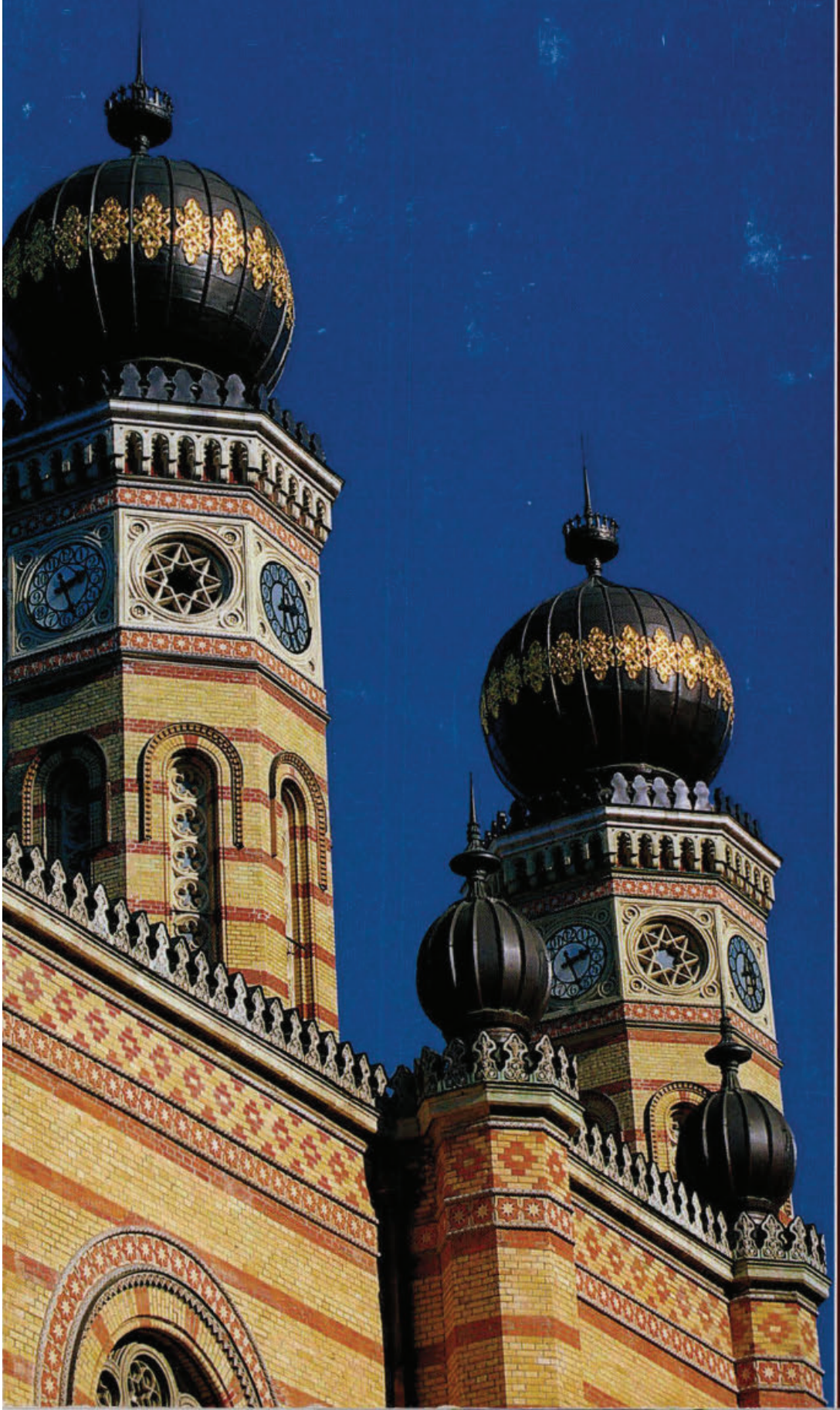
THE DOHÁNY STREET SYNAGOGUE





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THE HISTORY
of Jews in Hungary

The Hungarians first got acquainted with Jewish religion in the course of the 8th century at the time of the great migration when the Hungarian nomadic tribes lived in the neighborhood of a Turkish tribe, the Khazars. Led by their king, the Khazars have already become converted to the belief of the Jews and a small group of them joined to the Hungarian tribes participating in the conquest of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin towards the end of the 9th century. In the following centuries several migrating or escaping groups of Jews arrived from European countries. The Askenazi Jews came from Russian and Polish territories, while the Sefardic Jews arrived from the countries of the Balkan.

The Hungarian kings treated the Jews in different ways. There were some who welcomed them offering privileges, like Saint Stephen, the state founding king, but there were others, like Andrew 2nd, who severely restricted the rights of the Jews by his Golden Charta.

During the period of the Turkish occupation of Hungary the Jews lived mostly in villages and in the Castle of Buda taking part in the defense of the Castle. During the Turkish times, the Jews could live under relatively peaceful conditions: the synagogues were not touched and transformed (unlike the Christian churches). The Turks respected the Jewish religion because of its common roots with the Muslim belief.

The true emancipation of the Jewish religion started only at the end of the 18th century when in his decree the Habsburg emperor, Joseph 2nd declared the equality of every religion. He also approved the settling of the Jews in the suburb of Pest. These settlements became the beginnings of the future Jewish quarter.



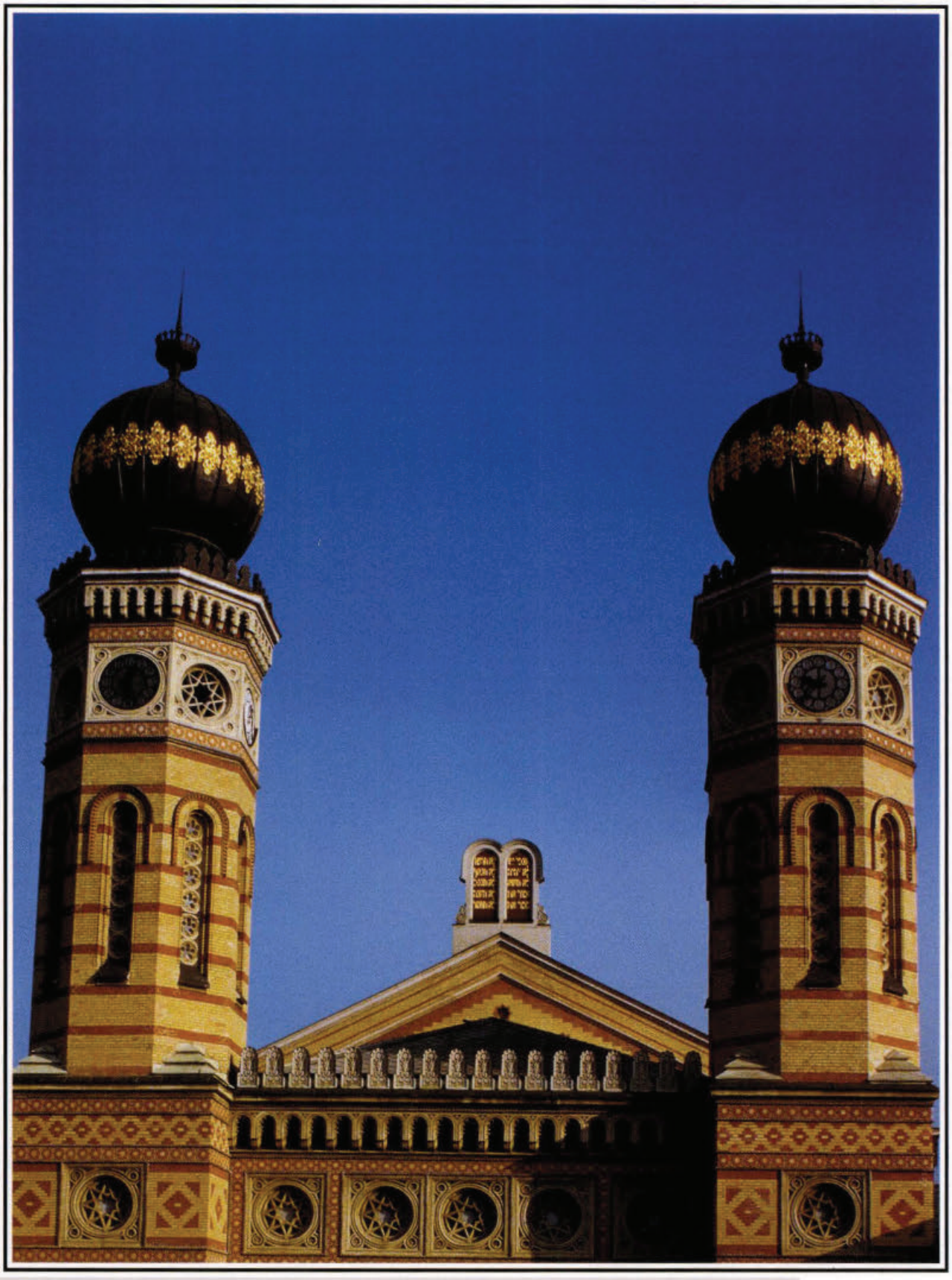
In the first part of the 19th century, in the Reform period the Jews took a very active role in the prosperity and in the public life of the country. In the year of 1827 there were 5276, while in 1848 more then 10.000 Jews lived in Pest. Several small prayer houses were built at that time, but the number of seats did not satisfy the needs of the growing Jewish population. The inauguration of the synagogue in Vienna in 1826 gave an inspiration for the construction of the future Dohány synagogue.

