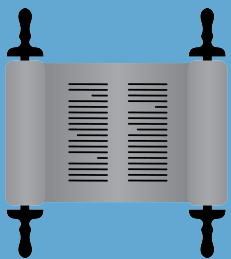


# MESSAGE FROM THE SCROLLS — UNLOCKING THE SILENCE

BAR / BAT MITZVAH MODULE



# MESSAGE FROM THE SCROLLS UNLOCKING THE SILENCE

## BAR / BAT MITZVAH MODULE

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# NOTES FOR TEACHERS

## RATIONALE

An exploration of the Memorial Scrolls Trust's Czech scrolls offers an effective and powerful way to engage young people in their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, giving it additional meaning and increasing understanding of their Jewish heritage. This is particularly true as this rite of passage traditionally culminates in the young person being 'brought to the Torah' as a fully mature independent Jewish man or woman. To have the opportunity to read one's parasha directly from one of these cherished scrolls would undoubtedly be a profound and moving way of marking the moment. To do so would provide a unique link to hundreds of years of Jewish heritage and the lost generation of Jewish youth who perished during the Holocaust.

In so doing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah performs a most spiritual undertaking; that of breathing new life into the scroll, commemorating its story, and creating a meaningful memorial of the Czech Jewish community that was destroyed in most cases in Terezin and Auschwitz.

This module is designed with Bar/Bat Mitzvah students in mind (aged 12/13). Primarily it is to be used in synagogue classes and Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes. It is especially suitable for young people in the 1000 communities which hold Czech scrolls.

It is easily adaptable for use with older Jewish children and children in Jewish schools. It may also be used as the basis for lesson planning for Jewish and non-Jewish children in other contexts.

The contents of this pack aims to provide the framework and contextualisation of the story surrounding the scrolls, to stimulate enquiry and enrich students' growing strength of Jewish identity. It aims to draw out a deep feeling of connectedness between the students and the Czech Jews who faced the desperate situation that unfolded and to recognise the extraordinary actions of those who sought to rescue their communities' precious scrolls. Ultimately; the tasks and activities will help students contemplate what the scrolls mean for them as they approach religious maturity. In order for *B'nei Mitzvah* to recognise the significance of the Czech scrolls it is important to learn about the history before, during and after the war and try to decipher what message they carry for Jewish people today. Far from dwelling on the tragedy of the Czech community, a study of the scrolls will inspire, edify and empower. For they enshrine a positive and enduring message – that of triumph in the face of adversity, and of courage when hope is lost. They speak of Jewish rescue, resilience, dignity and persistence of faith.

Whilst under Nazi oppression and acutely aware that hope for survival was fading, the Jewish workers of the Jewish Museum in Prague undertook a remarkable final act. Realising they could do nothing to save their fellow Jews nor themselves, they sought to rescue what they could of their community's artefacts, a last brave move to subvert Nazi domination, uphold dignity and preserve for perpetuity their sacred heritage.

In that terrifying year of 1942 these individuals were in effect building their own memorial - a collection of the cherished and sacred scrolls (as well as all the ritual objects of any still-extant synagogues) meticulously recorded, catalogued and indexed, and tenderly handled. What agony that must have caused and what courage it must have taken! Nazi ideology, not satisfied with the annihilation of every Jewish person, also set out to eradicate Jewish culture, tradition, and memory. The rescuing of these scrolls is therefore a remarkably bold act of resistance against Nazi tyranny.

Each one of these scrolls not only carries the ancient text of the Jewish people but also enshrines the spirit of survival, revival, courage and hope – qualities that have become the abiding strength of the Jewish people.

## **PEDAGOGIC APPROACH**

The approach is one which encourages both cognitive and affective discovery and tries to enhance capacity for enquiry through arousing student questioning. One of the reasons why the scrolls remain so fascinating is the mystery that surrounds them and the questions that remain unanswered. Who actually initiated the collection of Torah scrolls and synagogue objects? In what way might this act be understood as resistance? Why did the Nazis ‘allow’ this to take place? Why might they have wanted to hold such material? Why would they collate the artefacts and yet extinguish the people? Is there any merit in the idea they wanted to create a museum of an extinct people? Is that simply a myth? How were the scrolls sent to Prague?

Where possible, students are encouraged to contemplate some of these questions. The approach also seeks to inculcate self-reflection - to consider the significance the scroll has for the student at this important stage in his or her life. The approach encourages young people to attribute their own meanings to some of these difficult questions. It is for this reason that the module is entitled ‘Message from the Scrolls - Unlocking the Silence’.

The Memorial Scrolls Trust takes a clear position on this, based on research findings by experts such as Magda Veselská of the Prague Jewish Museum. She argues that the Jews themselves rather than the Nazis were the driving force behind initiating, facilitating and curating this collection in order to protect the property of the Czech Jewish communities for the future. The questions put to young people in this pack are deliberately open ended so as to encourage critical thinking and enquiry.

Prior student knowledge: prior knowledge of the Holocaust is expected as the module cannot adequately cover all that is necessary in just five sessions. It is important that some knowledge of the Holocaust is therefore in place before starting out. This should (if possible) include the vibrancy and diversity of Jewish life in Europe before the war, the Nuremberg Laws, Ghettoisation, the Wannsee Conference, the death camps, liberation. Students are likely to come to class with some understanding (or possibly misunderstanding) of these areas so it may simply need a recapping of what is understood to be ‘The Holocaust’. For points during the units where teacher explanation is required, a script/note is offered here. This is intended only as a guide and is not intended to be prescriptive.

Where possible, the module draws upon authentic materials, recorded testimony and case studies rather than dramatisation or fiction. Students will encounter real people in the material presented. This is to ensure that students connect with the story of the scrolls on a human and personal level.

# AIMS

*The module aims to:*

1. Strengthen Jewish identity
2. Stir curiosity about the history, significance and meaning of the scrolls
3. Develop respect for the scrolls as bearing the words of the Judaic law and the enduring covenant between God and the Jewish people
4. Enable students to participate in the re-emergence, reinvigoration and revival of Jewish continuity and hope
5. Give students enough knowledge and understanding confidently to discuss the history and meaning of the scrolls

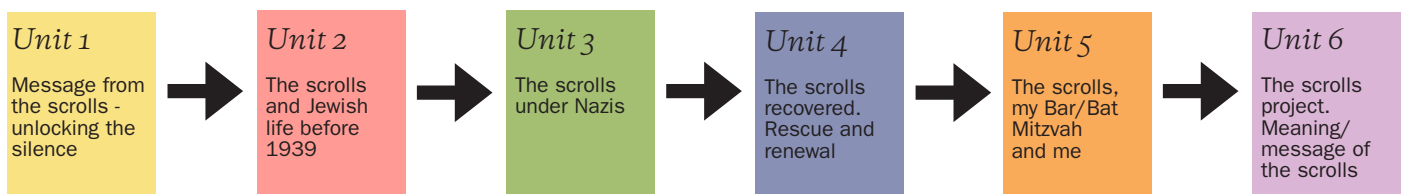
*The learning intentions are:*

- To grasp an awareness of the historical value of the Czech scrolls collection
- To reach for a sense of a spiritual profundity in its use within their own community today
- To begin to develop a personal connection with the Czech community who would have cherished the scroll before the German occupation
- To be aware of names of individual young people of similar ages who perished during the Holocaust
- To contemplate the fear, uncertainty and hope of the Jewish communities
- To know what measures were taken to persecute Jews
- To know where the deported Czech Jews went
- To understand that Jews were murdered in Terezin, Auschwitz and other camps
- To find a spiritual meaning in engaging directly with the Czech scroll housed in their own community in the preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- To learn about pre-war life of the Czech Jews and their fate during the Holocaust
- To draw a sense of communal cohesion
- To grapple with critical questions such as what was the Nazis' intention in allowing the scrolls to be rescued

- To know basic topology of Czechoslovakia and an awareness of its composite regions
- To know how this became the Protectorate after the German invasion and to consider the irony of the term
- To have a sense of the time-frame of events and what little opportunity was given for Jews to get out of Czechoslovakia
- To develop a sophisticated understanding that resistance – beyond that of physical fighting/uprising - can take complex and varied forms and to consider whether the actions of the Jews who collated the scrolls can be considered as resistance

## MODULE STRUCTURE

Units One to Five are ‘teacher led’. Each unit is designed to be 90 minutes long. Each unit comes to a natural break after 60 minutes allowing students to recess and return to the Unit for a final 30-minute concluding activity. The module is quite ambitious in what it is trying to achieve in each unit. Teachers may therefore wish to adapt the module to some degree to suit their timetable and the needs of particular students. Unit six is ‘student led’. It serves to showcase (to your community and/or parents or to younger synagogue classes) the projects students have been preparing. Students will need a gap of time to complete their individual projects and have adequate rehearsal time for presentations.

