

TEMPLE SINAI

Kol Sinai: Sinai Speaks

Zachor – The Importance of Remembering



Holocaust Remembrance Center Committee

Doing Our Part to Remember

Steve Greenblatt, Chair of the Holocaust Remembrance Center Committee

Boldly displayed above the Holocaust Remembrance Center exhibit is the word "Remember." It is there to serve as a reminder of our obligation to remember what was done to our people during the Holocaust. As it has been said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." **On November 4th at 4pm, we will hold our dedication ceremony for the Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Remembrance Center at Temple Sinai and we could not be more proud.** The dedication coincides with the Temple's commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Kristallnacht and the first exhibit is based upon that tragic time.

The Holocaust Remembrance Center was established at Temple Emanu-El following an appeal from Rabbi Peter Kasdan in 1987. As he said, "... in this thirty-second year of our journey as a post-holocaust congregation, we [must] devote the time and the substance to create a memory-bank - a living museum of personalized memories - that members of our

Temple family can and, hopefully, will share with the rest of us. With the VCR and modern-technology - with cameras that can update old and worn photographs - with words and feelings that can recapture the memories so long hidden away - the creation of such a storehouse of recollections is not only doable - it is, I believe, a mandate that we must fulfill in this moment of history when the past seeks to escape us!" We may have moved well past the era of the VCR but we have not moved past the critical need for this memory bank. In fact, as the Holocaust moves further in the past, the mandate to remember becomes even stronger.

Even before our two congregations came together, a committee was formed to work on re-establishing the Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Remembrance Center at Temple Sinai. Our committee includes longtime members of both congregations. The HRC will continue to carry the name of Temple Emanu-El as another form of remembrance as to where the Holocaust Remembrance Center was originally established.

One of the first things we did as a Committee was to define a Mission Statement for the Holocaust Remem-

brance Center. It begins, "The Holocaust Remembrance Center (HRC) is a memorial to the Holocaust through a repository of historical artifacts and personal memories, enabling learning of the past and drawing lessons for the future. The Center serves as a link between generations – l'dor vador – so that the lessons and memories of the Shoah inform current and future generations." We look forward to opening the Holocaust Remembrance Center to other temples, churches, and schools in the area to do what we can to make sure that everyone remembers.

On behalf of the Holocaust Remembrance Center Committee, we hope you and your family can join us on November 4th at 4pm as we commemorate this important day for our Temple and for our Jewish community. The event is appropriate for all ages and will be approximately 60 minutes followed by time to spend in the Holocaust Remembrance Center and to spend time with your fellow congregants. If you're interested in getting involved in the Holocaust Remembrance Center please email tehrc@templesinainj.org. If you are interested in making a donation to the HRC endowment fund, please contact Audrey Napchen at 908-273-4921x16 or via email at audrey@templesinainj.org.

We look forward to seeing you on November 4th.

Temple Sinai's Commitment to Holocaust Education and Remembrance

Rabbi Stuart Gershon

Temple Sinai has a disproportionately large number of Holocaust survivors, adult children of survivors, children who were hidden and those who lost many family members. With the dedication of the Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Remembrance Center, Temple Sinai's commitment to Holocaust education and remembrance is enshrined as a core principle and value of our congregation.



From Black and White to Living Color

**Audrey Napchen,
Executive Director**



This past summer, I traveled to Poland with 17 members of my family. The group included my daughter, mom, niece, aunt and cousins; mostly women! Our mission was to learn about, see and experience the places my maternal grandmother and grandfather came from.

My visions of these places came from the stories my grandmother told me. As was common at the time, my great grandfather

traveled to Canada to earn enough money to bring his family from Poland to the land of freedom and opportunity – in this case Toronto, Canada. Grandma Sue did not want to leave her little shtetl of Ilza. Her mother had died of Typhus. She lived with her grandmother and felt safe and protected. She told me that when her father came to take her away, she held on to her grandmother's leg and refused to let go (but she did). I don't know why, but I picture this scene in a small dark house made of gray wooden boards, a grimy window and one lamp burning in a corner.

