

# State & Local

## From one shul to another, the gift of a Torah

Newark synagogue greets newest scroll with song and dance

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**C**ongregants spilled onto Newark's Broadway Sept. 5 to welcome a Torah scroll to the city's oldest operating synagogue and to celebrate an act of friendship between it and a congregation in Springfield.

The 90-year-old scroll, inscribed in Russia and recently restored, was presented to the Conservative Ahavas Sholom as a gift from Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael in Springfield.

It came into the possession of that congregation in January 2008 when Temple Israel of Union merged with Temple Beth Ahm, providing the enlarged Conservative congregation with some 17 scrolls.

"It's nice to see this continuity," said Michael Zuckerman, a past president of Temple Israel who helped organize the merger. He and his wife, Sally, said they have found a warm and welcoming home in the merged Springfield congregation, but it still gave them a special pleasure to help support a congregation that has faced the same pressures that closed their shul in Union.



Leading the way for Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael's gift of a Torah scroll to Ahavas Sholom were, from left, April Modlinger, Eric Freedman, David Glass, and Rabbi Simon Rosenbach.

Ahavas Sholom, a survivor of Newark's once-thriving Jewish community, has 90 member units — families or individuals — and regularly adds new mem-



Rabbi Simon Rosenbach leads congregants in dancing outside Ahavas Sholom in Newark to welcome the arrival of the Torah scroll donated by members of Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael in Springfield.



Michael and Sally Zuckerman helped welcome the Torah scroll from their old shul, Temple Israel in Union, donated by the merged congregation, Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael, to Ahavas Sholom.

bers, mostly from the suburbs, said its president, Eric Freedman. Still, with new scrolls costing upward of \$20,000 and one of their three old ones deteriorating, there seemed no way to buy a new one.

Certain services throughout the year call for three scrolls.

Israel, he, Freedman, and others asked the leadership about giving the Newark shul one of their 17 scrolls. But many of them were in dire need of repair, and the congregation had just begun the process of raising funds to tackle that complex project.

Members of Ahavas Sholom offered to help. They collected money for the restoration project. With the restoration of four scrolls under way, TBAY members opted to give one to their friends at the Newark synagogue.

At the presentation ceremony, Freedman said it was wonderful to receive the scroll, but what stands out most for him is that kindness. "I can't tell you how warmly we were received when we approached TBAY," said the Jersey City resident. He described it as a fulfillment of the 613th commandment — enjoining Jews to "write" a Torah in their lifetime — and a demonstration of TBAY's commitment to their "shared mission" as Jews.

### 'A close bond'

When the scroll arrived at the shul on Sunday, people went out onto Broadway and welcomed it with dancing and rejoicing — now and then stepping to one side to let cars and buses go by.

They brought the scroll, with its blue velvet cover, into the shul, which also houses the Jewish Museum of New Jersey. Inside, there was more dancing to the rollicking tunes of Israeli musician Tuvia Zimmer.

Person after person, young

and old, took up the scroll, from Ceil Arons, who turns 100 on Sept. 27, to 13-year-old twins Zachary and Morgan Hersh, who were scheduled to read from it the following day at their dual b'nei mitzva ceremony.

Morgan and Zachary, the children of Lora and Jeffrey Hersh of Short Hills, also represent a link between the two congregations. They attended TBAY's preschool.

TBAY's Rabbi Mark Mallach couldn't be present, but in an e-mail said, "A close bond has developed over the years with Ahavas Sholom mainly due to the connection with Simon [Rosenbach], the desire to help this historical congregation, and to put at least one of the scrolls coming from Temple Israel back in regular use."

April Modlinger of Springfield, who headed up the committee planning the ceremony is, like Rosenbach, a member and leader of both congregations. She, Rosenbach, and Freedman and other Ahavas Sholom members worked for more than 18 months together with Mallach and TBAY's former president, Richard Falkin; current president, David Glass; and Lesley Brooks, chair of the fund-raising effort for the restoration project, to make this event happen.

"There were a lot of details to work out, but everyone was very cooperative," Modlinger said. "They all really liked the idea of what we were doing."

After the prayers and psalms and songs, the new Torah scroll, together with the shul's two functional scrolls, was carried seven times around the congregation, with singing and clapping. Glass said, "I wish you many great years of use of this sefer Torah."

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Twins Morgan, left, and Zachary Hersh dance with the Torah scroll they were to read from the next day at their b'nei mitzva service.