



*United States Attorney
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**UNITED STATES RETURNS ANCIENT BIBLE THAT WAS EXPROPRIATED
BY NAZIS TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF VIENNA**

PREET BHARARA, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JAMES T. HAYES, JR., Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), announced today that an ancient Hebrew Bible, seized by Nazis on "Kristallnacht" exactly 71 years ago, will be returned to its rightful owner, the Jewish Community of Vienna (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, or "IKG"), at a repatriation ceremony held today at the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. The ancient Bible dates back to the year 1516 and was originally donated to the IKG by SALOMON COHN in 1908. The repatriation marks the third time this year that this Office and ICE have repatriated artwork or property stolen during the Holocaust.

On November 9, 1938, the Nazis carried out "Kristallnacht" (Crystal Night), during which Gestapo seized and sealed the IKG library. After its seizure, the IKG library was transferred to the "Reichssicherheitshauptamt" (RSHA) in Berlin between 1939 and 1941. In connection with the evacuation of Berlin in 1943, main parts of the IKG library were then transferred to places of recovery in other Nazi-occupied territories in Lower Silesia, a province of Poland, and North Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic.

Earlier this year, New York City auction house Kestenbaum & Company had offered for sale in its June 25, 2009, auction catalogue, an item described as a "Bible: Venice. Bomberg, 1516-1517" (the "Bible"). ICE determined that the

ancient Bible described in the catalog was actually part of the library and property of IKG, up until it had been seized by Nazis during Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938.

Once ICE and this Office notified the Bible's owner, a Swiss consignor, of the Bible's history, the owner agreed to return the Bible to the IKG and entered into a voluntary stipulation, consenting to seizure of the Bible and facilitating its return to the IKG through this Office and ICE without the need for any judicial proceedings.

U.S. Attorney BHARARA stated: "Seventy-one years ago today, on 'Kristallnacht,' the Nazis carried out a violent and coordinated attack on Jewish people, ransacking the places they lived, worked, and gathered. The passage of time does not diminish our remembrance, or the duty to return all surviving works of art and precious symbols stolen by the Nazis. Returning this Bible to the IKG today is a step toward that worthy goal."

"The Bible returned today is a priceless inheritance left to the people of Vienna," said Special Agent-in-Charge HAYES. "ICE and the U.S. Attorney's office are grateful for the cooperation of Kestenbaum and Company auction house in the recovery of the Bible, and hope that Kestenbaum's leadership will encourage their peers in the industry to take a good look at their own works."

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of ICE in this matter, and its ongoing efforts to find and repatriate stolen works of art and artifacts.

Assistant United States Attorneys SHARON COHEN LEVIN and SEETHA RAMACHANDRAN are in charge of the investigation and repatriation.

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