

The Rabbi's message
for Shomrei Matt and Sylvia Bennett Torah
booklet project.

Thank you for joining us this morning to celebrate the restoration of Shomrei's first sefer Torah, the Bennett Torah. In Moshe Rabbeinu's final speech to the Jewish people, he gives them one last Mitzva, to write a Sefer Torah. ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת. This is a Mitzva for all time, to write a Sefer Torah and, thereby, to make sure that the message of the Torah continues. But what is striking is that Moshe Rabbeinu calls the Torah a שירה, a song. You might think he would refer to Torah as a ספר, a book, as it is called in so many places. But in the context of the need for the Torah to be transmitted to future generations, Moshe Rabbeinu refers to it as a song. I believe that, by using this term, he is hinting to two things that are necessary for the Torah to have a future. First, a song, unlike a book, can be enhanced by the diversity of those who take part in singing it. It is appropriate for a group, something they must do together. Second, a song has layers of depth and can affect those who hear it on a deep emotional level. It is the unity and depth that assure the continuation of our precious mesorah.

It is appropriate that our wonderfully diverse shul has taken on the responsibility of restoring this sefer, because it represents the foundation upon which this thriving makom tefilla, Torah and chessed was built. Our shul was built with achdus and simcha, and depth of commitment.

I want to thank the Bennett family for donating this Torah to the shul. Also, I want to thank Eli W. Schlossberg for taking the lead on this project with great devotion. And, finally, I want to thank all who contributed to this important initiative. May they merit great reward for their generosity.

May this Torah project, which represents the completion of a very successful Yovel (50 years) for our Shul, lead us to another successful Yovel. Thank you!

Remarks from our President

Thank you all for participating in this meaningful day, honoring the restoration of the Bennett Sefer Torah, the first in our Shul's storied history. It is incredible to look back at a half century of growth into the preeminent Shul in our community and still peer forward from a vibrant, thriving present to a bright future. The repair of the Bennett Sefer Torah represents just this idea, which is more than just an important piece of our kehillah's history, but the cycle of Torah renewed and reinvigorated through each of our generations. I want to thank our Rav, Rabbi Binyamin Marwick for his guidance and wisdom, Mr. Eli Schlossberg for overseeing this esteemed project, and of course, the Bennett family, for allowing us the chance to take part in this monumental event.

Dr. Kenny Friedman

President

Shomrei past presidents

2018-2020	Eli Robbins
2016-2018	Dov Ocken
2014-2016	Chaim Spero
2012-2014	Avi Greenlinger
2010-2012	Jonathan Lasson
2008-2010	Chaim Wealcatch
2006-2008	Thomas Weiss
2004-2006	Paul Schuster
2002-2004	Michael Elman
2000-2002	Eli W.Schlossberg
1998-2000	Mike Lowenstein
1996-1998	Ron Mitnick
1994-1996	Eugene Fisher
1992-1994	Zvi Howard Klein
1991-1992	Peter Warschawski
1989-1991	Aryeh Guttenberg
1987-1989	Mark Lustman
1985-1987	Noah Lightman
1983-1985	Murray Jacobson
1981-1983	Mark Lustman
1979-1981	Marvin Sober
1977-1979	Bernard Yaffee
1975-1977	Hillel Soclof
1973-1975	Mike Lowenstein
1972-1973	Noah Lightman
1971-1972	Avery Aisenstark

Kehilla Shomrei

By Eli W. Schlossberg

Baltimore Maryland

Originally written 2012

Some updates 2020 and 2021

Disclaimer: This was written over a period of more than 10 years with some updates. Therefore the time lines and grammar of present and past may be inconsistent and I ask the reader to please accept as it was written at many different times. I tried to include all that I remember but if someone was not mentioned please forgive me. Finally understand this is focusing on old time Shomrei and over the last 25 years so many younger members have been active and done monumental work for the Shul and Kehilla but this article focuses on the beginning and first 25 years of our Shul. Soon we will celebrate our 50 th year I”H.

I am publishing this as we celebrate the restoration of the Matt and Sylvia Bennett Sefer Torah which has been restored by Sofer Moshe Rishonau under the supervision of our Rav Binyamin Marwick, after being Posul for over 15 years. Many of the veterans of Shomrei participated in this wonderful project. The Torah was Shomrei’s first Torah and the Bennett family donated the Torah to the Shul.

Diversity

Where can you find an Orthodox Shul, a Kehilla where all Daven together in Achdus (unity)? The make up and diversity of the membership of this Shul is truly remarkable. Come to a Minyan and see who is there.

A Bais Yaakov principal, a former chairman of AIPAC and a former campaign head at the Associated, an Executive Administrator of Ner Israel, the Executive Vice President of the Baltimore Center of Jewish Education, a dean of Goucher College, a Principal of Ner Israel, lawyers, plumbers, doctors, government employees, accountants, business people- some with with black hats, others with Kippot Serugot - many women with hats(not Satmar), strong Israel

support, with many great Torah Talmidei Chachomim, and very Torah learned women. The kids attend Talmudical Academy, Torah Institute, Bais Yaakov, Ner Israel, Beis Medrash, Beth Tfiloh , Ohr Chodash, Bnos, and attend all different types of religious summer camps, from Moshava, Morasha, Mesorah, Manavu, Agudah, Munk, Bnos, NCSY, and many others. Synagogue members are all Shomer Shabbos and strictly Orthodox and are either Mizrachi, Agudah, Young Israel, OU or Yeshivish in their religious orientations.

They all came from very different educational backgrounds like YU, Torah V'daas, RJJ, Ner Israel, Lakewood, Tels, Chaim Berlin, Mir, Israeli Yeshivoh, public schools, Johns Hopkins, University of Maryland, Loyola, universities, colleges, seminaries, many FFB'S and many Baalei Teshuvah, they all came, and they keep coming. Welcome to Baltimore's most diversified Orthodox congregation, welcome to Shomrei Emunah on Greenspring Avenue. We are one big happy family.

Shomrei Emunah of Baltimore is a diverse and inclusive synagogue with a heterogeneous blend of backgrounds and ideologies across the Orthodox spectrum, and the congregation feels a strong commitment to outreach for the larger Baltimore Jewish Community. It has strong connections to Israel, and many members have over the yers made Aliyah.