In 1845 a committee consisting of clerical and secular dignities have decided to build up a synagogue that respects the traditions but gives place for the liberal ideas as well. At last three plans were made: a classicist design was created by Joseph Hild, a Byzantine design by Frigyes Feszl, and a romantic, oriental style building by the Austrian Ludwig Förster.

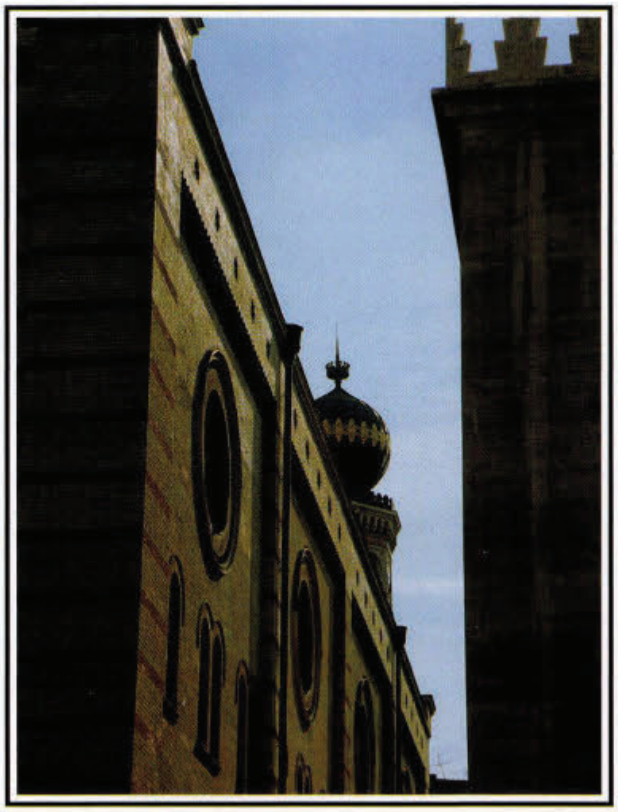
The Jewish Community approved the last one, in spite of the fact that Förster has formerly designed mainly catholic churches. According to a contemporary ironic remark "the Dohány Temple is the most beautiful catholic synagogue in the world."



