

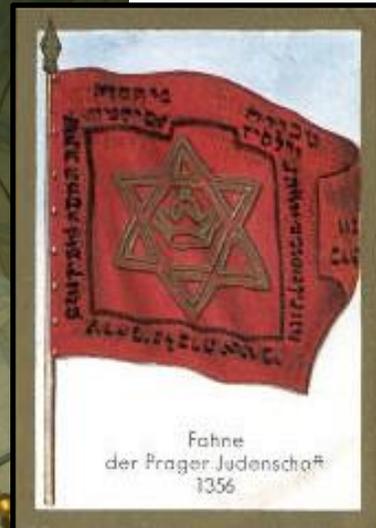
In this week's Parashah of Bamidbar, we read of the number of people in each of the Twelve Tribes. The Torah also tells us that each Tribe had its own flag to highlight its individuality and independent status. This week's NLI resource features the flags of two formerly-major European Jewish communities.

Kerem  
School



הספרייה הלאומית  
المكتبة الوطنية الاسرائيلية  
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in conjunction with NLI



The flag below is currently located in the Jewish Museum of Bucharest, Romania and was originally found in the Great Synagogue in Bucharest. It is unclear exactly where the flag would have been found, but it was clearly intended as a sign of the community's close connection with their country. The blue, yellow and red are the same colours as those that appear on the Romanian flag.



Above is the flag which is found hanging above the Bimah in the Altneuschul in Prague. The centre of the flag features a Magen David with a Jewish-style hat in its centre, which became the official symbol of the Prague Jewish community from the 15th century onwards, and indeed the first officially recorded Jewish flag. The text of the Shema is inscribed in gold thread along the edges of the flag.

There are some who say that the flag was given to the Jewish community in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by Emperor Charles IV. Others claim that Ferdinand III, the Holy Roman Emperor awarded the Jewish community their own banner in recognition of their services in the defence of Prague during the Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648). It was restored by Emperor Charles VI in 1716 though there is now a replica which hangs in its place in the Shul.

# ISRAEL FLAG

The flag of Israel was adopted on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1948, five months after the establishment of the State of Israel.

The basic design recalls the Tallit, the Jewish prayer shawl, which is white with black or blue stripes. The symbol in the centre is the Star of David "Magen David", a Jewish symbol dating from late medieval Prague (see over), which was adopted by the First Zionist Congress in 1897. The blue colour is described as "dark sky-blue" though it varies from flag to flag.

In 2007, an Israeli flag measuring 660m x 100m and weighing 5.2 tonnes was unfurled near the ancient fortress of Masada, breaking the world record for the largest flag.

# ALTNEUSCHUL

The Altneuschul (Old-New Synagogue) in Josefov, the old Jewish quarter of Prague, is the oldest Synagogue in Europe that is still used as a Shul. It was completed in 1270 and was one of Prague's first gothic-style buildings. The Synagogue was originally called the New or Great Synagogue and later, when newer Synagogues were built in the 16th century, it became known as the Old-New Synagogue.

Another explanation states that the name comes from the Hebrew על תנאי (al tenay), which means "on condition" and sounds identical to the Yiddish "alt-nay," or old-new. According to legend, angels brought stones from the Second Temple in Jerusalem after its destruction to build the Synagogue in Prague—"on condition" that they are to be returned when the Messiah comes, i.e., when the Temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt and the stones are needed.

There are numerous other tales and legends associated with the Altneuschul, including the well-documented case of the Golem of Prague, the artificial creature made of clay that was animated by Rabbi Loew (the Maharal) in order to protect the Prague community. According to legend, the Golem's remains are kept in the attic of the Synagogue. A further story is told of a Nazi agent who entered the Synagogue attic during World War II in an effort to stab the Golem, but instead, the agent was found dead. As a result, the Gestapo apparently did not enter the attic during the war, and the building was spared during the Nazis' destruction of Synagogues.

## Activities:

Something to discuss

If your family were to design their own flag, what would it look like? - Think about the colours and what they would represent as well as the symbols that would appear on it.

Some say that the story of the Golem of Prague is true whilst others say it is only a legend. Read up about the Golem and decide what you think. Why do you think this?



Try creating your family flag using paint, crayons or any other media. Bring it to school to be displayed on the NLI wall.

Other ideas:

Try to recreate the flag of Israel or Great Britain using hama beads or coloured pegs.

Try recreating a flag using scrunched up pieces of tissue paper.



Find out about the British flag: What does it symbolise? Why is it red, white and blue? Why is it the design that it is? Why is it sometimes called the Union Jack and sometimes the Union flag?

For a tour around the Altneuschul including a quick sighting of the flag:



Don't miss this! Life in Israel portrayed through the flag of Israel - it's brilliant!