

Art Committee Report 2022-2023

Gail Weinstein, Chair

June 20,2023

ZICHOR

During 2022-2023 The Art Committee addressed the Shoah. The Committee designed a shadow box “frame” for a Sefer Torah written in 1830, and rescued post Holocaust.

It is poignant that a shadow box was created for this Sefer Torah- as ZICHOR- REMEMBER is faintly inscribed above the Torah. ZICHOR appears as a shadow, for indeed the tragedy of the Shoah is kept alive through memory. We are a people who do not forget. Rabbi Meir Soloveichik tells us that “it has been noted by scholars such as the historian Yosef Hayyim and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, that while others speak of their connection to the past as history, Jews instead tend to speak of “memory”. History records the great figures who oversaw the events that changed the world. Jewish Memory insists on the debt we owe to all those who sacrificed in the past, and our obligation to remember them”.

As we view this 19th century Torah scroll from the village of Slany, located in the north central region of the Czech Republic, we should REMEMBER. It is as if the Torah calls out to us ,its very presence asking us to REMEMBER. We should think of those who were called to this Torah, those who read from this Torah, those who wistfully kissed this Torah as it was carried through the Congregation, the fate of those who lived in Slany and were slaughtered ...for being Jewish. Alongside this Sefer Torah is its history and information regarding the organization responsible for its rescue and safe keeping. This Torah was originally given on loan to Beth Hillel and now is in the safekeeping of The Emanuel Synagogue. This Torah is found in our main lobby alongside the entrance to the Goodman-Banks Garden.

The Art Committee sincerely hopes that you have taken note of this Sefer Torah and given pause -ZICHOR.

The Emanuel has been fortunate in receiving a gift from the Rosenthal Family and Beverly and Myron Halpin in honor of Ruth and Rabbi Philip Lazowski. The collage is entitled “PLUMAGE” and was created by Sheila Cohen Springer. “Plumage” is now situated in the alcove adjoining our main lobby.

“Plumage” remembers the Shoah. The artwork depicts barbed wire, followed by a perspective of railroad tracks. Synonyms for the word Plumage include: a cluster, a lump, a heap, a pile, a mass... and indeed looking beyond the railroad tracks, upon close inspection you will see the horror of a mass grave, a cluster, a lump, a heap, a mass of human bodies, Jewish bodies, discarded with inconceivable malice. The bodies represented depict what had been human lives, Jewish lives—people with dreams, families and hopes, yet for whom there was no hope. When we consider how Judaism carefully instructs us as to the manner in which we are to care for a dead human body- the realization and memory of what was is all the more heinous. The mass grave is shown to be beneath dead roots embedded below the ground. The only source of color in this collage is the Plume- feather like and red. Does this color represent the Jewish blood shed by the unspeakable acts of the Nazis? Does the plume represent the red fires of the crematories? Does the ethereal plume represent the ashes of the crematories reaching for the sky? Are we seeing the souls of those “buried” leaving this world while seeming to belong to another more spiritual world?

Please take the time to visit “Plumage” often...ZICHOR.