Inevitably with Poland comes the grainy black and white images of life in the Warsaw Ghetto, residents crossing an elevated bridge to go to work on the outside, and other images too horrifying to mention here. I left the US with trepidation– I could not imagine how my family and I would feel when looking through the lens of my grandmother's eyes.

Shortly after we arrived Kris, our guide, met us at our hotel. With him, he had our family tree with branches going back 5 generations; names, dates of birth, certificates of death and towns of origin.

He knew who we were and what we wanted to accomplish. Not at all an attractive city, we began the journey in Warsaw. Completely rebuilt after the war, there were blocks and blocks of drab Soviet style apartment buildings, roads in disrepair and boarded up stores and buildings. At one of our stops Kris lead us through the courtyard of an apartment building. Before us was a brick wall, part of someone's back yard garden; spreading vines and flowers attached. Incredibly, this beautiful garden wall was the last remaining section of the Warsaw Ghetto wall. If only that wall could talk... We stopped, stared and nobody said a word.

From Warsaw, we began the 2 hour trip to Ilza. We were ready to see what we'd heard about all our lives: the 13th century castle at the top of the hill, the little flower shop that was once the home of our cousin's mom, the cemetery where our great, great grandparents are buried. As we approached the town, in front of us was a road that spanned a large lake. Kris explained that there never was a road over the lake until the Nazis, to make it easier to traverse the countryside, built the road. It has been confirmed that the road was built with headstones from Ilza's Jewish cemetery. **Continued on P. 6**

The Story of Our Czech Torah Scrolls

Rabbi Stuart Gershon

Temple Sinai is now the conservator for two Torah scrolls saved from the Holocaust that were given to Temple Emanu-El on long term loan by the Memorial Scrolls Trust in London. These two scrolls are two of the 1,564 scrolls from Czechoslovakia that were saved from the Nazis.

Let me briefly tell you the story of the Czech Torah scrolls. In 1942, as the deportation of Czech Jews to the death camps escalated to its peak, the curators of the Jewish museum in Prague undertook an extraordinary mission. Realizing they could do nothing to save the Jewish people or themselves, they sought to rescue the Torah scrolls and other treasures from the now deserted synagogues across Czechoslovakia. As an act of great spiritual resistance to Nazi persecution, more than 212,000 artifacts were brought to Prague, including 1,800 Torah

scrolls. Until they were themselves deported to Terezin or Auschwitz-Birkenau, the museum curators carried out their sacred mission to preserve the heritage of the Czech Jewish communities for future generations.

In 1963, the Czech government offered Eric Estorick, a British art dealer, the opportunity to purchase some of the Torah scrolls stored in the museum. He contacted a client, Ralph Yablon, who in turn contacted Rabbi Harold Reinhart of Westminster Synagogue in London. Ralph Yablon funded the purchase of all 1,534 scrolls. They arrived in London on February 7, 1964.

Westminster Synagogue founded the Czech Memorial Scrolls Museum to house some of the scrolls and established the Memorial Scrolls Trust so that the majority of the Czech Torah scrolls could be allocated to congregations around the world who pledge to give the Torah scroll a prominent role in the life of the congrega-

tion. Congregations like Temple Sinai.

It is a condition of the loan that we teach about the Torah

scrolls and the communities they came from. On Rosh Hashana morning, we read Torah from Czech memorial scroll 488. It was written in the late 19th century. This Torah scroll belonged to the small Jewish community of Holeshov, comprised of 273 families.

The Torah scroll in the glass case opposite the sanctuary doors is Czech memorial scroll number 1386. It was written in 1700. It belonged to the members of the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague, once one of Europe's great cities of Jewish life. The Pinkas Synagogue still exists today. These scrolls symbolize the spirit of Jewish courage, dignity, resilience, and faith at the darkest and most desperate times in our people's history.



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Synagogue Music Lost, Forgotten

Cantor Marina Shemesh

Synagogue music had drawn Jewish and many non-Jewish listeners to temples in Berlin and Vienna, but it barely survived the Nazi Storm Troopers who destroyed recordings and scores, composers and cantors. A whole culture of music came to a sudden crashing fall. Only a small portion of the music of Louis Lewandowski and another renowned German-speaking Jewish composer, Salomon Sulzer, survived the Holocaust. Most of the German synagogue music written before Holocaust, was destroyed and is now virtually forgotten. Only a few Germanic choirmasters and cantors survived the Nazi concentration camps.

