Teleki Tér Shtiebel

The Buried Synagogue of Medieval Buda

FROM THEN UNTIL NOW - THE HISTORY BEHIND THE BURIED SCHULHOF SYNAGOGUE

Jakab Gláser
memorial foundation

We envision a more visible, valued, and interactive Judaism.

Jakab Gláser Memorial Foundation, located in the 8th District of Budapest, Hungary, was established in 2010 as a non-profit organisation of the **Teleki Tér Shtiebel** community.

Teleki Tér Shtiebel is a unique synagogue in the Hungarian Jewish scene that has served its community for over 100 years. Teleki Tér is **the last remaining *shtiebel*** (small prayer house) following the Hassidic/Sfard pray liturgy. Although it is an Orthodox synagogue, it represents far more, attracting a wide spectrum of people from Chassidic, non-Chassidic, Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Neolog, non-affiliated and post-denominational backgrounds.

The foundation is named after the late **Jakab Gláser** (1912-2006), without whom the shtiebel would have closed down decades ago. Jakab Gláser was the heart of the Teleki Tér Shtiebel for decades and his memory continues to inspire the new generation today.

Our activities and aims:

Focus	Mission	Related Activity
Jewish religion and traditions	• raising cultural awareness and community programs; • practicing and understanding religious Yiddishkeit; • editing and publishing texts related to cultural education and Jewish religion and heritage	• Weekly Shabbat services • Regular Jewish holidays • Guided tours • Lectures, conferences
The rehabilitation and operation of Teleki Tér Shtiebel	• make original devotional objects (Torah, Torah, jewelry, candle holders, wall plaques, etc.), furnishings (benches, cabinets, etc.) and other equipment (prayer books, *tefillim*, etc.) suitable for prayer and community activities; • developing logistical needs (heating, kitchenware etc.)	• New bathroom • New kitchen • Rehabilitated prayer room
Organizing community life of the Shtiebel	• financial & material support from community members; • creating communal space and operating it; • organizing religious ceremonies; • initiating community development and cultural programs.	• Learning club • Cooking classes • Home-made *palkina*
Collecting, archiving, publishing, and exhibiting	• documenting and understanding local traditions and the area's vibrant pre-war cultural and Jewish community life; • reviewing, summarizing and documenting the life and community activities of Jakab Gláser; • summarizing the results of research and publication of the outcome;	• Documentary film trilogy • Personal interviews • Research Project • Essay book • Photo Album • Short story book • Museum • Buda Buried Synagogue
Raising funds and grants	• support from members, grants, government, Jewish organizations • 1% end of the eligibility period of collection (Hungary) • organizing volunteer work for the community	• Merchandise • Judaica online store • Stylish traditional Jewish clothing manufacturing
Connecting international shtiebelach	• innovating an international network of small shtiebelach • encouraging dialogue for mutual advising and technique sharing • initiating a communal fundraising and fund-sharing platform	• Detroit screening and introduction

The Buried Synagogue of Medieval Buda

From Then Until Now - The History Behind the Buried Schulhof Synagogue
Paraphrased from the website of Shulhof Foundation http://www.buriedsynagogue.com/the-story/

The fascinating story of the Buried Synagogue begins during the years 1250-1360, when there was a medieval Jewish community prosperously living in the shadow of the Buda castle, which still stands.

Upon re-settling in 1364 in the eastern part of the Buda hills near the Vienna Gate, Yaacov Mendel built two synagogues on the main Jewish street in the town, called Tancsics Mihaly street, which also still stands today. The larger synagogue - which was magnificent! - he built behind his house on the southern side of the street. This synagogue was over 200 sqm with gothic pillars over 9m high and a roof extending another 5-6 m high. It was more than twice the size of the Altnoy synagogue in Prague!

The 1500s faced a series of invasions of this synagogue, which left the roof of the synagogue destroyed. During the 1600s, the Jews returned and repaired the roof as well as the community. Rabbi Ephraim Ben Yaacov (Sha'ar Ephraim) and his son-in law Rabbi Isaac Schulhof took over, bringing happiness and Jewish vivacity.