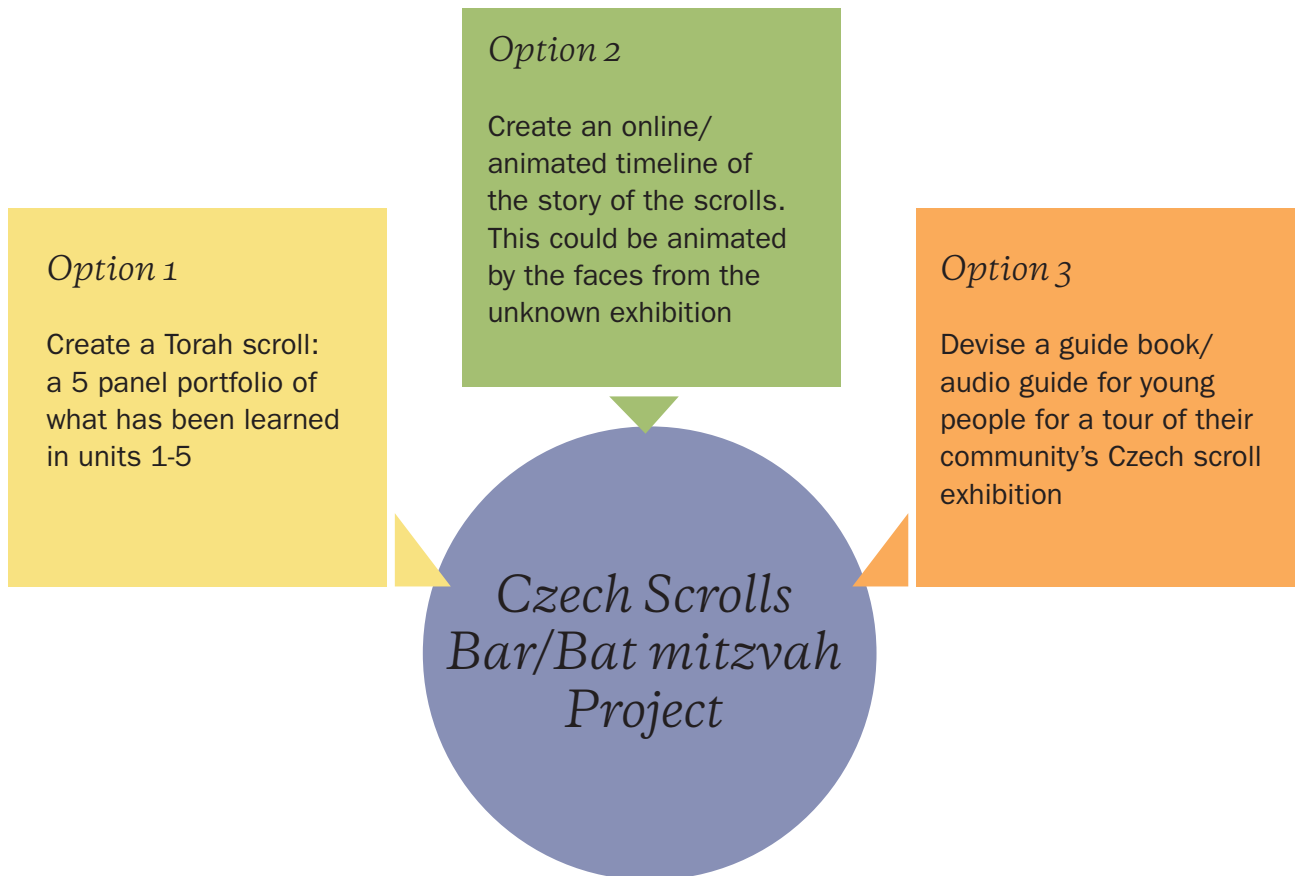


Unit Five will require the teacher to make available to students their community's Czech scroll. It is intended that this encounter will have a significant impact on the students so great care will be needed to introduce the scroll to them in such a way where the intensity of the moment is palpable. Where practical, the teacher should access the details of the scroll which were sent by the Memorial Scrolls Trust to your synagogue. If for some reason this information is not easily available or if very few details exist you can email the Memorial Scrolls Trust Administrator who may be able to help you: [info@memorialscrollstrust.org](mailto:info@memorialscrollstrust.org).

The tasks in the pack can still be completed if the origin of your community's scroll has not been established. If your synagogue does not hold one of the Czech scrolls then you may partner with another synagogue in your locality that does possess a scroll. The Trust will be very happy to advise you and help you make the connections. Alternatively, the Memorial Scrolls Trust Administrator will be able to provide a profile for a scroll which your students can use as the basis for this project.

Details of the name of the synagogue and the town from which the Torah scroll originated will give your students a great start to continue their research. Equipped with this information students can discover more through online libraries/galleries/data banks (listed in resources section) and can source images, photographs, documents and oral testimonies – all useful for the project.

Unit Six will outline the final student led project and will prepare students for this activity. The project focuses on the particular scroll that is on loan to your community or one that can be ‘adopted’ as your community’s scroll for the purpose. The module allows flexibility in enabling you to direct the organisation of this project to accommodate needs. A class of approximately 12 students could work in pairs if that would be better. Three suggestions are offered for the module’s final project.



### **OPTION 1:**

Create a structure similar to a Torah scroll in shape and use it as a blank canvas to mount a mini portfolio of 5 panels recording what the student has learned following the 5 unit sessions. The binder should be made from cloth upon which a dedication is to be inscribed in the style of the binders housed in the Memorial Scrolls Trust Museum (which can be viewed on the website). The dedication can be made in the memory of a young Czech person from the town from which your scroll originated. Names can be found via The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Yad Vashem <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en> or a name can be drawn from an individual studied during the module. Alternatively, the binder could record a verse from their Bar/Bat Mitzvah portion (in Hebrew or English) or a statement of the student's own thinking in relation to the story of the scrolls.

### **OPTION 2:**

Construct an exhibition – which could be ‘on line’ in the form of a powerpoint presentation. Students can draw upon the photo archive included in ‘The UnKnown’ exhibition compiled by the Jewish Museum Prague. ([http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/simpleGallery/Show/displaySet/set\\_id/37](http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/simpleGallery/Show/displaySet/set_id/37))

### **OPTION 3:**

Students can devise an audio guide or film on the story of the synagogue's own Czech scroll. For this students may wish to access the tools available through the USC Shoah Foundation i-witness:  
<http://iWitness.usc.edu/SFI/>

Unit Six will be an opportunity for your students to make a creative personal response to what they have learned. It is hoped that students will be given the opportunity to showcase their work to the community. Ideally, this is an event that is scheduled into the community diary.

On completion of the module each Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be awarded a certificate which can be downloaded from [www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org). The teacher will need to add the name of each recipient. It is the intention that certificates are to be presented to a student either at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony or at the community event.

## **THE MODULE AND ICT – WHAT FACILITIES WILL BE NEEDED**

Throughout the 'teacher led' units you will need to have classroom access to a computer and screen or you could ask your students to bring into class their own devices for accessing the Internet. Unit Two for example invites students to look up towns on maps that are located on the USHMM website. You will also need to register (it is free of charge) for log-in details with the i-witness program of the USC Shoah Foundation. Even better, would be if all your students log on with their own account, as they can then return to the testimonies after class, should they wish to do so. There is an outstandingly good help desk offered by i-witness and they will help you get started. Any budding film makers in your group will love the tools available to build an audiovisual film as their Unit Six project.

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

<i>Torah:</i>	The sacred text of Jewish people containing the five Books of Moses.
<i>Torah scroll staves:</i>	A stave is also called a roller or etz chaim, from the Hebrew for “tree of life.” They are wooden rods upon which the Torah parchment is rolled/attached.
<i>Torah scroll binders:</i>	Material used to hold together the two staves of the Torah scroll once it is rolled up.
<i>Artefact:</i>	Object often of rare importance or beauty.
<i>Czechoslovakia:</i>	This was the name of the country which, in 1993, peacefully dissolved into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Prior to the Second World War it occupied the area in Central Europe surrounded by Germany to the northwest, Poland to the northeast and Austria to the south. It comprised three major areas: Bohemia to the west and Moravia and Slovakia to the southeast. The capital of Czechoslovakia (today the capital of the Czech Republic) was Prague, located in the country’s northwest. From 1918–1938 it was a democratic republic. In 1938 Germany annexed the Sudetenland and in 1939 with the German invasion the area split into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak Republic.
<i>Holocaust:</i>	The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. The Shoah is the Hebrew word.
<i>Deportation:</i>	Deportation is the expulsion of a person or group of people from a place or country.
<i>Terezin:</i>	(German name Theresienstadt) was a concentration camp, also referred to as the Theresienstadt Ghetto. It was established by the SS during World War 2 in the fortress and garrison town of Terezin. It is located in what is now the Czech Republic. Tens of thousands of Jewish people died there during the Holocaust, some killed outright and others from malnutrition and disease. More than 150,000 other persons (including tens of thousands of children) were held there for months or years, before being sent by rail transports to their deaths at Treblinka, Auschwitz and other camps.
<i>Auschwitz Birkenau:</i>	This concentration camp in Poland became an extermination camp in 1942. Because Birkenau was also a labour camp larger numbers of Jews were selected to work giving a slightly higher chance of survival. Nonetheless starvation, disease and brutality presented a daily threat to life.