What keeps the Shomrei Achdus?

With such a diverse population of members what keeps the shul together and in unity?

There are two factors that have created this Achdus. Firstly the focus of the congregation is on Torah learning and its non-compromising Orthodox way of life, and secondly the synagogue has always had strong Rabbinic leadership. Torah learning, dignified and beautiful harmonious Tifila and an "Ivdu Es Hashem Bisimcha" environment makes Shomrei an outstanding Kehilla. The diversified membership and range of the entire Orthodox spectrum is in fact Shomrei's real strength.

Shabbos morning Shomrei houses three adult minyanim. The 7

am Hashkama Minyan, an 8:15 and the 8:50 Minyan in the main Sanctuary, and a kids' Minyan for teens. An Ashkenaz German Minyan lasted about a year and was then ended. Each Minyan represents different groups of a diversified spectrum of Shomrei members and while different in Tifila and even Hashkafa, everybody gets along. During the week Shomrei has four Minyamin each morning and two weekday Minchas in the afternoon one at Plaq and two Maariv Minyanim. They are all busy and attract good strong numbers of Mispallilim. During Selichos the shul had as many as 5 Minyanim some mornings.

Shomrei has wonderful Gabbaim too many have served to mention. However I must single out my best friend Myron Froehlich who over the years has served the shul delivering Torahs to Shiva Houses and performing all kind of work for the shul.

Shiurim, lectures and Torah study are central to this Shul and a vibrant Beis Medrash and well used classrooms create a center of Torah study including a night Kollel. Torah is learned and taught with father and son learning, chavrusahs, chaburahs, many shiurim, Daf Yomi and many classes for women. Shomrei brings in a diverse group of scholars in residence with divergent Orthodox views to keep its members totally informed and to supplement Torah Perspectives from the entire world of Orthodox teachings.

Shomrei Coffee Shiur

Baltimore is a wonderful Mokom Torah and the learning of Torah in this city grows in volume and quality each and every day. The Yeshivoths and the day schools together with the Kollels and fantastic Torah programs and the learning opportunities provided by all the Rabbonim and Shuls makes Baltimore the incredible torah town it has become. Many Daf Yomi's and so many shiurim for both men and women are making it possible for all to partake in Limud Torah like never before. I would like to share with my readers and

focus on just one Shiur to show what an impact Torah learning has on our community.

Monday through Friday at 7:40 am about 30 coffee or tea drinking middle age men and some a bit older, recent retirees and not so recent retirees gather together or some go on Zoom to hear a wonderful Shiur. For the next 35 minutes there is a interactive Torah Gemarah class.

Besides enjoying the morning Java and on occasion a delicious donut they have come together for a morning Gemarah Shiur delivered by their Rebbe Rabbi Shlomo Horowitz. Rabbi Shlomo Horowitz attended Ner Yisrael and actually had a daily chavrusah with Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg zt"l, the Rosh Yeshiva when Shlomo was a talmid there. He also learned in Yeshiva Shaalvim in Eretz Yisrael. Shlomo is a multi talented individual, an accomplished musician, a comptroller by profession an individual who is involved in Kiruv and a person who loves to learn and teach Torah. His warm personality, his Hislahavus to learn and teach Torah and his tremendous ability to connect to his Talmidim have made his Shiur each morning so successful in both numbers and content. During Covid the Shiur continued and was given on Zoom. Even now some zoom from Israel to join in the Shiur.

Shiur History

Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb came to Shomrei after Rabbi Weinreb left Baltimore for the position of Executive Vice President of the OU. Rabbi Gottlieb began a Gemarah Shiur in the mornings right after davening. Shlomo Horowitz, Peter Warschawski, Eli W. Schlossberg and Paul Schuster, were some of the attendees. The Gemarahl learned were not the typical Yeshivoth Mesechtas but some were Mesechtas not often learned except in Daf Yomi sessions. Rabbi Gottlieb started with Makkos, Rosh Hashana then Hurious, and then Sotah followed by Avodah Zora. Presently we are learning Sanhedrin. When Rabbi Gottlieb left town his Talmid Rabbi Shlomo Horowitz would sometimes pinch hit in delivering the Shiur. Upon Rabbi Gottlieb's taking a Sabbatical he asked Reb Shlomo to take

the Shiur for the whole year. For Shlomo, a hard working corporate comptroller, that presented great challenges but he could not turn down the terrific opportunity and challenge of delivering a daily Gemarah Shiur. For the last twelve years Reb Shlomo has delivered this shiur and there has been significant growth as the Shiur now has 30 daily Talmidim.

Shomrei is and has always been a very diversified congregation. Diversity has been the Shul's strength and the Shiur is a microcosm of the Shomrei environment. Here sit former Yeshiva students, non Yeshiva students, Rabbis, doctors, caterers, business people, government employees, PHD's, teachers, electricians, chemists, administrators, and all from different educational and even cultural backgrounds, all gathered to study Torah for 35 minutes from Reb Shlomo who brings the Gemarah alive. The learning discussion is vibrant and interactive and always interesting. What makes the Shiur even more interesting are the different perspectives from each of the Talmidim and the interaction of lively discussion stimulated by our Maggid Shiur.

Our Rabbinic Leadership

Shomrei has truly been blessed with the finest Rabbinical leadership. This leadership has always been steeped in Torah learning, and all were wonderful teachers and great Talmedei Chachomim who were able to shepherd the very diverse flock. Rabbi Benjamin Bak zt"l, the founding Rabbi, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, Rabbi Dovid Heber served as an interim Rabbi, Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb and now Rabbi Binyomin Marwick all represent the finest of Rabbinic leadership in America and have overseen the tremendous growth both spiritually and physically of this Kehilla.

Rabbi and Mrs. Bak brought a chein, a warmth and a dignity to Shomrei. Rabbi Bak was a huge Talmudic Scholar having been trained in Europe. He was an authority in America and world renowned on Hilchos Gittin. He was a distinguished man and was

a wonderful teacher of Torah. Rebitzen Bak was able to connect to the young women of the shul even though she was much their senior and Shomrei thrived with their leadership. From a basement Minyan, the congregation flourished to a cottage and would move to the Pickwick building where Rabbi Bak was once the Rabbi of that congregation.

