

For Immediate Release
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**First Torah written by Female Scribe for a Manhattan Synagogue
Tamid: The Downtown Synagogue commissions Julie Seltzer to write a New Torah**

The first Torah written by a female scribe for a Manhattan Synagogue was announced this week. Tamid: The Downtown Synagogue has commissioned Julie Seltzer to write a Torah for the downtown Jewish community. Seltzer, a native of Philadelphia, PA and graduate of Brown University, will spend the next two years writing the scroll here in New York and in Israel.

The Torah is the most sacred text of the Jewish People and contains the Five Books of Moses, held in high regard by Jews and Christians alike. There are 304,805 letters in the Torah and each one is written by hand. For the next two years, Julie will dedicate her life to writing this Torah, in Israel and in New York.

The Torah is traditionally written by men and ancient Jewish law prescribes that only Torah scrolls written by men are kosher. "We have an expanded view of tradition and Jewish law. While we respect the ancient ways, we live in a different era and our tradition needs to evolve to stay relevant to the values we hold dear today; equality among men and women is just one of these modern values," said Rabbi Darcie Crystal.

For Tamid, this is more than just creating a new Torah. "According to Jewish tradition, every Jew is commanded to write a Torah in their lifetime. But it's more than just putting quill to paper, it's a window into a Jewish person's history that dates back over 2000 years. It's bringing a Jewish soul into immediate contact with their inheritance," said Rabbi Darren Levine, Tamid's Founding Rabbi.

"The truth is that we did not commission Julie to write our scroll because she is a woman. We commissioned Julie because she best reflects our vision for what we are trying to accomplish. Julie is an educator, an artist, and a community builder and that's our hope for this project; to learn and to grow as people and as a community through her leadership and unique way that she communicates the art of writing Torah," said Alla Liberman, a member of Tamid's Leadership Council.

Everyone who wishes - adults and children alike - will be invited to participate in the writing of this scroll by filling in Hebrew letters on the parchment with the support of the Soferet. The Soferet will be in New York two or three times each year giving lectures, demonstrations, and hosting a Master's Class in the art and calligraphy of writing Hebrew letters for sacred texts.

It will take approximately two years to complete the Torah. Following prescribed customs, this scroll will be written on animal skin using a feather quill and natural dyes for the ink.

Rabbi Levine concluded, "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to create something this unique and special. I always say, only when you touch Torah can the Torah touch you. This is the moment and I'm so proud of our congregation for enabling all of us to touch Torah, literally."

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