<i>Ghetto:</i>	Section of a town or city where Jews were forced to live. Ghettos were characterised by overcrowding, hunger, exploitation for slave labour and disease. All ghettos were eventually liquidated with Jews deported to extermination camps or shot.
<i>Nuremberg Laws:</i>	Anti-Jewish laws enacted in September 1935 during the Nazi Party conference in Nuremberg, which provided the basis for removing Jews from all spheres of German life. They deprived Jews of their citizenship and associated rights. They also outlawed marriage and intimate relations between Jews and non Jews. Supplementary laws defined the Nazi vision of who was a Jew, with a range of categories for Germans of mixed ancestry.
<i>Wannsee Conference:</i>	Meeting which took place on 20 January 1942 at a villa outside Berlin of senior Nazi and government officials to discuss the implementation of the Final Solution – the attempt to murder every Jew in German-occupied territories and to make the SS overseers of the process. It was chaired by Reinhard Heydrich, Head of the Gestapo and criminal police.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Email address/Website</i>
The Wiener Library (London UK)	An online photo archive and with documents available. Outstanding collection.	info@wienerlibrary.co.uk
University of Southern California. The Shoah Foundation (i-witness testimony) (LA, California USA)	Hear oral testimony of Jewish people living in Czechoslovakia before and after the German invasion of 1939.  The i-witness program enables you to build your own exhibition with extracts of testimony of your choice. Easy to use and really creative.	<a href="http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/">http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/</a>
Yad Vashem (Jerusalem, Israel)	Here you can find names of Jewish people who perished during the Holocaust. See Hall of Names. Outstanding website.	<a href="http://www.yadvashem.org/">http://www.yadvashem.org/</a>
The Prague Jewish Museum (Prague)	Find out about the history of Jews in Prague from their online exhibitions and photo archives and documents. Highly recommended resource.	holocaust@jewishmuseum.cz
The Memorial Scrolls Trust (London)	Email the museum with any enquiry about your community's Czech scroll. Request the travelling exhibition. The website is an excellent resource and gives profiles of the individuals who rescued the scrolls and images of synagogues and communities in pre-war Czechoslovakia.	<a href="http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org/">www.memorialscrollstrust.org/</a>  info@memorialscrollstrust.org
United States Holocaust Museum and Memorialisation (USHMM, Washington DC)	Maps, documents and summaries of the experience of Czech Jews from this excellent online resource and learning centre. Highly informative website.	<a href="http://www.ushmm.org/">www.ushmm.org/</a>

## UNIT ONE

# MESSAGE FROM THE SCROLLS: UNLOCKING THE SILENCE

### *Aims*

Unit One introduces your students to the module and will stimulate interest and enquiry about the Czech scrolls. Students will begin their study with an examination of what makes a Torah scroll sacred and consider in what ways a Torah scroll can develop significance with time and context.

### *Introduction (15 mins)*

Teacher introduces the module. Explains that this module is central to students' preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Inform students that the module incorporates tasks and activities that they complete in class and will conclude with a project of their own. They will showcase their work at a communal event or display it in a suitable spot in the synagogue communal space. Alternatively, they can record their work on camera and upload it to a YouTube account. Successful completion of all elements of the module will result in a presentation of a certificate on the occasion of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony or equivalent event.

### *Teacher introduction*

Teacher introduces the subject of the module. Explains that the module centres on a precious object that their community has in its care<sup>1</sup> – an old and fragile Torah scroll. On becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah each of the students will in turn become guardians of the scroll and its story as fully fledged members of the community. It will not be forgotten. With this in mind the module will help students to understand why it is so cherished. When all is revealed this seemingly fragile length of parchment will surprise them and they will be inspired and strengthened by the story. Explains that they will work together to discover the significance of the scroll and what it means to them as they reach religious maturity.

Explains that the scroll is on loan from the Memorial Scrolls Trust in London. They have 1,564 scrolls in their collection and have cared for them since 1964. The scrolls did not originate in London but came from many towns and villages in what is now the Czech Republic but was then was part of Czechoslovakia.



Here is a picture of some of some of the scrolls<sup>2</sup>. They arrived in London without beautiful covers (although they each would probably have had one once), with no adornment of any sort. Some had beautiful binders that held each scroll together, others were wrapped as if in haste with a tallit, a belt or an odd material. Many of the scrolls that arrived were damaged. The ink was crumbling in many cases and they were particularly fragile to handle. A special scribe was called upon to restore them – this is painstakingly intricate work.

<sup>1</sup> While this module is primarily intended for use by students in synagogues hosting Czech scrolls it can be easily adapted by 'adopting' a scroll from elsewhere – contact the Memorial Scrolls Trust for details.

<sup>2</sup> This and other pictures which support this module are available in PowerPoint format at [memorialscrollstrust.org](http://memorialscrollstrust.org)

Explains that the scroll is no ordinary Torah scroll (although Torah scrolls are far from ordinary things). This particular scroll and the others kept by the Trust have a unique story to tell and maybe even a 'message' to give us – if only we can work out what that message might be. Explains to the students that that is our task.

This module is six weeks in length and in those six weeks students will unlock the story behind the scrolls – where they came from – what happened to them – why they are here and not with the community from where they originated. What does the story of the scrolls mean to them as they approach Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Advises students that they may find that much mystery surrounds the scrolls and we may find ourselves having to imagine and speculate possible answers. However, reassures students that this is how historians like Yehuda Bauer (a Jew from Prague)<sup>1</sup> begin to piece together the messy business of historical enquiry, weighing up all the available evidence in the process.

## Task 1 (15mins)

*Teacher reads welcome letter from the Trustees (3mins)*<sup>2</sup>

*Questions to class (5mins)* – What have we now learned from the Trustees about the scroll (and others in the collection) from this letter? (Responses recorded on flipchart paper).

*Bringing together (5mins)*: So, now we know that the scrolls are rare not just because many in the collection are hundreds of years old, but because they were rescued from the terror and destruction of the Holocaust (1941-1945). They are, in most cases, the last remnant of the communities that lived in the towns of Moravia and Bohemia. In the years immediately after the Nazis seized power in Germany, there was a systematic persecution of the Jewish people. Boycotting Jewish shops, segregating Jewish people from the rest of society, limits on their freedoms and basic human rights were enforced. Eventually, violent terror and the destruction of Jewish culture began. Synagogues were burned, together with Jewish books and books by Jewish authors. As time went on Jews were ordered to leave their homes which had become under German authority and were sent away. Most never returned. They were murdered. In some towns it is hard to see any trace that a Jewish community once lived there. In other towns such as Prague the old Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and museum remain.

The scrolls could tell us so much, couldn't they? It really makes one stop and wonder. They could tell us what they witnessed, about the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, who brought them to Prague and what happened next? But for now, they are silent.

In the weeks that pass we will unlock more and more of the story of the scrolls. We will be finding out about the communities that worshipped in the synagogues with these scrolls before the war and how these scrolls survived, who rescued them and why. We will also learn about how they came to London after the war and how they are on loan to communities throughout the world today so they can once again 'live' amongst a thriving and flourishing community.

We will also go to our synagogue to see the Czech scroll we have 'adopted'. When it is your Bar/Bat Mitzvah you will read your parasha from it and/or study from it prior to the day. At that point the scroll will be far from silent. Before we begin to learn about the Czech scrolls it is important for us to reflect on the significance of a Torah scroll itself.

<sup>1</sup> Born 1926, Bauer is a Czechoslovak-born Israeli historian and scholar of the Holocaust. He is a professor of Holocaust Studies at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> Found in the appendices at the back of this pack

## Task 2 (15mins)

In groups of 3 examine the study cards toward the back of this pack labelled Unit One Study Card. Then, agree on a response to one of the three following questions (one question per group):

1. In what way is the Torah scroll a sacred object?
2. Does a Torah scroll become more special with time and if so why?
3. "Each week when a young person (Bar/Bat Mitzvah) holds the Torah for the first time and reads from its ancient words, our tradition is strengthened and our future made more secure." Do you agree with this statement? If so why? If not, why not?

Illustrate your answer with reference to what you learned from the study cards. Following a short break you will return and present your conclusions in a plenary session.

## Plenary (15mins)

Students feedback their answers. Credit students where there is evidence that they have grasped the centrality of the Torah scroll - that it is the most important document in Judaism and that it has been the 'spiritual glue' that has held the Jewish people together through the centuries. It has served as a beacon of hope to Jews in times of persecution and expulsion. The covenant speaks of an everlasting bond between God and the Jewish people. The Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land is the ultimate realisation of this promise. This has inspired Jews to continue to believe that God is benevolent and will bring redemption and salvation (you may need to explain these concepts). Remind students that the Ner Tamid shines perpetually over the Ark that houses the Torah scroll and ask them what that suggests to them about the relationship between God, the Jewish people and the Torah.