On Rabbi Bak's retirement from Rabbonus, Shomrei made a major find of a real treasure. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb was a practicing psychologist who was known for his Torah Scholarship. He gave the Daf Yomi, often alternating with Rabbi Yankel Herskowitz, at Machzekei Torah Rav Sternhill's Shul. Together with his wife Chavi, a grand-daughter of the Modzitzer Rebbe, they brought a spirit of Chassidus, song and Leibidikeit to the shul. Learning increased and Rabbi Weinreb's oratory skills as a master speaker made for many a memorable Drasha. He attracted many new members and membership boomed. Who knew that after just 13 years in Rabbonus at Shomrei Emunah, Rabbi Weinreb would become one of America's finest most treasured Rabbis. Rabbi Weinreb would be recognized as a Rabbi's Rabbi as he was appointed as the leader and head of the Union of Orthodox Congregations at a very critical and stressful time in that organization's history.

What was so very beautiful was the transition of the Rabbinat between Rabbi Bak and Rabbi Weinreb. The Midos of these two Rabbonim were exemplary. Rabbi Weinreb showed such respect and Kovod for Rav Bak and seeing the two working together was remarkable. There was a very warm friendship between these two great Talmidei Chachomim. What a lesson of "Bein Adom L'chavero" and respecting one's elders this taught us all.

Rav Bak passed away in 1991.

Generation to Generation= L'dor Va'dor

Shomrei while a young Shul back in the 70's had its revered elders: Matt and Sylvia Bennett, who donated the first Torah to the Shul; for many years Matt was the Baal Korei doing all the Laining at Shomrei. Henry and Pauline Hausdorf, with Henry serving as a Gabbai for so many years. Oscar and Sylvia Creeger, with Oscar serving as maintenance supervisor of the Shomrei cottage; he was up on the roof and fixing whatever needed fixing. Ben and Miriam Cohen, Harry and Eleanor Chernikoff, Hy and Isabel Levinson, Jack and Mary Weintraub, Mr. Genut, were Shomrei's elders. Later members being part of the Sandwich Generation have had the opportunity to bring their parents to live in our Shomrei community. Gary and Judy Rosenblatt were joined by Judy's father, Mr. Aaron Turk and Mark and Hannah Kuhr were joined by Hannah's father, Ezra Aslan Toeg. Both added much charm and spirit to the shul and both passed away in 1991. Mr. Herbert and Dita Froehlich, parents of Myron Froehlich and Shelley Kadden, joined Shomrei. Mothers of Sandy Guttenberg (Mrs. Lowy a"h), Marcel Reischer's mother a"h, Dena Soclof's_ parents , and Flo Ziffer's mother also moved to the community. The parents of Glenn Porcelain moved to Baltimore. Hans and Selma Frank and later Mr. Herman and Rose Roth became important elder members of Shomrei. Mr. Herman Roth led us always in Tehillim. Avrum Kowalsky's parents, Rabbi and Mrs. Shalom Kowalsky, lived here for a while and in that short time Rabbi Kowalsky added so much to the Shul's spirit and Ruchnius. Later families Pleeters, Goldkranz, Vims and the Frieds had come to Baltimore to live or for part of the year.

Shul happenings

The 1983 Membership list has two members just 3 listings apart. Herman Berlin and Sherry Breuer were both individual members. Well that's all history as a Shidduch occurred and soon after we had one listing as Mr. and Mrs. Herman and Sherry Berlin.

Since that time there have been many Shidduchim of the children, now second generation, as Shomrei mishpachos were marrying fellow Shomrei members.

Another proud happening for Shomrei is the many children of Shomrei who have had the Zichus to study in Israel. Also many children raised in Shomrei have had the opportunity to serve in the Israeli army. The Spivak boys who made Aliya all went to the army and Adam Cohen who lives in America also joined Zahal.

Rabbi Mitchell Ackerson made us all proud as he served twice during the Iraq War as a USA Armed Forces Chaplain. A few years back Dr. Shauli Weinreb was serving in Iraq delivering needed medical care to the region.

The phone call

I was President of Shomrei struggling with a building campaign and big plans to build a new Shul. We were right in the middle of a resurging building campaign that had already dragged out for many years. It was a Friday afternoon two hours before Shabbos. The phone rang and Rabbi Weinreb asked me to immediately come to his home. I was worried sick. What could be so critical that I was summoned to the Rabbi's home two hours before Shabbos? I rushed over to the Rabbi's home and he told me the news. The Union of Orthodox had offered him the top leadership role as the Executive Vice President of the OU. It was a critical time as the OU was rocked with a major sensitive leadership issue that needed a dynamic strong new Torah giant to save the organization its reputation and its credibility. Without question Rabbi Weinreb was the right person to accomplish that task. I was happy for the Rabbi and Chavi but I was devastated as President of Shomrei at the news. I could not let anyone know the news until the OU would make that official announcement. The news would not come out for over a month and it was a very difficult secret to keep. I did confide in one person, our second Shul President Dr. Noah Lightman. Tzvi Howard Friedman knew before any of us from his involvement as a leader of

the OU. I knew immediately we had a major problem as the building campaign would come to a rapid halt until a new Rabbi would be in place. Moreover, how in the world do you replace a Rabbi Weinreb?

Interim Rabbi

Rabbi Dovid Heber was a wonderful choice for interim Rav when Rabbi Weinreb left for the OU. Actually it was Rabbi Weinreb who told me Rabbi Heber would be the absolute best choice for the position of interim Rabbi. For over a year and a half, Rabbi Heber led Shomrei and made so many friends and Talmidim as members truly gained from his learning and his leadership.

The rabbinic search to fill the shoes of Rabbi Weinreb was a tough and difficult search. The name of a very young Talmid Chochim came up at a board meeting in 2003. As the just retired President at that time and head of the search committee I phoned Rabbi Mordechai Willig, a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University where Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb had studied. Rabbi Willig also had a shul in Riverdale where Rabbi Gottlieb served as a summer Rabbi. Rabbi Willig highly recommended Rabbi and Elana Gottlieb to the position and a young great Talmid Chochum and very polished and confident well trained Rabbi Gottlieb was chosen as the new Rav. His scholarly erudition, pastoral skills and his community focus infused Shomrei with new youthful energy. In 2006 Rabbi Adir Posy served Shomrei as a rabbinic intern. Shomrei continued to grow and Rabbi Gottlieb added his Torah scholarship and his youthful spirit to continue Shomrei's growth and get the long awaited building campaign finally going. Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb in 2009 after serving 6 years at Shomrei and, after a Sabbatical, made the decision to make Aliya.

