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## The Pittsburgh Shooting, Our Community Unites in Response



Story and photo by Diane Joy Schmidt

At 9:50 a.m. on Saturday morning, October 27, 2018, the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in US history occurred at the Tree of Life synagogue in the historic Jewish neighborhood of Squirrel Hill in Pittsburgh. A 46-year-old white male shooter entered the synagogue during a baby-naming ceremony. He shout-

ed, "All Jews must die." Armed with a Colt AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle and three Glock semi-automatic pistols, he killed eleven people and wounded seven, including four police officers who engaged him in a shoot-out. He was wounded and taken to Allegheny General Hospital, where Jewish staff attended him.

In Albuquerque, that Saturday afternoon a

widely circulated statement from Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld of Congregation Albert included the words, "I want you to know that we live in an amazing community. A few minutes after 10:00 am this morning, an Albuquerque police sergeant arrived at the synagogue to make sure we knew what had happened and

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## Journey of a Torah Scroll Weaves History and Geography

Story and photos by Diane Joy Schmidt

Immigrant Jews came to Roswell more than a hundred and fifty years ago, including the prominent Praeger and Jaffa families who established a Jaffa, Prager & Co. Flour and Grain store there in the 1880s. Roswell, in southeastern New Mexico, 200 miles from Albuquerque, is today the fifth largest city in New Mexico.

In the 1940s, the Roswell Jewish community sponsored families from Displaced Persons camps in Europe. Once they established themselves in business, three of the men who arrived from the camps pooled their resources and bought a former Nazarene church. It became Congregation B'nai Israel, and was dedicated in 1949. The head of the congregation was David Lehman, who had escaped Kristallnacht.

The congregation did not have a Torah. In another act of generosity and thankfulness, survivor Isadore Karnowsky donated a Torah scroll to B'nai Israel in Roswell in the 1950s. It was later examined by a Torah scholar who determined it was one of those Torahs that had been brought out of Europe surviving the Holocaust. Karnowsky dedicated the Torah to his father Samuel and uncles Jacob and Abraham. His niece, Kathryn Karnowsky, and great-nephew Nathan K. Lyons are members of Nahalat Shalom in Albuquerque.

Over the last many years, Rabbi Min Kantrowitz, Rabbi Jack Shlachter, Rabbi Ron Wittenstein and Dr. Sara Koplik, community outreach director for the Jewish Federation, among others occasionally traveled to Roswell to lead services. Last year, after a tree



fell on the roof of the building, upkeep was no longer tenable and the building was sold.

Emet Ma'ayan, president of Nahalat Shalom, continues the story

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## SHABBAT continued from page 1

to assure us he would be at our front door until he could get a patrol car on the property. He assured me that APD would also be present tomorrow during religious school and if necessary, beyond. When I thanked the sergeant, he replied: 'No need. It's what my mother would want me to do.' I was moved speechless as we shook hands."

A call went out on social media that there would be a community gathering at sundown that evening at Nahalat Shalom, the Jewish Renewal congregation. A gathering, led by the cantor and president, took place outdoors in a semi-circle in the courtyard as the leaves fell in the late evening light.

On Sunday afternoon, there were organized gatherings throughout New Mexico at synagogues, at the Holocaust and Intolerance Museum in downtown Albuquerque, and in smaller communities. In Placitas, a village between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, an evening gathering for the Jewish community and friends at the Placitas Library packed their small activity room. About fifty people attended. Led by community members, eleven candles were lit, and then people stood up spontaneously and spoke.

Among those was Navajo linguist and educator Frank Morgan, whose presence and words seemed to strike a special chord, as a number of people came up to thank him afterwards. He spoke briefly about the Navajo origin story of the Twins who vanquished the evils in the world. Later he said, "It was my way of consoling the Jewish people that things will change and that we will have compassion and kindness. Hate is a danger that we all face. Hate will be resolved spiritually and Americans will experience the opposite of the evils of hate."

Following the shooting in Pittsburgh, the U.S. president tweeted that day that it was an anti-Semitic attack of pure evil. However, in a follow-up he later tweeted, "If there was an armed guard inside the temple, they would have been able to stop him." Despite calls from the governor and the mayor of Pittsburgh not to come, he made a visit to one of the funerals on Tuesday with his wife, daughter and son-in-law.