The late 1600s faced more despair. After the Christian slaughtering of Turks and Jews in 1686, the Christians filled the synagogue in with dirt, and so it remained for 350 years…

In 1964, the municipality was working on the water lines underground, when a beautiful gothic pillar was discovered. Archeologists discovered 72 corpses, one still with his *tefillin* on! After further excavation, Hebrew letters were found at the base of one of the pillars. Professor Schrieber from the local Jewish school explained that they were the letters "Shin aleph," representing the year 1541. Another pillar had "Bas peh," which probably represented an extension that was completed 80 years later (peh=80).

Realizing that this was a synagogue, the communist government at that time decided to halt excavation. They protected the area and refilled it with dirt. They took 3 of the pillars, as well as one of the medallions from the ceiling, and moved it to the museum in the small synagogue across the street.

Over the last 46 years, Ariel Budai, an architect present at the excavation, has been tirelessly working to keep the dream of excavation alive. Yossi Ben-Nun, an Israeli researcher, joined the cause around 6 years ago, and has been at the forefront in the fight to excavate this monumental synagogue ever since.

During a trip to Israel in 2009, members of the Schulhof family met Ofra Friedland, a world renowned Israeli artist. When Ofra heard the last name Schulhof, she couldn't believe it. Her father was Yossi Ben-Nun! Before long, Yossi brought the Schulhof family to Budapest to witness this important piece of history firsthand.

Thus, the Schulhof Foundation was created to help restore this critical piece of history, which brings us to today.

Project description

Vision: The Buried Synagogue will be excavated, accessible, and relatively well known.

Mission: The **Jakab Gláser Memorial Foundation (JGM)** would like to partner with the Schulhof Foundation as its Hungarian partner. Together, we can resurrect this astounding and lesser-known piece of Hungarian Jewish History and create a web of awareness and dialogue around it.

Method: The project aims to (1) familiarize the public with the story of the Buried Synagogue and to (2) excavate and reconstruct the synagogue.

Addressing the first aspect of this project, the JGMF aims to raise cultural, scientific and touristic awareness of the Jewish history of Medieval Buda in wider society.

In order to achieve these goals, the JGMF proposes to:

1. Locate and apply for Hungarian and international grants to build capacity and gain the momentum needed
2. Research the story of the Buried Synagogue
3. Re-publish and research the background of Megillat Buda by Isaac Schulhof
4. Process and summarize specialist literatures, archives, responses etc.
5. Write own studies and essays
6. Present research results at professional conferences
7. Organize paid local history walks on Castle Hill in Budapest
8. Publish an essay book and photo book about the topic
9. Make and present promotional videos and clips
10. Participate in all major Hungarian and international cultural programs and festivals
11. Ensure media coverage (internet, radio, newspapers, magazines, journals, TV shows etc.)
12. Create interactive website (in Hungarian and English)
13. Involve volunteers

Why Us?

The Teleki Tér Shtiebel and JGMF are examples of resilient Hungarian Jewish life. The shtiebel survived the 20th century and now embraces a new, youthful community. During the last few years we built a team and gained the knowledge that enabled us to put Teleki square and the shtiebel into the minds of people living in Hungary as well as people living abroad .

We know the process and methods of a research: where, what and why we should search. In Autumn 2012, we started a resource project named Teleki'44 which is about the story and history of Teleki Tér Shtiebel and its neighborhood. Our members include qualified people from various professions (art historian, sociologist, humanities, photographer, graphic designer, web developer, travel guide, etc.) who are able to compose a viable, inter-disciplinary and effective team.

Rather than initiating a new network for this project, this community is able to engage its existing network of Hungarian Jewish organizations, synagogues and communities, in addition to major non-Jewish cultural, scientific and/or artistic organizations which could be assistance to us, including:

MAZSIHISZ (Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Faith Communes)	MAZSÖK (Hungarian Jewish Heritage Foundation)
MAZSIKE (Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association)	Budapest University of Jewish Studies
IKI (Israeli Cultural Institute)	Jewish Meeting Point
Bálint Jewish Community Center	Bet Orim Reform Jewish Congregation
MAROM Budapest	Moishe House Budapest
Sochnut Jewish Agency — MiNYanim	Bet Elijahu (Páva Street) Synagogue
Nagy Fuvaros Street Synagogue	Centropa Hungary
Past and Future Journal and Publisher	SZOMBAT ("Shabbat") political and cultural magazine

OSA (Open Society Archives)	Art Sector Foundation
KÉK (Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Center)	MTA TK SZI (Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences)
Beyond Budapest Sightseeing	Chainless Budapest Urban Adventures
Tilos Radio	Civil Radio