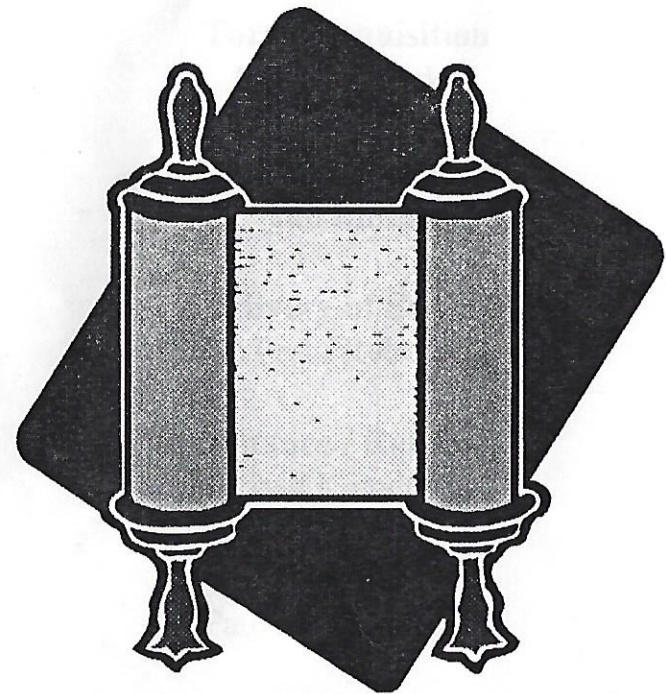


**DEDICATION OF THE
CZECH MEMORIAL
HOLOCAUST SCROLL**



**YOM HASHOAH WEEKEND
25-27 NISAN 5757
MAY 2-4, 1997**

ORDER OF THE EVENING

Ma'ariv

Torah Linkage to Yom Hashoah

Rabbi Steven Glazer

Torah Acquisition

Michael Marks

In Memory of Anna Perl

Jim Mihal

Delivery of Scroll

Michelle Perl / Rebecca Marks

Acceptance / Remarks

David Kamerling

Dedication

Paul / Deane Shatz

El Male Rachamim / Mourner's Kaddish

Andy Sandberg

Conclusion of Service

OUR TORAH'S JOURNEY

On Thanksgiving Day 1995, there appeared an article in the *Washington Post* describing the efforts of two area synagogues to obtain, and in one case restore, a "Czech Memorial Scroll" Torah for religious use. The Czech Torahs were confiscated by the Nazis, but were saved by the Czech government after the war and ultimately transferred to what became known as the Czech Memorial Scrolls Centre located at Westminster Synagogue, in London, England. The Nazis intended that these Torahs and other Jewish religious articles would form the basis of an exhibition of a defunct culture.

The goal of the Centre was to find homes for the Torahs in synagogues and museums around the world. Having finished the article I became so excited that I immediately showed the article to my wife Cookie and proceeded to call Rabbi Glazer and our President, David Kamerling. I will remember that day as long as I live, for it was the beginning of a journey for my family that took us to Europe where we obtained a Scroll and learned more about our Jewish heritage.

My thought was to acquire a Czech Memorial Scroll for Beth Emeth to coincide with the construction of the new addition to our synagogue. The thought that I expressed to both the Rabbi and David was that as important as the building was, what was of greatest importance was what would be inside. And what could be better than having a living memorial to the martyred Jews of the Holocaust, to remind us how lucky we are to be able to freely practice our beliefs, and to inspire us to do so in our daily lives, as we build upon the religious and cultural foundation we have established here at Beth Emeth.

Both Rabbi Glazer and David were excited and supportive of my desire to obtain a Scroll, and for that my family and I will always be most grateful. Rabbi Glazer had been involved in obtaining a Scroll for his synagogue in Birmingham, so his knowledge of how to proceed was very useful. The Board of Directors was immediately supportive of my proposed effort and agreed to put up the necessary funds to acquire Scroll on "permanent loan." I would like to thank them again for their

enthusiasm and continued support.

After many overseas phone calls and letters, our plans were set to travel to London to pick up Beth Emeth's Czech Memorial Scroll. Along the way, our travels took us to many unexpected and wonderful historical gems of Western European Jewish religion and culture.

Finally we arrived at our most important destination, the Czech Memorial Scrolls Centre. There we met Ruth Shaffer, who is in charge of the whole affair. As a result of my many letters and phone conversations with her I felt like I was reuniting with an old friend. Ruth is a wonderful human being, who has been completely dedicated for almost thirty years to finding good homes for the Scrolls.