# Task 3 (30mins)

*Following recess*

Before beginning an exploration of the story of the fate of the Czech Jews during the Holocaust and the scrolls, students connect with the name of one young Jewish person and serves as a point of reference with one individual as students work through the module. The names included are of young people from Czechoslovakia who were aged around 11, 12 or 13 when tragically they were taken away from their homes by the Nazis. Each student (or in pairs) should be allocated one of these documents for this activity (Task 3 Unit 1 ) and to Task 2 in Unit 2.

Teacher hands out to each student a separate biographical document relating to one young Czech person approaching Bar/Bat Mitzvah age in 1941 or 1942 (see below for one example). This material has been extracted from the Yad Vashem Central Data base of Shoah Victims' Names.

Ask students to try to decipher from the documents:

1. What is the name of the person?
2. What was their date of birth?
3. Where was their home?
4. Did they work?
5. Where were they during the war?
6. Did they survive the Holocaust?
7. If not what was the date of death?
8. What more information can you extract (eg their age when they died)?

Tell students that they are to keep the name of this person with them and they should feature this person in some way in their final project.



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יד  
כרן לשואה ולגבורה רשות

www.yadvashem

' השמות, ת.ד 3477, ירושלים 9103

## Page of Testimony עֶד דָּף..

For the Jews who perished during the Holocaust - Shoah. Please submit a separate form for each victim, in block capitals. **Fields in bold are mandatory.**

The Heroes' Remembrance Law 5713-1953 determines in section 2 that: "The task of Yad Vashem is to collect and preserve material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who fought and rebelled against the Nazi enemy and his collaborators, and to perpetuate the memory of those of the communities, organizations and institutions which were destroyed because of their Jewishness."

Name: Flussová		Maiden name:	
Name (also nickname): Lili, Lilinka		Previous/other Family name:	
Gender: Female		Date of birth: 23.IV.1929	Approx. age at death: 13
Place of birth (town, region, country): Prague, Bohemia Czechoslovakia, after 15.III.1939 "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia", Today Czech Republic		Citizenship: Czechoslovak	
First name of victim's father: Bedřich		Family name of victim's father: Fluss	
First name of victim's mother: Marie		Maiden name of victim's mother: Krásová	
Victim's family status: Child	First name of victim's spouse:	Maiden name of victim's spouse:	No. of children:
Permanent residence: Prague, Bohemia, Czechoslovakia (town, region, country):		Street: Praha XVI. – Smíchov, Pízeňská This was house NC 205 <sup>1</sup> , which no longer exists.	
Victim's profession: Schoolgirl.	Place of work:	Member of organization or movement: Unknown, but due to age unlikely.	
Places and activities during the war - prison/deportation/ghetto/camp/death march/hiding/escape/resistance/combat (circle relevant option): 3.VIII.1942 deported to Theresienstadt, Transport Aaw-46, 20.III.1943 died at Theresienstadt and cremated there.			
Residence during the war (town, region, country): Prague, Theresienstadt		Street: As above.	
Circumstances of death: prison/deportation/ghetto/camp/death march/hiding/escape/resistance/combat or unknown - Shoah Exact circumstances unknown.			
Place of death (town, region, country): Theresienstadt		Date of death: 20.III.1943	
I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this testimony is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this Page of Testimony and all the information on it will be publicly accessible.			
Submitter's first name: Peter Richard		Family name: Pinard	Previous/maiden name:
Street, House no., Apt.: U vlápenky 695/4		City: Praha 5 – Radotín	State/Zip code: 15300
Country: Czech Republic	I am a Shoah survivor: No	My relationship to the victim (family/other): Loving friend/researcher.	
During the war I was in a camp/ghetto/forest/the resistance/in hiding/had false papers: Submitter born 1962.			
Date: 29.V.2007	Place: Prague	Signature: <i>Peter Richard Pinard</i>	
*...And I shall give them in My house and in My walls a memorial and a name ... that shall not be cut off" Isaiah 56:5			

<sup>1</sup> Numerus conscriptionis "NC", in Czech: číslo popisné, (in German "Konskriptionsnummer") is a number given to each house in a district of Prague (and other cities). It remains unchanged even when the streets themselves are changed/renumbered/divided etc.

## UNIT TWO

# THE SCROLLS AND JEWISH LIFE PRIOR TO 1939

### *Aims*

To ensure students understand something of Jewish life in Czechoslovakia (regions of Bohemia and Moravia) before the German invasion so that they are better able to understand what was lost.

### *Task 1 (5mins)*



Teacher shows map to students<sup>1</sup> and provides the following information:

Jews had lived in the areas of Central Europe called Bohemia and Moravia for more than a thousand years and over that time a rich Jewish culture had developed. Jewish life centred on Prague but also spread across a large number of communities in towns throughout the country.

The Jews survived repeated expulsions in the seventeenth century, to enjoy religious freedom by 1700. Forbidden to practise many trades they came to develop expertise as shoe makers, tailors, hatters and furriers.

By 1800, Prague had become the centre of Hebrew printing, learning and scholarship and in the 100 years before 1939 the Jews of Prague were free and prosperous. According to the 1930 census, there were 117,551 Jews in Bohemia and Moravia (356,830 in all of Czechoslovakia).

The Jewish community had become religiously and culturally diverse. A number were secular Jews. Many were highly educated and cultured. Some of the greatest Jewish thinkers, artists, architects, poets, musicians and composers came from this region.



Alice Sommer Herz is pictured here. She was an inspirational woman and an outstanding pianist. It was her musical talent and unending optimism which, in all probability, saved her from the Holocaust. She died peacefully in London in 2014 at the age of 110. (If students wish to find out more about her life they can watch a 5 minute recording of her: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5VTkQKgxkY>).

<sup>1</sup> All the photos and illustrations in this pack can be found in a powerpoint presentation downloadable from [www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org)

## Task 2 (5mins)

Students pinpoint on the map the home town of their allocated named Czech boy/girl from the Yad Vashem database of names. To do this they will need to look up the animated maps on the USHMM website:  
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/gallery.php?ModuleId=10007323&MediaType=NM>

## Task 3 (10mins)

Teacher expands context. In order to hold the two staves of the Torah securely together when it is rolled, a binder is required. They were often made from the linen diaper initially used at a boy's circumcision.

It was later laundered, cut into four strips, sewn together and embroidered with a Hebrew inscription running the length of the binder. Typically, it named the boy and his father, his date of birth, and the devout wish that he should grow up to Torah, Chuppah (marriage) and good deeds. This blessing is taken from the circumcision ceremony and relates to the most important events in the life of a Jewish man. The binder was presented to the synagogue on the occasion of the boy's first visit and used to wrap the Torah on special occasions in his life, such as his Bar Mitzvah and on the Sabbath preceding his marriage. Sometimes it might even be used to decorate the canopy at his wedding, symbolically binding him to the Torah and thereby reinforcing his covenant with God.

## Task 4 (5min)

Ask students to take a look at this binder<sup>1</sup> and see if they can deduce what the writing means, what symbols are and why they might have been embroidered here.



<sup>1</sup> Image available in powerpoint found at [www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org)

## Task 5 (40 mins)

This task examines the pre-war life of Felix Winkler.

Watch USC Shoah Foundation i-witness video testimony of Felix Winkler  
<http://iwwitness.usc.edu/SFI/> (interview code 14740). Clip 3-6.

Felix was born in Miroslav (Moravia, Czechoslovakia). Here he talks about his youth and Bar Mitzvah just before the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia.

*Recess*

## Task 6 (15 mins)

Students answer questions:

Teacher recaps what has been learned. Ask students:

- What picture do you get of Felix's childhood before the invasion?
- Where did he move to?
- How did he describe celebrating Jewish festivals with his family?
- When was the synagogue built?
- When was his Bar Mitzvah?
- What was going on in the political world around him?
- Why was it conducted in a sad way?

Play Clip 7 and 8, 9 and 14:

Here, Felix tells us what his father chose to do with the synagogue scroll when the Germans invaded his home town.

Ask students to discuss in pairs their thoughts on the following two questions:

- How does Felix describe his Bar Mitzvah under these conditions?
- How does Felix describe life with everything denied to Jewish people?

## UNIT THREE

# THE SCROLLS UNDER THE NAZIS

### *Aims:*

To investigate the situation of Czech Jews after German occupation and the establishment of the Protectorate. Students will consider the irony of that word and should come to understand the reality of Nazi rule and its effects on the lives of the Jewish people. The desperate search for refuge will also be examined. Students will also learn about the fate of the Czech scrolls. Finally, the students will discover what happened to the Jews of Czechoslovakia.

### *Task 1 (10mins)*

Teacher shows slide of photo of a woman, Gertrude Zelenkova, and a boy, Martin<sup>1</sup>. Explains that the photo comes from an archive at the Jewish Museum, Prague.



Asks students the following questions:

- What do you think the relationship is between these two people?
- Inform the students that they are a mother and son who came to Prague before the war.
- Do the students think that this photo was taken before or after the Germans seized Czechoslovakia?

