

# **“MEMORIAL TEMPLE OF THE DEPORTED” NEOLOGUE SYNAGOGUE „TEMPLUL MEMORIAL AL DEPORTATILOR”**

## **Short history**



**before 1900**



**1944**

The Neologue community in Cluj/Kolozsvár (initially called “status quo ante”) was separated from the Orthodox community in 1881.

In 1884, the community requested land from the municipality for building a house of prayer.

The synagogue was built based on engineer Izidor HEGNER’s plans by constructors Károly REMENYIK and the HORVÁTH brothers.

It is a classical construction of Moorish architecture; on the façade between the two main towers Moses’ Tables (the 10 commandments) can be read. An other text in Hebrew “Build me a sanctuary and I shall dwell among thee” (free translation) is positioned there as well.

The rearranged interior adopted the Neoclassic-Modernist style. It is the most representative architectural monument of the Jewish Community in Cluj/Kolozsvár.

The sanctification took place on October 26, 1886, and the inauguration on September 4, 1887. The opening sermon was held by Chief Rabin in Arad, Sándor ROSENBERG.

Next to the synagogue a dwelling for the Rabby and the community’s offices was built. In 1904 a new building for a kindergarten and elementary school was erected, in the same Moorish style.

In 1912 the synagogue was restored and all community institutions were functioning in this location.

In December 1927 the synagogue was devastated by students, members of the Iron Guard returning from a Congress that took place in Oradea/Nagyvárad.

The benches were entirely destroyed, the Tora rolls were burned in the street, and the windows were broken. The authors remained unpunished.

The synagogue was rehabilitated with funds from the Romanian state and donations from the country and abroad.

After March, 1944 during the German occupation of Hungary the synagogue was used as storage.

On June 2, 1944 the synagogue was destroyed by bombardments (according to other authors, it was dynamited by Hitler’s retreating troops).

After 1945, it was rebuilt according to plans of Sámuel LENGYEL. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1947, it was re-inaugurated and it was called Memorial Temple of the Deported in memory of the over 16,000 Jews deported from Cluj and exterminated (most of

them) in Auschwitz (the restoration continued until 1951). At the re-inauguration many Jews from Cluj, survivors of the Holocaust came from almost all continents of the world, where they resumed their life after the tragedy in the death camps.

This was the last meeting of this kind before Romania turned into a communist country and the Iron Curtain descended.

Today, it is the only still functioning synagogue in Cluj for the small community of approximately 400 persons.

A few commemoration plates are located inside and outside the synagogue.

**On the outside:**

- on the street façade, a plate in Romanian and in Hebrew dedicated to the memory of Jews in North-Western Transylvania who were deported and exterminated in 1944;

- on the external left wall (from entrance) a commemorative plate in Romanian, placed there in 1994 on the occasion of commemorating 50 years from deportation;

On the 40<sup>th</sup> commemoration Elie WIESEL, winner of the Nobel price for Peace was present, giving a memorable speech.

**On the inside:**

- a memorial plate to remember the community leaders and officers lost in deportation;

- a plate with the list of the institutions, companies and persons who contributed to the reconstruction of the temple. In a letter written on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1946 Alexander SAFRAN, Ph.D Chief Rabin of the Mosaic Cult in Romania called for contributions for the reconstruction the bombed temple and building. He also envisioned a Cultural Palace, meant to express the thirst for life of the Jewish people

- plate for remembering the reconstruction of the community with a list of the leaders after 1945;

- separate plates with the Rabins of the Orthodox and Neologue communities (chronologically), who served in Cluj/Kolozsvár along the years.

From the eight Neologue Rabins, Chief Rabin Mátyás EISLER, Ph. D., who served almost 40 years (1891-1930) was the most famous. Schooled in Rabbinical studies in Budapest and Berlin, Ph.D. in philosophy, professor of Semite languages at the University of Cluj, co-author of the Judaic Encyclopaedia, he gave brilliant sermons, out of which 21 were published in several languages.

Another important Rabin was Moshe (Carmilly) WEINBERGER, Ph.D., who served the community between 1934-1944, until his deportation. He escaped to Romania and then left for Palestine. After 1990 at his initiative a Judaic Study Department was set up within "Babes-Bolyai" University, which later became the Institute for Judaism and Jewish History (the first in Romania). Today it functions in the old building of the Shas Chevra synagogue on Croitorilor Street, purchased and rehabilitated by the university.

The synagogue Memorial Temple of the Deported has been included on the list of the historical monuments in Cluj District (since 2004), with classification code CJ-IV-m-B-07837.