In November 1987, all known surviving cantors and choirmasters in the United States met for the first time to share what

they remembered of the music they performed in pre-Nazi Germany and Austria. These were the men who were revered as guardians of Jewish culture in the 1930s, and before, when synagogues had a role in society much like concert halls have today. The conference participants brought with them their memorabilia, and shared their life stories. Rabbi Gunter Hirschberg, formerly a German choir singer, told how a Christian organist had saved the music of one of Berlin's main temples shortly after *Kristallnacht*, he remembered his surprise at the outbreak of overt anti-Semitism when suddenly, almost overnight: "It became very important to me to sing louder than the Nazis outside."

Baruch Levine, professor of Hebrew and Judaic studies at NYU, said that "...there was a strong German tradition of anti-Semitism- as in other places- but not on the level that kept Jews down. That's why the Holocaust was so shocking." Though Jews never accounted for more than 1% of the German population, Levin said, every big city had at least one major "choral synagogue" and most had several such temples with rich musical performances. **Continued on P. 6**



Zachor!

David Hoodis, President

This entire issue is dedicated to Zachor! – the Importance of Remembering, specifically the opening of the Temple Emanu-el Holocaust Remembrance Center. The word that comes to mind is legacy. The legacy that Temple Emanu-El has brought to this community will continue as an integral part of the fabric of Temple Sinai.

Teaching the lessons of the Holocaust so that we, as a society, never repeat such atrocities, is everyone's responsibility. As Jews we take it as an obligation. The opening of this center, in Summit, NJ, will allow us to fulfill this obligation; to learn and enlighten ourselves, our children and the broader community; to recognize how relevant to today are the lessons we will take away from the center we are about to dedicate.

Since my Yom Kippur address, I have heard from so many of you; about your personal feelings about the Holocaust. Many of you have family members who are survivors, artifacts from love ones, stories from parents and grandparents. Your emotions and your stories help strengthen the mission of the center and our obligation. Many of you have since asked how you can get more involved, loan your artifacts, or contribute. All of these are appreciated, and you will hear more throughout the next few months.

As President during this time in our history, I am humbled by the outpouring of support for the center, the involvement of our members, and the commitment from our staff to making this center a place that we can be proud of and share with the broader community.

I hope you can join us on November 4, but more importantly, that you will continue to be passionate about teaching acceptance, standing up for injustice, and for supporting groups that further these causes, like Temple Sinai.

Valerie Hoodis Spearheads the Daffodil Project



Valerie plants the first six bulbs

Temple Sinai is planting 1000 daffodils in freshly dug flower beds on Sunday, October 28. The Daffodil Project was started by a non-profit Holocaust Education and Awareness Organization in Atlanta, Georgia called Am Yisrael Chai! Their goal is to "...build a Living Holocaust Memorial by planting 1.5 million daffodils around the world in memory of the children and in support for children who continue to suffer in the face of genocide and humanitarian crises in the world today." Daffodils; the shape and color of the daffodils resemble the yellow stars that Jewish people were forced to wear during the Holocaust. The Daffodil Project goes

on to say: "They (daffodils) are resilient and return with a burst of color each Spring, signifying hope, renewal and beauty. The daffodils also honor those who survived the Holocaust and went on to build new lives after this dark and difficult period."

We thank Valerie for bringing The Daffodil Project to Temple Sinai. Families with young children, ECEP, Religious School and High School students will be involved in planting the bulbs. We are excited to be a part of it, and look forward to seeing the sunny heads of the daffodils peeking their way out of the ground in Spring!



HRC: A Welcome Resource for Religious School

Patti Kahn, Director of Education

Learning about the Holocaust is an important subject of study in TSRS. Our Grade 4-7 students annually commemorate Kristallnacht and Yom Hashoa, with a special service whose goal it is "*Leezkor*," to Remember.