Explains that we know from the archive that these photos were taken by a friend of Gertrude. Gertrude and Martin had managed to get a visa to go to Britain where they would have been safe but had to delay the departure because Martin became sick. They never made it to Britain.

<sup>1</sup> Image available in powerpoint found at [www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org)

## Task 2 (10mins)

Students examine the photos below<sup>1</sup>.

Teacher invites them to look closely and try to decipher the context of the first image - where, why and how?

Draws their attention to the uniforms – in what country does this suggest the photo is being taken?

What is happening do they think? Why is the man being handled like this?



London *Evening Standard* 31 March 1939. Courtesy of the Wiener Library



Does the second photo on the right help students deduce what may be happening here? Who are the people being marched away? Why would that be so? What do you think they may have done?

Teacher allows students to examine the photo and respond. Listens to students inferences and ideas.

Teacher then provides the historical context - explaining that the Jews of Czechoslovakia in 1939 were desperate to leave. They wanted to escape the danger that lay ahead back home. Many sought refuge illegally in other countries such as Britain (which only allowed a set quota of refugees). When they made it to Britain many were sent back to Czechoslovakia if there was no visa or if they did not have a British guarantor that would put up the money for their needs. This meant they were trapped with nowhere to go.

Teacher explains the context of the photos. They show Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia being marched away by British police at Croydon airport, March 1939. The photos appeared in the *Evening Standard* London newspaper. That same month Hitler's army had marched into Czechoslovakia and the safety of the Czech Jews was in jeopardy. The well-dressed men and women were threatening to jump from the plane if they were forced to fly back. Despite the screaming and pleading of the refugees, the British refused them sanctuary. They had to return and face their fate as Jews in Nazi-controlled Czechoslovakia<sup>2</sup>.

By 1943 some 26,000 Jews had successfully managed to emigrate. Yet there were still thousands facing an uncertain future with nowhere to go and no one to turn to.

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<sup>1</sup> Image available in powerpoint found at [www.memorialscrollstrust.org](http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org)

<sup>2</sup> For an extension task invite young people to explore the archives from the Prague Jewish Museum's online exhibition: "You are now my only hope." The Goldberg Family letters between occupied "Protectorate" and England.

## Task 3 (10mins)

In pairs caption either one of the two Croydon airport images and be prepared to give reasons for your caption.

## Task 4 (5mins)

Show the second photo of Gertrude and Martin<sup>1</sup>. Ask students – what is different about this photo – when was this taken do you think? (Draw attention to the yellow star on clothing.)



Courtesy of the Prague Jewish Museum

Teacher provides historical context (10mins).

Information should include how life changed for Jews with the German invasion: why tens of thousands of Jewish communal objects were able to be safely transported to Prague but their owners were beginning to be deported away from home to a city called Terezin. Whilst the conditions in Terezin on the surface may have looked relatively harmless, behind the scenes Jews were being brutalised and killed. The Red Cross visited Terezin to inspect the treatment of the Jews in the camp. The Germans hid the reality from the inspection team by constructing a facade.

## Task 5 (10 mins)

Listen to clip 63 of Felix Winkler  
<http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/>

1942, following the Wannsee Conference the Nazis speeded up their goal to murder every single Jewish person. By 1943, things were desperate too for those still left in Prague.



Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Prague.  
Jews being marched from the station to the Terezin camp.  
They were allowed to take luggage weighing up to 50 kg.

<sup>1</sup> See [www.memorialscrolltrust.org](http://www.memorialscrolltrust.org)

## Task 6 (5 mins)

Read out Letter 13 written by Heinz Valazar. It comes from a book called Last Letters from the Shoah (Devora Publishing). It describes life in Czechoslovakia in 1943. After reading the letter ask students:

- What can be learned from the letter?
- What are the fears of the author?

### LAST LETTERS

#### *Letter 13*

Prague, May 20, 1943

— Here remains only a small part [of the Jewish population that lived in Czechoslovakia]. In the entire country there are 10,000 Jews. There are six times more in Theresienstadt (60,000). Of them over half are from Austria and the German Reich and also children and a few elderly from Holland.

According to regulations [in Czechoslovakia, regarding the Jews] it is forbidden to buy meat, milk, white flour, cakes, eggs, fruit, vegetables, fish, cheese, sweets and jam. We must also get used to not smoking. Our children don't attend school. It is forbidden to convene for prayer in a quorum (*minyan*). Despite this, our situation is better than that of the majority who were transferred to Poland. We can't receive any news from them. However, what we hear saddens us very, very much. In Theresienstadt only a small part remain of those that were deported over there from here [Prague]. The majority was deported further. The death rate in Theresienstadt is high, especially among the elderly.

[Heinz Valazar]

Teacher shares the following information to conclude:

Some 81,000 Jews were deported to Terezin ghetto and then on to camps. About 10,500 survived. The number of children murdered was 15,000. Most of them were sent away from Terezin to be murdered. Among them was little Martin Zelenka who was deported on to Auschwitz Birkenau and perished there together with his mother.

After recess:

## Task 7 (30 mins)

Recite this poem to the group and ask them what do they understand about what is lost.

### *The Last Butterfly*

The last, the very last,  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing  
against a white stone...  
Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high.  
It went away I'm sure because it wished to  
kiss the world goodbye.  
For seven weeks I've lived in here,  
Penned up inside this ghetto  
But I have found my people here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut candles in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.  
That butterfly was the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
In the ghetto.

Pavel Friedmann 4.6.1942

The poem is preserved in typewritten copy on thin paper in the collection of poetry by Pavel Friedmann. It is dated June 4, 1942 in the left corner.

Pavel Friedmann was born January 7, 1921, in Prague and deported to Terezín on April 26, 1942. He died in Auschwitz on September 29, 1944.

It is estimated that in the Holocaust 80,000 Czech Jewish lives were lost. There were approximately 350 synagogues in Bohemia and Moravia, but by the end of the War more than sixty had been destroyed. The remainder were abandoned and left to decay, and when the Communists came to power eighty of these were demolished.

## UNIT FOUR

# THE SCROLLS RECOVERED: RESCUE AND RENEWAL

### *Aim:*

This session will engage students in five key questions:

- How was it possible that Jews were able to save the scrolls?
- Why did the Nazis order the safety of the scrolls while they were destroying the people?
- Who were the Jewish rescuers of this collection?
- In what way can their work be understood as an act of resistance?
- What is the enduring legacy of this story?



### *Note to teacher:*

Uncertainty abounds about how and at whose initiation the scrolls were rescued but the explanation that the Memorial Scrolls Trust and the Prague Jewish Museum deem most likely is that the Jews of Prague may well have managed to broker some sort of 'arrangement' with the Nazi authorities to allow this process to take place. Other historians may suggest a different reason and say that the Nazis were planning to rescue religious curios to exhibit once the Jewish people had been destroyed. Engaging young people in analyzing why the band of Jews felt compelled to carry this out and why the Nazis complied will be a worthy educational activity and working with uncertainty is all part of historical enquiry. However, it is important that the session should not distract from the students' reflections on the profound act of Jewish spiritual resistance performed by the Jewish curators of Prague when they carried out this mission in their final months and days.

## Introductory Teacher Explanation (10 mins):

Explains to the students that senior SS officials met in Wannsee in January 1942 to discuss how they were going to carry out the murder of every Jew in Europe. They began by listing the numbers of Jews in each country then went on to plan the mechanism for ensuring successful completion of the task. What followed was a rapid increase in violent round-ups and deportations in the ghettos, towns and villages of Nazi controlled territory.

For the Czech Jews this meant an escalation of deportations. During 1942, the peak year of the implementation of the Nazi 'final solution of the Jews' 54,627 Protectorate Jews of Bohemia and Moravia were deported from their homes and arrived in Terezin. It was during this year that a group of Prague's Jewish community, knowing that they could not save themselves or their community, engineered a way of rescuing what they could of the Jewish treasures and Torah scrolls of the now deserted synagogues of Czechoslovakia. At least that is the view of some historians including Magda Veselska of the Prague Jewish Museum. In her book *Defying the Beast* she reveals her interpretation of the evidence available. She says that under the Nazis the society behind the pre-war Jewish Museum was abolished, yet amazingly, in 1942, members of the Jewish community asked the Nazi authorities for permission to found a central museum that would store objects being left behind. She states:

"People from Prague's Jewish community wanted to save materials, holy books, archival materials, at the moment when people began to be transported to concentration camps, and they left these things behind. Unfortunately we don't know the exact arguments that they used to convince the Nazi authority, but having seen the documentation, archival materials, I think that they argued for it on the basis of the museum's long pre-war history. That argument could have been quite a strong one."

*Magda Veselska*



So, in some way and for some reason the Nazis were persuaded to accept the plan and as a result more than 10,000 artefacts were brought to Prague including 1,800 Torah scrolls. Once in Prague a team of expert Jewish curators received them, catalogued them and labelled them with meticulous detail, precision and loving care.

The scrolls were identified by the town they came from and, in many cases, the age of the scrolls, though the dates may have been based on the educated guesses of the curators.