Most, if not all of the 1,564 Czech Memorial Scrolls that were brought to London suffered minor to very serious damage. Scrolls that were in the best condition were lovingly restored at Kent House and sent to new homes around the world. Other Scrolls were restored for religious use at their new homes. Many of the remaining Torahs were in a state of disrepair that would preclude their religious use. Finally, there were Scrolls that were merely collections of fragments of what had been. The second part of this project therefore was to refurbish our Torah so that it could serve our congregation as a living memorial and educational tool. I had to become knowledgeable of conservation issues. Torn sections needed to be mended and sewn. Holes need to be repaired. Now, I came in contact with the fascinating world of the Torah scribe and conservationist.

Today my family's journey ends with the dedication of this Czech Memorial Scroll and its presentation to our congregation. But more importantly, this dedication marks the end of our Torah's journey -- one that started perhaps as much as two hundred years ago in a Bohemian or Moravian synagogue, saw fire and death, rescue in London, and ultimately rebirth in America with Beth Emeth's family. For all those that participated in this important effort with their time, inspiration and financial contributions, my family and I thank you.

Michael Marks

MESSAGES

In many ways the word "Torah" is synonymous with the Jewish people. We have lived by and died rather than forsake its ordinances, statutes and ethical teachings. Therefore, there is no more fitting memorial to those who were slaughtered only because they were Jews than to dedicate to their memory a "survivor of the Holocaust" in the form of a Torah scroll.

We are most grateful to Michael Marks who initiated this project, and who personally flew to London with his family to acquire our Czech Memorial Torah. Thanks to their efforts, and those of the many others who assisted, our redeemed Scroll now has a place of honor for all time. As Jews and as survivors, we mourn the past, celebrate the present and anticipate the future.

Rabbi Steven M. Glazer

The dedication of a Torah evokes powerful emotions. It links us to our past and commits us to the future. Each Torah has its own story to tell. The last time Beth Emeth welcomed a Torah into our family was a totally joyous occasion. The Torah was purchased new and came to us unblemished. Like parents, we watched as the sofer, the scribe, wrote the final words and we celebrated with great pomp and ceremony as we placed the Torah in our ark for the first time. It has been treated with love and reverence since then.

Tonight we must temper somewhat the great joy we feel on welcoming a new Torah into our midst. The Czech Holocaust Torah we embrace this evening comes to us after suffering great humiliation and desecration. We know nothing about the synagogue that once treasured it, except that most of its members probably perished during the Holocaust.

Congregation Beth Emeth welcomes the opportunity to provide a new home for this Torah, a home where it will once again be treated with respect and dignity. We also have the opportunity to carry on the memory of those whose names we do not even know, those who in life once cherished this Torah as we now do. It is an awesome responsibility, but one that we accept with pride, humility, and great gladness.

David Kamerling, President

THE FATE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIAN JEWRY

In March 1939 Slovakia was declared an independent state, with Father Jozef Tiso, a Catholic priest, as Prime Minister, and with the Hlinka People's party, a right-wing Catholic nationalist group, as the only legal party. Slovakia had to adhere to the German-Italian-Japanese axis, to provide rail and road access for the Germans to the east, and after the German attack on Russia, also to provide fighting troops. In October 1939 Tiso was elected President; pro-Nazi Voytech Tuka became Prime Minister; Sano Mach, head of the Hlinka Guard, became Minister of the Interior, and Ferdinand Durcansky, Foreign Minister.

For the first two years of the war, Slovakia enjoyed significant benefits from its new status, such as increased trade and help in industrial development, but after the German defeat at Stalingrad and the turning of the tide of the war, Slovak sentiment among both government and people became noticeably less pro-German. At the beginning of 1944, when the Soviet army stood at the frontiers of Ruthenia, young Slovaks began to be more responsive to the appeals for resistance issued by the Czech government-in-exile. Soldiers in the Slovak army began to desert to join resistance groups in the mountains. Popular opposition grew. Open fighting broke out in August 1944. Tiso then proclaimed martial law and total mobilization. The Slovak uprising gave the Germans the pretext they needed to occupy the country. Serious fighting between the Slovak partisans and the Germans continued through October, when the Germans succeeded in crushing the resistance. The Russian advance through Slovakia began in January 1945, but it was not before April 1945 that Slovakia was liberated from German occupation.

JEWS IN PREWAR SLOVAKIA

In 1938 about 135,000 Jews lived in Slovakia, of whom

40,000 lived in the territory ceded to Hungary (Ruthenia and Subcarpathia). About 5,000 emigrated voluntarily before the war, leaving about 90,000 Jews, 3 percent of the population. Slovakia was poorer and far less industrialized than the historic Czech crown provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, and so were its Jews. They were engaged mostly in retail trade and handicrafts, servicing the peasantry.

The small segment of well-to-do Jews spoke Hungarian and were assimilated, maintaining religious congregations of a somewhat lukewarm character. Most other Jews were highly traditional, among whom Hasidic rebbes enjoyed huge followings.

