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# When One Ark Closes, Another One Opens

By Rachel Jarman Myers

There are 650 miles and three states between Fort Mill, SC and Greenwood, MS, but their connection is closer than ever after Michael and Carol Pleskoff made the trek to Jackson two weeks ago.

The couple, along with other members of Fort Mill's Temple Solel, met with Rabbi Marshal Klaven on a rabbinic visit to the newly formed congregation in July. They were looking for a Torah to use during the monthly services they hold in a local church. Rabbi Klaven recommended contacting me, and two days later I was helping to arrange the loan of a Torah from the collection of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE).

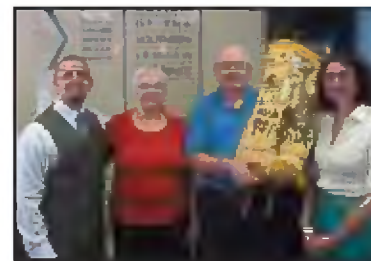


The Pleskoffs and the Torah about to depart for South Carolina.

The Torah once belonged to the congregations of Temple Beth Israel in the Mississippi delta community of Greenwood. Jews arrived in Greenwood in the 1850s, and by 1890 they had begun to organize a Jewish community. In 1897, a group of merchants met in a store house and formed the first synagogue, a Reform temple named Beth Israel.

Beth Israel always remained a small synagogue. In 1940, there were 30 members. By 1957 the temple had 66 members and twenty students in Sunday school. Like many small communities in the region, when people started to leave Greenwood for opportunities elsewhere, the Jewish community was not able to replenish itself, and the congregation closed its doors in 1989. The Torah and other religious artifacts were donated to the MSJE.

The end of Beth Israel does not reflect a dwindling of Jewish life in the South. Just the opposite, Temple Solel is an example of Jewish communities growing in different parts of our region as populations shift to larger cities like Atlanta and Charlotte. Michael and Carol are examples of dedicated congregants, traveling that 650 miles to Jackson in their RV, in order to preserve their Jewish traditions. By replanting a piece of Southern Jewish history



Rabbi Marshal Klaven, Carol and Michael Pleskoff, and museum project coordinator Rachel Jarman Myers.



TEMPLE SOLEL

in their new congregation, Temple Solel will continue the legacy of Jewish life in the South. As congregants read from this Torah they will be reminded of those who read from it before them and how those congregants promoted Jewish life in this region in order to pave the way for thriving communities today.

For more information including directions for our usual Friday night services, please visit [templesolelsc.org](http://templesolelsc.org), Temple Solel SC on Facebook or call Renee Feitelberg at 803-547-3043. ✡

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## Kudos to Temple Solel

By A Temple Solel Congregant

My husband and I attended High Holiday services in Fort Mill, SC. This was the first time in 10 years. I have missed being affiliated with a synagogue because

I discovered that maintaining my Jewish identity is a very difficult thing to do in the Carolinas without the support of others who collectively keep up with the traditions of the Jewish faith.

A few months ago, we heard about a small group of Jews that were forming a new congregation. It was named Temple Solel. We attended their first service and felt very comfortable. The services were conducted by a group of lay people, but quite frankly, we did not feel as if we were missing anything by not having a Rabbi or Cantor.

This remarkable group of people held amazing High Holiday Services. I felt truly proud of each and every one of them. I thought about my grandfather, who over 60 years ago, was concerned about his children and grandchildren drifting away from our religion. Here was a group of people of all ages who worked together to strengthen it, only now it is sixty years later.

It takes a great deal of motivation to do what they are doing without a Rabbi. Most of the services are conducted by two people. At one of the Onegs, we learned that two of the congregants were flying to Mississippi to attend a class on how to conduct a religious school. This "one room schoolhouse" concept religious school and special method of teaching consists of a small group of children and is already operational.

Temple Solel will soon have its first Bat Mitzvah and the entire congregation will share in this ex-

citing event. Her father is her teacher and I can only imagine the joy her parents will experience when she completes this journey to her 13th year.

There are so many firsts for a new congregation. Hours and hours were spent putting together the services for the High Holidays. This was accomplished through the combined efforts of many people. One congregant taught himself to blow the Shofar. Another told us he spent hour after hour brushing up on his Hebrew so that he read the Torah. Sermons were given that were meaningful and I am sure well thought out. The services were conducted by a reader of Hebrew who also chanted and a reader of English. Our lay Rabbi (the reader of Hebrew) had tears in his eyes when presented with a gift of appreciation at the Break the Fast. I can only imagine what an emotional experience it was for him. The list goes on and on of what was done to make this happen. What an amazing feat and what a remarkable group of people.

Temple Solel is a place where people know you by your first name. There are no pretenses. If you have the misfortune of being disabled, you are not forgotten. Instead there is a concern about you managing a walk or steps that may be too far and the concern comes for many. There is opportunity for growth, kindness, tolerance, acceptance of how you choose to worship, and a genuine love for being a Jew. Here is a place where one can find more meaning in his or her life. ✡

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