



Holocaust Sefer Torah

Located in our rotunda is a scroll created in the 19th-century which survived the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. Our scroll, #1139, is approximately 200 years old and comes from Mlada-Boleslav, a town in the Czech Republic. Our scroll is on permanent loan from the Memorial Scrolls Trust (MST) in London. The MST loans scrolls to congregations, museums and other groups as symbols of survival of the faith and a connection to all Jews who perished during the Holocaust. It is truly with a sense of pride for us at Temple Sholom to be a recipient of one of the 1,564 recovered scrolls.

In 1942 the *Nazi Zentralstelle* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration) issued instructions for all communities in Bohemia and Moravia to send their “historically valuable” items to the Jewish Museum in Prague, some members of Prague’s Jewish community persuaded the Nazis to allow them to bring other religious treasures from the deserted communities and destroyed synagogues to the comparative safety of Prague. More than 212,000 artifacts were brought to the museum. Among them were Torah scrolls. Each item was meticulously recorded, labelled and entered on a card index by the museum’s staff with a description and the place it had come from. It is believed that the Nazis’ interest in the museum developed from a number of practical problems that had to be resolved. The main reason is clear - the museum enabled the Nazis to quickly gain in-depth knowledge about confiscated Jewish objects that were of particular value. The Nazis had no experts in the field of confiscated Jewish artifacts. As such it is possible that the Nazis saw the museum as a special department for the collection, documentation, storage and evaluation of confiscated Jewish property.

In the years immediately after the Nazis seized power in Germany, there was a systematic persecution of the Jewish people which included boycotting of Jewish shops, segregating Jewish people from the rest of society, and limits on their basic liberties and

human rights. Eventually, violent terror and the plot to destroy Jewish culture began. Synagogues, Jewish books and books by Jewish authors were burned. Jews were forced to leave their homes and were sent away by the German authority. In January 1942, the Nazis ordered 1,041 Jews from Mladá-Boleslav and the surrounding areas to be concentrated in the old castle where they stayed until they were deported to Theresienstadt (Terezín) and subsequently transported to various extermination camps where they were systematically murdered. Of the 1,041 Jews from Mlada-Boleslav who were deported to Theresienstadt only 40 were still alive in November 1944.

Just a few years after the war ended there was a Communist coup which took over, among other things, the Jewish Museum and storage in Prague. 1,564 scrolls were found and transferred from the museum to the basement of a warehouse that had once been the sixteenth-century *Michle Synagogue*. The forgotten scrolls were rescued in 1964 and sent to Westminster Synagogue in London where the Memorial Scrolls Trust was then established. The scrolls are silent witnesses and survivors of the Shoah.

Mr. and Mrs. Roger Maister, in honor of their son's Bar Mitzvah, following a request from Malcolm Black then president of Temple Sholom, arranged for the acquisition and transportation of our scroll from the MST in 1989.