During the life of the Czechoslovak Republic, Jews enjoyed full civic and religious rights, even though anti-Semitism, particularly among the predominantly peasant population, was widespread.

JEWS IN WARTIME SLOVAKIA

In April 1939 the new Slovak state began to enact anti-Jewish legislation, defining the status of a Jew along religious rather than racial lines (Slovakia was a Catholic country, ruled by a priest and a Catholic party). In rapid succession came a series of decrees excluding and restricting Jews in various professions and occupations. Anti-Semitic violence on the part of the Hlinka Guard accompanied the administrative anti-Semitism.

In August 1940 SS-Hauptsturmführer Dieter Wisliceny, Eichmann's representative from the Reich Security Main Office, arrived in Bratislava as an adviser on Jewish affairs. The Hlinka Guard and the *Freiwillige Schutzstaffel* (Slovak volunteers in the SS) were reorganized on the model of the SS and given the responsibility of carrying out anti-Jewish measures.

On September 26, 1940, a new decree established the *Ustredna Zidov* (Center of Jews) as the only authority permitted to represent the Jews, responsible to the Central Economy Office (under the Minister of the Interior) and obliged to transmit its instructions to the Jews.

On September 9, 1941, the Slovak government promul-

gated a major body of anti-Jewish legislation, containing 270 articles, redefining the Jews as a racial group, requiring them to wear the identifying yellow Star of David, making them liable to forced labor, and evicting them from specified towns and districts.

Plans for deportation began late in 1941; in March 1942 five assembly points for deportees were set up, and despite intensive efforts on the part of Jewish communal leaders to halt them, deportations continued unabated from March through August 1942. By then, only 25,000 Jews remained in Slovakia. Three more transports left in September and October. Some 58,000 Jews, 75 percent of Slovak Jews, had been deported, mostly to Auschwitz.

Further deportations were put off, partly through the intervention of the Catholic church and partly through a strategy of bribery and promises of financial profit that the Jewish leaders used in negotiations with Slovaks and with Wisliceny himself.

After the Slovak national uprising in 1944, the SS took 19,000 prisoners, of whom 5,000 were Jews. Under the subsequent German occupation, 13,500 more Jews were deported. No more than 5,000 Slovakian Jews remained in the country in hiding or on Aryan papers. About 10,000 of those deported in 1944 survived and returned to Slovakia.

(SOURCE: Lucy S. Dawidowicz. *The War Against the Jews*, 1933-1945. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975, pages 377-379. Reprinted by permission.)



CZECH MEMORIAL SCROLLS 1964-1997

The 1,564 sacred Scrolls that came to Westminster Synagogue on 7th February 1964, had been gathered together in Prague, from the desolated synagogues of Bohemia and Moravia, by the Nazi official in charge of the Czech "Protectorate". Much more synagogue booty, books, pictures, embroidered vestments and ceremonial objects of silver and gold, were similarly collected by the Nazis, and many of these articles are now in the State Jewish Museum in Prague. The Scrolls themselves lay piled in the disused Michle Synagogue for more than 20 years.

In 1963, with the sympathetic concern of the Czechoslovak Government, Mr. Eric Estorick, a London art connoisseur, was able to arrange with Artis, the authority responsible for such treasure, for the acquisition of the Scrolls. Mr. Ralph Yablon of London responded generously to a request to finance the enterprise; and, at his instance, Mr. Chimen Abramsky, now professor of Hebrew Studies at the University of London, travelled twice to Prague to make a cursory examination of the Scrolls. The packing and shipping were themselves no small undertaking; and all was done with meticulous care. It was agreed from the outset by the Czech Authorities and the British interested parties that the Scrolls should pass in trust to a responsible non-commercial body; and Mr. Yablon nominated Westminster Synagogue. The offer was solemnly accepted by the synagogue officers; and a Memorial Scrolls committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mr. Frank R. Waley, then chairman and later president of the Synagogue, gave his devoted attention to every aspect of the care and distribution of the Scrolls from the moment of their arrival until his death in 1969.

The first task of the committee was the careful unpacking and numbering of the Scrolls, and the construction in three rooms of racks designed for the purpose, with positions properly numbered so that each of the 1,564 Scrolls could be readily accounted for through the period of their study and

distribution. Then came the major task of inspection. A system of cataloguing was devised; and in accordance therewith, each Scroll was gone through by an expert and a record made, so far as was possible, of the origin and age of the Scroll, the physical condition of its components and, most important, the state of the writing and the defects therein. On the basis of this study, the Scrolls were classified into grades, from best to unusable. The middle grades were such as could be made usable by a little or a greater amount of labour, and such as had some parts which were or could be made usable. Of the remainder, most were destined to serve as sacred memorials.

