

Looking Back & Facing Forward



The Rededication of Our Rescued Holocaust Torah Scroll



February 25, 2023
Shabbat Terumah, 5783
Chevrei Tzedek Congregation
Baltimore, Maryland
Rabbi Rory Katz

**Welcome to Chevrei Tzedek,
an informal, participatory, egalitarian,
and welcoming community.**

Our Mission

At Chevrei Tzedek, we show up for each other, caring for our communities and our world. We work together to pray, learn, and teach, deepening our commitment to Jewish tradition.

Our Vision

Chevrei Tzedek is a thriving, inclusive Jewish faith community, guided by Torah and the principles of the Conservative Movement. All members are creatively and actively engaged in congregational life, including ritual observance, education, governance, social justice and community building.

Looking Back & Facing Forward

Our Torah scroll has traveled from a Czech synagogue to a cemetery chapel to multiple warehouses under Nazi and later Communist rule. It traveled from London to Baltimore and back before finally returning to Chevrei Tzedek, newly restored to kosher status.

As we celebrate our scroll's survival, we also remember those from its original community who did not survive. Today, this scroll will be read for the first time in over 80 years. May we chant from it again on joyous occasions for many years to come.

**We thank the generous donors
who made today's rededication possible.**

Charley and Sheila Jay
Zara and Charles Brenner
*in memory of Charley and Zara's parents
Amelia and Aubrey Jay*

Elissa Hozore and Charles Locke
*in memory of Elissa's parents
Judith and Seymour Hozore*

Memorial Scrolls Trust

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We also thank our additional kiddush sponsors

Elise and David Saltzberg

Cheryl Kaplowitz and Irwin Weiss

and all donors to our Torah and Sacred Books Fund

What is a Holocaust Memorial Scroll?

By March 1939, Nazi Germany occupied all of Czechoslovakia. Over the next few years, the Nazis ordered Czech synagogues to close. A delegation of Prague Jews persuaded the Nazis to allow them to collect the artifacts from the abandoned synagogues.

Over 200,000 artifacts from around the country were brought to Prague, including 1,800 Torah scrolls. Each scroll was labeled with an index card describing the scroll and the community from where it came. All of the Jewish curators who participated in this project would later be deported, many to Terezin and from there to death camps. Only two would survive.

Soon after the war, Czechoslovakia came under Communist control. The Communist government, like the Nazi government before it, did not permit Jewish religious life. The Torah scrolls were transferred to a damp warehouse in a former synagogue outside of Prague. Here they remained for almost two decades.

In 1964, a small group of British Jews – an art dealer and a philanthropist, in consultation with a rabbi and a scholar – arranged the purchase of 1,564 scrolls from the Communist government and transported them to London. The Memorial Scrolls Trust was created to care for these scrolls and distribute them on loan to worthy congregations around the world.

Thanks to the generous efforts of our late members Amelia and Aubrey Jay, Chevrei Tzedek is the proud custodian of one of the Torah scrolls rescued by the Jewish community of Prague during World War II.

The Story of Our Scroll

Our late members Aubrey and Amelia Jay dreamed of procuring a Memorial Scroll for our congregation. Through their magnanimity, in 1993, we received Memorial Scroll No. 345 on permanent loan from the Memorial Scrolls Trust.

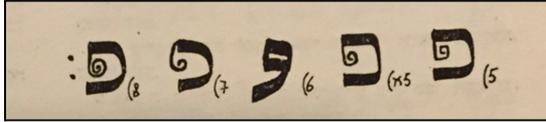
Scroll No. 345 was cataloged under the name “Praha-Malvazinka,” because at one point it was stored in the Jewish chapel at Malvazinka Cemetery in Prague. However, Memorial Scrolls Trust cannot identify the specific community or synagogue from which our scroll originally came. We believe the scroll dates to the 1860s.

Between 1948 and 1964, our scroll suffered extensive water damage. To the Jays’ – and our congregation’s – disappointment, the first *sofer* (scribe) who examined our scroll in 1993 said that it was too badly damaged to be repaired. It was not until 2016 that another *sofer* suggested it might be possible to repair the scroll after all. Our congregation began to discuss whether we could raise the funds for this repair. By 2022, though, as the scroll continued to deteriorate, we were once again told that it was irreparable.

The Memorial Scrolls Trust asked us to send the scroll back to London for examination by their own *sofer*, Bernard Benarroch. We were enormously excited that he was able to make the needed repairs and restore our scroll to kosher status. The funds for this project were provided by Charley & Sheila Jay and Zara & Charles Brenner, in memory of their parents Amelia and Aubrey Jay; by Elissa Hozore and Charles Locke, in memory of Elissa’s parents Judith and Seymour Hozore, on the occasion of Judith’s first *yahrzeit*; and by the Memorial Scrolls Trust.

Special Lettering

Throughout the Jewish world, Torah scribes have varied traditions for writing certain letters in special ways. One example is the “peh l’fufah,” a style of writing the letter פ (peh) with a small פ inserted into the large פ.



Several versions of the special פ

Our scroll is unusual because it is written by a sofer from the Prague School of Kabbalists, who used a version of this special פ in certain words.

Since World War II, no sofer has written a Torah scroll this way. To our knowledge, no sofer from this school of scribes survived the Holocaust, and the tradition was lost. Because contemporary scribes do not know why older scribes employed the special פ, they do not feel qualified to duplicate this style of writing.



