

DHJC and The Czech Memorial Scrolls Holocaust Survivors

The Dix Hills Jewish Center is honored to be the home of three of the 1564 Czech Memorial Trust Torahs. Each Torah has been on loan to us from the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust, with two sacred scrolls becoming part of our precious legacy when Suffolk Jewish Center and Commack Jewish Center merged with DHJC. The 1564 Torah scrolls were rescued from the ravaged Jewish communities of Bohemia, Moravia, & Silesia following the Nazi Occupation of Czechoslovakia 1939-1945

Though the scrolls were saved from the Nazis, they were stored for almost 20 years in a synagogue outside of Prague where they remained (decomposing) until 1963, when the Czech government searched for and found a buyer for them, Ralph Yablon. Yablon, a founding member of the London's Westminster Synagogue purchased the 1564 scrolls and on Feb. 7, 1964 they arrived in London. The scrolls, all 1564 were in need of repair and Rabbi David Brand, a sofer in London, undertook the massive task of restoring them, a task which took nearly 30 years.

Many of the scrolls are presently on loan to synagogues throughout the world. The Sefer Scroll that was brought to Dix Hills Jewish Center by the Memorial Scrolls Trust in December 1980 is scroll number 1114. It was written in 1850 and comes from the village of Chotebor. Scroll number 344 written in 1815 in the village of Prostejov was originally in Suffolk Jewish Center. Scroll number 1416 written in 1780 in the village of Budyne was originally in Commack Jewish Center. We are proud and blessed to be caring and safeguarding these sacred Torahs.

We honor the memory of these Jewish communities, and all Jewish Communities each time we see these majestic scrolls on display and when we use them at sacred moments of remembrance. May the victims of the Shoah never be forgotten and may these Scrolls, along with the others, serve as a symbol of hope for all generations to come.

For more information on the Memorial Scrolls Trust, please go to:

<https://memorialscrollstrust.org/>

Our Holocaust Torah

Original Article by Joel Morris

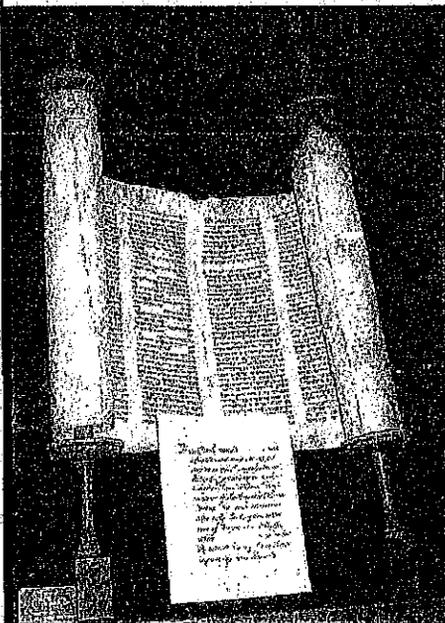
Adapted by Ronald Stelgman and Joseph Marcal

When a person enters our Synagogue, one of the first objects that is seen is our Holocaust Torah. Since a large portion of our members and visitors were not around when the Torah was acquired it is necessary to repeat its history and its history in the Commack Jewish Center.

When the Nazis destroyed Jewish communities they methodically gathered together the Torahs from the Synagogues. They contemplated a permanent exhibition of the works of an exterminated people. We believe that our Holocaust Torah did not fall into Nazi hands and that it was buried to prevent the Germans from capturing it. When the "Thousand Year Reich" came to an end, after a period infinitely less than a thousand years, but a thousand times too long, 1,564 Torahs were found. The existence of this Torah and others like it came to our attention while at a meeting of the National Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, our parent organization. These Torahs had been stored at the Westminster Synagogue in London, England. Through the efforts of many dedicated people, this Holocaust Torah has found a resting place at the Commack Jewish Center.

Ronald Stelgman and Clement Soffer developed the idea of acquiring a Holocaust Torah after hearing Jack Blum of the Regional National Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs speak. Michael Chetkoff on a trip to

England in 1978 obtained the needed information. A committee chaired by Ronald Stelgman and Clement Soffer, consisting of George Koff, Larry Jacobson and Morris Rubinfeld was formed to obtain the Torah and the appropriate showcase. Morris Rubinfeld graciously



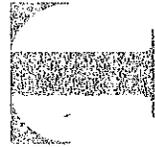
donated an elegant showcase which is located in our lobby to store this Torah. Due to significant damage, the Torah is unusable. The dedicated efforts of Cantor Leon Wolk and Alan Wegman must also be recognized both for their help and advice in obtaining the Torah, but also for the memorable evening when in 1978 the Torah was dedicated on Holocaust Day.

Funds used to obtain this Torah came entirely from the Men's Club Torah Fund. Our Torah is one of the oldest of the 1,564

Torahs that have been found. It belonged to a Synagogue in Budyne, Czechoslovakia. It was dedicated by Emperor Joseph II in 1780 in honor of his mother, Empress Maria Teresia. The Torah was called "Terezin." We don't know whether it was named for Empress Maria Teresia or for the town of "Terezin," which is located 7 miles from Budyne. This town later became a concentration camp, Terezin, where many Jews lost their lives.

Our sacred Scroll had been collected from a desecrated Synagogue in Budyne. Like many others, the Torah is unusable because it is burned in part, torn in some instances and may even have blood from victims who tried to shield the Holy Scrolls from being completely destroyed.

When the Torah arrived at JFK airport the CJC was informed. Ronald Stelgman went to get the Torah. He was asked what the value of the Torah was. His answer was that it was worth a great deal and he put a value on it. Then he was informed that since it was so valuable the import tax was one thousand dollars. Ronald told the customs official that religious articles imported and technically on loan had no tax. After at least an hour the customs official agreed and gave Ronald Stelgman the Torah on his signature. Now it resides in our synagogue and in our collective memory.



The Sefer Torah number 344 which this certificate accompanies is one of the 1564 Czech Memorial

Sifre Torah which formed part of the treasures which were saved by being collected in Prague during the Nazi occupation 1939 - 1945 from the desolated Jewish communities of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and which then came under the control of the Czechoslovak Government for many years. The Scrolls were acquired, with the help of good friends, from Artia (the Czechoslovak State Cultural Agency) for Westminster Synagogue, where they arrived on the 7th February 1964.



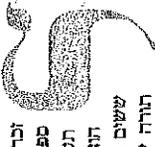
Some of the collection remain at Westminster Synagogue, a permanent memorial to the martyrs from whose synagogues they come; many of them are distributed throughout the world, to be memorials everywhere to the Jewish tragedy, and to spread light as harbingers of future brotherhood on earth; and all of them bear witness to the glory of the holy Name.

This scroll came from Prostějov and was written in 1815

Dix Hills Jewish Center

This Scroll is the property of the Memorial Scrolls Trust, London, England

June 1979



The Sefer Torah number 1114 which this certificate accompanies is one of the 1564 Czech Memorial

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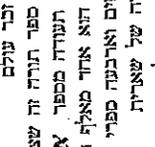
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This scroll came from Chotěboř and was written in 1850

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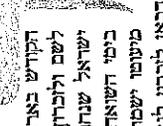
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