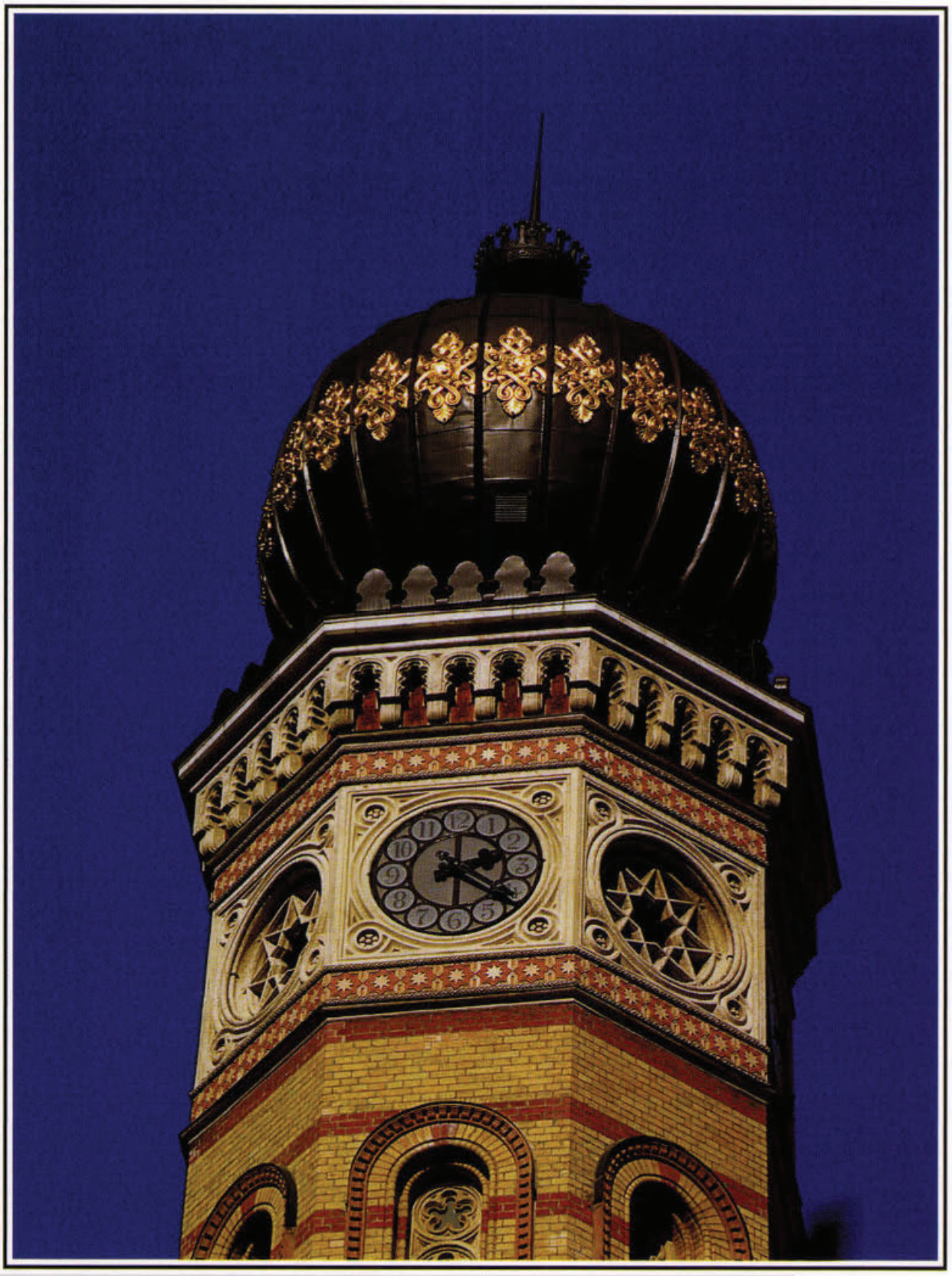
THE DOHÁNY STREET
Synagogue

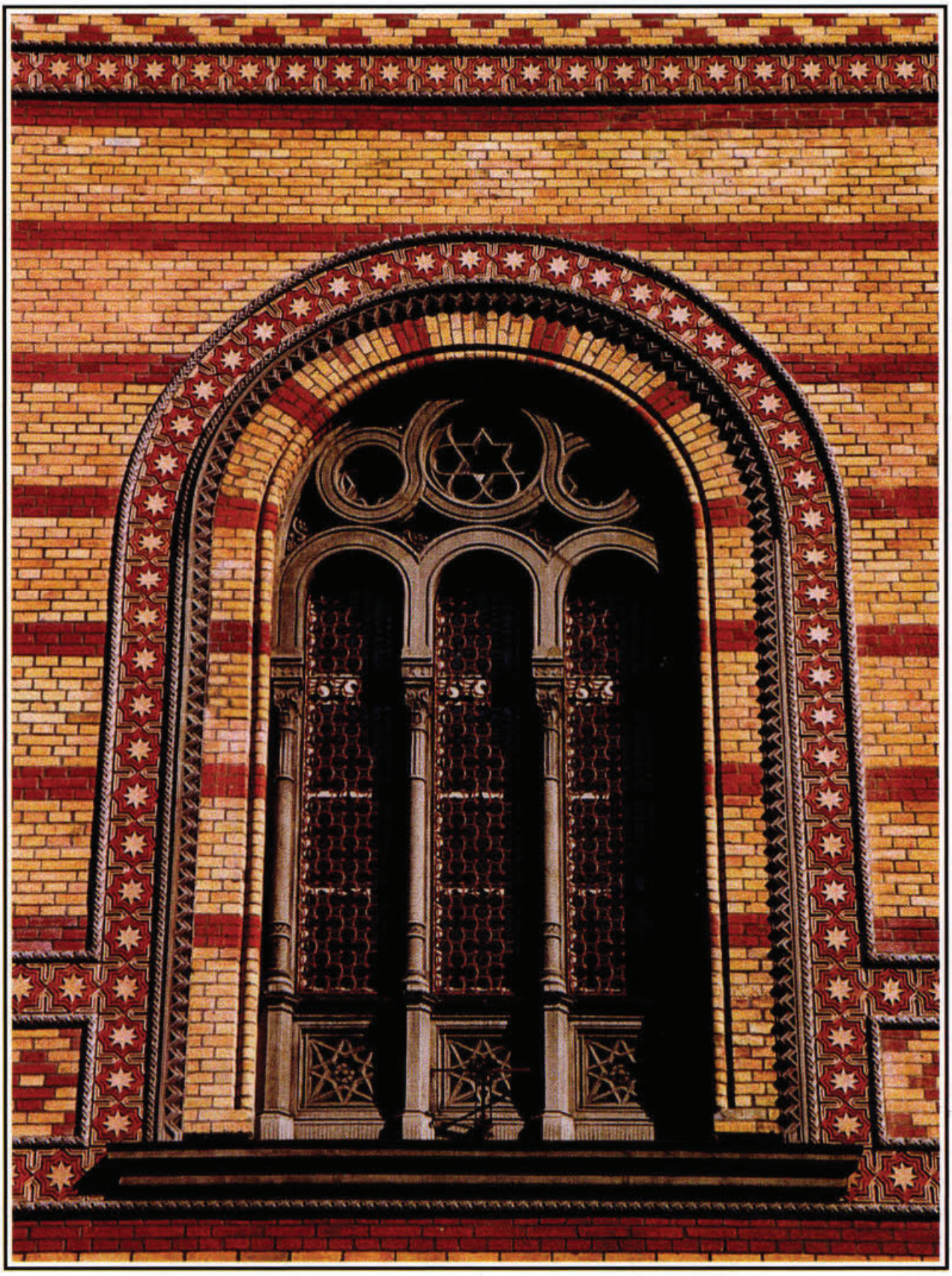


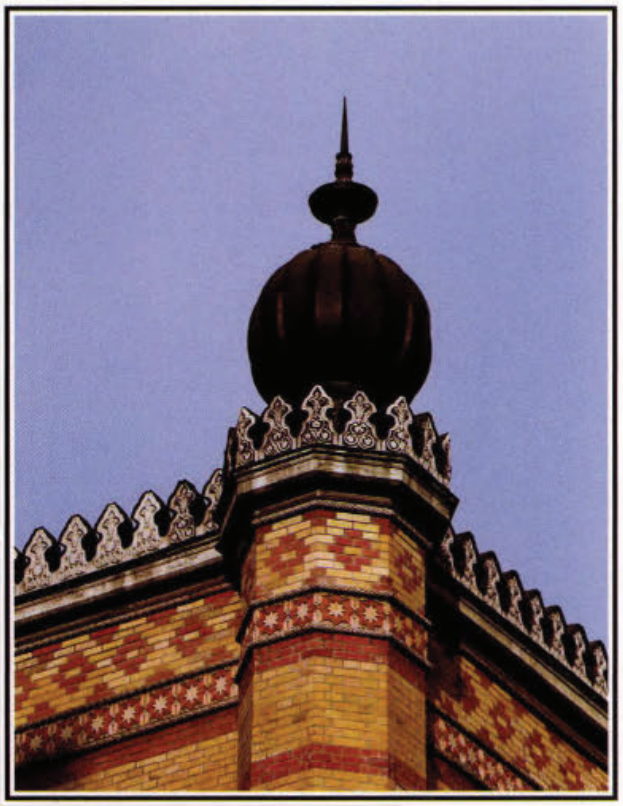
Before constructing the river embankment in Budapest the lower -level Pest side frequently became the part of the tidelands of the Danube. Prior to the construction of the synagogue the architects solved this problem by digging deep wells to channel the internal water of the construction site (these wells are hidden by plastic covers under the seats in the middle of the first and back rows.) The foundation stone was laid down afterwards, on 5th September 1854. The Dohány Street Synagogue is the largest Jewish prayer house of Europe and the second largest one in the world after the New York Temple Emmanuel. The ceremonial inauguration took place on 6th September 1859.





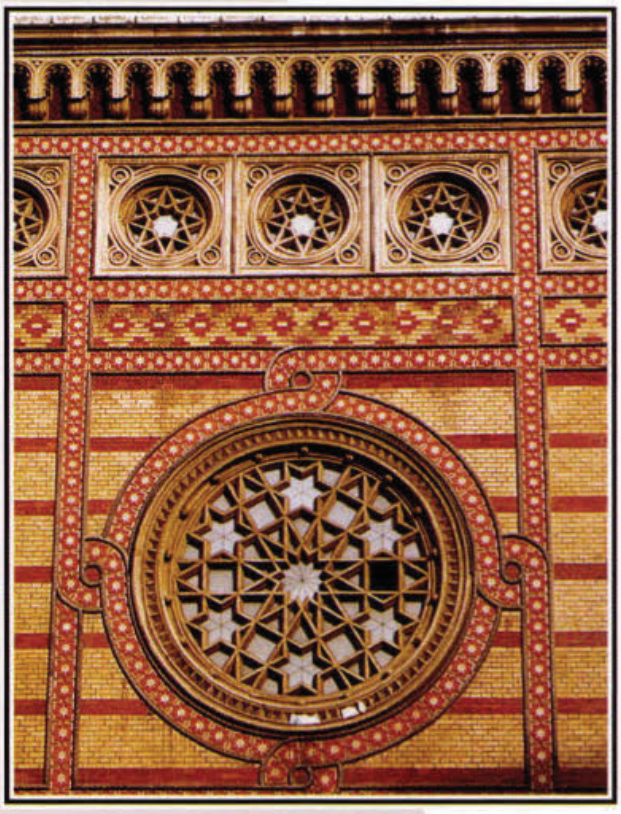






Its architectural style is romantic-oriental, similar to Moorish buildings and hardly reminds us to a usual orthodox synagogue. The façade has many similarities to the elements and symbolism of a gothic catholic cathedral: two high towers, a rosette, and a triumphal arch-like entrance. Towers are very rare in the synagogue architecture. Here they refer to the Old Testament: they remind us to the two columns standing in front of the temple of Solomon.

The burned brick façade is moderately animated by carved stone sections. Solely a molding ledge breaks the horizontal character of the middle part. The richly ornamented semicircular entrance and the huge, oriental rose-window are placed in the middle axis of the building. The two stone-tablets of Moses are placed on the vertex of a triangle shape attic, above the horizontal middle part of the main façade, but a bit further back. The size of the towers, ending in golden ornamented ball-shaped cupolas is: 43,61 meters. The Hebrew language inscription above the main entrance is a quotation from 2nd Book of Moses: "Prepare a sanctuary for me, so I may live among them."
The diameter of the clock-faces placed on the towers is: 1,34 meters.

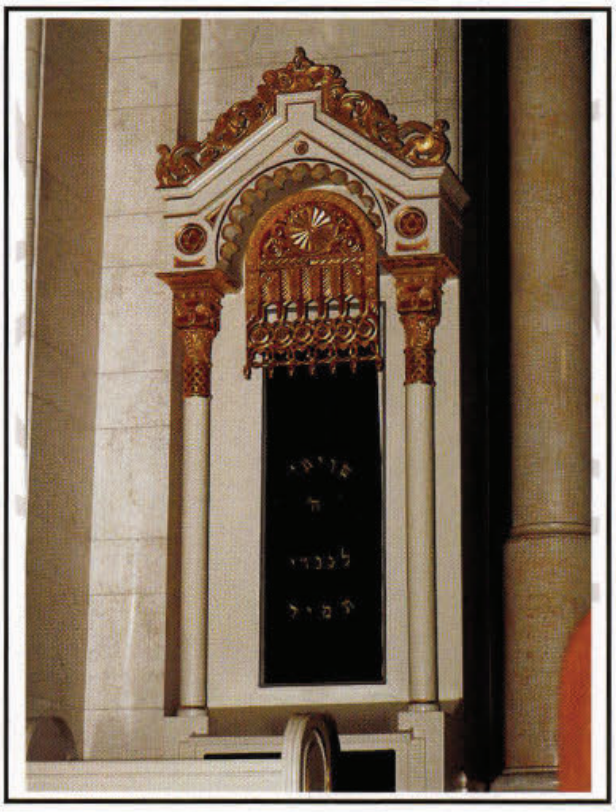


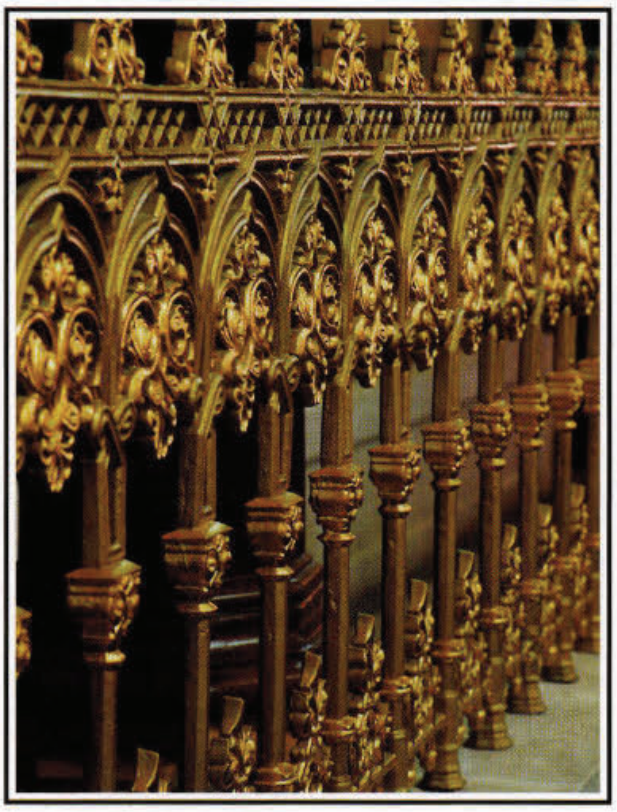




The inner space of the synagogue is probably more gorgeous than its outer walls, thanks to the foreman, Ignác Wechselmann who substituted Ludwig Förster in his absence. The inner design of the building is the work of Frigyes Feszl. The main aisle is 26 meters high and 12 meters wide. The basic area of the inner space is 920 square meters. The total length of the longish temple is 75 meters. The wooden seats are gleaming in the light of the wrought-iron lights, chandeliers, colored attic- and stained glass windows.







