



BKA Trip to the Legacy Heritage Foundation conference in Newark, NJ, and to Congregation Beth Shalom of Rochester, NY and to Congregation Bnai Yeshurun of Teaneck, NJ

Sivan 5769; Participants: Rav Shlomo Sobol, Rabbi David Fine, J.J. Sussman

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Monday

After landing, and renting a car, we went to *shul* in Elizabeth, New Jersey and then continued to Dunkin Donuts for breakfast. At about Noon, we went to check in at the hotel where the conference was being held to rest up. The conference began at around 5PM. By dinner already all of the attendees had arrived. There were representatives from about 45 *shuls* across the world all of whom were winners of the Legacy Heritage Foundation Innovation grant. Some of them had won the grant for four years in a row. There were approximately twenty first time winners. About eight *shuls* from Israel and about eight Orthodox *shuls* total. At dinner, each table learned together a source sheet dealing with *Parshat Behaalotcha*.

Tuesday

The second day of the conference was split into sessions. There was one on how to use a consultant (part of our funding has to go towards using a consultant). The highlight though was sessions run by some of the past grant winners that have already demonstrated what this funding can do to help. There was a *shul* from Berkley, California that demonstrated a technology platform which allows them to run the *shul* in an incredibly efficient manner.

At night, we had a free night. Rav Sobol and I went to Noah's Ark in Teaneck and met with Rabbi Kenneth Brander and Rabbi Ari Rockoff who are the leaders of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future. We had a long and wide ranging discussion about how YU and CJF can help us. Basically we agreed to remain in touch and take advantage of their expertise in building communities as we continue to build ours. Rabbi Brander's insights from his days of building the community of Boca Raton around the Boca Raton Synagogue were especially inspiring and useful.





Wednesday

The third day at the conference was dedicated to breaking out into groups of four *shuls* and giving each group both a chance to present the proposal and also to hear feedback, criticism, and ideas for improvement from the other *shuls*. We were paired with *Kehillat Zichron Yaakov* (Rabbi Yair Silverman and his wife Ilana for those of you that know them), *Kehillat Ramat Zion*, a Conservative *shul* in French Hill, and also *Beit Daniel*, a Reform *shul* and school system for gan age kids in Tel Aviv. Rabbi Fine and I presented our proposal to the group. People were very impressed and gave us some ideas that we had not thought of. The session was very enlightening.

We left the hotel around 5PM and that evening I participated in the *shul* dinner for Lincoln Square Synagogue. LSS is also in the midst of a building campaign (\$10M) and they put on a dinner in line with the economic reality that we are all living through. It was somewhat toned down. Buffet style, lower cost for attendance, etc... It was a very nice evening and I met some parents of other members of our *shul* there as well.

Thursday

I took Rav Sobol to Target and Costco in the morning and then used the afternoon to catch up on some work. Rav Sobol went out to dinner with Fred Green and I met my family for dinner. Rabbi Fine went to the Mets game with his family.

Friday

On Friday we woke up early. We began the day by davening at the 6:10AM minyan at Congregation Ohab Zedek (OZ) and then picked up bagels and stuff at H&H for our 5.5 hour drive to Rochester. Our first meeting in Rochester was at the Federation. We met there with the local head of the Federation along with the incoming and outgoing head of the "Partnership 2000" program between Rochester and Modiin. It was a nice open discussion about how better to involve and leverage our *shul* and its members in the already existing partnership between the two cities. From there we had a wild meeting at City Hall – details in person. We then went onto to Sam's Club to finish off some shopping. We made it to Rabbi and Rebbetzin Kilimnick's home around 5:30PM to get ready for Shabbat.

At dinner, we were joined by Mr. and Mrs. David Movsky who were former congregants of Rabbi Fine's in Kansas City and who were very instrumental in helping us plan our trip to Rochester. In addition, the Kornfeld family joined us for dinner as well.

Shabbat

On *Shabbat* morning, Rav Sobol gave the *drasha* to about 200 people in *shul*. His English was almost impeccable (I mean how many people would make the honest



mistake of thinking that the word “crise” is the singular form of the word “crisis”). After *shul*, there was a nice *kiddush* with ample herring and scotch and we also had the opportunity to meet many members of the local community including Dennis Kessler who is the current president of the Federation. We returned to the Kilimnick’s for lunch and were joined for dessert by Rabbi and Mrs. Chaim Hisiger who is the principal of the local day school. After a short nap, we went to “Learning on the Lawn” where about 30 people came out to hear Rav Sobol give a *shiur* on whether it is permissible to save a friend’s life if it means putting your own in danger and how this reflects on serving in *Tzahal*, etc... After that, we walked to the *shul* where Rabbi Fine led the weekly *gemara shiur*. After *mincha*, we ate *seudah shlishit*, where I gave a short *dvar torah* and offered my wishes to the *chattan* and *kallah* who were celebrating *sheva brachot* there. Before setting out on our journey after *Shabbat* (we hit the road at about 10:30PM) Rabbi Kilimnick sat down with us and asked how he can help. He had some ideas including the idea of potentially linking the giving of one of the synagogue’s *sifrei torah* to our *shul* with their 80th anniversary dinner that they are celebrating in the fall.



Sunday

After arriving back in NYC just before 4:00AM we got a few hours of sleep before heading out to the 8:00AM *minyan* at Bnai Yeshurun in Teaneck – our sister shul. After *minyan*, Rabbi Pruzansky announced in the main *shul* that everyone was invited to hear Rav Sobol’s *shiur* on tearing *kriya* for *Yerushalayim*. All those in attendance, including Rabbi Pruzansky, enjoyed the 50 minute *shiur*. We also had the opportunity to meet the head of the sister shul program and begin to discuss other ideas of how to make the connection even tighter.



After a quick breakfast we returned to NYC to pack. We then were fortunate to meet Fred Green at Yankee Stadium and watch the Yankees crush the Mets 15-0 in the new Yankee Stadium. This *chavaya* gave Rav Sobol a real sense of *galut*. We had to leave just prior to the game's end to give us enough time to load up the car and get to JFK for our return flight home.



Summary

All in all, the trip was an excellent opportunity to begin to develop relationships for our *shul* which will hopefully over time be helpful to us in many areas. To make these relationships worthwhile, we will need to invest time and energy into them. Whether it is the grant, the sister shul program with Teaneck or our Rochester relationship, volunteers to run and lead these initiatives would be welcome. I am very excited about the implementation of the Legacy Heritage grant. I believe that it will bring our shul to a higher level in many ways. The grant is a way for many of our members who want to be more involved to get more involved in the shul

I invite all those interested in getting involved in the grant and its implementation to be in touch with Daniella Hellerstein or Rabbi David Fine. For any other questions about the trip or anything else, feel free to send me an email.