

Worship

The Geniza Ceremony

After many years of storing old and tattered prayer books in corners all around our building and keeping a Torah scroll that was beyond repair on the top of a closet, our congregation decided to embrace an ancient tradition and create a *geniza*, a permanent burial place, at our cemetery for these sacred books. On Sunday afternoon,

October 5, volunteers of all ages gathered as part of our Family Mitzvah Corp Cemetery Clean Up Project. The Torah scroll was placed in a simple and magnificent earthenware vessel, made especially for the occasion by our congregants,

Louise Rosenfield, Lisa Erich and Jan Haig.



The Geniza Ceremony included this beautiful poem written by our member, Connie Dufner, to mark this sacred time.

PASUL

*Say goodbye
To this scroll, worn thin
By generations seeking
Stories of our people, verse by verse:
Words that reveal joy, yearning,
Envy and anger--
In all time*



*Lie in peace
Frayed, tattered siddur
That no longer has a home
In the bins where we store our handbags,
Announcements, kippot, crayons
And tissues for when
We must cry*

*Remember
Torah is alive
The soul of prayer never dies
Though the texts of our Jewish journeys
Are buried beneath the ground
They are part of us
Forever...*



*As a child
I stroked the ribbon
That divided the pages
Of the much loved old Union Prayer Book
With care I tucked it inside
Until Shabbat came
The next week*

*I'm at camp
Mesmerized by song
Drawn by the guitar, to dance;
Realization dawns, through the voices
Of hundreds strong, and yet one
This too, is prayer
Reaching God*

*My child squirms
I sing a niggun
Holding her close and praying
While my spouse points out the Hebrew words
Hoping that one day she'll know
Their awesome power
To change lives*



*It is time
To say our goodbyes:
To books that need sacred rest
To a Torah excused from duty--
We mourn them and yet rejoice
As they, swathed in love
Return home.*

See more photos of the Geniza Ceremony and read the liturgy created for the ceremony by our Youth Director, Aimee Wortendyke and Rabbi Debra Robbins at www.tedallas.org.

'I was part of their history . . .

This reflection was written by Henry Roseman. Henry is the 10-year-old son of Michael and Amy Roseman and grandson of Lynn and Sharan Goldstein and Rabbi Kenneth and Phyllis Roseman.

"At 1:00 p.m., we have to go to the Temple cemetery. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!" I shouted to my Mom when she came to Temple to pick me up after Religious School.

During Religious School, Rabbi Robbins carted around an old Torah in an earthenware jar made by a congregant. She was doing this because she was excited to invite the students to the Torah burial ceremony.

My Mom suggested that I call my grandparents to see if they would like to take me. I called my grandparents and I explained to them all of the details of the Torah burial service and asked them to take me. They were really excited and agreed to pick me up so that we could go together.

During the ceremony, we put the Torah scroll and lots of old prayer books into the burial place. It felt special putting the old prayer books into the burial place. The books had dates in the front covers. One dated back to 1864. Most of the books had names and cities written in them. These names, dates and cities helped me connect to the books and feel like I was part of their history.

It was neat to put the Torah scroll in the earthenware container and see how old it really looked. When the Torah was buried, it looked like it fit in with all of the other books. This burial showed me that even when we are not going to use a Torah any more, it is still treated with a lot of respect and is returned to the earth. We said a different version of the Kaddish because the Torah and other books are still alive with us.

The service was meaningful to me because it really showed me that the Torah is a very important part of our Jewish culture.