

Torah a Phoney

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The story told to us by a Sofer about the rescue of our family Torah in Nadworna turned out to be a cruel fabrication.

In this archive is a story about the seemingly miraculous recovery of our family Torah, found to repose in an Eastern Orthodox monastery nearby. The Sofer who had worked the effort turned out to be a "con man" and had fabricated the entire story in order to get an exorbitant amount of money from our family. The scam began when he apparently "hacked" our family records in the Jewishgen database, and was feeding us information that he had learned from what he found there. Of course, we didn't see the Torah until it "arrived" from Nadworna. In reality, it "arrived" from elsewhere in the United States. Not being a sofer myself, the "nusach Ari" form of the writing and the apparent violation of several principles of Sofrut looked sufficiently exotic enough for me to believe his claims. The Torah in question has been checked by a Badatz-certified Sofer and it would seem that all of the claims made for it were completely false. I should have suspected something when a box of authenticating documents mysteriously disappeared in the United Parcel system. The techniques used on the parchment were developed in the 1950's and NOT 280 years ago. As my father said recently, we may not have had a family Torah, but we DO have one now. The Sofer involved had done the same thing to others, and was arrested and tried on wire fraud charges in Federal Court in New York City. He will begin serving his sentence in June of 2012. The story made headlines in all of the Jewish newspapers in America, as well as some general newspapers around the country (New York Times, Washington Post, etc.) and in Israel.

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