

## Holocaust Memorial Scroll

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In the corridor leading to the atrium is Kehillat Ma'arav's Holocaust Memorial Scroll, which is on permanent loan from the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust in London, England.

The Torah that is displayed in our entry way comes from the small town of Breznice in the Czech Republic. The town is located 43 miles southwest of Prague in central Bohemia.

Over half a century ago, the community of Breznice would dance with the Torah on Simchat Torah, listen to children reading from it on their Bar Mitzvah day, and touch it as it was paraded around the synagogue on Shabbat.



A recent photo of the town of Breznice.

In 1994, this Torah was granted to Kehillat Ma'arav on permanent loan from the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust. The Trust, located in London, at the Westminster Synagogue, housed or distributed over 1,500 scrolls that were discovered in an abandoned synagogue in Prague. They were to be part of a collection of Jewish ritual objects that were confiscated and to be used in a "museum of an extinct race."

The Jewish community of Breznice had its beginnings in the second half of the 16th century. At its peak, the Jewish population of Breznice was approximately 200 people. A recent publication, [Synagogues Without Jews](#), by Rivka and Ben-Zion Dorfman, provides insight to the town and some of its inhabitants over the past few centuries until the town's inhabitants were murdered in 1943.

The Jewish ghetto of Breznice is known as Loksany, named after Lord Fredinand von Loksan who established it on his land in 1570 as a separate Jewish Judenstadt (Jewish town). In 1727, the Jewish population was required to move to Loksany by decree of Charles VI (1685-1740), the Holy Roman Emperor.



One of the maps prepared for Emperor Charles VI for his 1727 decree.

All over the area, towns were required to report the proximity of Jewish homes and synagogues to the local church. Jews that owned homes that did not meet a minimum distance were forced to relocate. Some of these maps are still available today in governmental archives. The Christian homes in Breznice were identified with Arabic numerals, while the Jewish homes were numbered with Roman numerals. These numbers are still visible today in the town.

One of the more well known families of Breznice was the Popper family. The Popper family lived in house number I. Joachim von Popper (1720-1795), merchant, financier and philanthropist, was one of the first Jews to be raised to nobility in Bohemia. His father, Wolf Popper (1685-1767) was born in Loksany, and was the land magistrate for Breznice from 1749 until 1767. House number XIV was used as an inn and kitchen for Jewish travelers.



The synagogue in Breznice.

The synagogue is located in the center of one of the ghetto's squares.

It was built in 1725, and renovated in 1820-1821. The Jewish cemetery in Breznice has tombstones dating from the 17th century.

Breznice served as the seat of the district Rabbi (Kreisrabbinat). This position was created around 1820 by the Kaiser.

House number III was used as the home of the district Rabbi. The mikveh and sukkah were located here. The position was held by Rabbi Eleasar Flekelse of Prague and Kojetin. His successor was Rabbi

Menachem Mendl Polak. Rabbi Polak served until 1866.

In 1915, Rabbi Adolf Neu was appointed by a congregation of less than 80 persons. As it turned out, Rabbi Neu would be the last Rabbi of Breznice. In 1930, the Jewish population of Breznice stood at 30.



In 1942, Jewish property (including the Torahs) was confiscated by the Nazis and sent to Prague. The Jews were deported to Terezin, and ultimately to Auschwitz.

None are known to have survived. Special Thanks to Rivka and Ben-Zion Dorfman