

Jewish Heritage in Hungarian Architecture

Pál Gyürki-Kiss MSc Architect

Jewish Architecture...

- *what is meant by “Jewish Architecture”?*
- *does “Jewish Architecture” exist as an independent topos of architecture?*
- *when can be called an architectural product as Jewish?*

- *is there a specific Jewish form, style, tradition in Hungarian architecture?*
- *what is the value added by the Jews to the Hungarian architectural scene?*

Jewish Architecture

- *most important, unique and specific architectural topos: the synagogue*
- *beyond it: schools, hospitals, palaces, ritual baths (mikve), etc.*



The Synagogue

- συναγωγή, *from Greek: “assembly”, “house of assembly”*
- *synagogue = Jewish house of worship*
- *synagogues are consecrated spaces used for the purpose of prayer, the Torah reading, study and assembly (multipurpose)*

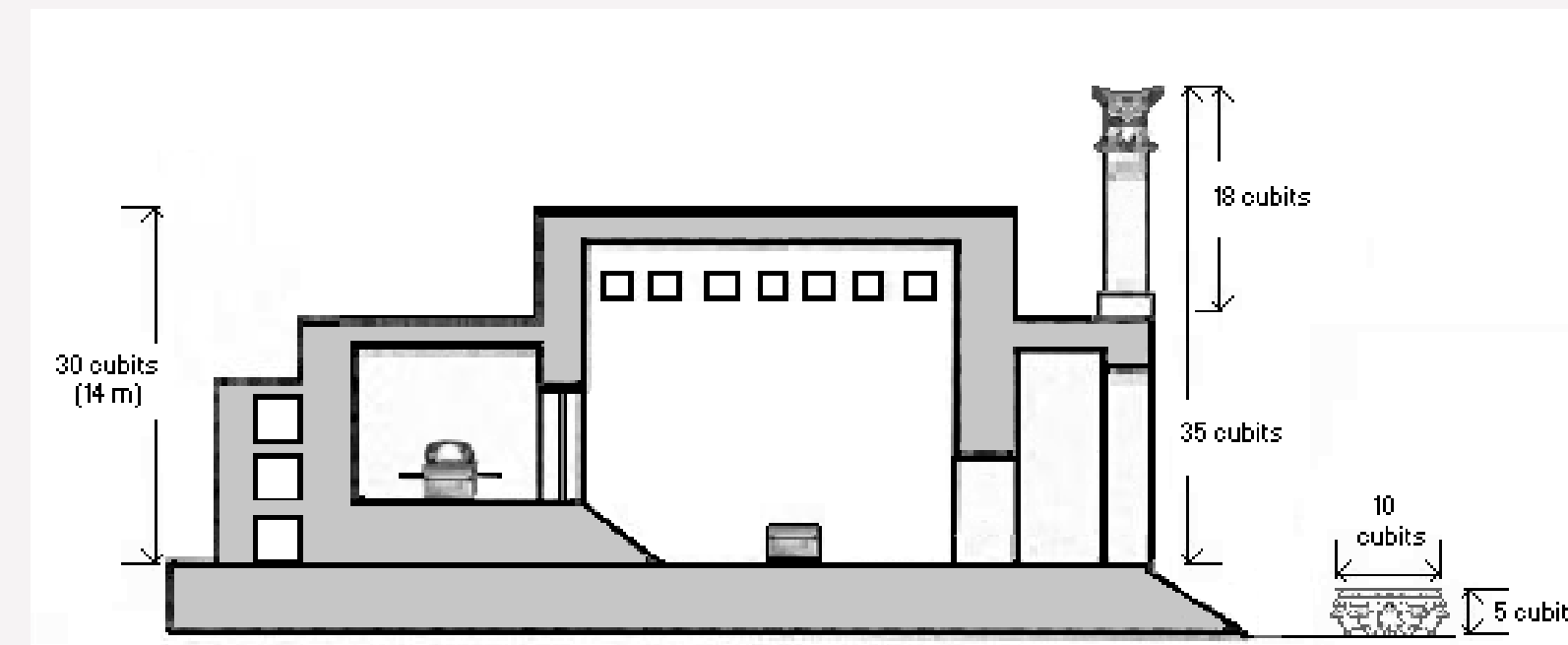
The Synagogue

- συναγωγή, *from Greek: “assembly”, “house of assembly”*
- *synagogue = Jewish house of worship*
- *synagogues are consecrated spaces used for the purpose of prayer, the Torah reading, study and assembly (multipurpose)*

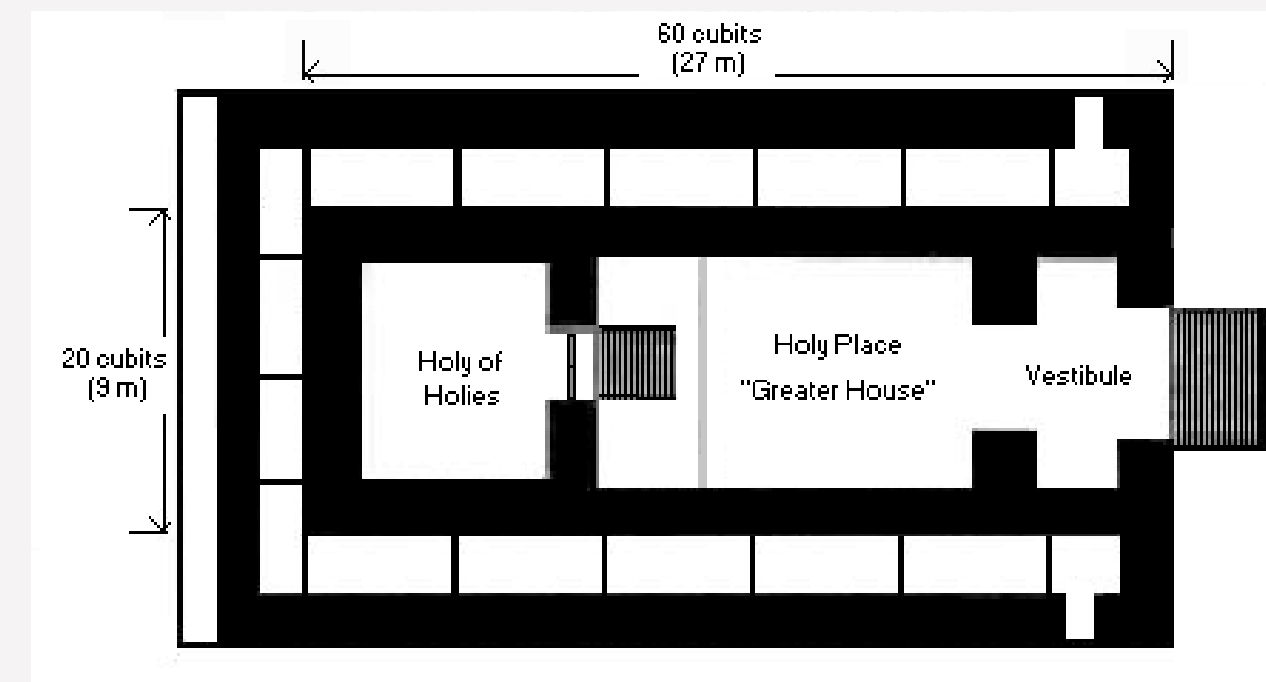
- *however, a synagogue is not necessary for worship: communal Jewish worship can be carried out wherever ten Jews (a minyan) assemble*
- *any Jew or group of Jews can build a synagogue*
- *Jewish worships are not taken place in the synagogue because it is a sacred place...*
- *...synagogue is not consecrated space in itself, it turns into a sacred place only when people assembly and pray in it (> different from other religions)*
- *image ban, absence of material representations of both the natural and supernatural worlds*