See if you can research photos of the synagogue.

The curators witnessed the tragic scene of their own families being deported. Finally their turn came too. Most of these brave curators were eventually sent to Terezin and died there or were taken to Auschwitz Birkenau or another camp and murdered.

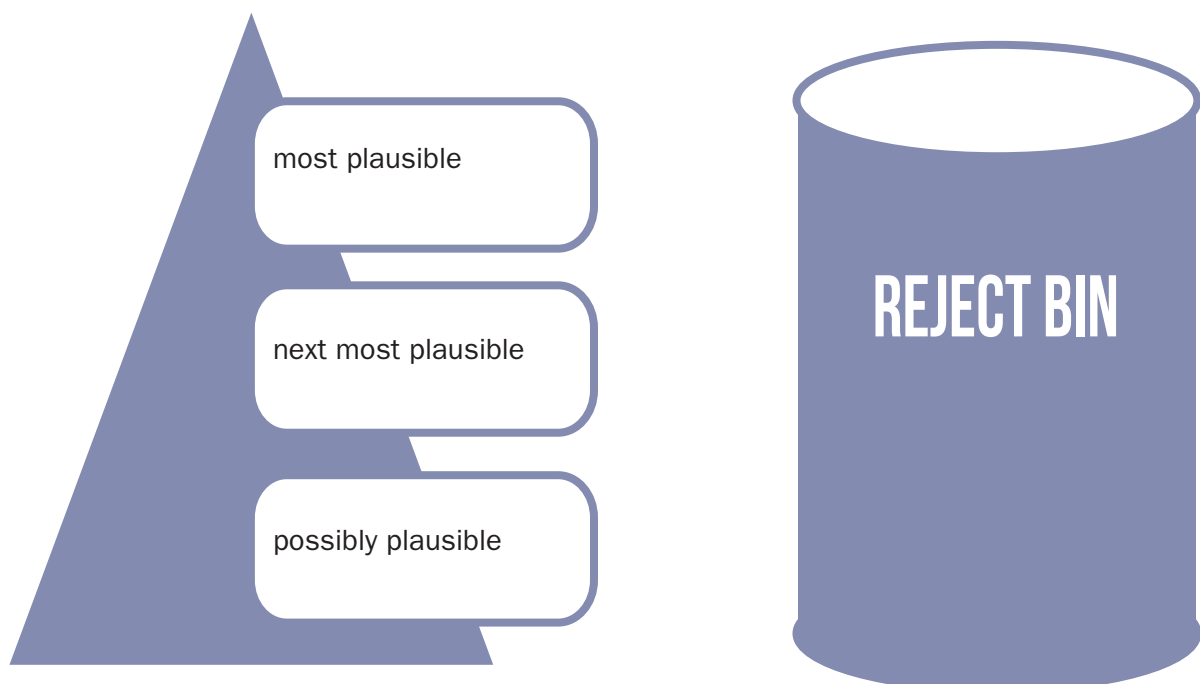
The scrolls, however, survived. Yet they were devoid of the life of the community they served. After the war, they were transferred to the ruined synagogue at Michle, two or three miles south of Prague, where they remained untouched until they were brought to London 20 years later.



What must have gone through the minds of the curators as they conducted what historian Philippa Bernard describes as 'their sacred duty' is something we will never truly know. Nor will we really find out what drove them to persist when danger and death was a constant threat and once it grew clear that the people were never coming back. What motivated them once they realized that they too would inevitably be sent away?

## *Task 1: Key Question - Why did the Jews rescue the scrolls?* (10mins)

Question to debate in groups: What drove the Jewish workers to risk everything to rescue the scrolls? Use the cards (which can be copied, cut out and distributed to students in groups) to help your discussions. After analyzing each card and considering the plausibility of what is written, reject any card that seems unlikely. Add any other reasons that the group thinks important to consider on the blank cards provided. Then place the cards in a pyramid shape indicating which you consider the most plausible at the top, followed underneath by the next two, followed by the next three etc.



*Cut out cards:*

They saw saving  
the scrolls as if  
saving human life.

To store the scrolls  
safely so they could  
be returned once  
the war was over.

They did it  
as an act of  
resistance against  
the Nazis.

They were ordered  
to carry out the  
work.

(free for students to complete)

To regain human  
dignity amongst  
the destruction of  
Jewish religious  
freedom.

They did it out  
of a dedication to  
preserving the  
sanctity of God's  
name.

To ensure  
something of the  
present would be  
passed to a future  
generation.

(free for students to complete)

(free for students to complete)

## *Task 2: Re-convening and feedback (10mins)*

Each group returns to address whole class on how they have configured the possible reasons and why. Teacher attempts to draw a conclusion.

It is important to try to work out why these Jewish people chose to tend to and carefully catalogue the scrolls knowing most probably that they were shortly going to be deported to hard labour or death far away from home. In many ways this was an act of exceptional courage. For whatever reason the Nazis allowed this to take place, it seems that the action by the Jews was a defiant subversion of Nazi domination. They wanted something of their world preserved. They would not let the name of God and the centuries of Jewish life that was etched on every crease of the parchment skin be left to be destroyed or to decay.

## *Task 3 Discussion (10 minutes)*

In groups of 3, ask students to come to an agreed position on the question below and be prepared to provide a rationale for their argument.

What was the motivation of the Nazis? If we accept the theory that the collection was instigated by the Czech Jewish community we still are left pondering as to why the Germans agreed.

- Were the Nazis planning, as some have suggested, to exhibit Jewish religious and ceremonial artefacts following the completion of the Final Solution? (Please note, that there is little conclusive evidence of this).
- Did it reflect the agenda of the chief ideologue of the Nazi party Alfred Rosenberg who was coordinating the appropriation of cultural property during the war?
- Was the reason to keep an atmosphere of calm – if the Jewish people thought their scrolls were being kept safe while they were sent away then they may have thought they were going to return one day and therefore cooperated more willingly making the deportations easier to process?
- Was the reason about deception? They may have wanted the outside world to believe that ‘rumours’ of killing Jews was unfounded. After all, remember what was learned in Unit 3 about the sophisticated scheme of deception at Terezin.

Might there have been another reason why the Nazis would have allowed/ordered the shipment of this religious material?

## *Task 4: Key Question - Who were the Jewish rescuers of this collection? (15mins)*

Whatever the case, we do know that this group of dedicated Jews from Prague’s Jewish community worked to bring artefacts and Jewish possessions of all kinds to what became the Central Jewish Museum in Prague. Here, they dedicated themselves under appalling conditions to preserve what little remained of Jewish communities. The best they could have wished for was that these treasures would be protected and might one day return to their original homes. Yet this was not to be so.

The curators at the Museum were eventually transported to Terezin and Auschwitz. Only two survived. Their legacy was the catalogue of the vast collection in the Museum, eventually to become the Jewish Museum of Prague.

Eight individuals are profiled on the museum website. You can find them by looking up the Memorial Scrolls Trust website: <http://www.memorialscrollstrust.org/czech-scrolls/>

## Task 5: Reflecting on their legacy (5mins)

*'At first the hope may have been that soon it would be over, the Jews return and a restored Jewish life would need back the items necessary for a flourishing Jewish religious community. As time went by I am sure they realised there would be no immediate return, maybe even no return, but they worked on. Some say because they thought that their ongoing work would delay their own transport to Terezin, and who could blame them? Though, of course it didn't save them and I read that all but one of this brave band perished before the end of the War. Amongst those who were murdered was Tobias Jacobovits, the uncle of the former Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue'.*

Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue.

After Recess:

## Task 6: (15mins) Teacher explanation & questions to students to discuss

The title of Magda Veselská's book on this subject is titled 'Defying the Beast'. What do you think she means by this title?

Many scholars of the Holocaust understand resistance as not only armed fighting. They see it as a standing up against tyranny in many different ways. This could include engaging in cultural, educational, religious, and political activities taken to strengthen morale and to keep alive that which the Nazis were trying to destroy.

- In what way would you describe the actions of the Jewish curators as resistance, or defiance of their Nazi oppressors?
- What do you think they achieved?
- What do you think is their legacy?

## Task 7: How the Scrolls were brought to London (15mins).

### Teacher explanation

In 1963 Eric Estorick, a London art dealer, was offered the opportunity to purchase the 1,564 Torah scrolls, stored by the Museum.

He contacted a client, Ralph Yablon, who in turn approached Harold Reinhart, Rabbi of Westminster Synagogue. Together they asked Chimen Abramsky, a Hebrew scholar, to go to Prague and examine the scrolls. Ralph Yablon's generosity made the purchase of the scrolls possible and they were transported to the synagogue in London. They arrived on 7th February 1964.

Damaged, some with binders, some with makeshift versions, they made 'an eloquent'<sup>1</sup> monument to a tragic past. The new custodians embarked on the job of restoration.

One day – out of the blue - a Chasidic scribe arrived at the door of the synagogue asking if there was any work. Nearly thirty years later, he was still working there bringing the scrolls back to perfection so they could 're-live again' and be used for worship in synagogue services.

