

Congregation Mishkan Or

Sebo on Sabbatical - #4

Rommie and Cantor Kathy Sebo continued their journey this week through the Jewish history and communities of Prague, Bratislava and Vienna. (Pictured are Rommie and Cantor Kathy in the old Jewish Quater in Prague, Czech Republic. Note the “face” of the lower clock)



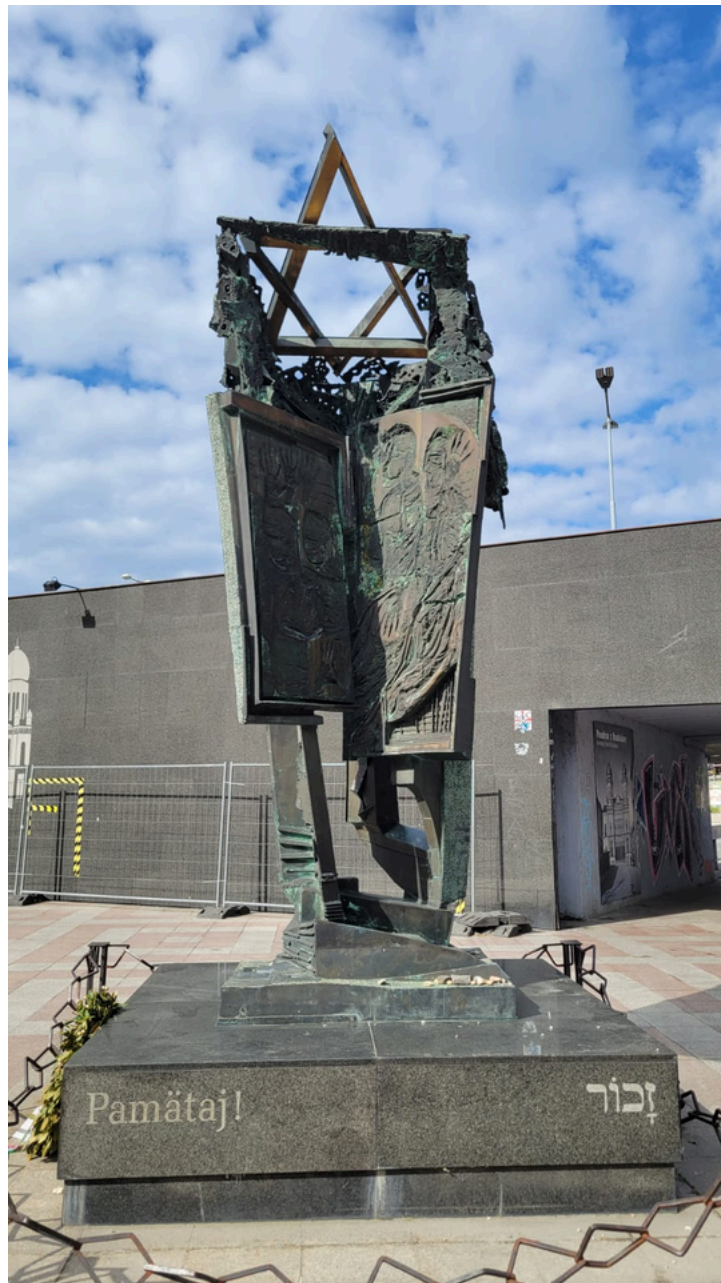
Prague: The Altneuschul (The Old New Synagogue) is the oldest active synagogue in Europe. The medieval shul was completed in 1270.



The old Jewish Cemetery in Prague saw its last burial nearly 350 years ago. The oldest headstone here dates back to 1439. While there are 12,000 headstones here, there are just over 100,000 buried in this ancient and holy place.



In 1930 Bratislava boasted a Jewish population of 15,000 people, 12% of the city's total population. Today there are less than 500 Jews in Bratislava. The Pamatai Jewish Holocaust Memorial stands tall on the spot where the Neolog Synagogue once stood. While burned and desecrated by the Nazi's, it was the Communist regime that demolished the Neolog Synagogue in 1969 to make way for a highway.



We visited the grave and memorial to the Chatam Sofer, Moses Schreiber, one of the most important Orthodox rabbis in Europe in the early 1800's.



The Jews of Vienna, Austria gave the world some of the greatest minds and souls; Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Martin Buber.... And on and on and on... imagine what the world could have been had 65,000 Jewish souls of Austria not perished at the hands of the Nazis. The Shoah Memorial in Vienna represents “an inaccessible library” filled with books and chapters that can never be accessed or read. The doors of this memorial have no handles and the “walls” are comprised of inverted books on the shelf.



The Stadttempel in Vienna is the only synagogue that survived WWII. This is probably due to the fact that this temple was built into what looked like a “normal” building on the outside. But, on the inside... a glorious sanctuary that is home to the Orthodox community of Vienna. Rommie and I had the pleasure of attending this past Tuesday’s evening maariv minyon in their modest chapel and were thrilled when one of their members brought us into their grand sanctuary.