July 2009 brought Rabbi Binyamin Marwick to Shomrei as our interim Rav. In July 2010 he was elected by the membership and assumed the position as Shomrei's Rav. His warm personality and his Torah Scholarship make it very likely he will continue in the path of his great Rabbinic predecessors who all served Shomrei so well. His wife Miriam is involved with the membership as she gives womens' classes.

Greenspring 1970 Who lived there?

Across the green line across Cross Country Blvd was a neighborhood called Greenspring. Park Heights was separated from Greenspring by a tributary of the Jones Falls Stream. Very few Orthodox Jews lived in that area. The Klavans (now Joyce Jandorf) and the Chernikoffs are two families that lived in that area that I remember visiting often as my sister went to school at Bais Yaakov with Shelley Chernikoff and Joyce Klavan. Others who lived in Greenspring were the Hellmans (very active Chevra members), Goldmans (Goldman Bakery) the Wolfs (Greta Lasson's family), Rabbi and Mrs. Leibowitz (the Rabbi of the Greenspring shul), Pretsfelder's (Mr Fix it), Bernie & Selma Yaffe, Howard and Marsha Kaplon, Meyers, Rashbaums, Ecksteins, Zaleschs, Spivaks (founders of Shomrei), Shavricks, Cohens (director of Park Hill Camp), Harrisese, Reiches (Brenda Strum's parents), Bergers (Cantor of Greenspring Shul), Resnicoff (Leah Schwartz's family) and later came Rabbi and Mrs. Davis and the the Schulman families (Lois Volosov's family and her father was the Chazan at Greenspring Ner Tamid shul).

Topography and map of the community

On Smith Avenue where today is the Greenspring Shopping Center there was an airport and airstrip for the Bendix Corporation for small planes. Down Smith Avenue, turning left on Pimlico Road and turning on Copper Mine Terrace, were copper mines and chromium mines. The stone quarry was on Greenspring Avenue where today is the QuarryLake and shopping center. Way down Greenspring next to Cylburn was Bais Yaakov on a 48 acre campus that Leo Storch a"h and Henry Cohn a"h secured for Bais Yaakov.

Frum Jews lived near Talmudical Academy on Cottage Avenue, on Pimlico Road in Forest Park near the Ner Israel Yeshiva, and around

Rogers Avenue and Glen Avenue up to Slade. Rabbi Baumgarten had a shul on Liberty Road at the foot of Patterson Avenue.

Most Orthodox Jews lived near Shearith Israel, the Adas, Rogers Avenue shul, Rabbi Taub's, Beth Jacob, and near Ohel Yaakov, Rabbi Dinowitz's shul and also near Mr Ernst Gutman's Shabbos Minyan. Yeshiva couples lived in the Glen View Apartments or the Parkington Apartments. A very few lived uptown near Bancroft or Clarks Lane (near Shaare Zion, Rabbi Tabak's and later Rabbi Shapiro's shul), and Seven Mile Lane at Suburban Orthodox (then Rabbi Gevantman's Shul) and near Rabbi Vitsick's or Rabbi Fischer's shuls. Later came Rabbi Hertzberg and Rabbi Sternhill. All in all there were maybe 250 Shomer Shabbos families, many Davening in Shearith Israel and the Adas, and the rest spread thinly throughout other Shuls.

Once Ner Israel and Beth Tifiloh Congregation left the Forest Park neighborhood and TA left lower Park Heights, those neighborhoods collapsed Jewish-wise. Most were moving to the area between Rogers Avenue and Seven Mile Lane along the Park Heights Corridor. Only three Orthodox families lived in the Fallstaff / Westbrook neighborhood. Borough Storch a"h, Sidney Finkel a"h and Alvin Gerstein who began a Minyan over 60 years ago in his home. Just these lived in that upper Park Heights Myerhoff developed community of Fallstaff/Westbrook. Today that area is almost all Shomer Shabbos.

Jewish Neighborhood Commerce and Shopping 1970's

Jews shopped kosher at Shapiro's Supermarket at Hilltop Shopping Center, at Jack's grocery on Park Heights in Pimlico and at Schuchman's kosher grocery and deli on Pimlico Road. Shapiro's opened a store on Old Court and Reisterstown Road, and when they closed Hilltop they opened on Liberty Road in Randallstown.

Leibes' Deli and Goldman's Bakery were on Rogers, Reinberg's bakery on Park Heights and later the Friedmans opened up a fish and produce store across the street. Lower Park Heights still had Schmell's and Azman's Bakery and Pariser's was way down on Greenmount Avenue. The JCC had moved from downtown up to Park Heights. Perns, Central and Friedman Hebrew bookstores were on Park Heights and a mid Eastern Israeli kosher restaurant called Sabra opened in the Boxwood Inn where Office Depot was located and today it's Maven Market.

The Associated Jewish Charities in the 1960's commissioned a study to see where Jews would eventually move to. Greenspring was second to Randallstown.

Some gathered in Randallstown which was the new and upcoming Orthodox neighborhood. In 1968 Talmudical Academy, Liberty Jewish Center, Winands Road Synagogue, Woodmore Synagogue and Rabbi Shafran's Shul were situated in Randallstown awaiting the throngs of Orthodox Jews expected to move to that area. Forest Park was rapidly disintegrating as a strong Jewish neighborhood and Ner Israel Mechinah moved out to Mt. Wilson Lane in 1967 and the entire Yeshiva moved out to Mt. Wilson a year later in the late summer of 1968.

Owings Mills was rolling farmland and a new upscale suburb Stevenson was being built. Stevenson was where the wealthier but mostly non Orthodox community was moving to. Then a few years later a community was being built in Greenspring called Green Gate. It was developed by Shomr Shabbos developers, the sons of Rabbi Samson, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Talmudical Academy. Dr. Allen and Katie Genut and Cantor and Mrs. Denburg were two of the few Orthodox couples to buy a home there.