The Synagogue

- *reference I: Solomon's Temple, also known as the First Temple in Jerusalem*
- *1000-586 BCE, destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II*



Vertical section of the Temple



Floor plan of the Temple



The Ark of Covenant containing the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments

The Synagogue

- *reference II: the Second Temple, replacement of Solomon's Temple*
- *516 BCE-70 CE, destroyed by the Romans*



The Synagogue

- Synagogues in the sense of purpose-built spaces for worship, or rooms or formal, communal prayer existed long before the destruction of the Second Temple

The Synagogue

- *Synagogues in the sense of purpose-built spaces for worship, or rooms or formal, communal prayer existed long before the destruction of the Second Temple*
- *the earliest archaeological evidence for the existence of very early synagogues comes from Egypt, where stone synagogue dedication inscriptions dating from the 3rd century BCE prove that synagogues existed by that date*
- *more than a dozen Jewish Second Temple era synagogues have been identified by archaeologists in Israel and other countries belonging to the Hellenistic world*

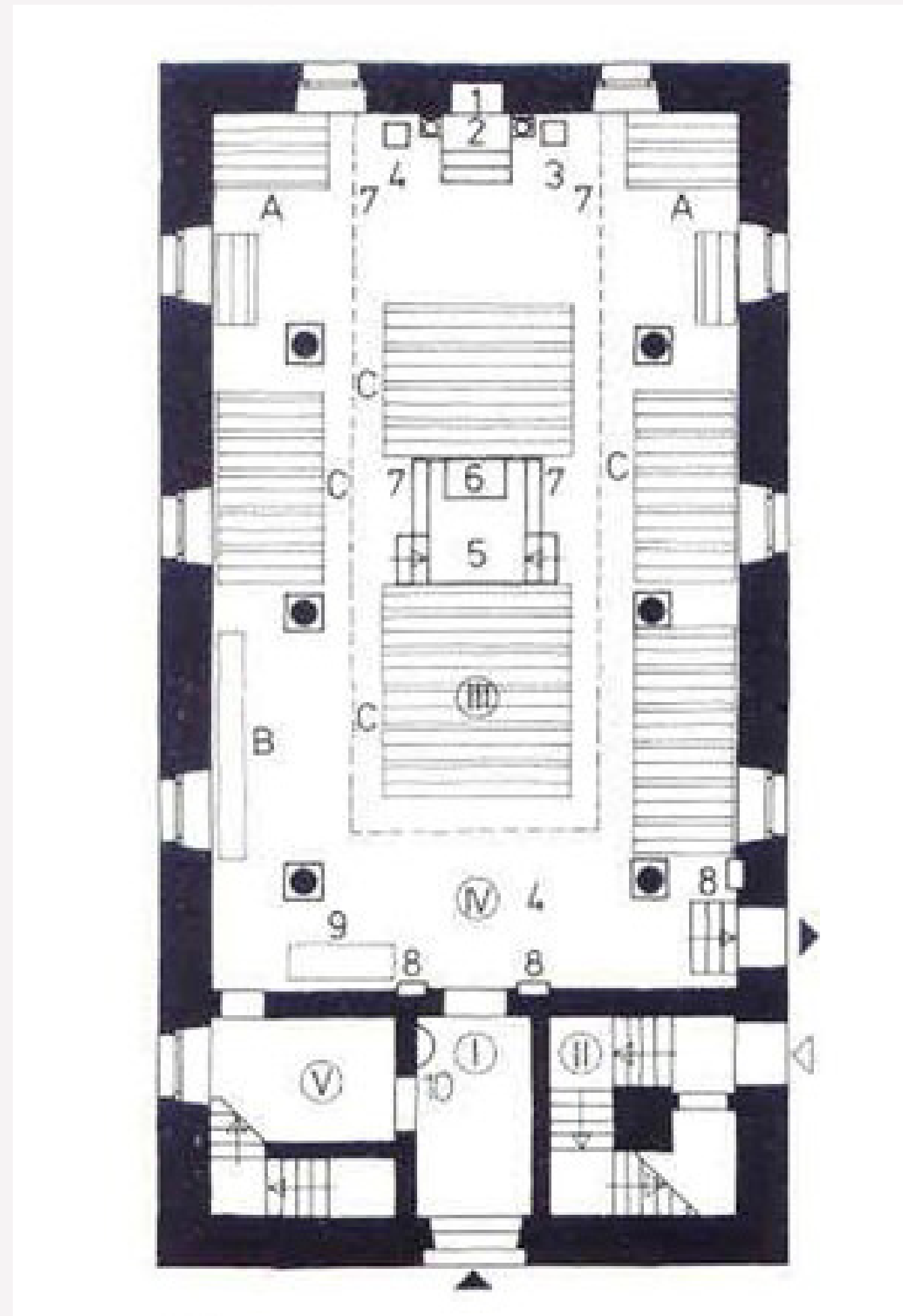


Ruins of the Ancient Synagogue at Bar'am, Israel | ~300 CE

The Synagogue

- *there is no compulsory blueprint to be followed for synagogues*
- *two centres*
- *the architectural shapes and interior designs of synagogues vary greatly*
- *dual conversation: dialog with the ancient tradition + dialog with contemporary conditions and surroundings*

unified synagogue-style doesn't exist as a special genre



Vestibule

The Torah Ark

cabinet in which the Torah scrolls are kept and is almost always positioned in such a way such that those who face it are facing towards Jerusalem

