Czech Memorial Torah
Scroll No. 1518

Held in joint trust by
The University of Houston
The B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation
—Houston Hillel—

Rescued from the HOLOCAUST
by the Memorial Scrolls Committee, Westminster Synagogue, London

The TORAH, the holiest book in Judaism, comprises the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The torah is not a printed document but a scroll of 80 panels of parchment (sheepskin or cowhide) sewn together with animal sinew. No artificial materials may be used in the creation of a torah. It is fastened to wooden dowels that enable readers to advance the panels. The torah is written in Hebrew letter-by-letter by a scribe (a sofer) in a centuries-old tradition, utilizing a sharpened feather, i.e., a quill pen. The torah is comprised exactly of 340,805 letters with 42 lines per panel. Ink for writing the torah on the parchment must be made of natural materials—a blend of powdered gall nuts, copper sulfate crystals, gum arabic, and water providing for a deep, black color.

The Holocaust torah (No. 1518) is protected in memory of the 600-year-old Jewish community of Prague and the Pinkas Synagogue. The Pinkas Synagogue was founded in 1532 with continuous worship up to 1945 when the Nazis forced the community to cease their worship services and closed synagogues during the devastating occupation of Czechoslovakia.

During World War II, torahs of synagogues no longer in use were entrusted to the Prague Jewish Museum, which stored over forty warehouses, some of them deserted Prague synagogues. Prague Jews assigned to the task of copying and documenting Czech torahs were deported and transported to their death in the Terezín concentration camp.

Torah 1518 is said to be from the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague and is on permanent loan to the University of Houston and Houston Hillel, obtained by the faculty of the University in 1976 on behalf of the student body, with the generous support of patrons of the greater Houston Jewish community.

Torahs gathered under German occupation suffered rips and mutilation. The Prague Holocaust torah reveals multiple leaves with small and large patches, as well as new lettering inserted, according to tradition by a scribe (sofer), enabling its use in religious services on campus. The torah was repaired at the Westminster Synagogue in London.

The torah is kept secure in the Special Collections Reading Room of the M. D. Anderson Library on the University of Houston campus, both in a specially designed cabinet, and for limited exhibit. An exhibit of the torah is scheduled for the Jewish Humanities Conference to be held on campus in February 1988.

Donors for the Prague Holocaust Torah

Chabubmech Lebihor of Texas
Congregation Beth Am
Congregation Beth Israel
Congregation Beth Shalom
Congregation Emanuel
Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism
United Orthodox Synagogues

Houston Area, B’nai B’rith Council Community Lodge, B’nai B’rith
Downtown Lodge, B’nai B’rith
Houston Memorial Lodge, B’nai B’rith

The Jewish Herald Voice—Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity—United Alumni

Mr. and Mrs. Nathan F. Berenstein
Dr. and Mrs. Dylan Braden
Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Dunster
Mr. and Mrs. J. Bob Davis
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Doleff
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ehrnbrook
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Fales
Mr. and Mrs. Aaron J. Farb
Mrs. and Mr. Joe Frank
Mr. and Mrs. David Gundersen
Dr. and Mrs. Eugene Goldschmidt
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hecht
Mr. and Mrs. Saul Horowitz
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Kaplan
Mr. and Mrs. Irving "Ike" Klein
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Lapin
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Lehman
Mr. and Mrs. Sol Luftman
Dr. and Mrs. David Litovsky
Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mandel
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Margolin
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Peters
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Rich
Mr. and Mrs. Earle Rosenbaum
Dr. and Mrs. Irving N. Rothaus
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rudell
Mrs. and Mr. Robert Schindel
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Zimol
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Zubikos

Monthly University of Judaism Faculty Lectures and Music Concerts in Support of the Torah Acquisition 1975-1976

Mr. Sidney Berger, Theatre, performance, Director: The Man of La Mancha
Dr. Earl Naugler, English: "Shylock and Portnoy—Images in Fiction"
Dr. Richard Wexler, Psychology: "Psychology and Contemporary Jewish Community"
Dr. David Gantelt, Dr. Samuel Schuman, and Dr. Sheila Shingel, Social Sciences: "Modern Jewish Community: A Study"
Professor Jeffrey Lerner (clarinet and saxophone), Albert Hirsh (piano), and Warren Leggett (violin): Music Evening Concert
Mr. Dan Luss and Dr. Alfre Ojert, Chemical Engineering: "Research at the Technion"
Mr. Alfred Nourmous, Dean, Liberal Arts: "German: The Jewish Heritage in Twentieth-Century Austria 1880-1936"
Dr. Joseph Nogee, Political Science: "Dissent in Israel: American-Soviet Policy"
Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Foundations of Education: "The Teaching of Mathematics: Akko in Houston"

Torah Acquisition Committee 1975-1976
Dr. Irvin N. Rothaus, Co-Chairman and Faculty Chairman: Mr. Saul Horowitz, Co-Chairman; Mr. Marc A. Mandell, Student Chairman; Dr. Hilda Jaffe, Piqque Calligraphy; Mrs. Barbara Pauli and Mr. and Mrs. Alan F. Levin; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Rotenberg, Admission: Rabbi Morton Cahana, Director, the B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation

Czech Holocaust Torah Display Case—Dedicated 2012

Donors
Dr. Lynn Bliss
Ms. Max Eretz, Art-Printing 1956
Dr. Sandy Freidin, German 1980
Ms. Celina Fett, Holocaust Survivor, Class 1950
Mr. Robert Ginzburg, Holocaust survivor
Dr. Natasha Houston
Mr. Yusuf Klein, AIT Fraternity
Prof. Stuart Ostrow
Dr. Irvin N. and Hava Rae Rothaus
Dr. Arthur B. Wengrow
Dr. Thelma Zehrbach, Ed.D. 1983

With appreciation
Special Collections: Ms. Pat Boreman, Department Head; Ms. Julie Grob, Librarian; and Ms. Chihua Duan, Staff; Ms. Carol Borr, English Department; Jordan Argungou; Rabbi Kenneth Weiss, Director; Houston Hillel
Design and Construction: Quang, Ryan Hoang

Special Collections, Room 260 / M. D. Anderson Library