Our Memorial Scroll, with the yad pointing to the special פ

Why Hold Our Rededication Today?

The recently repaired water damage to our scroll occurred in the portion of Shemot (Exodus) that we will chant today, Parshat Terumah. We surmise that the scroll was rolled to this section during the 16 years (1948-1964) when it lay in a damp warehouse in Communist Czechoslovakia.

Why was the scroll rolled to this section? Might Parshat Terumah have been the last part of this Torah chanted before it was confiscated by the Nazis? Or might the Torah have been rolled ahead to Parshat Terumah just after its last use, in anticipation of a service that was never held?

The tantalizing possibility that we are picking up where the scroll's previous owners left off is just speculation. It's possible that the Torah was unrolled and re-rolled sometime between its confiscation in the early 1940s and the time that the water damage occurred. We will never know.

In any case, it feels appropriate to resume using this scroll at the section that was so carefully restored. Additionally, the words of this text are fitting. Parshat Terumah teaches about the sanctity of ritual objects and the importance of donating generously to create and sustain our places of worship. What a beautiful message for this day on which, thanks to the love and generosity of Jews in three countries over eight decades, our rescued Torah scroll can once again be opened up and chanted.

Order of the Service

Shacharit Amit Golding, Chair of Chevrei
Tzedek

Morning service

Torah Introduction Rabbi Rory Katz

Rededicating the Torah Charley Jay and Zara Brenner

Torah Service Natan Golding

Opening the Ark Micah Higgs

Carrying the Torah Pam Mandell

Shehechyanu Sarah Glazer, Jeanne Glazer,
Alexander Glazer, Natan Golding, and Lev Eisner

Torah Reading See adjacent page

Lifting the Torah Refael Miles

Dressing the Torah Peter Merles

Haftarah Jeff Amdur

I Kings 5:26 - 6:13

p. 499 - 502 in the Eitz Chaim (large red book)

Parshat Terumah Shemot (Exodus)

p. 485-491 in the Eitz Chaim (large red book)

	Text	Reciting the Blessings	Chanting from the Torah
1	25:1 – 5	Alan Cohen	Elissa Hozore
2	25:6 – 9	Charley and Sheila Jay	Nechama Bernhardt
3	25:10 –16	Zara and Charles Brenner	Hannah Heller
4	25:17 – 22	Melissa Sloane Brenner and Nina Herchel Jay	Lev Eisner
5	25:23 – 30	Elaine Katz	Irwin Weiss
6	25:31 – 33	Congregant	Sam Barsky
7	25:34 – 40	Whole Community	Debbie Steinig
	Maftir 25:37 – 40	Jeff Amdur	Debbie Steinig

Order of the Service (Continued)

D'var Torah ~ Words of Torah...Storyteller Jennifer Zunikoff,
introduced by Debbie Steinig

Prayer for Our Torah Scroll Rabbi Gila Ruskin
Chevrei Tzedek's Rabbi, 1988 - 2004

Prayer for Survivors Rabbi Rory Katz

Prayer for Our Country State Delegate Dalya Attar

Prayer for the State of Israel. . . Sarah Glazer, Jeanne Glazer,
Alexander Glazer, Natan Golding, and Lev Eisner

Prayer for Peace Barbara Baum

Returning the Torah. David Saltzberg

Closing the Ark Ella Sitrin

Musaf Jeanne Glazer
Additional prayers

Kiddush Becky Pearlman
Blessing over grape juice

To Learn More

To learn more about our special scroll, please:

- Visit our "museum" over kiddush lunch, curated by Naomi Hafter and Ginny Salzberg.
- Visit our website, ChevreiTzedek.org, for a wealth of information, including Alan Cohen's detailed history of the rescued Czech scrolls.

- Visit MemorialScrollsTrust.org to see where other memorial scrolls are in use around the world.
- Attend tomorrow morning's virtual learning session at 10 a.m. with Sofer Bernard Benarroch, the scribe who repaired our scroll, and scholar Deborah Thompson, an expert on the special lettering in our scroll. Register and get the link at ChevreiTzedek.org.

Thank You

We extend enormous appreciation to **Amelia and Aubrey Jay**, who had the original vision of bringing a Memorial Scroll to Chevrei Tzedek, and to **Alan Cohen**, who kept alive the Jays' dream of repairing the scroll. We're grateful to the Jays' children, **Charley & Sheila Jay and Zara & Charles Brenner**, for enthusiastically participating in today's rededication and joining **Elissa Hozore & Charles Locke** in providing funds for the repair.

We thank **Elissa Hozore** for organizing the logistics of today's event, **Rabbi Katz** for framing its spiritual significance, and **the officers and the Coordinating Committee** for your support. Thanks, too, to the members of the Rededication Committee: **Jennifer Zunikoff**, storyteller extraordinaire; **Naomi Hafter and Ginny Salzberg**, museum curators; **Elaine Katz and Angela Haynes**, publicity; **Elise & David Saltzberg and Cheryl Kaplowitz & Irwin Weiss**, additional kiddush sponsors; **Debbie Steinig**, program editor; and once more **Alan Cohen**, our resident historian and maintainer of our ritual objects, without whose profound knowledge and unstinting elbow grease none of this would have come to be.



Front & Back Cover Photos
of Holocaust Memorial Scroll No. 345
Courtesy of Rachel Krug & Naomi Hafter