in the back of our car, covered it with a nice blue blanket and headed back to Florida to the TBS sanctuary. Rich placed the scroll on the amud where it happened to open to Rabbi Shinder's favorite parashah, Kiddoshim, the holiness code, read on Yom Kippur afternoon! We then excitedly Face Timed with Rabbi Shinder and Co-President Catherine Greenblatt. After inspecting the scroll further, we recited Shehecheyanu, thanking God for bringing us to this season.



Rabbi asked us to put the new scroll in one of our covers and put our older scroll in the white velvet cover from Port Jervis. Our resident musician, Andy Hannes appeared from another part of the building, perfect timing. As Andy played the piano and we prayed

Eitz Chaim Hi, while placing the new scroll in the ark. Our first Bar Mitzvah of the season, Mark Wishnia, read from the new scroll on April 24th.

Temple Beth Shalom is deeply humbled by the generosity of Temple Beth El and happy to fulfill the mitzvah of keeping their scrolls housed locally.