Our 7th graders currently experience ten lessons from the Holocaust curriculum that is part of the "Facing History and Ourselves" curriculum. This curriculum focuses on the choices of individuals who were victims, perpetrators, witnesses and rescuers. The special approach helps students to make connections between history and the consequences of human actions and beliefs, both historically and today. Sadly, the study of the Holo-

caust and inhuman behavior reveals the relevance of history in our lives and our world today. The final lessons in their curriculum ask our students to think about the ways we can participate in the world around us as caring, thoughtful Jewish citizens, who can choose to help prevent genocide, mass murder and other atrocities from occurring again.

New this year we have introduced a shorter, 5-session media-centered Holocaust curriculum to our sixth graders. Our students will be watching and reflecting upon the film, "Hana's Suitcase." They will work together to recreate the suitcase and its contents. Hana was a girl from Czechoslovakia who was orphaned by the Nazis and killed at Auschwitz. Having come across the suitcase that Hana left behind, a teacher in a Tokyo Holocaust Education Resource Center enlightens her diverse students about Hana's experience. In the film it is these school children who explain Hana's story and encourage our children to



A child's art from Terezin in the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

never forget Hana.

On Sunday, March 3rd, our 6th and 7th graders will participate in a hands-on workshop with guest artist Rebecca Kelly of the Young Audiences Arts for Learning program. The workshop, "I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Poetry, Art and Stories of the Holocaust" will enable our students to write and draw about the Holocaust. We will display their work for the congregation.

We have no doubt that the Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Remembrance Center will provide great depth and texture to our students' factual and emotional Holocaust learning experience. Our teachers and families look forward to exploring the riches of what will be provided in the HRC. We will put it to good use. We thank all who have participated in re-establishing the Center at Temple Sinai. We will never forget.



Early Childhood and Families with Young Children – A Daily Lesson in Kindness

Amy Damast, Director of the Early Childhood Education Program

Through the generations, educators and parents have often found it challenging to help young children process difficult adult topics like prejudice, gun violence, and natural disasters. So, how can we involve our youngest children in the dedication of the Holocaust Remembrance Center?

As we do every month, we will focus on honoring our similarities and differences with kindness. In our classrooms, we discuss our likes and dislikes in respectful ways. Some children like bagels and some

do not. Some children like the color purple and some prefer yellow. Some children play soccer and some like to dance. These conversations are matter-of-fact and carry no more weight with the children than the fact the people have different names, different eye colors and the like. But the message is weighty – our friends and classmates are similar and different, and each brings something special to the classroom simply by being himself or herself.

As the Temple creates the Daffodil Garden to honor and remember children who suffered during the Holocaust, our ECEP students and Tot Shabbat community will lend their hands in the planting. And as those hands, big and small, plant daffodil bulbs, they will also plant a tiny seed of kindness that honors the uniqueness in each of us.



Holocaust Resource Center: An Important Part of Our Learning

Samantha Eichert,

Director of Youth Engagement

By the time our children reach our high school, all of our teens have been exposed to both the Holocaust through the Jewish lens, and through the secular lens. Patti ensures that by the time they are young adults, they know the “who’s, what’s, where’s, when’s”. By the time they reach high school, they understand they, as Jews, and as citizens of the world, have an important role to play in society- Never Again.

In the high school, they learn to be advocates - advocates for themselves, their communities, and for the greater goodness of the world, and as a school we explore what that means.

Sometimes that means marching with those who share the same opinions. When they are a bit older, it means they participate in government and exercise their rights to vote. We learn together that the right thing and the easy thing are not always one in the same. Sometimes it means standing alone & being the one righteous voice in the room.

One of the main ways we have achieved teaching “Never Again” and advocacy is by bringing in survivors and military veterans to talk about what they saw and what they experienced. When I was growing up, I remember sitting face-to-face with several survivors in my own religious school feeling astounded by their stories. It was not until I was much older that I could reflect and realize that this opportunity to sit face-to-face will not always be here. Their stories need to be heard and remembered. As time continues to press forward, we move further away from the Holocaust. This does not mean our education is less important and

that our children should not learn. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Now, more than ever, we have an even greater responsibility to ensure that we continue *l'dor v'dor* (from generation to generation) and spread the message of Never Again.