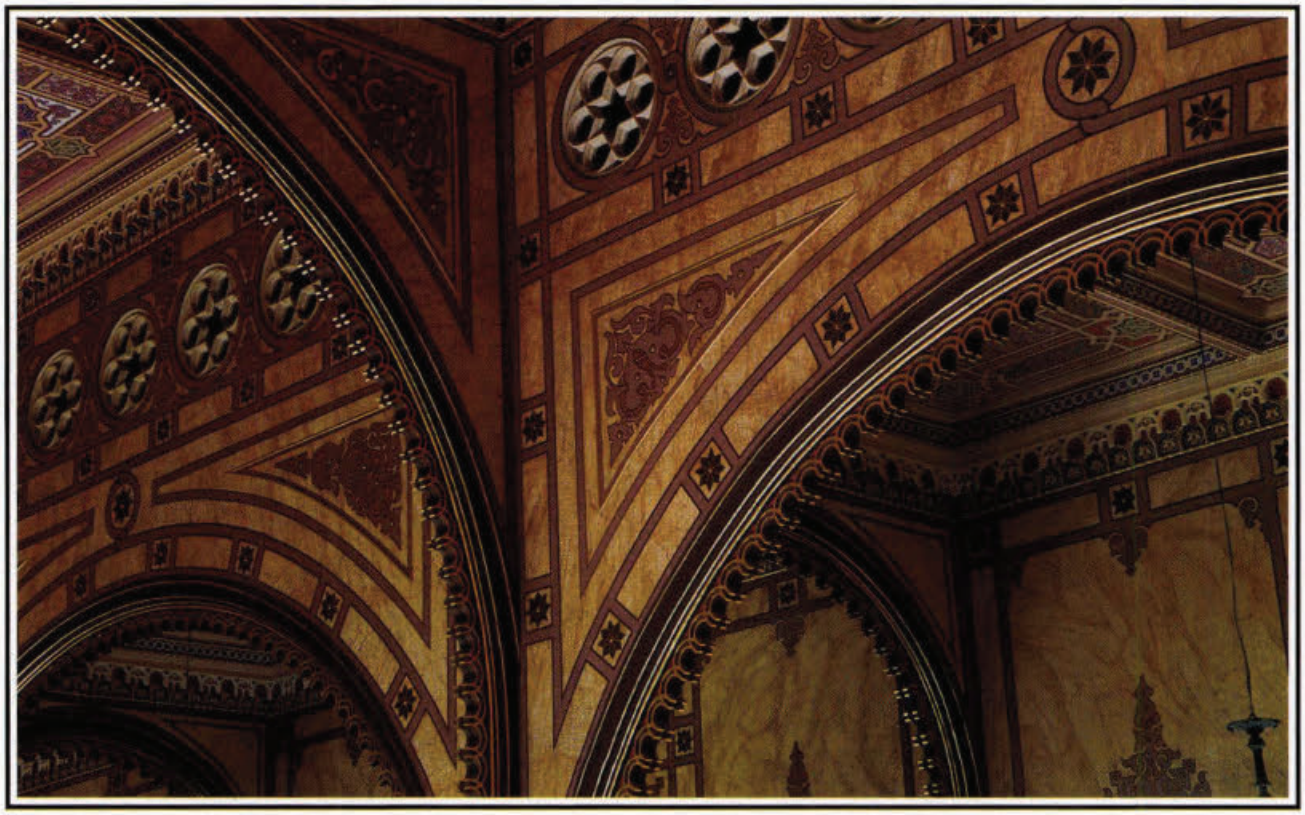


The flood light of the temple, -when 1600 bulbs are lit - gives a chance to really admire the Byzantine style, red, blue and purple motifs of the ceiling. The rectangle shaped, hall-like inner space is divided into three side-aisles by the lines of the two-leveled galleries and the bunch of iron columns. While approaching towards the sanctuary we can have an impression of being in a classical, catholic church with three aisles. In the side-aisles smaller double columns support the two-leveled galleries of women.







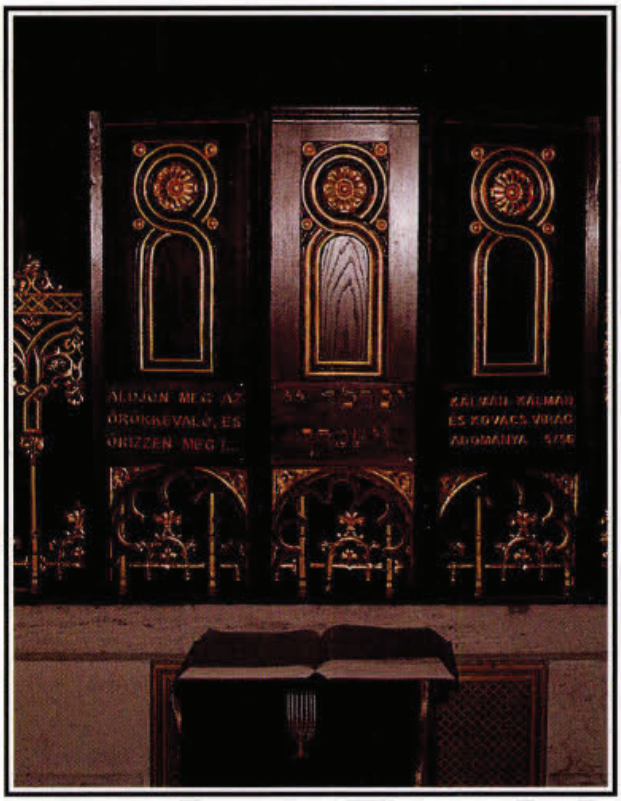






On the ground floor there are 1360 seats for men, while the galleries provide 1466 seats for women. The height of the "Ark of the Covenant" is 8,21 meters, its inner surface is 3,56 square meters. On the top of the "Ark of the Covenant" a small David star can be seen. The eternal flame hanging down in the middle, above the symbol of the sun, hiding the name of God has got the same motif. The semicircular inscription says: "Praise the name of God from sunrise to sunset."

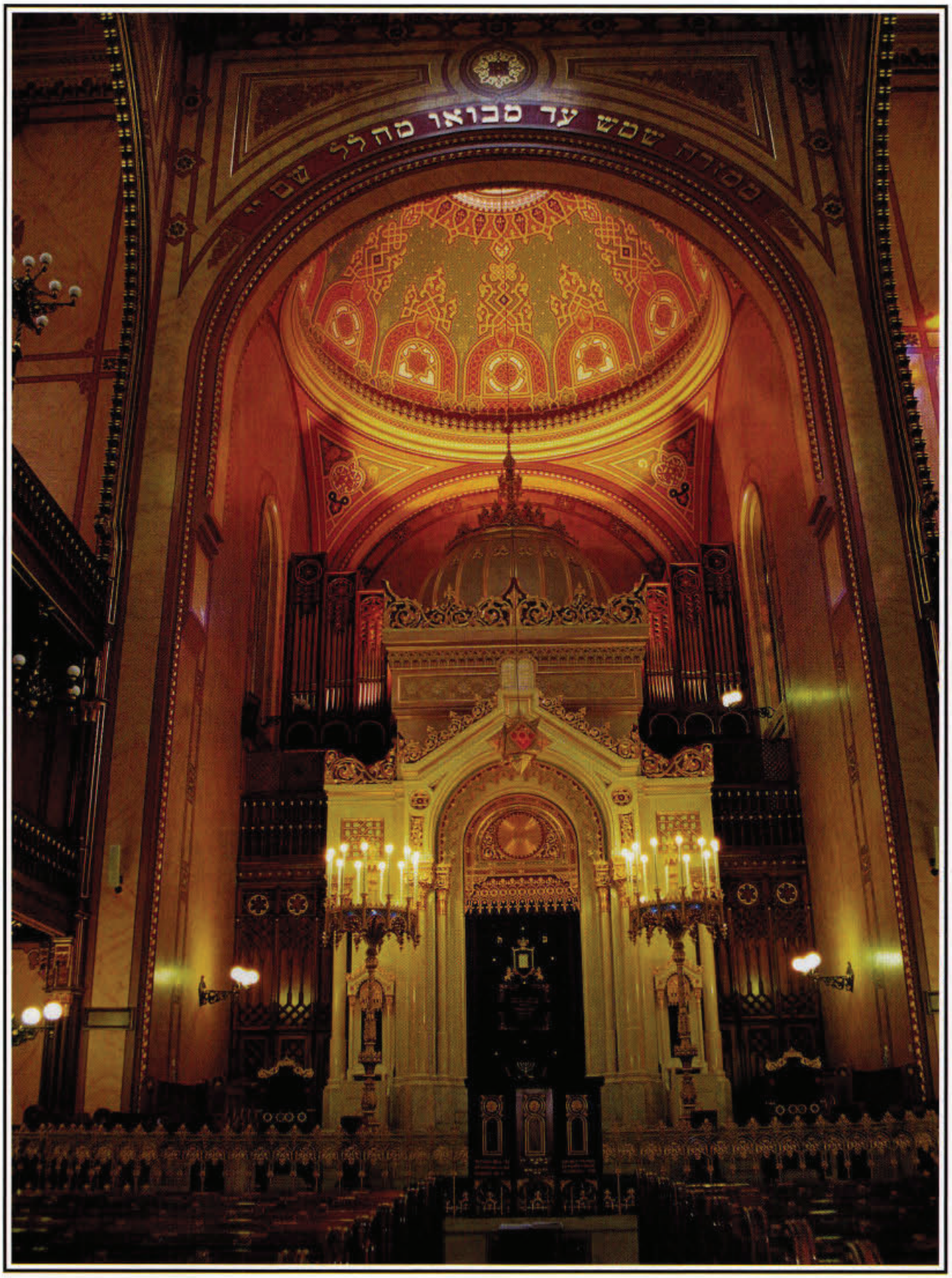
One can reach to the forestage of the sanctuary from its two sides. In the front one can see the lower pulpit and the folding large pulpit in the middle, that in its folded form functions as a Torah's reading table, or as a pulpit for the cantor who leads in prayer. On both sides there are the seats of the dignities. Three steps lead to the seats of the rabbi and the cantor standing immediately in front of the "Ark of the Covenant". The Ark is an obligatory element of every synagogue since this is the place where the Torah, -the scroll of the 5 books of Moses handwritten onto parchment paper - is held. In the Dohány synagogue there are 25 Torah scrolls. The interior of the "Ark of the Covenant" is decorated with golden stars and a blue carpet. The Torah scrolls are dressed in velvet covers and a huge crown is hanging down above them. The organ and the gallery for the choir are at the back of the sanctuary.







