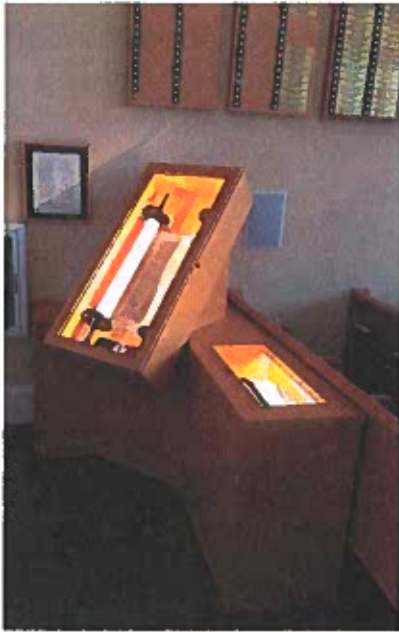


# OUR CZECH HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL TORAH #431



The congregation of Temple Beth Rishon is honored to have been chosen to receive one of the 1564 Czech Torah Scrolls rescued from a mass of deteriorating scrolls found in a storage area of the Michle Synagogue in Prague.

Our Memorial Scroll #431 is on permanent loan from the Memorial Scrolls Trust in London—  
[www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org).

Torah #431 was scribed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and originated in Ivancice, a town in South Moravia, Czechoslovakia from a synagogue thought to have been built as early as 956. Through the years, the Jewish community of Ivancice flourished and even supported a Yeshiva from which many noted scholars evolved.

Temple Beth Rishon was given this sacred Holocaust Scroll in 1984 and dedicated it on May 4<sup>th</sup> of that year during a Shabbat Service. Since then our congregation has cherished this historic Scroll. The Torah has been an integral part of our synagogue's spiritual life, especially during B'nei Mitzvahs of grandchildren of Holocaust survivors while inspiring us to never forget its past history.

In August, 2016, Temple Beth Rishon had a custom built cabinet installed to protect and preserve our Torah #431 from the inevitable aging of its wood and parchment. In this cabinet at the entrance to our Sanctuary, our Memorial Torah #431 will be proudly displayed. Its visibility will continue to motivate and educate future generations of TBR membership as well as guests, visiting scholars and students

Through this Torah, our community will be forever connected to the Jews of Ivancice, Czechoslovakia who perished during the Holocaust. May we always remember the Shabbat Services, High Holidays, Simchas and Blessings that this Torah shared with that Jewish community.

## A Brief History of the Origins of Torah #431

Jews lived in Bohemia and Moravia for more than a thousand years, and over that time a rich Jewish culture developed. It was centered in Prague and spread across a large number of communities in towns throughout the country. Following the Nazi invasion in 1939, historical congregations were closed down and their synagogues destroyed or deserted.



During World War II, a large refugee camp was constructed in Ivancice and by 1942 the entire Jewish population had been deported to death camps. In 1942, members of Prague's Jewish community devised a way to bring the religious treasures from the deserted communities and destroyed synagogues to the

comparative safety of Prague. The Nazis were somehow persuaded to accept the plan and more than 100,000 artifacts were brought to the Museum. Among them were about 1,800 Torah scrolls. Each was meticulously recorded, labelled and entered on a card index by the Museum's staff with a description of the Scroll and the place it had come from. Temple Beth Rishon's Holocaust Torah is inscribed with number 431.

After the war, this massive collection of Jewish scrolls, torah covers and artifacts were transferred to the ruined synagogue at Michle outside Prague.

In 1963, on a visit to Prague, an American art dealer living in London was asked by a state official if he would like to buy some Torah Scrolls. Visiting 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. Two trucks crammed with 1,564 Torah Scrolls arrived at the Westminster Synagogue in February and March of 1964, and the Memorial Scrolls Trust was established to oversee their care, restoration and allocation to synagogues around the world.



## Learn More About the Memorial Scrolls Trust

The story of the acquisition of 1,564 sacred Scrolls of the Law from Czechoslovakia which arrived at Kent House, the home of Westminster Synagogue in February 1964, has passed into history as a small but remarkable episode in the tragedy of European Jewry.

To those who were entrusted with the Scrolls, they were a symbol of hope after a time of sorrow, and an intimate link with those synagogues and their congregations destroyed by the Nazis. Over the decades since the Scrolls arrived, the shelves on which they were so gently laid have grown emptier, as one after another they have been sent out to be restored to their proper place in Jewish life.

After fifty years, when most of the Scrolls have found new homes, the Trust is charged with the next phase of its work. It must ensure that those synagogues who have received scrolls are aware of what they have, that they investigate the scrolls' original homes or what is left of them, and hand on to the next generation the precious legacy they have acquired.

For the long journey of the Scrolls is not finished. They have a role to play in enabling those who care for them today to remember their past and to look ahead to their future, to play a part in ensuring that the terrible events which brought them to London and then onward to new homes, can never be repeated.

Please visit the Memorial Scrolls Trust website at [www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org) to view their photos and to learn more about this amazing organization.