



TEMPLE BETH TZEDEK

621 GETZVILLE ROAD • AMHERST NY 14226
PH. 716.838.3232 • FAX 716.835.6154
WWW.BTZBUFFALO.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Allan Werbow, Executive Director
(716)838-3232

October 28, 2009, Amherst, N.Y. – Temple Beth Tzedek (TBT), Buffalo’s largest Conservative Jewish congregation, will rededicate its Holocaust Memorial on Sunday, Nov. 8, 2009, in conjunction with the commemoration of the 71st anniversary of Kristallnacht, the “Night of the Broken Glass.”

The dedication ceremony will take place at 11:15 a.m., in the Andrew Paull Eisen Sanctuary, to be followed by the recitation of memorial prayers outside in the Jerry Frank Memorial Garden, where the memorial has been installed on the exterior brick wall of the synagogue.

Guest speakers will include Dr. Sol Messinger and other Holocaust survivors. Rabbi Perry Netter will officiate at the ceremony, while TBT President Harvey Sanders will relate the history of Kristallnacht and of the memorial itself. Students of the Geshur School, a joint school of Temple Beth Tzedek, Temple Sinai, and two smaller congregations, will also attend, as will local dignitaries.

"The memorial looks more powerful than ever," said Linda Boxer, a TBT Vice President and Co-Chair of the Art and Artifacts Committee, which has been charged with integrating the holdings of TBT’s predecessor congregations. "At Beth El, the sculpture was up on the wall, high above my head. Here, in the Jerry Frank Garden, the piece is in my space, a powerful reminder of our obligation to honor the victims."

Designed and executed by the Ascalon Studio over two and a half years, and paid for by a host of generous donors, the Holocaust Memorial was originally dedicated April 11, 1986, and was displayed inside the sanctuary at Temple Beth El (TBE), the oldest synagogue between New York City and Chicago and one of the predecessors of TBT.

Following the June 2008 merger of TBE and Temple Shaarey Zedek, the memorial was carefully taken down from TBE’s former building on Eggert Road in Tonawanda, and was recently reinstalled in a place of honor in the Jerry Frank Memorial Garden, between the two entrances to TBT.

The memorial features a backdrop of barbed wire, symbolic of the wire that surrounded Nazi concentration camps, and sculpted flames forming the word “Zachor,” which is Hebrew for “remember.” The flames appear to be devouring holy objects, including a Torah scroll, broken tablets of the Ten Commandments, and three open prayer

books. The memorial also includes a menorah, or candelabra, being toppled, and six tree trunks, cut off in their prime but with new branches sprouting to symbolize the rebirth of the Jewish people through the State of Israel.

"It is spectacular," said Rabbi Perry Netter. "Frankly, being attached to a brick wall, which reminds me of the barracks at Auschwitz, make the piece even more powerful than the picture reflects on the wall of the old TBE."

Maurice, David, and Adir Ascalon are known for their works of art, which grace synagogues throughout the United States, Mexico, Israel, and Europe. The Ascalons also created Temple Beth El's Ark doors and stained glass windows, which are now incorporated into the TBT building, as well as the Eternal Light and Doors of Glory, which the synagogue hopes to display shortly.

Kristallnacht, which literally means "Crystal night," was an anti-Jewish pogrom or riot in Nazi Germany and Austria from Nov. 9-11, 1938. It was part of Nazi Germany's broader anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jews, and is seen by many historians as the harbinger of the Holocaust.

It was supposedly triggered by the assassination in France of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by a German-born Polish Jewish refugee, which served as a pretext for a coordinated attack on Jewish people and their property, orchestrated by Hitler and propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels. In all, 91 Jews were murdered and about 30,000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps. The Hitler Youth, Gestapo, SS, and SA also destroyed 267 synagogues and ransacked thousands of homes and businesses. Storefront windows were smashed, giving rise to the name Kristallnacht.

After the rioting stopped, the Jewish community was fined to pay for the damages and the assassination. Additional restrictions and other anti-Semitic measures soon followed, including the seizure of property, as the Nazis ramped up efforts that ultimately led to the Holocaust.

For more information about the memorial, see TBT's Web site, at <http://www.btzbuffalo.org/history/tbe/building/h-mem/tbeholoc.htm>.

----- 30 -----

ABOUT TEMPLE BETH TZEDEK

Temple Beth Tzedek is the largest Conservative synagogue in Western New York, serving more than 600 families and about 1,500 individuals in the greater Buffalo-Niagara Falls area. Formed on June 8, 2008, from the merger of Temple Shaarey Zedek and Temple Beth El, the oldest synagogue between New York City and Chicago, the synagogue caters to congregants of all ages with a range of religious, educational, social, and cultural programs. Temple Beth Tzedek is located at 621 Getzville Road in Amherst.