In the late 1980's and 1990's former residents of Randallstown were moving to Greenspring. The Sobers, Friedmans, Sinskys, Rubensteins, Brietbarts, and Recheses were some who moved to the area. Herbie and Rene Siegel moved many years later to the area.

Brief Shul History

Shomrei Emunah was founded in 1971 in response to a need for a traditional shul in the Greenspring Corridor. Avrum Kowalsky, Jerry Goldfeder and Harry Chenikoff were seeking a place to start a Frum Minyan. They found three young Ner Israel fellows who lived at 2526 “ Rellim” Road (“Miller” the apartment developer spelled backward) of the Greenspring Apartments at Greenspring Avenue and Steele Road. Heshy Daks, and Shmuel Yankel Mann also from Cleveland and a Rebbe at TA and Alex Bryner who was then in Law School opened their apartment to start a Shomer Shabbos Minyan. At some point they asked Rabbi Binyomin Bak, who had left Pickwick Jewish Center over a Mechitza issue, to join them in their Davening to serve as a Rabbinic authority. Soon after the Shul would relocate to Mike and Layne Lowenstein’s basement on Amleigh Road. That was January 1972 where the shul would have its home for the next 14 months.

Rabbi Bak was officially appointed Rabbi in May 1972.

The shul consisted primarily of energetic young couples, active and enthusiastic, many of whom were new to Baltimore.

The Shul became fully established in January 1973 when at that time 18 couples purchased a cottage at 6213 Greenspring Avenue. By 1975 we were at 50 members, at which time the Shul enclosed the porch, adding 18-20 badly needed men’s seats. In response to continued growth and many children, tables, and Stenders were removed. Bar Mitzvahs and Kiddushes were held outside on the lawn. By 1982 there were 70 members.

At that point in 1982, a group of 15- 20 couples asked Rishus from Rabbi Bak to leave Shomrei and to join the Pickwick Jewish Center two doors away with the intention of eventually merging the two Shuls. We had the members but they had the building.

Rabbi Bak granted us permission and he made me personally promise him that I would give it two years to try and merge the two congregations. I had to promise him that I would return to Shomrei after two years if our group could not get the Mechitza raised and could not merge the two Shuls. The Pickwick Mechitza

was at the minimum Shir for a kosher Mechitza, and for a merger to ever take place the Mechitza would have to be raised. Such a merger could benefit all as Pickwick had the building and Shomrei had future membership growth. Rabbi Marcel Blitz was the Rabbi and I personally became close with him. In a way our group felt sort of like the Merraglim, spies. For two years we worked hard, but our attempt to bring the two Shuls together failed. Our Pickwick young couples club now at 36 couples could not override the Pickwick board and members with the necessary changes needed to complete a merger. As I had promised Rabbi Bak, I left two years to the day and returned to Shomrei. The rest of the group followed within a few months.

1985 after we all had returned to Shomrei, we were at the limit. A Hashkama early Shabbos morning Minyan was started at 7 am. We also purchased the cottage to the north, which eased the crisis somewhat. We now were able to have two Minyanim on Shabbos and Chagim and on a weekly basis had a youth Minyan. In August 1986 we purchased the Pickwick Jewish Center. At that time we moved in before the Yomim Tovim in September and we stood at 136 family members. In 2012 Shomrei had over 400 family members. 2021 over 650 members.

How we were able to purchase Pickwick???

A call to Rabbi Bak

As I said, Shul became uncomfortably packed and there were Mamash no seats left. If you came late to Shul... you had no seat. A Hashkama Minyan relieved the situation somewhat but we were still very crowded. Yomim Tovim we were absolutely squished. Between Pickwick and Shomrei there lived a non Jewish couple Shomrei had been negotiating for years to buy the property but the deal could not be made. The neighbor had opposed the porch project years before and there was a strain in our relationship. Shomrei

tried to buy the home under market as it was an old building and its resale was extremely affected as it sat between the two Shuls. Mark Lustman, a former President, had laid the groundwork in speaking with our neighbor previously. I called Rabbi Bak. I convinced him that he and I should visit the neighbor and offer him a premium for the property. Location- Location- Location is the Golden Rule of real estate. The property had little value but to us it would be priceless. Rabbi Naftali Neuberger always said if a property comes up for sale next to a Shul or school BUY IT! ! I suggested to Rabbi Bak that without Shomrei Board approval we tell the neighbor that we would try and convince the Shul to buy the property at a price of \$ 15,000 above its fair market value. We couldn't promise anything but we told him if he would accept that offer we would do all in our power to make it happen. We shook hands and we went straight to the board. Three months later we owned the house and property. A few years later we purchased another next door property from our shul members the, Bergers, to use as a youth building.

Pickwick Panicked

A month or two after that acquisition our driveway and concrete sidewalk at Shomrei was in disrepair. A large yellow digging machine came to the Shomrei lot to dig up the concrete. Pickwick board members suspected we were about to build. A frantic call came in to our President Mark Lustman and Doc Goldstein Chairman of the Board of the Pickwick Jewish Center offered to sell us the Pickwick Jewish Center for \$ 500,000. We agreed and in more negotiation and deal making we agreed to maintain the memorial plaques of the Pickwick Jewish Center.

We raised much of the money and I helped secure a line of credit for the shul with my bank the First National Bank of Maryland. Now we had 4 properties on Greenspring and plenty of land to expand in the future.

Years later that money we paid to Pickwick was given to Torah

Institute for their new Owings Mills building. Rabbi Weinreb and I tried to secure the money for Shomrei, but realizing that was not going to happen we set up a meeting with the Pickwick board and Rabbi Herman Neuberger. Rabbi Neuberger, maybe the world's absolute best negotiator, was able to convince the Pickwick board to give the bulk of the money to Torah Institute. So eventually it was the Shomrei money given to Pickwick that would build Torah Institute.