Since the second Temple of Jerusalem was ruined, according to the traditions no other instrument then a ram's horn, the shofar can be heard in prayer houses. In spite of this tradition the people here could listen to the music from the organ prepared in Paulinzell, Thüringie. At the inauguration ceremony the organ was played by Ferenc Liszt and Camille Saint-Saens. First in 1902, then in 1931 the organ was rebuilt according to the contemporary technology, and got an electro-pneumatic system. At that time it was the largest organ of the country with its 70 registers, 4 manuals, 5030 pipes and 49 bells. The instrument that lacked the organ-box - however it was considered to be modern at that time - got spoiled in 60 years. Only 20 registers could have been adapted. To save its velvety tune it was rebuilt as a French romantic style instrument after the ideas of Gábor Lehotka, teacher of the Music Academy, with traditional mechanic system and 63 registers. From this time on the synagogue with its regular organ and other instrumental concert plays an important role in the cultural life of the capital- as a concert hall.



Enlargements, demolitions and RENOVATIONS

In the corner building next to the synagogue - it has been pulled down later - the writer, journalist, and dreamer of the State of the Jews, Theodor Herzl was born. From time to time several smaller and bigger changes have been made on the building of the synagogue. In 1864 it was reinforced, then in 1893 two add-itional staircases were built to the temple. In 1931 the Hero's Temple and the building of the Jewish Museum were built following the partial demolition of the left wing in front of the main entrance. An archway was created to frame the space between the two buildings. A garden surrounded by the arcades was also put into shape during the reconstruction. At that time the designers haven't yet known anything about the tragic role the garden would play later in the life of the Jews of Hungary. The last ghetto of Europe was set up at the beginning of December 1944. The ghetto included 162 buildings of the streets behind the synagogue.





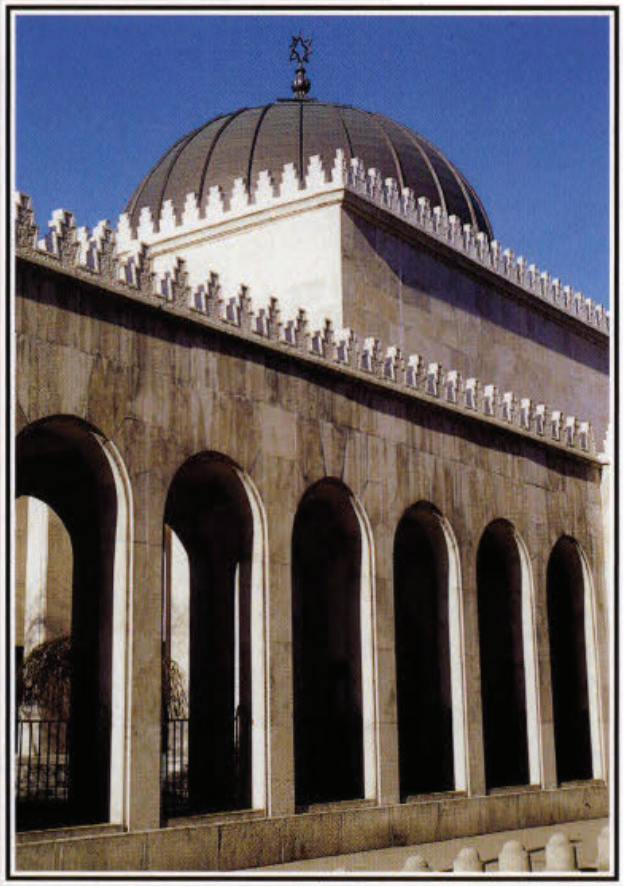
Even though the Soviet Army liberated the survivors on 18th January 1945, during the two months of the winter 10.000 Jews froze to death or died from starvation, illness and bloodshed. The garden of the temple now became the cemetery of the martyrs. In lack of surviving relatives the majority of the bodies could not be identified, so their mortal remains had been buried here.

As an ally with Germany, Hungary was not military occupied. The situation has changed in March 1944 when Hitler occupied the country. Headed by Adolf Eichmann, the Gestapo has also appeared in Hungary together with military troops and with the help of their Hungarian assistants deported the whole Jewish population of the countryside to Auschwitz within three months. The figures tell everything: Before the 2nd World War 750.000 Jews lived in Hungary, out of them 200.000 in Budapest. In the course of the last year of the war 600.000 Jews lost their lives. 90 % of them came from the countryside.



During the war the Dohány Synagogue was hit 27 times. Though the damage was not fatal, there was an urgent need for the complete restoration after the temporary one. The overall reconstruction works of the group of buildings could start in 1990 thanks to the donations of several thousands of charitable people and believers. First the steel structure of the ceiling and the roofing was fixed, and then the restoration works started section by section. The works preserved the spirit of the original construction, but at the same time they considered the demands of our age as well. For the gilding of the wall and furniture 300 square meters of 23-carat gilt were used. The ground floor received an electric floor heating, while the woman's gallery was equipped with hot-air heating. The two large chandeliers are also new, since the military authorities casted guns from the original ones during the occupation of Hungary.



