

Our Holocaust Scroll

Ensure our future by remembering the past.



You can ensure our future today!

We are blessed with the opportunity to have a Holocaust Scroll to commemorate the history and memory of those who perished in the Shoah. You have a unique opportunity to dedicate a portion of our Holocaust Scroll. Your dedication will help fund the cost of the scroll, ensure continued educational opportunities relating to the scroll, and maintain our Congregation. The scroll will be housed in our new Ark in our lobby.

All contributions will be recognized in our monthly Digest and all contributions over \$1,000 will be memorialized on a dedication plaque to be mounted next to the Holocaust Scroll Ark.



How the Holocaust Scrolls came to be:

After the start of Jewish deportations in 1942, a group of Jews at the Jewish Museum in German-occupied Prague submitted a plan to the Nazis to save the precious objects in the synagogues by bringing them to the museum to be catalogued and preserved. We will never know the real reason the Nazis agreed to this plan, but transport companies were given permission to bring Torah Scrolls, religious treasures in gold, silver and textile, along with historic archives and thousands of books from over 100 synagogues, to Prague. Word went out to synagogues in the Czech countryside in 1942: Bring your Torah scrolls and other religious objects to Prague, where they will be safer at the Central Jewish Museum. More than 100,000 items were eventually received by the newly-named Central Jewish Museum. They swelled the museum's collection fourteen-fold, requiring 40 storage buildings, many of which were deserted Prague synagogues. The Nazis had the intention of making the Torahs relics in a proposed museum of the 'extinct Jewish race.'

The Nazis sent the people who meticulously catalogued those treasures to the death camps. Bohemia and Moravia, regions that today make up most of the Czech Republic, had been under brutal Nazi control for three years. Three more murderous years lay ahead. Jews had lived in the towns and villages of Moravia and Bohemia since the late 10th century, thriving in vibrant communities in spite of various forms of persecution. During the 19th century, they gradually became emancipated and civil equality was granted. Unfortunately, that ended with the Nazi occupation following the Munich Agreement of 1938. The Jewish population of

Bohemia and Moravia was virtually annihilated between 1939 and 1945, over 77,000 or approximately 84.8% of their numbers murdered. According to the Encyclopedia Judaica: "6,392 had died in Theresienstadt, 64,172 had been murdered in the extermination camps, and of the Jews who had not been deported, 5,201 had either been executed, committed suicide, or died a natural death". On the day of the



restoration of national sovereignty in Prague (the Prague Uprising,) May 5, 1945, there were 2,803 Jews alive in Bohemia and Moravia who had not been deported, 600 of them partners of mixed marriages.

But 1,564 Torah Scrolls would endure. The Germans were defeated and the Torah scrolls were safe. But unfortunately, in 1948, after less than three years of Czech freedom, the Communists staged a coup and took over the government. The revival of Jewish life was stifled and the Prague Jewish Museum came under government control. Hundreds of rescued Torah scrolls languished as state property. The Communists had dumped many of them in an old synagogue where conditions were poor – no better than a damp warehouse. That didn't bode well for their survival. But the scrolls were durable, written

on animal-skin parchment, some already more than 200 years old.

Fast-forward to the early 1960s. Communist authorities who had taken over the museum after the coup of 1948 asked American art dealer Eric Estorick, who lived in London and visited Prague regularly, if he would like to buy some scrolls. At the Michle Synagogue he saw wooden racks holding about 1,800 Scrolls. He returned to London and contacted a fellow American, Ralph Yablon, who in turn contacted his rabbi, Rabbi Harold Reinhart, of the Westminster Synagogue, and offered to put up the money to buy the Scrolls. After their authenticity and condition were verified, an offer was made for the purchase. On Feb. 7, 1964, the 1,564 Torahs rolled into London on two open-sided trucks destined for the Westminster Synagogue. In March of 1964 the Memorial Scrolls Trust was established to oversee their care, restoration and allocation to synagogues around the world.

The process of repairing began, and more than 1,200 of these Torah Scrolls have since been distributed to synagogues and other Jewish institutions throughout the world. Most are now in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Israel, and the United States. The Trust also opened a museum in 2008.

In addition to using the scrolls for education and religious services, the trust hopes to develop interfaith work around the link between the Torah, Christianity, and Islam.

How the Czech scrolls were saved, and returned to active Jewish life in Tampa and around the world, is a story of survival, and of the connection of modern-day Jews with thousands of years of Jewish history.

About Pardubice, from where our Scroll originated:

Our scroll, referred to as #1169, originates from the town of Pardubice, located about 58 miles east of Prague, Czech Republic. Pardubice lies on the river Labe (Elbe in Germany), its landscape marked by meadows, deciduous forests, and historic canals. The town smells of gingerbread and is reminiscent of a big chateau park.

The region had a monastery beginning in the early 13th century and the city itself was founded c.1340. In 1491 William II of Pernstein purchased Pardubice, and he continued to expand the town, making a significant impact on its prosperity. In 1845, the first train arrived to Pardubice, linking the town to the rest of Europe and allowing new industrial enterprises such as a distillery, a mill machine factory, and Fanta's factory to prosper. Since 1874, the Great Pardubice Steeplechase horse race has taken place every autumn (second Sunday in October).



Until 1918, the town was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Austria side after the 1867 compromise), head of the Pardubitz district, one of the 94 Bezirkshauptmannschaften (political districts) in Bohemia.

Jews were first mentioned in the town in 1492. In 1880, when the synagogue was consecrated, the Jewish population was close to 400. In

1930, there were more than 500 Jews residing there. At war's end, only five Jews returned. One still tends the Jewish cemetery, supported by the Jewish community of Prague.

In October 1942 the Nazis closed the synagogue and by the end of that year all the Jews had

been deported to Theresienstadt. By the end of the war the sole synagogue in Pardubice itself had been razed.

Today the Czech Republic has about 200 Synagogues, only 4 of which are currently used for worship, none in Pardubice.

You can ensure our future today by completing the form on the back.

Our Holocaust Scroll

Ensure our future by remembering the past.

Name		
Mailing Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone	E-mail	

First Sentence of the Torah (\$10,000)

Chapter (\$540)

First Word of the Torah (\$9,000)

Verse (\$180)

Special Sections (\$7,200), select one from below:

Word (\$72)

____ Ten Commandments (Exodus)

____ Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy)

____ Song at the Sea

____ Moses' Song

Letter (\$36)

Book (\$5,400), please specify: _____

Parashah (\$3,600), please specify: _____

1 of the 613 Commandments (\$1,800), please specify: _____

Name from the Torah (\$1,080), please specify: _____

How do you wish to pay?

Check # _____



Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: ____/____/____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

Give this completed form to Victoria in the Congregation Beth Am office, or, if you prefer, mail this form to:

Congregation Beth Am, 2030 West Fletcher Avenue, Tampa, FL 33612.

For more information, contact Victoria at (813) 968-8511, or via e-mail at admin@BethAmTampa.org.