Residents were kept a block

away behind a barricade. As reported by Reuters: "Over 2,000 people, including many from the local Jewish community, protested against Trump's presence, chanting 'Words have meaning,' and carrying signs with such slogans as 'We build bridges not walls.'" The following night at a rally in Florida, Trump would claim the protests, which were well-documented, were "staged" and "fake news."

And finally, an organized request went out across the country from the American Jewish Committee, to #ShowUpforShabbat on Friday at a congregation, as a show of strength and love against hate.

One gathering was held at Congregation Albert in Albuquerque on Friday evening, November 2nd, led by Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld. It was standing room only, and one of the largest gatherings seen in the synagogue's history. "About 1,100 people, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and others, came together in solidarity Friday night at Congregation Albert or watched on our live stream," said Rabbi Rosenfeld. (The final attendance numbers were based on the number of chairs that were set out.) The link to watch the service in its entirety is on the rabbi's Facebook page and will also be found on the Congregation Albert website and on YouTube.

Mayor Tim Keller, former mayor Richard J. Berry, and many other government officials, political candidates, and community leaders were there. Local TV stations KOAT and KRQE came and broadcast news reports later that evening. Representatives of every local Jewish congregation and organization attended. Clergy of many faith groups came. Those who were invited to speak included representatives of the Catholic, Muslim, Christian Conference of Churches, Sikh, Mennonite, Episcopalian, and a former director of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, now known as HIAS. Their statements were profound and excerpts edited for space, are included here.

If *tikkun olam*, the Jewish ethical and religious mitzvot to repair the world, has an angelic representative, she certainly was hovering over the Friday evening service. To look around, one could see faces gleaming. It seemed that a great

spiritual strength and sense of being uplifted to a more loving and forgiving frame of mind had come to everyone at this Shabbat service.

#### Statements by Clergy and Religious Leaders

**Archbishop John Wester** of the Diocese of Santa Fe: "We of the Archdiocese want to assure you we walk through that desert with you (when) hatred rears its ugly head. Genesis reminds all of us that we are created in God's image, so we, as Rabbi said a moment ago, must be wholly ourselves and allow our love to conquer the hatred and the insanity that snuffed out the eleven precious lives at the Tree of Life Synagogue. We commit ourselves to stay that path of love. Shabbat Shalom."

**Mohammed Abdul Haqq**, president of Dar al-Salam Mosque: "Look around you. See who's here. Our community is united, and I think that's what's important. As Muslims, we believe that all life is sacred and all life is precious and that the taking of a single life carries the same weight as the killing of all of mankind. Conversely, we believe that saving a single life carries the same weight as saving all of mankind."

Abdul Haqq quoted from a hadith, a saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "'to gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to comfort the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, to heal the wrongs of the injured, that person is the most beloved of God, who does the most good to God's creation.' Let's remember this as we move forward, not as Jews or Christians or Muslims, or any faith you belong to, but as a single community, we remain united against hate and work towards that. Shabbat Shalom."

**Rev. Susan Quass**, New Mexico Conference of Churches: "People of good will everywhere know that good must triumph, that love is stronger than hate, and that God is One, God is Love, and there's nothing in this world that can overcome that power. God created each one of your faces in God's own image, and it is only when we forget that, when we don't see who we are looking at, the beauty, the uniqueness, that hate has a chance to spring forth. Shabbat Shalom."

**Krishna Khalsa**, Sikh community of Espanola: "The Sikh tradi-

tion is both a tradition of saintliness and a tradition of spiritual warrior. If you're only a saint, people can kick you around. If you're only a warrior, you'll kick other people around. So you have to do both to serve humanity. Each person has the opportunity to awaken to the perfection within, and is waiting to be awakened. We are at a time in the history of this universe when an awakening is happening.

"Part of that awakening is bringing out a lot of sad reality that has been an affliction for a long time; but you can't heal it if you can't see it. We sing a prayer whenever we gather, in part, 'When things are down and dark, that's when we must stand tallest. Until the last star falls, may our faith enable us, that we may not give an inch at all.' Shabbat Shalom."

**Rev. Erica Lea-Simka**, Mennonite Albuquerque Church: "I'm not a Jew. I wasn't that lucky. But I did the next best thing -- I married a Jew. In my Mennonite community, the words peace and justice are used as frequently as prayer and potluck. Mennonites believe that faithfully following the teachings of Jesus require more than faithfully doing no harm, but actively building peace and restorative justice as an expression of love. Where there is *Nefesh*, there is the Divine, where there is *Ruach*, there is the Divine.