Harry's Magic Cholent

Another vital component to the success of Shomrei was Harry Chernikoff's special Heimishe Cholent. The Cholent concoction secret recipe (he added honey and maybe ketchup) attracted culinary experts from all over our town. It Mamash cemented the Achdus and kept Shomrei together. His famous Cholent became a Shomrei legend and it attracted wonderful people and really Heimishe members. Through Machlokes ridden times like "should the Hashkama Minyan not say the Prayer for the Medina" or through tough Mechitza issues, "side by side or women in the back" and the huge controversy of women having a vote or being allowed to hold official Shul offices, it was strong Halachic Rabbinic leadership and Harry's Cholent that kept us together! Harry would say "Kenecht Baindel" knee bones makes a good Cholent but whatever it was the magic potion worked and Shomrei grew! The Associated prediction that Randallstown was the up and coming Jewish area was wrong. The Eruv, eventually not including Randallstown because of Halachic issues (a flowing stream with fish) and probably the rapid spread and the reputation of Harry's Cholent and a Shul called Shomrei made Greenspring the new Mecca of the Orthodox migration.

FOUNDERS

Just like Yaakov's 12 sons and the Shivatim (tribes) of Israel Shomrei had 12 founders.

On May 19th 1971 12 families founded a new shul Shomrei Emunah. Moving the Minyan from the apartment near Steele Road, the group clustered in the basement of Mike and Layne Lowenstein's home right off Smith Avenue at 6613 Amleigh Avenue and Shomrei Emunah Congregation was born. Avery and Edith Eisenstark, Ralph and Eileen Baer, Stephen and Sheila Bailey, Harry and Eleanor Chernikoff, Ben and Miriam Cohen, Marty and Regina Cohen, Oscar and Sylvia Creeger, Jerry and Suri Goldfeder, Herschel and Diane Hawk, Avrum and Sharon Kowalsky, Irvin and Marian Spivak and Jackie and Leah Spivak were the founding couples of the shul. Together with the Baks, as Rabbi Bak became the Rav in May 1972, Shomrei had the ingredients needed to grow a Shul. It had the leadership and Torah of the Baks, wise middle aged experienced couples and vibrant energetic passionate young couples who all had a dream to build a Shul, a community and a beautiful kehilla. Oh and let's not forget the magic Cholent that too made Shomrei unique.

The Shomrei First Banquet

As a student I often entertained as a folk singer for Pirchei, NCSY and entertained at Yavneh Shabbatons or on college campuses singing and playing my guitar. Someone from Shomrei liked my program and I got a call from Layne Lowenstein, wife of Shomrei's third President Mike Lowenstein (Avery Eisenstark was the first President, and Noah Lightman was the second President). Layne asked if I could perform at the First Shomrei banquet to be held at Suburban Orthodox Congregation on March 11, 1972 Besides the \$ 100 program fee I charged them, I heard a rumor that Shmulka Bernstein's of New York was catering the gala event and Baida Caterers was serving the dinner. Jade East in Towson loaned the synagogue their chef. That clinched the deal! I could taste the cuisine

and I got paid besides. The Jewish Times reported that Shomrei's entertainer for the gala event was Eli Schlossberg, a 22 year old musician who was a product of Ner Israel and Loyola College and was the NCSY director at Liberty Jewish Center. The Jewish times article read "Schlossberg to Entertain at Shomrei Emunah Fete, the first Annual Banquet of Shomrei Emunah Baltimore's newest Orthodox synagogue. Shomrei had been formed a year and a half ago by a group of men and women seeking to establish a simple traditional synagogue in the Smith Avenue area." Quoting the Jewish Times "Its members are highly educated in both Orthodox Judaism and secular subjects. The congregation's philosophy is based on "Torah im Derch Eretz" Judaism as a total way of life. Rabbi Benjamin Bak renowned Talmudic scholar is the synagogue's spiritual leader." "Though the members have not compromised their dedication to Torah, they are very involved in the community and accomplished in the arts and Sciences. There are businessman, teachers, lawyers, accountants, physicians, psychologists and artists in the group." Libby Lehman and Suri Goldfeder were the reservation chairpersons and Steve Bailey and Mrs. Miriam Cohen were assisting Layne Lowenstein in chairing the event. Decorations were handled by Diane Hawk, Ellen Lightman and Edith Aisenstark. At the banquet I loved the crowd and the food and at that time I didn't even know about Harry's Cholent. The program was great if I had to say so myself and at Shomrei we've been singing ever since!

I married Ronnie Schwartz of Far Rockaway New York in August 1973. After being married two years and having lived in the Eton Hall apartments for our first two years of marriage across from Shearith Israel (a two bedroom for just \$ 215 a month) we then moved to Greenspring in July 1975. We moved to Greenspring on the high hills of Green Meadow Parkway(\$47,000 for a Ranchleigh home) and joined the Shomrei family. Both Ronnie and I were convinced that we wanted to be part of the Shomrei community. Shomrei Emunah was in its infancy but it had the potential to become the neighborhood of the future. The shul had an OU affiliation and had a strong affinity to Eretz Yisrael. The Greenspring area was the new young Orthodox area and Shomrei, with Rabbi Binyomin

Bak, offered a learning and davening atmosphere that appealed to the young OU or Young Israel type couples who were looking for such a Shul and social lifestyle. Many from Shearith Israel would follow. We were followed by a wave of young couples who purchased homes in the Greenspring and Strathmore Park areas. The growth was dramatic yet Shomrei retained its warmth and closeness. Shomrei was an independent Shul led by its Rabbanim. Doctors, nurses, dentists, lawyers, accountants, business people, government employees, teachers, administrators, plumbers, electricians, social workers, real estate agents and salespersons we were all Shomrei.

(I would list them in alphabetical order.) Hillel and Dena Soclof, Robert and Libby Lehman, Art and Marysue Rubenstein, Walter and Leah Steinhardt, Mark and Elsa Lustman, Stan and Froma Lustman, Bernard and Selma Yaffe, Myron and Miriam Froehlich, Jerry and Shelley Kadden, Alan and Tova Taragin, Danny and Leah Taragin, Maury and Greta Lasson, Elchonon and Faige Oberstein all had a connection to the Glen avenue shul and were all Shearith Israel transplants who would come to Shomrei. Even Rav Bak davened for a few years at Shearith Israel.

The neighborhood appealed to Ner Israel alumnae and to others of a strong Yeshivish Hashkafah and they too joined Shomrei where all felt comfortable. Shomrei was a Cholent pot of different Hashkafahs but all felt welcome as there was a strong commitment to Achdus and Torah learning and a B'kovod Tifila kept us united. Later a Shomrei Hashkama Minyan and the opening of the Agudah Greenspring added to Shomrei and Ner Tamid, providing a full array of Davening options.