The Trust has established a second life for the 1,564 Torah scrolls since their arrival at Kent House in 1964.

The vast majority of scrolls are now loaned out to communities throughout the world while a handful is displayed at a small museum at Westminster Synagogue. The scrolls are used in services of all kinds including Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. Those communities who bring a scroll within the heart of their community breathe new life into these sacred treasures.

David Robson of the *Jewish Chronicle* in London reports: "There is a beautiful museum at the (Westminster) synagogue where just 100 scrolls remain, the rest are in use. You can see it as a memorial to tragedy. I prefer to view it as a symbol of Jewish continuity and rebirth".

Ruth Shaffer devoted forty years of her life to the scrolls. She created a database detailing information about each scroll. She worked closely with David Brand, the scribe who restored the scrolls. All these individuals together with devoted supporters, Frank Waley and Constance Stuart became founding members of a committee that would ensure the scrolls were safely stored, restored and commemorated.



Eric Estorick



Ralph Yablon



Dr Harold Reinhart



Prof Chimen Abramsky



Ruth Shaffer

<sup>1</sup> David Robson, *Jewish Chronicle*, 'Lifting the Shadow of our Past' October 23, 2014

## UNIT FIVE

# THE SCROLLS, MY BAR/BAT MITZVAH AND ME

### *Aim:*

To introduce students to their community's Czech scroll. They will be able to touch the scroll's staves and through that encounter hopefully sense its long and turbulent history. The aim is that the students will see that in reading from the scroll at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah they breathe a new life into it and, in so doing, create a powerful symbol of the Jewish people's strength and continuity. The session aims to create a connection between the young people and similar young people who worshipped in the synagogue with this Torah scroll over seventy years ago.

Three other points:

Prior to this Unit teacher should ask students to come prepared to identify which parasha they will read or study for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The teacher may draw on the community's Rabbi to assist students to identify their parasha in the scroll.

Students may wish to wash their hands before meeting the scroll and recite a blessing.



Rollers (*Etz Chayim*) upon which the scrolls were wrapped. Here seen with the original labels still attached.

### *Task 1 (30mins)*

Teacher shows the scroll to the students. Invite students to follow the contours of the staves with their hands while informing them of how old it is and where in Czechoslovakia it came from etc.

Asks them to think about the member of the community whose job it was to remove the scroll from its Ark and bind it up and send it to Prague. What would have been going on in their mind? What would their main concerns have been? What service might the scroll have been used for? What prayers would have been on the lips of the worshippers as they paraded the scroll in their synagogue?

Allows the students to discuss this.

## Task 2 (30mins)

With the assistance of the rabbi identify the individual student's *parasha* in the scroll. The teacher/rabbi draws out a special phrase from within the *parasha* that has some significance or poignancy with the scroll's story (where appropriate).

*After Recess:*

## Task 3 (15 mins)

Students asked to reflect on the experience and what they believe the message of the scrolls might be in relation to them as they approach their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. They can log their thoughts in a notebook.

## Task 4 (15 mins)

Teacher shows the Yad Vashem online site The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names.

<http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en>

Shows them how they can use the search facility to log in the name of the town and the year of birth to find a young person of a similar age to them who was from that town. Asks them to calculate what year someone was born if they were approaching their Bar Mitzvah age in 1942 when the deportations were at their most frequent. Do they know any one of this age? They can identify a name.

They may wish to actually conduct this exercise as part of their project which is discussed in Unit 6.

## UNIT SIX

# THE SCROLLS PROJECT: THE MEANING/MESSAGE OF THE SCROLLS

### *Aim:*

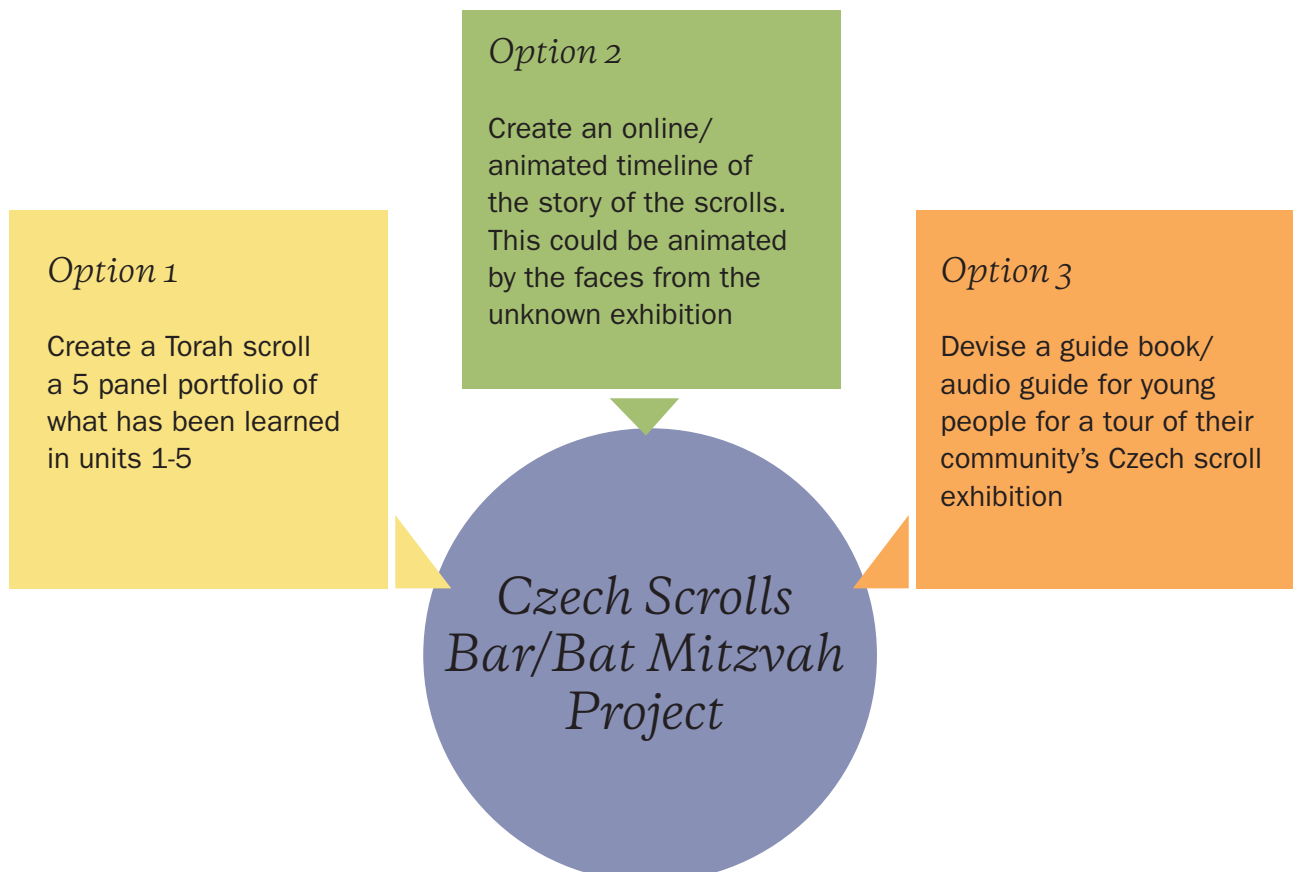
The aim is for students to respond to what they have learned in the five weeks and to articulate the significance of the scrolls for them and their community. It is an opportunity for students to be creative and give a personal response to the experience of meeting the scrolls. The idea is that students will undertake their own individual project. The Memorial Scrolls Trust will be delighted to showcase some of the projects that teachers wish to submit. A Memorial Scrolls Trust prize will be awarded for any projects submitted that demonstrate outstanding creativity.

### *Task 1 (10 mins)*

Teacher explains that the project is the culmination of the five intense weeks of study. Reminds them briefly of what they did over the five units. You can use the powerpoint of images to illustrate.

### *Task 2 (25mins)*

Outlines the three project options explaining when the project has to be completed. Advise them that a certificate from the Memorial Scrolls Trust will be presented to each one at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah:



### *Task 3 (15 mins)*

Students to plan how they may like to conduct their project.

### *Task 4 (10 mins)*

Pool student ideas from the class.

*After recess:*

### *Resource check (20 mins)*

Reminds students of the online resources they can use. If you have a computer in class the teacher or student can demonstrate the website resources that can feed into the individual projects.

### *Conclusion to module (10 minutes)*

Explain to students that each of us may 'hear' a distinct message from the scroll and that they should reflect carefully on what this may be for them. At some point, displayed somewhere within their project, they should articulate clearly what the scrolls mean to them as they reach religious maturity.

# **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

**TORAH STUDY CARDS 1-5**

**TRUSTEES LETTER**

**CERTIFICATE**

# TRUSTEES LETTER – 2



The Trustees,  
Memorial Scrolls Trust,  
Kent House,  
Knightsbridge,  
London SW7 1BX

*Dear Bar/Bat Mitzvah student,*

The Trustees of the Memorial Scrolls Trust would like to congratulate you on reaching Bar/Bat Mitzvah and welcome you to this module.