Our Holocaust Remembrance Center offers a unique experience to our teens right in their Jewish homes. Through Rabbi's elective in the high school, they get to build the displays and research the artifacts. They are working together to help create an exhibit which will be here for generations to come. Our teens understand the impact and importance of the space they are helping to create & I can only personally say how thankful & inspired I am by their dedication and commitment to making our Holocaust Remembrance Center, and community, a place which is devoted to Holocaust Remembrance and Education.

Synagogue Music Lost, Forgotten, Continued from P. 2

Cantor Marina Shemesh

"So great was the Jewish culture that government dignitaries came to hear the music. Even Franz Liszt came to the synagogue in Vienna and wrote about it."

The government even granted Jewish composer Louis Lewandowski the official title of Royal Music Director. Lewandowski composed most of his music during his tenure as musical director at the Neue Synagoge in Berlin and his melodies can be heard in many synagogues around the world today, and at our Temple as well.

During my visit to Germany as part of the Cantors Assembly Mission in 2012, I visited the Neue Synagogue. It was an unforgettable experience. The synagogue was damaged on *Kristallnacht* and almost destroyed by allied bombing in 1943. It was partially restored in 1980s, but the bulk of the synagogue was never rebuilt. In its place there is an empty plot of land on which is marked the original layout of the building. The inner wall and the remnants of the masonry have been secured by a glass and steel structure and the ground plan of the former synagogue has been laid out in stone in the open space. This open space behind the restored parts of the building

gives a powerful impression of the size of the original synagogue and the extent of its destruction. It provides an insight into of a way of the synagogue life in Germany used to be. I was praying on Shabbat overlooking this open space through the glass and I could just imagine how amazing it could be to hear the majestic music of Lewandowski with organ and choir in this place that is now no more... It is a surreal site that makes your heart stop and leaves you with a chilling feeling that is now etched in my memory forever.

From Black and White to Living Color, Cont. from P. 3

Audrey Napchen, Executive Director

We knew we had reached Ilza when we spotted the castle. From the start we were introduced to and warmly welcomed by municipal government officials.

We were given a tour of the newly built community center and sat in on a class of women who were learning to use the computer. We located the abandoned cemetery on a steep hill over grown with bushes and trees. The only remaining piece to mark the cemetery was the iron entrance gate. We took a few minutes to climb the hill and quietly recite the Mourners Kaddish and the El Malei Rachamim. It should be noted that prior to WWII, Jewish people represented 50% of Ilza's population. Today there are no Jewish people in Ilza. Outside of Warsaw and Krakow, there are no Jews.

We could not leave Poland without visiting a concentration camp. Majdanek, minutes outside of Lublin, is the most intact camp in existence. To get there, we traveled by van and I did not know how long it would be before we arrived. At one point, I turned my head to the right and outside the window I saw rows and rows of brown wooden bunkers, rusted barbed wire and steel guard towers. My stomach dropped- it's really here. We silently walked through the bunkers, gas chambers and crematoria. We faced a wall with neat rows of Zyklon B gas containers. Walking into a bunker, we heard a loud incessant buzzing noise. There was nothing mechanical in the bunker, no other people. We couldn't figure it out until we saw a moth fluttering, almost frantically against the window, trying to get out. We tried but could not open the window. It was too far from the doorway to lure it out. We came to the understanding that the moth would never leave the bunker.

Prior to WWII, Jewish people represented 50% of Ilza's population. Today there are no Jewish people in Ilza. Outside of Warsaw and Krakow, there are no Jews.

It had been our plan that on Friday, our last night in Ilza, we would have Shabbat dinner. My cousin had her great grandmother's brass candlesticks and wanted to kindle them in our ancestral town. We invited Ilza's mayor and all of the town officials we had met earlier in the week. They joined us and all together, we lit candles, said Kiddush and Ha'motzi and enjoyed our meal. Half way through the meal, Lukasz the town historian turned to us and said, very quietly, that this was the first Shabbat dinner to take place in Ilza since October 1942. Again we stopped, looked at each other – and no one could say a word.

We had gone from grainy black and white to living color.

Mazal Tov to the September, October & November B'nei Mitzvah and Their Families

Sophie Levin
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