Bimah

platform from which the Torah is read

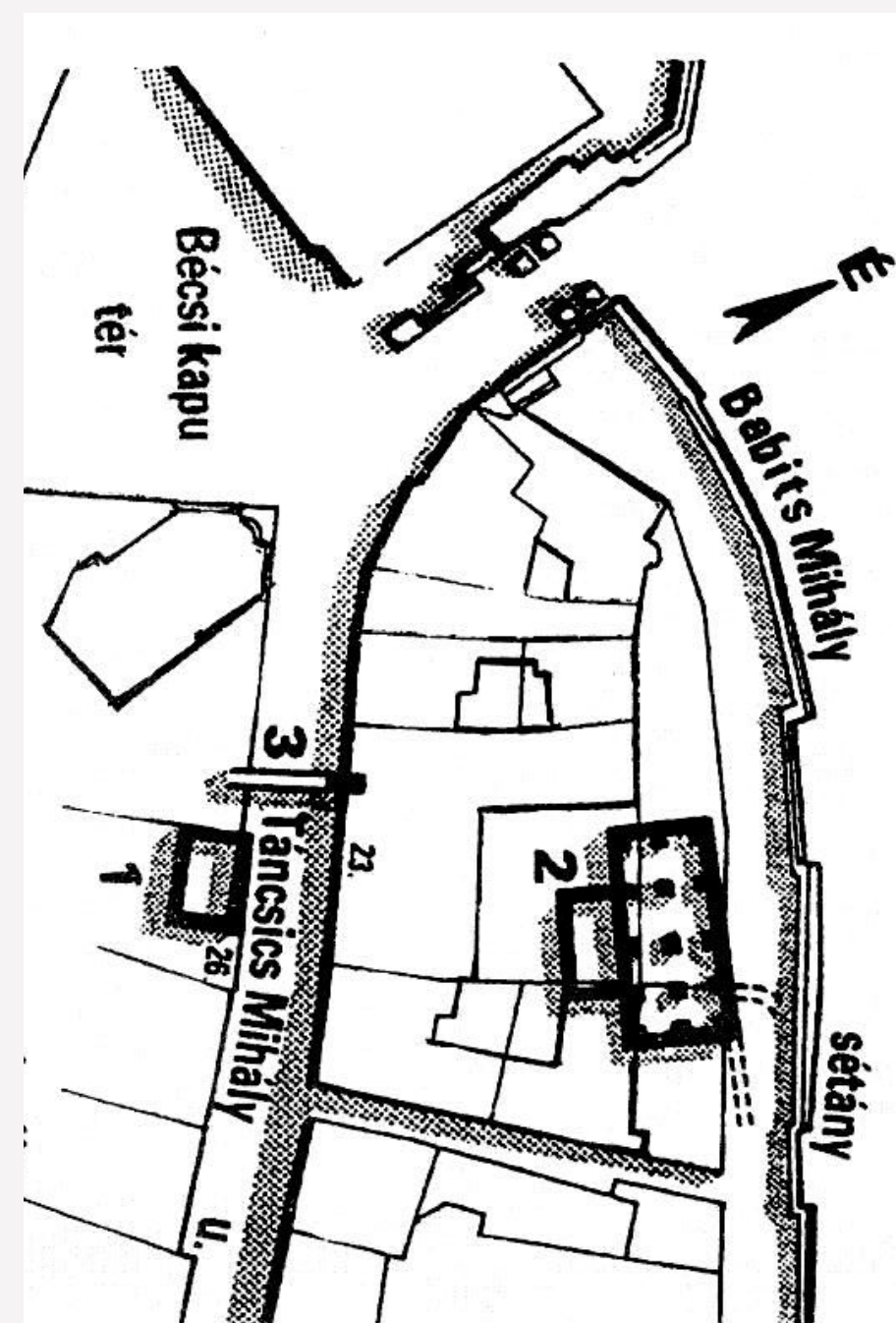