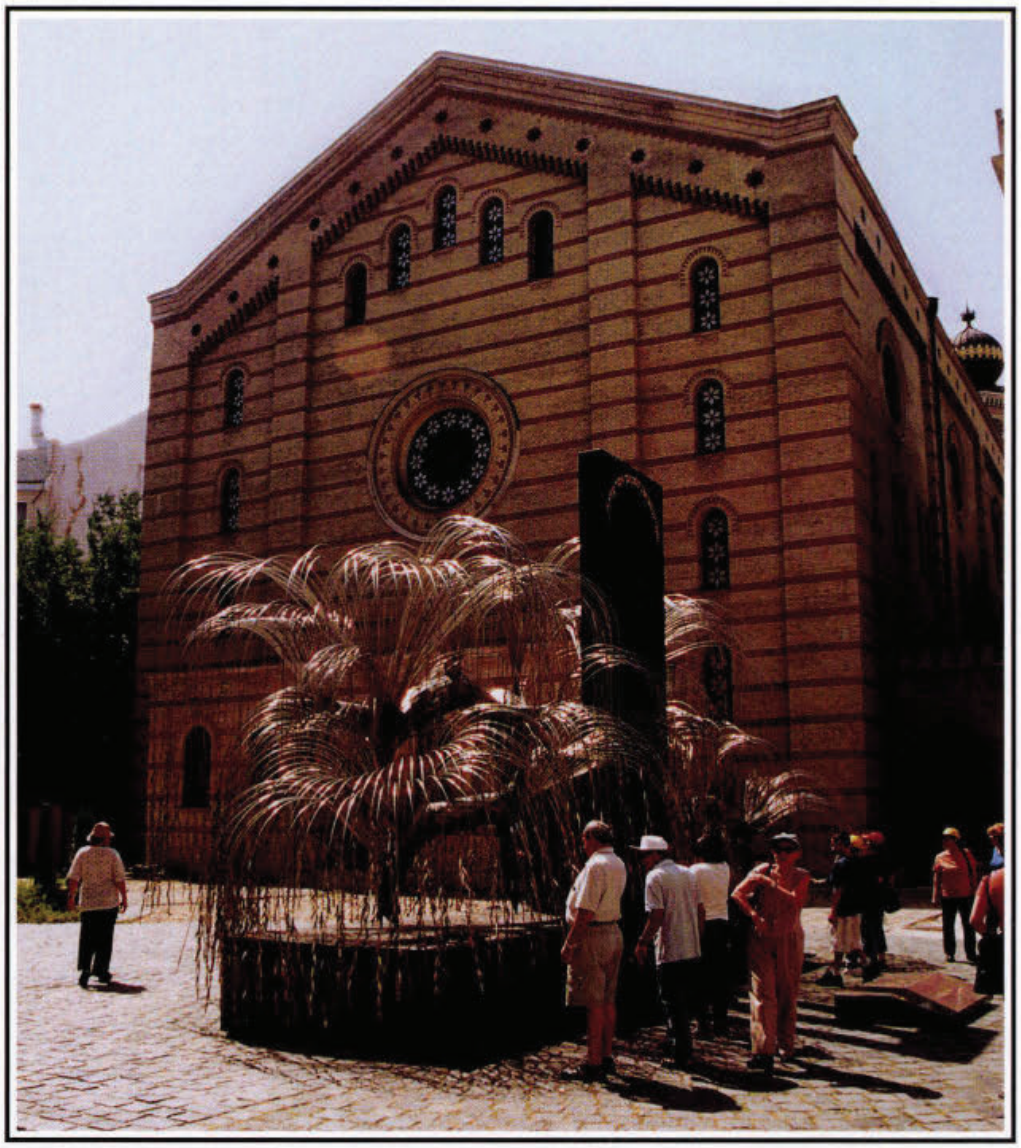




The weight of the chandeliers is 1,5 tones and have 124 bulbs, each. Both of them can be lifted as requested by a remote controlled electric motor. Microphones amplify the preaching with the help of sounding boards placed at the four corners.

The cost of the renovation works mounted up to nearly 10 millions dollars. The temple was inaugurated in its renewed form and original beauty on 5th September 1996.

THE MEMORIAL Park



The Memorial Park

behind the synagogue bears the name of Raul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who saved the life of about 35.000 Hungarian Jews during the 2nd World War. The most impressive object of the Park is the Holocaust Memorial Tree commemorating the 600.000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

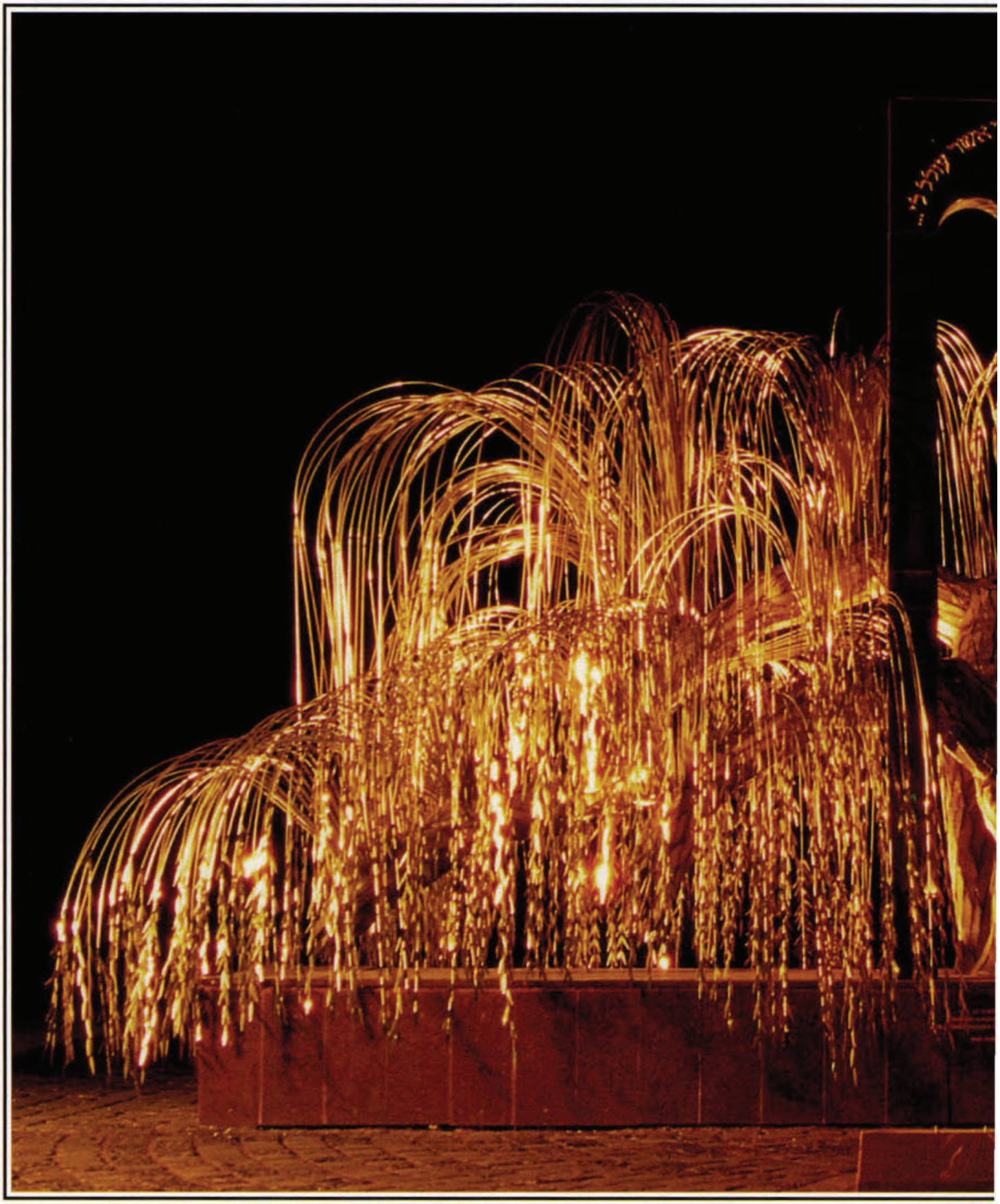
The weeping willow tree - made of stainless steel and silver - is the work of sculptor Imre Varga. On the top of the black double archway the Hebrew language inscription asks: "Is there a bigger pain then mine?

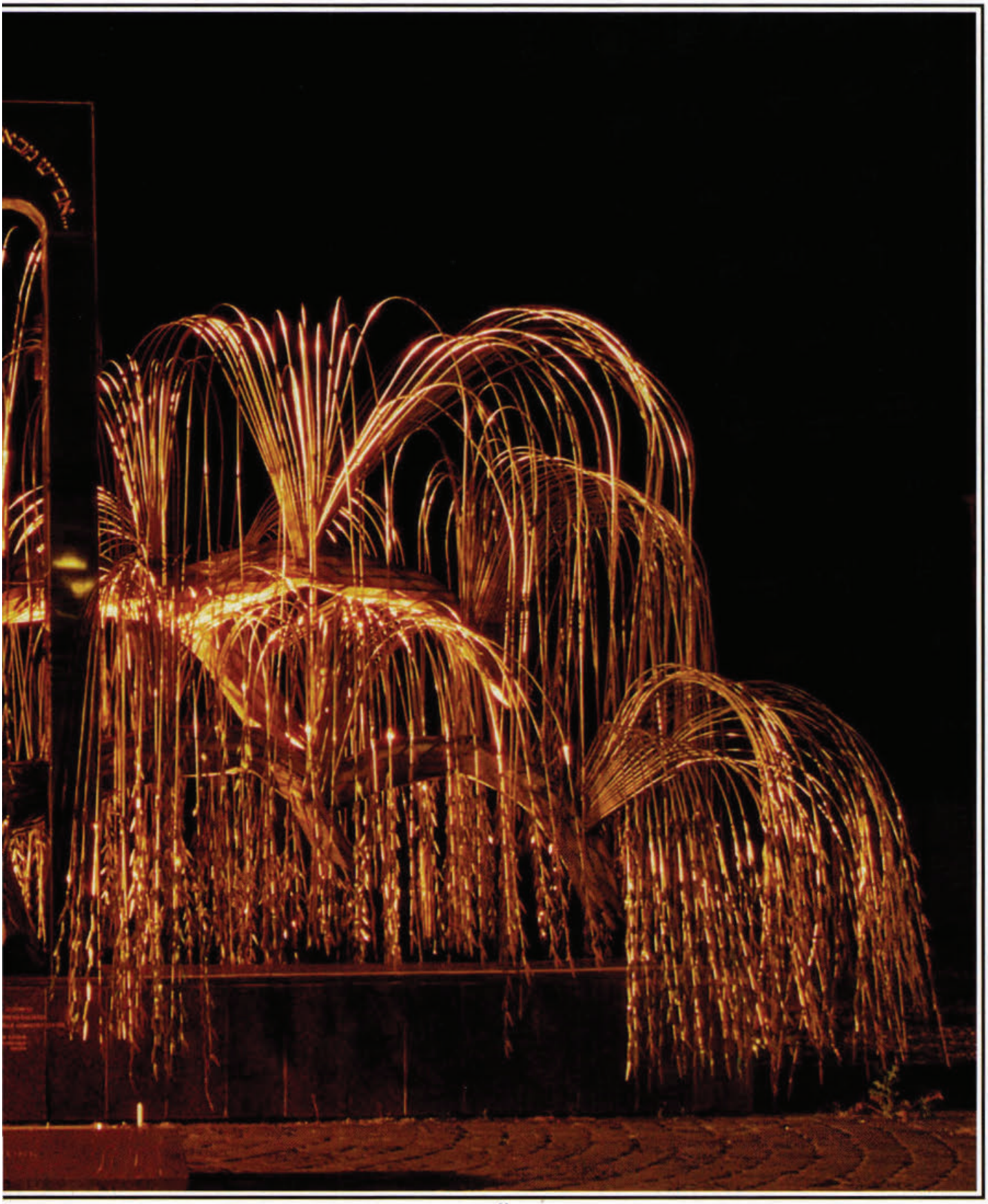
The shape of the tree symbolizes a reversed menorah: the Soa is an up-side-down distorted image of everything human and traditional. The 4.000 leaves of the Memorial Tree give place to the names of the Hungarian Jews perished in the Holocaust. Their memories are kept by their surviving relatives or friends, who at the same time supported the Emanuel Foundation, the founder of the Memorial Tree. The foundation was raised by Tony Curtis, the famous American movie star of Hungarian origin for the memory of his perished father.