Your synagogue has on loan from our London museum a rare treasure. It is fragile and old, yet it holds a key to understanding the Holocaust and the resilience and strength of the Jewish people.

This treasure was taken from its original home in tragic and devastating circumstances. It was left isolated, redundant and silent for many years, until it found a home in London where it has been repaired and restored. What is truly miraculous is that this special object survived the greatest catastrophe that has befallen the Jewish people in modern times.

The object is a Torah scroll – the handwritten parchment upon which is inscribed the five books of Moses containing the ancient Jewish law, and the everlasting covenant between God and the Jewish people. This particular scroll once led a vibrant life, as the sacred epicentre of its synagogue's community in Czechoslovakia. It was cherished and revered by generations of Czech Jewish families. Some of these families may have been observant and would have read from the scroll during regular services. Others may have attended the synagogue only on High Holy Days, if at all. Whatever the case, the community as a whole will have been drawn to the scroll as they marked sacred moments in their lives such as a birth, a marriage or a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The scroll would have been held up high in the synagogue and paraded every Sabbath and Simchat Torah as its community rejoiced in religious and communal life.

Whilst every working synagogue has a Torah scroll, this scroll is very different. For if it had a voice it would speak of the brutal way its community was treated by the Nazis. It would tell how it was rescued by the curators of the Jewish Museum in Prague before they were taken away. The scroll survived the Holocaust. It is the remnant of a once flourishing Jewish community in Europe.

But what happened to the people who loved and cherished the scroll? Where are they? Where are their children and grandchildren now?

Through this module it is hoped that you will come to answer these questions and ask more questions that will lead you to contemplate the meaning and significance of the scroll today, and most importantly what it means to you as you reach this important landmark in your life.

We encourage you to encounter your community's scroll directly and if possible practise your Bar/Bat Mitzvah parasha from it. In learning about the history of this scroll in the run up to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will reinvigorate the scroll, give it new vitality and return it to the central place as the bedrock of Jewish life. That would indeed be an exceptional act of memorial and commemoration.

With best wishes,  
*The Trustees*

# UNIT ONE STUDY CARD 1

## THE TORAH

Torah refers to the five books of Moses. These are: Bereshit (Genesis), Shemot (Exodus), Vayicra (Leviticus), Bamidbar (Numbers), and Devarim (Deuteronomy). The complete scroll is known as a Sefer Torah from the word sefer which is the Hebrew word for book.

Traditionally, Jews believe that God dictated the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai 50 days after their exodus from Egyptian slavery. Progressive Jews typically regard the Torah as divinely inspired, but written over a period of time by human beings with an understanding of their time and thus open to reinterpretation.

Either way, it is the central book of Jewish theology. The Torah shows us how God wants Jews to live.

The Torah is written in Hebrew, one of the oldest languages and is the first section of the Jewish bible. Tanach is used to describe the whole of Jewish scriptures. This is an acronym made up from the first letter of the words Torah, Nevi'im (prophets), and Ketuvim (writings).

An exact translation of the word Torah into English is not straightforward. Torah is 'teaching', 'instruction' and 'law' rolled into one.

Some Jews place a literal interpretation on the 613 commandments/mitzvot contained in the Torah. Others believe the Torah needs to be understood in relation to the values and experiences of modern life and that it our responsibility to interpret the essence of the law in the present context so it remains relevant.

Within the Torah are included the story of creation, the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments, the laws concerning Kashrut, and the enduring and binding covenant between God and the Jewish people.

# UNIT ONE STUDY CARD 2

## HOW AND WHEN IS A TORAH SCROLL USED?

The Torah scrolls are taken from the Ark (Aron hakodesh) and traditionally portions are read in the synagogue three times each week. On Mondays and Thursdays small sections are read. The main reading is on the morning of Shabbat (Sabbath/Saturday).

Over the course of the year the whole scroll is read in sequence. This begins from Simchat Torah, which comes at the end of Sukkot.

The special portions for the readings are called parashot (singular: parasha) and are usually three to five chapters in length.

The letters in the Torah scroll are written without corresponding vowels. The reader has to know the portion very well to avoid making mistakes. The reading is conducted using an ancient tune and is sung rather than spoken – as if the reading isn't hard enough! The weekly portion or Sedra is followed by the recitation of part of another of the Jewish holy writings.

The scrolls are not directly touched when unfurled on the Bimah (raised platform in the middle or at the front of a synagogue). A pointer or Yad (hand) is used instead. This is in the shape of a hand with an outstretched finger. It is a very great honour for a member of the community to be asked to read during a synagogue service and it is a celebration for the whole community when a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is called to read. This is called having an Aliyah which is Hebrew for 'going up'.

# UNIT ONE STUDY CARD 3

## HOW IS A TORAH SCROLL MADE?

Creating a Torah scroll is a masterpiece of work and dedication. The Torah scrolls are entirely handwritten in Hebrew by a specially trained sofer (scribe). He must be Bar Mitzvah (some say, even married! and know all the laws of Safrut - (laws of writing the Torah). The Torah is written on parchment from a kosher animal - usually a cow. It can take up to 18 months to complete the whole process. The Torah is made of many sheets of parchment that are sewn together to make one very long scroll. Great accuracy is needed when the sofer writes the scroll. There are 304,805 letters in a Torah scroll and 42 lines on each page. If any mistakes are made (misshapen words or missing letters), it can make the whole scroll pasul (non-kosher).

The sofer makes the quills for writing a Sefer Torah. The feathers must come from a kosher bird, and goose or turkey are often the birds of choice. The Sofer carefully carves a point in the end of the feather and uses many quills in the course of writing one Sefer Torah. A special quill is used for God's name.

The sofer also prepares ink for writing the Sefer Torah by combining a blend of powdered gall nuts, copper sulphate crystals, gum arabic, and water, preparing only a small amount at a time, so that the ink will always be fresh. (See if you can locate these ingredients and try to make your own Sefer Torah ink). Fresh ink is a deep black, and only this is acceptable for writing a Sefer Torah.



# UNIT ONE STUDY CARD 4

## WHAT MAKES SOME SCROLLS NO LONGER KOSHER?

Scrolls become pasul (no longer kosher) when letters are damaged. There are 304,805 letters in the Torah and traditionally it is critical that every letter must be perfect. Scrolls are checked and restored hundreds of times to keep the letters perfect, but it comes to a point either through wear or sudden damage when it is easier to commission a new scroll than to keep repairing the old one. Traditionally, the Torah must be 100% perfect or it is considered pasul and cannot be used.

Common problems arise where parts of letters are missing having flaked off, or the whole letters has faded from a dark black to a light brown. You can easily see this on almost every old scroll you examine. To be kosher, every single letter and every part of the letter must be solid black.

## WHAT IS IT CUSTOMARY TO DO IF A SCROLL BECOMES DAMAGED?

Traditionally, Jewish material used for sacred purposes (e.g. for worship) are thought of as having a certain spirituality enshrined within them and should be handled and disposed of in a dignified way.

The Talmud stipulates that all sacred writings (Torah and Prophets) should be preserved in a place where they cannot be destroyed. This idea originally arose because it was prohibited ever to erase God's name. The main idea is that a damaged scroll is considered unfit for use and should be set aside in a dedicated place where it is safe from damage. This is called a geniza which can be a room or even a cupboard in a synagogue put aside for this purpose. Eventually a scroll damaged beyond repair may be buried.

# UNIT ONE STUDY CARD 5



Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is the former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth and he has something rather poetic to say about the Torah. Read this:

*‘So it is to this day, that Torah scrolls are still written as in ancient times, by hand, on parchment, using a quill – as were the Dead Sea Scrolls two thousand years ago. In a religion almost devoid of sacred objects (icons, relics), the Torah scroll is the nearest Judaism comes to endowing a physical entity with sanctity – and this is an understatement.*

*The Torah is less like an object than a person. In its presence we stand as if it were a king. On Simchat Torah we dance with it as if it were a bride. If one is, God forbid, damaged or destroyed we bury it as if it were a human; we mourn as if we had lost a relative. Judaism is the story of a love affair between a people and a book, the Book of Books.*

*The 613th command – to make the Torah new in every generation – symbolizes the fact that though the Torah was given once, it must be received many times, as each of us, through our study and practice, strives to recapture the pristine voice heard at Mount Sinai. That requires emotion, not just intellect. It means treating Torah not just as words read, but also as a melody sung. The Torah is God’s libretto, and we, the Jewish people, are His choir, the performers of His choral symphony. And though, when Jews speak they often argue, when they sing, they sing in harmony, as the Israelites did at the Red Sea, because music is the language of the soul, and at the level of the soul Jews enter the unity of the Divine which transcends the oppositions of lower worlds. The Torah is God’s song, and we collectively are its singers.*

*To make the Torah live anew, it is not enough to hand it on cognitively – as mere history and law. It must speak to us affectively, emotionally’.*

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Chair, Memorial Scrolls Trust