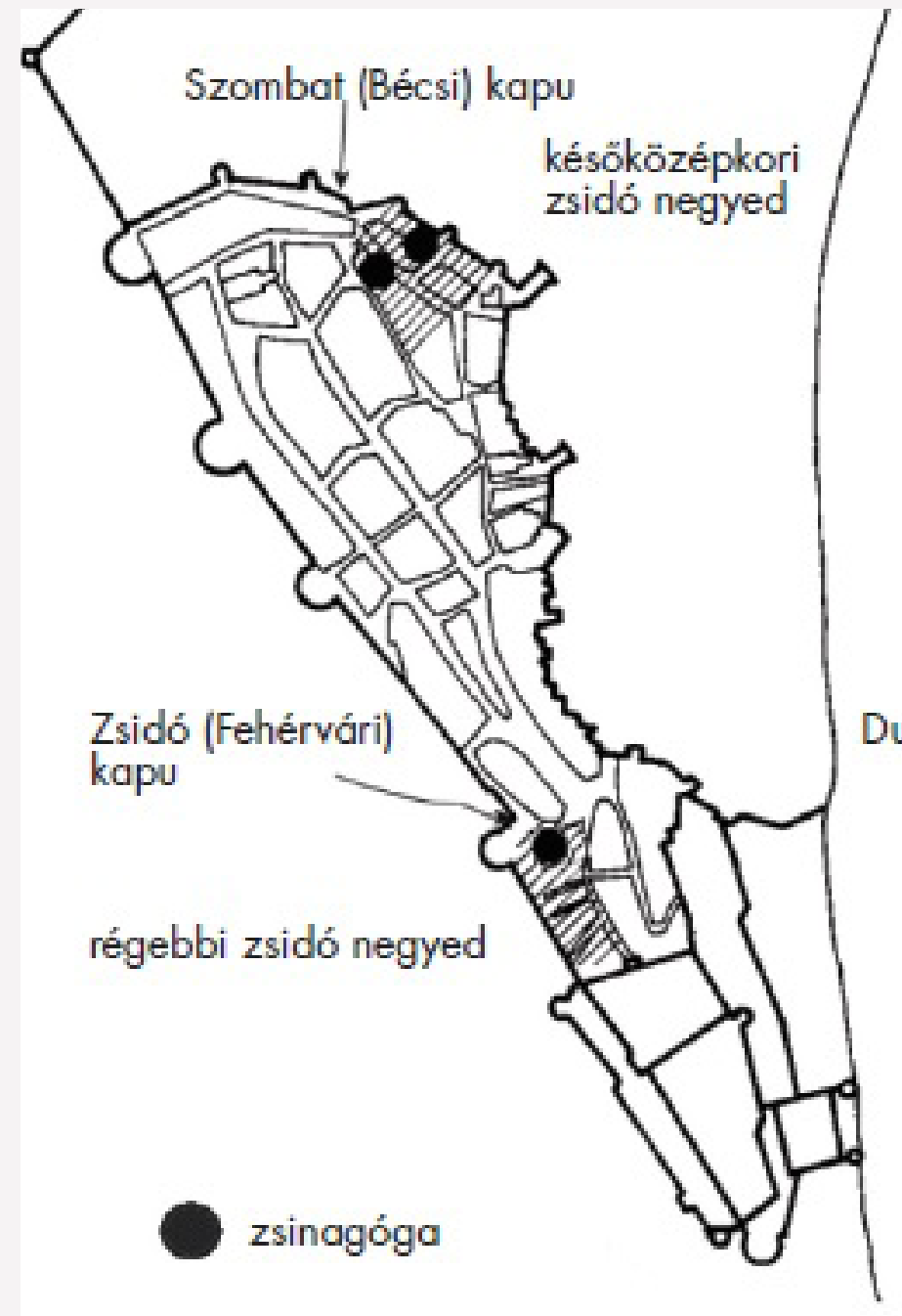
Seating

