

## Return of Five Lost Textiles from Frankfurt to Prague

- Valuable textiles return to Prague after many decades
- Jewish Museum in Prague preparing a special exhibition on the theme of repatriation

Prague, February 23, 2026 – On Friday, February 13, curators, restorers and other specialists from the Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP) took delivery of a substantial shipment from Frankfurt am Main. Although Friday the 13th is usually a day of dread, this time it brought nothing but joy: inside the large transport crate were five historic synagogue textiles returning to where they belong – to the collections of the JMP.

The items in question – two Torah ark curtains, two Torah mantles, and a wedding canopy – are valuable textiles of Czech provenance dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were identified in the collections of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt (Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt), which had acquired them in good faith from a private owner in the late 1980s, without detailed verification of their provenance at the time. Through systematic research into their ownership history, it was conclusively established that the textiles had passed through the JMP's collections during the Second World War. Their rightful owner is therefore the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic – the founder of the JMP.

Between 1942 and 1944, as part of wartime shipments from dissolved Jewish religious communities, the textiles were transferred to the Central Jewish Museum in Prague, an institution operating under Nazi supervision. There, Jewish curators worked under harsh conditions to preserve the cultural and spiritual heritage of Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia. After 1945 and again after 1948, these ceremonial objects – along with many other items from the JMP's collections – disappeared under unclear circumstances. Some were issued by the Council of Jewish Religious Communities (the predecessor of the Federation of Jewish Communities) as loans to restored Jewish communities or synagogue choirs, with the expectation that they would be returned to the JMP after a certain period of time. In numerous instances, however, the items were illegally exported abroad and subsequently declared lost.

In the latter half of last year, JMP specialists managed to conclusively identify all five textiles and then submitted a successful request for their release.

“Securing the return of these missing Jewish ceremonial objects represents a significant achievement for Czech cultural heritage,” said **JMP Director Pavla Niklová**, adding: “It not only testifies to our institution's sustained efforts to reconstruct and preserve the integrity of our collections, but also

serves as a positive example of international cooperation. Above all, this step symbolizes the restoration of a continuity disrupted by tragic historical events."

Thanks to the constructive approach and cooperation of institutions such as the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, which promptly agreed to return the objects to the Czech Republic, the restitution claim was resolved without unnecessary delay. "New research indicates that the objects were loans that never belonged to the respected communities and that the acquisition therefore was illegal. By transferring these objects to the capital of the Czech Republic, the Jewish Museum Frankfurt acknowledges the rightful ownership of its partner organization, the Jewish Museum in Prague," **stated Prof. Dr. Mirjam Wenzel, Director of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt.**

### **UNIQUE CURTAIN FROM 1898**

Among the five repatriated textiles, a particularly remarkable piece is a deep green velvet Torah curtain dating from 1898. It is adorned with the raised embroidery of a crown in gold braid and set with imitation gemstones. A Hebrew dedicatory inscription records that it was donated by Jacob Mischkönig and his wife, Judith. During the war, the curtain was transferred to the Central Jewish Museum from the Pardubice collection point. An identification number remains visible on its reverse side, confirming that it was released in the immediate postwar period for an unspecified loan. It has now returned to the museum's collections after 80 years.

### **EVEN DECADES AFTER THE WAR, PROPERTY RETURNS TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS**

The return of these textiles marks the second restitution from the Jewish Museum Frankfurt. In recent years, it has returned three Torah curtains to Prague; these remain on long-term loan for exhibition at the Jewish Museum Frankfurt.

In a similar instance, a Torah curtain was recently repatriated from the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, where it will remain on display under a 15-year loan agreement.

The first successful restitution of a Jewish ritual object originating from the Czech lands was achieved through the dedicated efforts of specialist JMP staff 12 years ago. In the spring of 2014, a Torah curtain – originally from the Czech town of Mladá Vožice – returned to the Czech Republic after being identified in the listings of the New York branch of Sotheby's auction house.

### **SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF RETURNED OBJECTS**

The returned Torah curtains, Torah mantles, and wedding canopy will soon be reintegrated into the JMP's holdings (recorded in the Czech Ministry of Culture's Central Registry of Collections) as an integral part of its unique textile collection, under their original inventory numbers.

The public will have an opportunity to view the aforementioned Torah curtain from Pardubice, together with the other repatriated objects, in a forthcoming pop-up exhibition on the theme of repatriation. The exhibition will be on view this September at the Artschul, the JMP's newly opened cultural, educational, and gallery space.

### **Jewish Museum in Prague**

For 120 years, the Jewish Museum in Prague has been dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of the Jewish communities of the Czech lands. Founded in 1906, the museum today administers one of the world's most extensive collections of Judaica, comprising more than 44,000 collection objects, 130,000 books, hundreds of thousands of photographs, and a substantial archive documenting the Jewish religious communities of Bohemia and Moravia. In cooperation with the Jewish Community of Prague, the museum also oversees eight major historical sites of Prague's Jewish Quarter and regularly organizes a wide range of cultural and educational programs. Further information is available [HERE](#).

### **Media contact:**

Martina Kemrová

M: +420 603 400 150

E: [martina.kemrova@jewishmuseum.cz](mailto:martina.kemrova@jewishmuseum.cz)

[pr@jewishmuseum.cz](mailto:pr@jewishmuseum.cz)