In front of the tree the memorial tablet on the ground calls us: "To remember". The other tablet, close to the fence quotes the famous sentence from the Talmud: "Those who save one soul, save the whole world."

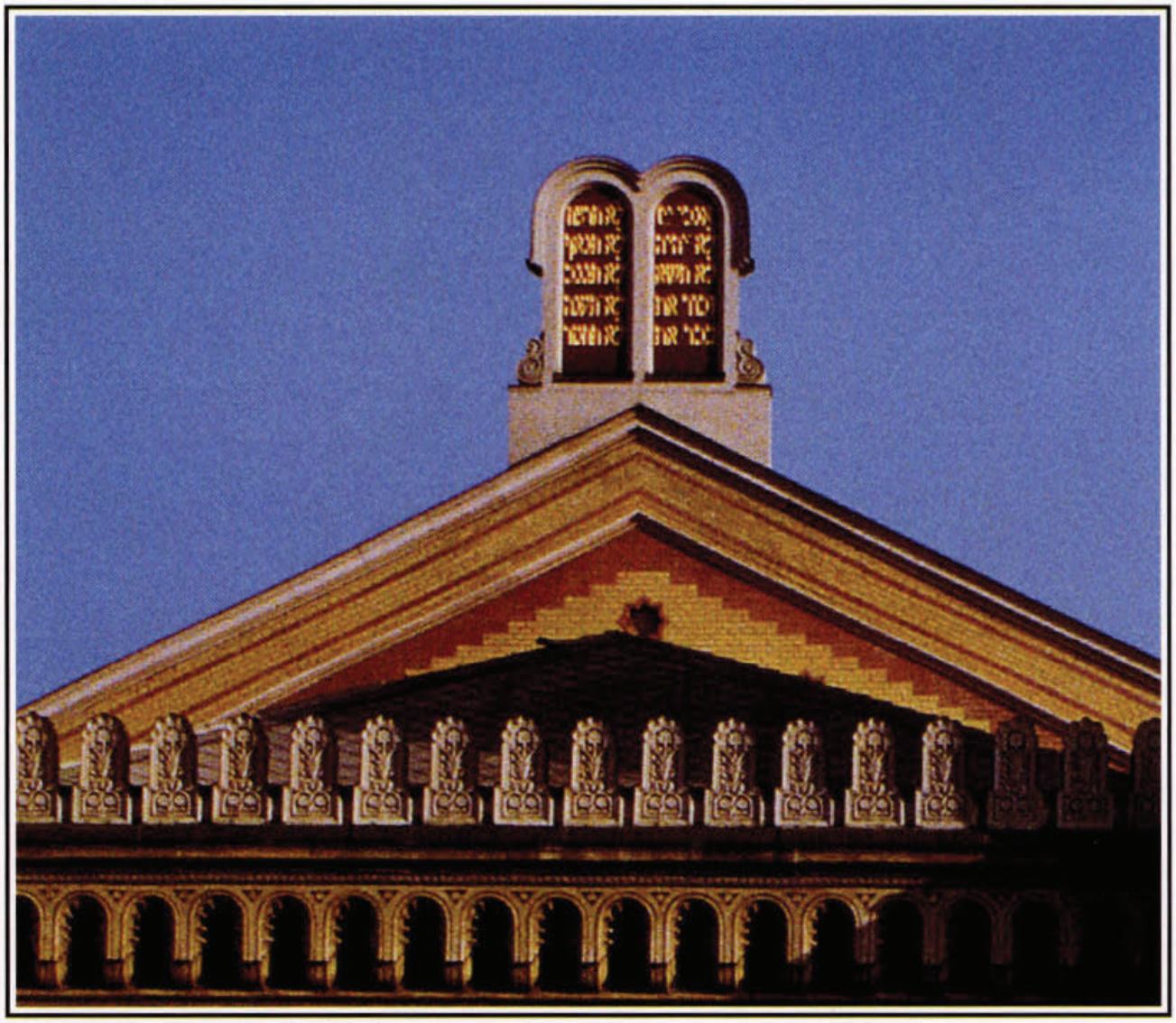
Behind the tree, in a park four huge standing red granite columns surround a fifth black one lying in the middle. Here we can remember those non-Jews who did their best to save the Jews during the hard times. They are called "Righteous Gentiles" (Raoul Wallenberg, Angelo Rotta, Carl Lutz, Perlasca, Branquinho, etc.).







THE SYMBOLS OF
the Jewish religion



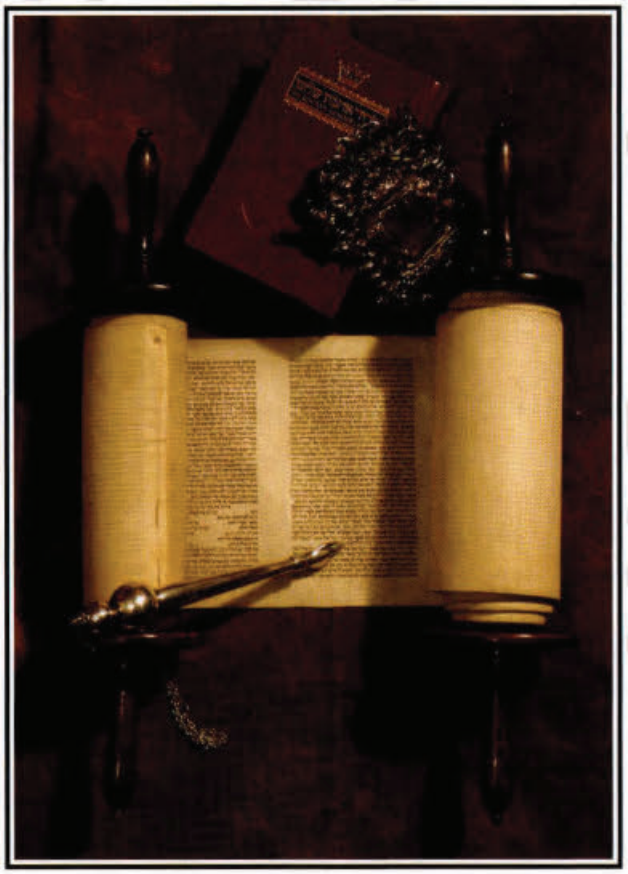
The Stone Tablets

The stylish copy of the Stone Tablets with the Ten Commandments is the characteristic and favored external decoration of the synagogues. The Jewish people liberated from the Egyptian slavery heard the manifestation of Lord after wandering for three months at the Mount Sinai. This manifestation is the basic moral and ethical codex for mankind and it is known as the Ten Commandments. The experience of the revelation and the acceptance of the Ten Commandments initiated the advancement of the Jewish spirituality and became the basic pillar of the Jewish law and every jurisdiction.

The Torah

The five books of Moses are known, respected and protected by the people of Israel as the "Torah" (meaning "Teaching"). The Torah is published in two forms. Its printed form is used for everyday learning while the scrolls made of parchment paper written by quill pen and according to very strict rules, without capital letters and punctuation are red out during the services, four times a week: Monday, Thursday, Saturday morning and afternoon, and on the morning services of the Jewish holidays. Each time a certain passage - Parasha - is red from the Torah, therefore the greatest respect for a Jewish man is if he may read - or stand next to the reader - from the Torah. The scrolls of the Torah are so precious that they are protected and decorated in every possible way. The crown of the Torah can either be a crown shape ornament or a jewel fixed on both woods, called pomegranate after its form. The sacred scrolls are protected and decorated by armors made of silver. Since the Torah is written by hand and with ink, it is very sensitive to every touching. To save the Torah from touching and to facilitate the task of the person who reads out of the Torah, a male from the community follows the lines on the parchment paper with a pointer (called "yad", hand) that has a shape of a hand and usually is made of silver.