Even more today, in 2012, there were so many added vibrant Shuls, Lubavitch Torah Center under Rabbi Kaplan, Rabbi Seidemann's Kehilath B'nei Torah, Rabbi Naiman's Bais Medrash of Ranchleigh, Rabbi Schwartz's Shomrei Mishmares Hakodesh, Rabbi Teichman's Congregation Ohel Moshe, Rabbi Lefkowitz's Hechel Melech, Rabbi Khoshkeraman's Greenspring Sephardic Synagogue, Rabbi Sion Balhaness's Torah V'chesed, Rabbi Berger's Kol Torah, Rabbi

Pinny Gross where Shabbos davening is at the Greenspring Shul, Ner Tamid Rabbi Moetzen, Netivot Shaalom, and now even a Greenspring Rebbe, Rabbi Eichenstein and in 2021 Rabbi Kosterlitz came to Greenspring.

The neighborhood is booming physically and spiritually.

Today Shomrei has over 600 families so the once very Heimishe know-everybody-by-name atmosphere is long gone. While challenged, Shomrei still thrives with tremendous effort in keeping its large diverse membership in peaceful harmony.

Shomrei a Shul of Song!

Shomrei from its inception is a Shul of melodious song. When the new tune of Etz Chaim Hi came out, it immediately became the theme song of Shomrei Emunah. When the Torah is returned to the Ark Shomrei is ablaze in a crescendo of harmony. The Tifila at Shomrei is filled with joyous melodious harmony and while there is no formal choir the members of Shomrei make Shomrei an incredible chorus of musical delight. It's simply one of the most beautiful Mokom Tifilos in America. Rabbi Weinreb added much to this ambience. Our Chazzan Rishon Rabbi Chaim Gartenhaus with his melodious voice led the congregation in song. Many Shomrei members have beautiful voices so there is a constant rotation of excellent Ba'alei Tifila throughout the year. Cantor Shalom Kalib of the Jewish Music Heritage Project who often Davened at Shomrei began a Baltimore men's Choir. The Succah sing in in the Warschawski Succah is a melodious gathering of harmony. Shomrei is known to have an incredible list of excellent Ba'alei Kriah. Aryeh Guttenberg, Eitan Spiegler, Joe Zoimen, well it really doesn't get any better than that. Then there was a wonderful and knowledgeable Ba'al Tokeya in Rabbi Avrum Kowalsky - not only a fabulous Bal Tokeah but a Lamdon and Talmid Chochum as well, and you have a sensational roster and staff of marvelous Avodei Hashem.

Here is what one visiting guest, a Judge from New York, wrote as to the Tifila at Shomrei for Yomim Noraim

“Irrespective of the particular religion, it is almost universally accepted that the public singing of at least a portion of the service tends to enhance the entire experience.”

“Indeed there is something uplifting and inspiring about an assemblage joining together as one in a spirited and moving musical offering of prayer or supplication or thanks.”

“Such was my experience during the recent Rosh Hashana holiday when we visited our kids in Baltimore. We participated in a synagogue service where the congregation, rather than simply sitting as docile spectators while the cantor chanted the liturgy, chose instead to sing along and aloud in a symphony of sound that, I believe, truly floated up to impact the angels in heaven while still lingering close by to touch the folks on earth”.

Some very special Shomrei events

Shomrei was always famous for its Labor Day BBQ and Shomrei was the place to be for the yearly Sondhelm Purim Spiel. In the early days we had theatre parties, bowling nights, and other social gatherings.

Way way back in the early 70's I was given the role to organize a theatre party. Very much wanting our Rav and Mrs. Bak to come I searched high and low for a play that would be totally kosher for all to see. After all, we were Shomrei. Park Heights was already casting an evil eye on those who crossed into the frontiers of Greenspring. I found a tiny theatre, the Spot Lighters on St. Paul, and was reassured by a wonderful nice lady Audrey who was the theatre administrator that this was a very kosher show. The name was “Two By Two the story of the animals entering Noah's Ark”. It sounded biblical and very kosher. I convinced the Rabbi and Rebbitzen that it was a very appropriate play and gave the Rabbi and Rebbitzen a front row seat.

Little did I know that at the beginning of Act 2 some of the clothing of the actors and actresses were coming off, leaving them in leotards and scantily clothed. That ended my entertainment credibility and theatre parties for the future at Shomrei. We played it safe going forward.

Instead we made concerts, many Shabbatonim, singing events and Malava Malka's in the Shul.

Shomrei BBQ-Youth Programs and Activities

Shomrei has always had a festive Labor Day BBQ bringing the community together to the Shul for a social happening. Besides the delicious cuisine such events bring all in the Kehilla together socially. Community Shul dinners are another venue for Achdus.

Shomrei has an active youth program for all ages and the youth have taken an active role in the Lulav and Essrog sale every Succos raising money for the youth program and other Shomrei needs. Shomrei is a full service Shul in every way, serving all ages. Shomrei's annual banquet is another event where active Shul members or staff have been honored and where the Shul has the opportunity to show unity and Achdus. Scholar in residence programs offered over the last 50 years have brought memorable Torah scholars and speakers to the congregation, enriching not only the members but the community at large. Shomrei members are key leaders throughout our wider community in volunteering for community Chesed and all sorts of Jewish affair projects. Shomrei has been a conduit bringing Orthodoxy to the wider Jewish community as a Kiddush Hashem.

Good Times and Bad

A shul that has been in existence for 50 years unfortunately we have lost many elder members. Those are painful of course but old age and Arichas Yomim are blessings. Many elders were founders and stalwarts of the congregation and we have wonderful memories. They were the foundation of our shul.

However it's very tragic when younger members are Niftar.