Gallery for women

Synagogues in Hungary

Budapest

- It's not known when Jews first settled in Budapest, but they have been present since at least the 13th century
- King Béla IV moved the Royal Seat to Buda and invited Jews to settle in his new town, giving them various privileges
- Jews started to appear in Buda around 1250 and according to written documents, Jews have been living in Óbuda since 1349.



Synagogues in Hungary

- Gothic styled medieval synagogue
- built between 1300-1325
- unique in Central Europe

Sopron



Synagogues in Hungary

Mád

- *rare example of baroque styled synagogue, built in 1795*
- *finely decorated interior with Polish-Lithuanian influences*
- *remarkable bimah with four columns that support the nine-sectioned vaulted space*



Jews in Nineteenth-century Hungary

- *Hungary had one of the largest Jewish communities of the nineteenth century*
- *Hungary's capital city (Budapest) was the second largest "Jewish" city in the world*
- *Jewish contribution to trade and commerce facilitated the industrialization of the country*
- *Jewish cultural presence played a crucial role in establishing modern literature, art, music and architecture*

Jews in Nineteenth-century Hungary

- *Hungary had one of the largest Jewish communities of the nineteenth century*
- *Hungary's capital city (Budapest) was the second largest "Jewish" city in the world*
- *Jewish contribution to trade and commerce facilitated the industrialization of the country*
- *Jewish cultural presence played a crucial role in establishing modern literature, art, music and architecture*

- *major shift from traditional Judaism to modern Jewish life*
- *between 1868-69 the Jewish Congress took place, where the 3 major Jewish organizations of Hungary were founded:*
 - *the largest became the modern Neolog movement*
 - *the conservatives joined the Orthodox movement*
 - *"middle-of-the-roaders" became known as the Status Quo*