The experts who worked on this task for part or all of the ten months from July 1964 to April 1965, were: Mr. Chimen Abramsky, Mr. Morris Sanders, Rabbi Ilisha Rosenfeld, the Rev. Jacob Akiba, Mr. David Acoca and Mr. Moise As-souline, the last three under the supervision of Rabbi Pinchas Toledano.

On 28th June, 1965, a Solemn Assembly was held at Westminster Synagogue to mark the completion of the preliminary study of the Scrolls and the beginning of the task of distribution. The Assembly was representative of all sections of the Jewish community, and included also members of the clergy and academics of different faiths. Sir Seymour Karminski, President of the Congregation, presided; Dr. Brodie, then Chief Rabbi, read the memorial prayers; and Dr. Reinhart spoke of the past tragedy and future hope of which the Scrolls were a symbol. A message of good wishes was read from the President of the Prague Jewish Community.

From the beginning, the Memorial Scrolls committee received the encouragement of the Congregation and of the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community: the then Chief Rabbi, Dr. Brodie; the Haham, Dr. Gaon, who gave valued practical help; Dr. Richard Barnett, of the British Museum; and many, many more.

In March 1980 the constitution of the Memorial Scrolls committee was formalised under a Trust deed. The committee, as now constituted, consists of Ruth Shaffer, Constance

Stuart (joint chairmen), Leo Bernard, Phillipa Bernard, Ivor Connick, Rabbi Dr. Albert Friedlander, Evelyn Friedlander and Peter Goldsmith. Mrs. Shaffer continuing in office bears the brunt of the immense labour involved; she has the willing help of the Synagogue's staff. During the years 1965 and following, the work of repairing the Scrolls was done by the scribes who had conducted the original examination. Unfortunately, they could give but little time to this work. Since May 1967 until 1994, the committee enjoyed the services of Mr. David Brand, a scribe whose professional skill and conscientious disposition was of inestimable value.

Requests for the sacred Scrolls have come to the committee continuously from the time of their arrival in London in 1964 (widely reported in the British and American press), up to the present time. In the allocation of Scrolls during these past 20 years, priority has been given to Synagogues needing a Scroll for use in services. Czech Memorial Scrolls are now in use in many countries. As might be expected, the largest Jewish community, that of the United States, has provided new homes for a great many of the Scrolls; but others have been sent to virtually every established community. Of the 1,564 Scrolls received in 1964, a very great many are beyond repair for use in synagogue services. Practically all the scrolls which can be made kosher have been distributed, and the remainder are being allocated to those congregations who wish to have a memorial to the martyred communities. When a request is approved by the committee, a Scroll is handed over on "permanent loan"; and the recipient is asked to make a contribution towards the expenses involved. A minimum contribution is suggested, but congregations are encouraged to make larger contributions in accordance with their means. Many have responded generously, and the committee has thus been able to meet the constantly increasing costs incurred in distributing the Scrolls.

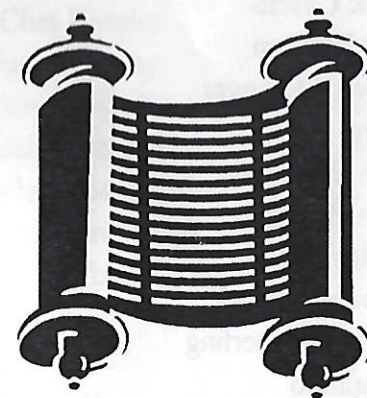
Each Scroll bears a brass tablet with a number corresponding to the number on a certificate which describes the origin of the Scroll and any known particulars.

Some Scrolls, not necessarily fit for use in synagogue but

appropriate as solemn memorials, have been assigned for display in religious and educational centres, and it is hoped that many future applicants will find these Scrolls appropriate to their needs. One went to Westminster Abbey, where it was a feature in the exhibition arranged by the Council of Christians and Jews in connection with the Abbey's 900th Anniversary Commemoration; this Scroll is now permanently in the library of the Council of Christians and Jews. Others have gone to the Royal Library at Windsor; Brandeis University, New York; Northwestern University, Chicago; University of Rochester, New York; King's College, Cambridge; Leeds University; University of Southampton; University of Warwick; Clifton College; University of York and York Cathedral; Yad Vashem.

It was clear from the outset that a residue of scrolls and fragments of scrolls would remain when the process of distribution had been completed; it was envisaged that this residue, together with binders and wimples, would one day form the basis of a museum devoted to the history of the project and to the memory of the Czech communities.

Meanwhile, the committee continues to receive many requests; and will not rest until the sacred treasures shall have found their most appropriate homes, to honour the memory of the martyrs and to bring light to future generations.



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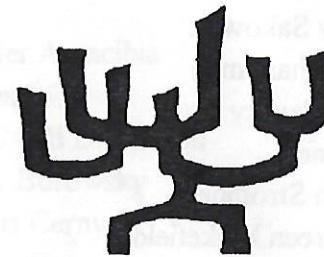
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