When we lost Abe Diamond in 1985 we were all stunned. He was a young energetic member being taken from his family and from our Kehilla. We then lost Sandy Dean, Ralph Baer, Joshua and Sonia Greenspon, Elliot Daniels in 1987, Mark Reches, then Bernie Yaffe our Gabbai Tzedakah in 2002, Rabbi Dovid Brown, Walter Steinhardt, Elliot Shimoff in 2004 and more recently his wife Sandy, Rabbi and Mrs. Munk, Hershey Hawk, Larry Soltz, Rabbi S. Stein, Judah Katznelson, Sandy Vogel, Suri Goldfeder, Harry Rashbaum, Norman Friedman and Dave Klein. All were too young and in the prime of their lives. Of recent we lost four very young men, Chaim Zoimen, Eliezer Goldman, Yonah Goldman, and Gilad Schwartz then Lois Yaffe passed away. Then a founder Marty Cohen and more recently we lost Chavie Klein, Henry Reches and Barry Levi. In those times of sorrow Shomrei came together as a Kehilla to mourn the terrible losses and comfort the families.

We have experienced marriage break ups and divorces, many have sat Shiva for their dear parents but a Kehilla united eases the pain and gets us through all situations.

The Women of Shomrei

At Shomrei the women play a very important and vital role in the success of the congregation. It was therefore during our early years that the women's vote arose as a major issue. In most Orthodox congregations only men served on the Shul board and held official positions. There were women's auxiliary groups like sisterhoods but Shul religious issues and officers were men. In the early years this issue surfaced and was hotly contested by our members and threatened the future of Shomrei and its Achdus. In the 70's women's rights was at the forefront of American political issues. In an Orthodox Shul with women sitting in the back behind a Mechitza partition the women's vote issue became a real sensitive issue. Rabbi Bak led us through that difficult period and got us to all agree to a "Family Vote." That meant either husband or wife could cast a vote one vote for a family member. All officers were to remain men. The Mechitza would always stay status quo with men in front and women behind. Rabbi Bak's wonderful personality, sincerity and Torah Scholarship instilled a trust in the membership to listen to his wise advice and take us through some challenging times.

Our women focused on the important issue of making Shomrei a wonderful Kehillah.

It is impossible to list all those accomplishments of our ladies so here is just a sampling of a few of those tremendous accomplishments.

Layne Lowenstein and Ellen Lightman started the Sisterhood.

Ellen Lightman started a most innovative program "Twain" a program that created dialogue with the wider general Jewish community of Baltimore. It won Shomrei the trust and admiration of the non-religious Jewish community. It was a Kiddush Hashem!

Suri Goldfeder and Diane Hawk led the Kiddush committee that catered so many beautiful Smachot and raised so much money for the Shul. After them for many years Morris Mayer & Howard Kaplon led the Kiddush club.

Dr. Janet Suness and other talented Torah scholarly women gave high level educational classes to the women of Shomrei. Janet would write up all Shabbos Shuva and Shabbos Hagadol Drashas for the entire Shul.

Susan Leibtag managed our offices and published weekly bulletins and publications to inform our members of all current shul news. Rosemary Warschawski has for many years handled all shul PR and publicity, published “Kol Hashomrim” a Yom Tov publication for the community and was in charge of fundraising for the newly built shul.

Dr. Sandy Shimoff a”h completed Shas and made a private Siyum on that incredible achievement.

Laure Gutman worked for many charitable causes but at Shomrei she undertook a unique and special project. She created a huge canopy with all our children’s names on the fabric to place above the hundreds of children who on Simchat Torah get called up to the torah at “Kol Haniarim”.

Many women took charge of decorating the Shul for all the years and Sarah Scheller was our interior decorator for the recently completed sanctuary complex.

Many women served on our Rabbinic search committees and the women have taken an active role in selecting our Rabbinic leadership.

The women of Shomrei are most responsible for making Shomrei a Kehilla that has Boruch Hashem raised so many thousands of Shomrei inspired children who now span the entire world as leaders and active participants in the Kehillah of Klal Yisroel.

Love of Eretz Yisroel

We all have different ways how we express our love for Eretz Yisroel so when the issue came up years ago for the Hashkama Minyan to include the prayer for the Medina, sparks flew. Through negotiation and understanding a Pishara was B”H reached.

Shomrei from its inception was a very Zionist congregation. Shomrei of today has a sister community in Eretz Yisroel the community of Eli. Over the years many Shomrei members have made Aliya and Rabbi Gottlieb, Shomrei’s third Rabbi, made Aliya just four years ago. Rabbi Weinreb intends to spend much of his time living in Eretz Yisroel. Shomrei’s Tzedakah Fund first under Bernard Yaffe it’s founder, then under Marvin Diamond and Howard Kaplon and now under Joseph Wolfe has given many hundreds of thousands of dollars to Israeli tzedakos and Institutions. Jordan Weiner heads our Israel fundraising efforts. Jordan was the first to chair the Israel committee and raising funds. The committee is now headed by Binyamin Berger with Mike and Layne Lowenstein deeply involved in the fundraising and distribution efforts. The Tzedaka Fund is currently run by Yoseph Wolf.

Today Shomrei’s original leadership of the 1970’s has handed the baton of leadership to the next generation. This young dynamic group has done a terrific job steering Shomrei through difficult financial times. While the new Shomrei beautiful building complex was so needed, it created a heavy debt load for the congregation. The new young leadership brought creative financial solutions and very needed new fundraising to the congregation.

Thousands of children who are now Frum adults and leaders in their respective communities came out of Shomrei.

From the original founding 12 family
members,

Shomrei has over 650 members today.

Rabbi Binyamin Marwick

When Rabbi Gottlieb left Shomrei for Eretz Yisrael , first as a Sabbatical the shul hired an interim Rabbi. Rabbi Marwick was the Rabbi of an OU program at Hopkins from 2007-2009. Then once Rabbi Gottlieb decided to make Aliyah , Shomrei elected Rabbi Binyamin Marwick as its fifth Rav.

Raised in Silver Spring he attended Hebrew Academy of Greater Washington for Thirteen years then Keren B'yavneh and Chevron Yeshiva of Jerusalem followed my Ner Yisrael for 9 years. His wife Miriam attended Columbia University and got a PHD from John Hopkins. When Rabbi Marwick came in 2009 Shomrei had 450 members and today has over 600 Members. Rabbi Marwick started a night Kollel under the leadership of Rabbi Shmuel Iser

Shomrei is poised and ready to serve the entire community of Greenspring with its beautiful Tifilah, its tremendous learning and Torah opportunities, its wonderful Rabbinic leadership and as a shul it will I'H continue to produce future leaders who will work for Shomrei, the community and all Klal Yisroel.

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