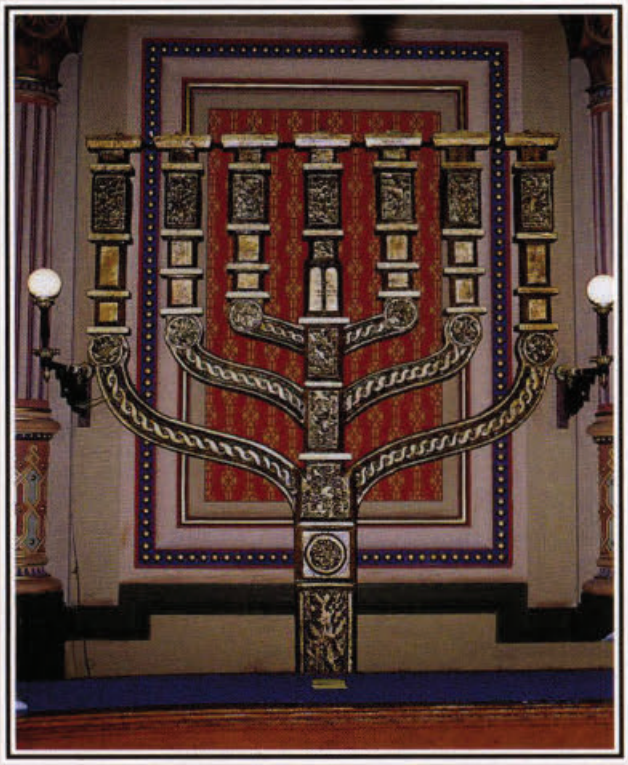




The shofar

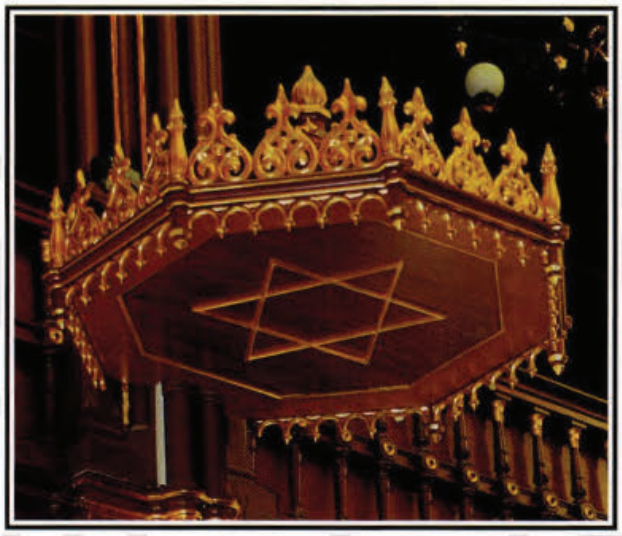
The shofar is the only traditional instrument of the synagogue. It is a horn instrument made of the horn of a ram. The sound of the shofar provoked the fall of the walls of Jericho. Other instruments were also used in the Temple, but after the destruction of the 2nd Temple, the shofar is the only instrument used in every synagogues of the world. It is an essential requirement of the ceremonies of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year and of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. According to the traditions one has to hear hundred sounds from the shofar on these days.

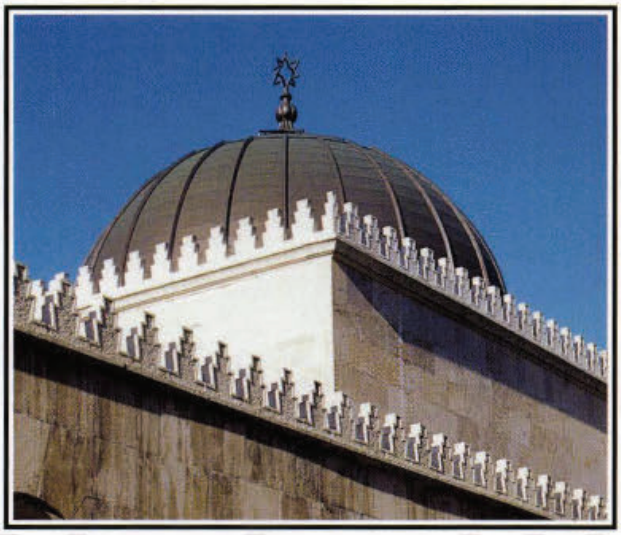




The Menorah and the Eternal Flame

The Menorah, the seven-armed candlestick stood in the Jerusalem Temple. The flame of the oil was burning all the time, illuminating the Temple. The Eternal Flame keeps this memory in every synagogue of the world. According to other explanation a human soul is the candle of God, and its flames remind us to our deceased relatives, and cherish their memories.



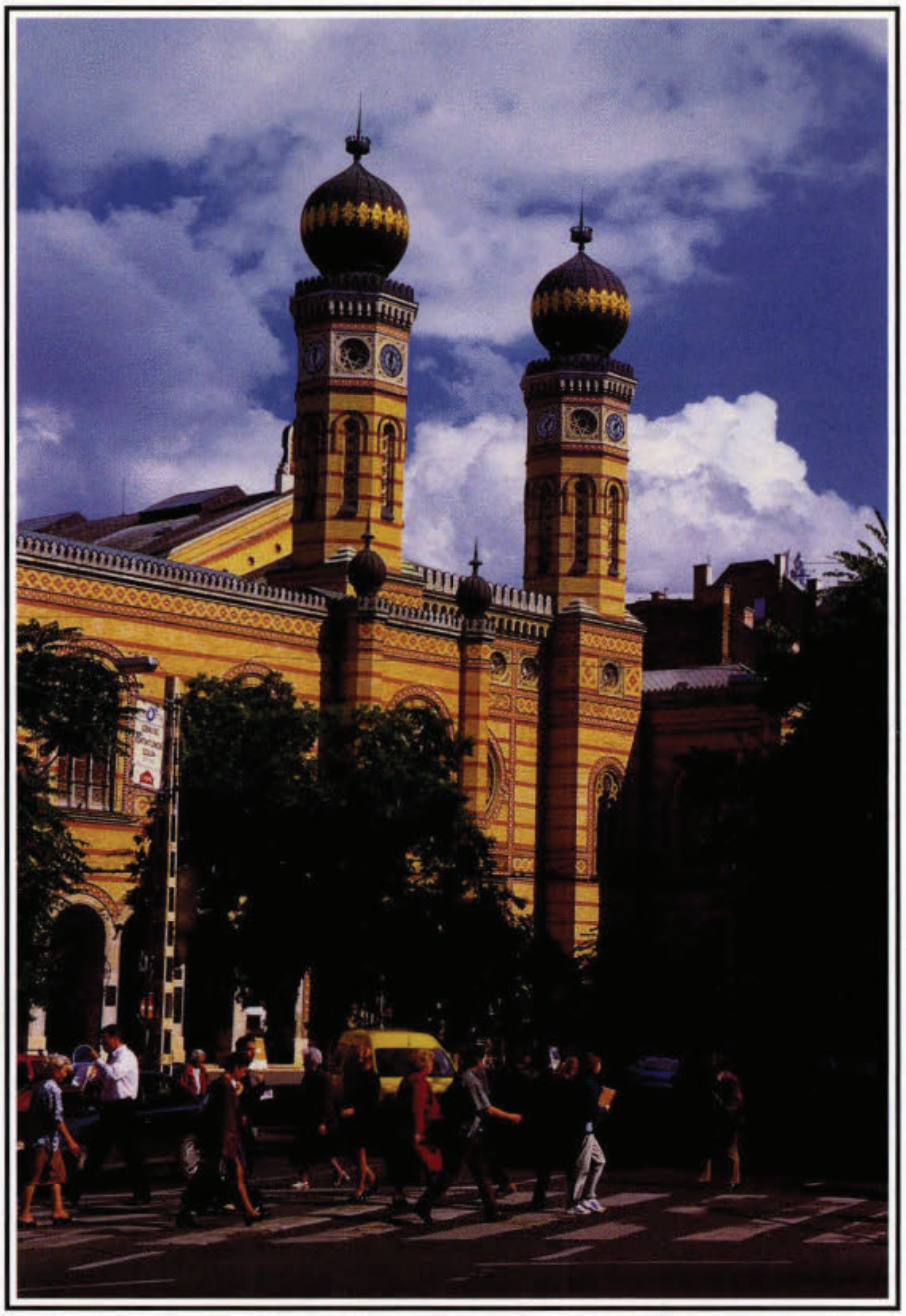






The Star of David

The Star of David is one of the most favored ornaments of the synagogues today. They are painted on frescos, or glazed windows or casted from metal. The two triangles turned into each other symbolize the connection of the Sky and Earth, God and the human beings. Originally the sign was a decoration of David's shield, according to legend. Beginning since millennia the Jews identified themselves with the six-pointed star at such an extent that it was also used to stigmatize the Jews during the time of the Holocaust. It is still the symbol of the Jewish people that they are proud of. The Star of David can be also seen in the national flag of Israel.



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THE DOHÁNY STREET SYNAGOGUE