"I repent from and actively reject the ways Christians have historically weaponized the Bible to demean and diminish too long a list of minority groups, but especially Jewish communities, by perpetuating anti-Semitic teachings. What a disgrace to our Abrahamic family and to Jesus himself. From my queer, Jewish, Mennonite, fickle, funky family to yours, you have an ally, advocate, and you have an accomplice, when need be, in me, my family and in Albuquerque Mennonite Church. Shabbat Shalom."

**Reverend Daniel Webster**, St. John's Cathedral (Episcopal): "Pray for those who have died, for their families and their loved ones, those who are wounded, pray for our brothers and sisters in the Jewish community, pray for the Tree of Life Synagogue, pray for the City of Pittsburgh, pray for America, pray for us all. And then, go out and do something! Go out and do something that helps to end the long night and helps to bring in the

daylight. Visit a neighbor. Remind our Jewish brothers and sisters that they do not stand alone. Care for someone (his voice cracked at this point) Love. Stand for what is right and what is good, then pray, then act. So, on this day, which on the Christian calendar is the Feast of All Souls, I remember specifically 11 souls, and may their memory be a blessing to all of us. Shabbat Shalom."

**Norm Levine**, retired director of U.S. operations for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, now known as HIAS. "As the son of immigrants, the proudest two decades of my career were at HIAS. We welcomed Jews from the former Soviet Union, Jews fleeing persecution in Iran, Baha'is fleeing persecution in Iran, Liberians, Hmong tribesman from the hills of Laos, Argentinians fleeing persecution. Whether they were Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Baha'i, we served them because we as Jews were required to because we were strangers in a strange land. We will not forget, and we will not stop resettling people. Let this be the beginning of our recommitment to serving refugees, asylees, and the oppressed from about the world. Shabbat Shalom."

At the end of the service, **Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld** spoke: "It is so powerful and comforting to see my clergy brothers and sisters as well as people from other congregations here. And our young people, that's so powerful to me. Growing up, my father told me I had to be Jewish "so that it didn't give Hitler a post-humous victory." That weighed on me. Later in life, I heard a lecture by Leibel Fein (founding editor of *Moment Magazine*) that there were two ways to look at Jewish history: as a tapestry, and as a shroud. I vowed that I would look at our history as a tapestry. Yes, there's some tears, some holes, some burn marks, and you fix them, you find a way to make it whole again.

"For almost 4,000 years Jews had to repair the tapestry on their own. It was just us. But for the last 70 years, we no longer have to repair the tapestry on our own. With us tonight, we're not alone, we're not alone. And with that comes a responsibility, we need to stand up and be there for you as well. Go out and take this spirit with you. Introduce yourselves to each other, and wish each other a Shabbat Shalom."

## TORAH SCROLL continued from page 1

on the NahalatShalom.org website, "One day, Glorya Hale told her friend, Kathryn Karnowsky, about the problems with our (frail Holocaust) Torah. Kathryn, one of our members, then told her about the Torah that belonged to the Roswell synagogue and had been donated to them by her uncle. The Jewish community in Roswell had dwindled. They had sold the building that housed their synagogue. The Torah was to be carefully stored in a bank vault.

"Glorya got in touch with Rabbi

Min Kantrowitz who ...contacted some of the remaining members of the synagogue - and they have agreed to loan, indefinitely, their Torah to Nahalat Shalom."

As Carolyn and Rick Sidd arrived at Nahalat Shalom on August 30 from Roswell, a tallis was held aloft by members of the Karnowsky family and Nahalat Shalom to welcome the Torah. Carolyn gave an emotional tribute, as she told the bittersweet story of the history of the Roswell congregation and the journey of this Torah, the loss of the building in Roswell, and their decision to now share the

scroll with Nahalat Shalom.

The Roswell Torah was put to use immediately at High Holiday services, and on Simchat Torah, on Monday, October 1, Rabbi Min Kantrowitz dedicated it, sharing the story with the congregation at a joyous celebration. She explained that the journey of this Torah scroll "weaves history and geography."

**Carolyn Sidd entering Nahalat Shalom with B'nai Israel's Torah scroll. Husband Richard Sidd follows her, while members of the Karnowsky family hold the tallit aloft as a chuppah.**

