**Tour in ANU: The Czech Perspective**

**The Czech Audience**

The Czech population is quite monolithic. The vast majority are ethnic Czechs (more than 60%). Minorities, which traditionally and on a long term live within the Czech Republic territory, include Slovaks, Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, Vietnamese, and a few other communities. About 70% of the population does not identify with any religion, but most of the Czech culture is historically embedded in Christianity (and Judaism). For example, the majority of Czechs celebrate Christmas and Easter but do not always consider their religious significance.

**Czech-Israel Relations**

The Czech Republic (and Czechoslovakia) have had good relations with the State of Israel and the Yishuv since the 1920s. The first Czechoslovak president Tomas Garrigue Masaryk was one of the first state officials to visit the then-British mandate of Palestine in 1927. He, for example, met with Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and Hugo Bergmann, a professor at the Hebrew University and the director of the Jewish National Library (until 1935). Later, Czechoslovakia was among the first countries which recognized the State of Israel; the diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on July 3, 1948. Czechoslovakia provided not only political but also military support, which was crucial for Israel’s victory in the first Arab-Israeli War. But similar to relations with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovak relations with Israel deteriorated in the 1960s. After the fall of communism in 1989, Czechoslovakia (and later the Czech Republic) re-established good relations with Israel. Political and cultural cooperation has been thriving ever since.

Under the historic development mentioned above, Czechs are quite supportive and sympathetic to the State of Israel. In recent years, many Czech tourists visited Israel and vice versa.

**Czech Elements in the ANU Exhibition**

The Old New Synagogue (Hallelujah Gallery)

* Built in the last third of the 13th century
* Ashkenazi synagogue serving the Prague Jewish Community
* Originally was called New or Great Shul
  + It was a second synagogue built in the Jewish quarter after the so-called Old Shul
* When other synagogues were built in the Jewish ghetto from the 16th century onward, it was renamed Altneuschul (Old-New Shul/Synagogue)
  + ANU’s index also mentions a legend about its name and its connection to the Second Jerusalem Temple ([here](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/the-old-synagogue-altneuschul/))
* Enveloped in numerous legends and tales, including the legend about a golem (created by Maharal)
* Currently still in use by the Prague Jewish Community (weekly for Shabbat services and holidays)
  + It is believed to be the oldest extant and active synagogue in Europe
  + The Prague Kehilah is the biggest in the Czech Republic containing about 1,500 - 2,000 members.

Gutwirth-Zucker Prague Haggadah ([Floor 1: Hallelujah](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/gutwirth-zucker-prague-haggadah/))

* Manuscript written in Prague at the beginning of the 18th century
* Can also serve as a connection to talk about the Prague Hebrew press established in the 16th century (it was the first Hebrew press “north from the Alps”)
  + However, manuscripts were still created in Prague after the establishment of the print. Since printed books became more common, manuscripts became a luxurious article…
* Information about unique drawings are discussed in an article on the ANU blog ([here](https://www.anumuseum.org.il/blog/who-knows-three-enigmatic-drawings-in-the-gutwirth-zucker-haggadah/))

The Golem of Prague Poster by Lena Revenko ([Floor 2](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/display_center/jewish-immagration/))

Rivka Bat Meir Tiktiner ([Floor 2](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/text-rivkah-bat-meir-tiktiner/))

* Originally (probably) from Tykocin, near Bialystok, in Poland
* Buried at the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague
  + Her tombstone and the *Memorbuch* both mention that “she preached day and night to women in every pious community.”
* The first woman author of a Yiddish book: the moral homiletic *Meineket Rivkah* (Prague, 1609 and Krakow, 1618)
* Her unique scholarship and wisdom, which were uncommon for women of her era, are obvious in her writing. It if full of:
  + The enormous number of Hebrew biblical quotations, narratives based on Talmudic and Midrashic aggadot, and quotations from Hebrew and Yiddish ethical literature
  + The employment of many concepts and methods from rabbinical exegesis…

“The Traitor,” illustration of the degradation of Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), on the cover of the daily Le petit journal ([Floor 2](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/the-traitor-illustration-of-the-degradation-of-alfred-dreyfus-1859-1935-on-the-cover-of-the-daily-le-petit-journal/))

* Many antisemitic parallels can be found between the Dreyfus affair in France and the Hilsner affair in Habsburg monarchy
* Hilsner affair:
* Political and cultural controversy surrounding the murder trials of Leopold Hilsner, a Jew from eastern [Bohemia](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bohemia_and_Moravia), in 1899 and 1900.
* Hilsner was accused for “ritual murder” of a Christian woman Anežka Hrůzová
* For more information see an article in YIVO Encyclopaedia ([here](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hilsner_Affair))

Goblet with the likeness of herzl and the phrase “If you will it, it is no dream” ([Floor 2](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/goblet-with-the-likeness-of-herzl-and-the-phrase-if-you-will-it-it-is-no-dream/))

* Glasswork from Czechoslovakia

Behind the Iron Curtain ([Floor 2](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/text-behind-the-iron-curtain/))

Franz Kafka

* His novel Amerika and his portrait (Literature section, [Floor 3](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/the-library-franz-kafka-1883-1924amerikagermany-2009museum-collection/))
* Kafka’s caricature in the Luminerees Gallery ([Floor 3](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/illustration-franz-kafka-author/))
* The first edition of the Metamorphosis ([Floor 3](https://index.anumuseum.org.il/exhibit/first-edition-of-the-metamorphosis-by-franz-kafka/))