Jews in Nineteenth-century Hungary

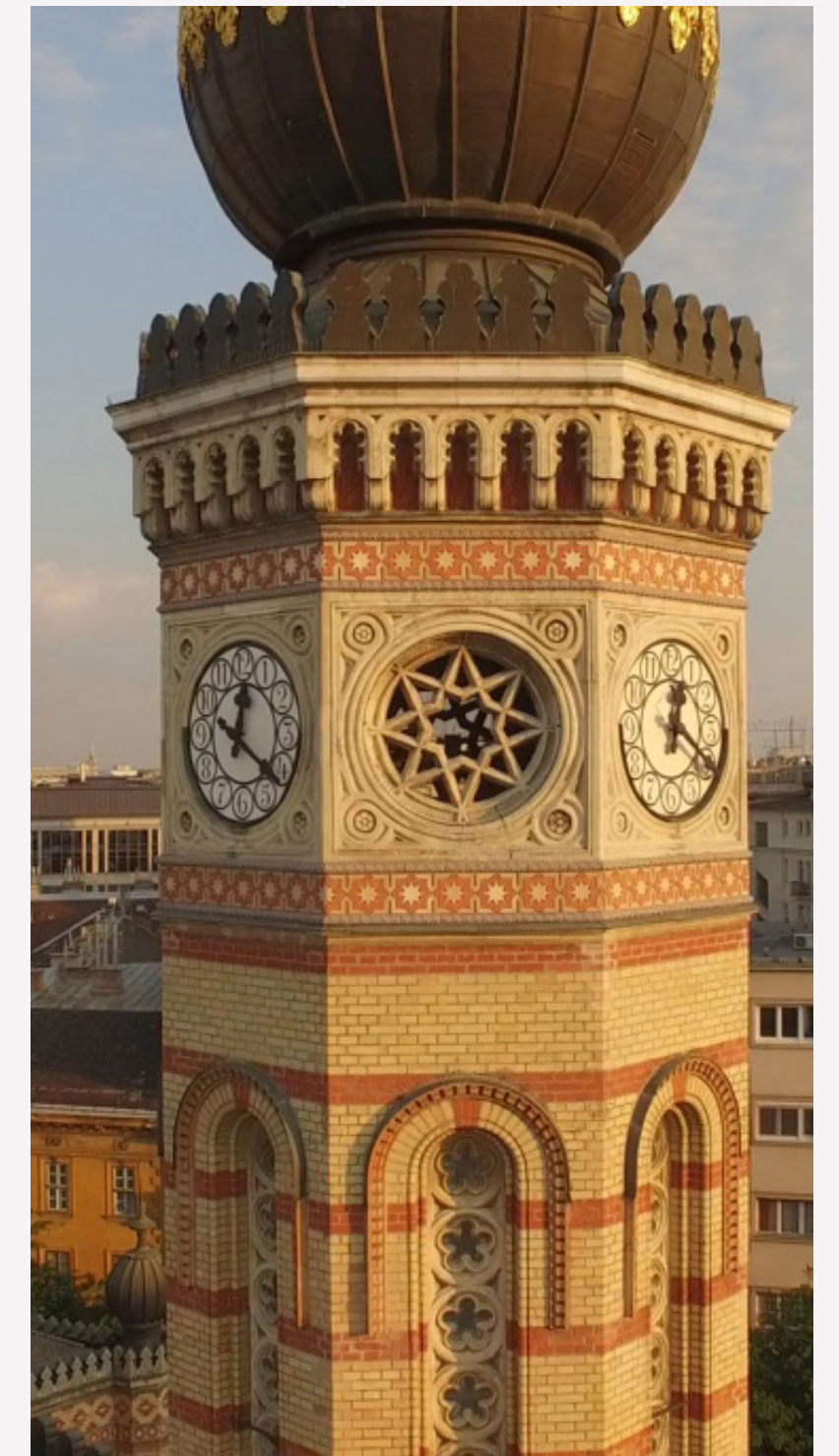
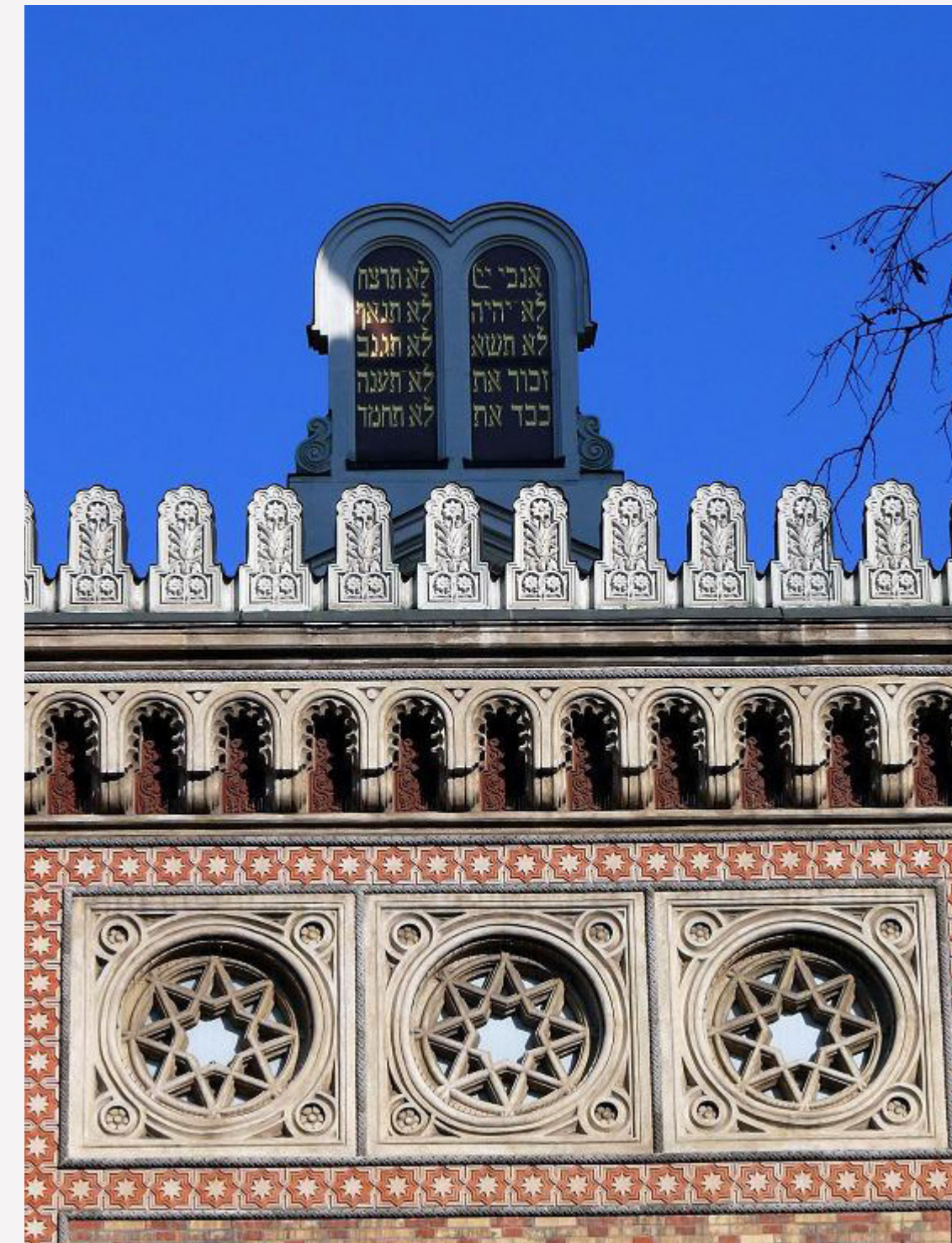
- *Hungary had one of the largest Jewish communities of the nineteenth century*
- *Hungary's capital city (Budapest) was the second largest "Jewish" city in the world*
- *Jewish contribution to trade and commerce facilitated the industrialization of the country*
- *Jewish cultural presence played a crucial role in establishing modern literature, art, music and architecture*

- *major shift from traditional Judaism to modern Jewish life*
- *between 1868-69 the Jewish Congress took place, where the 3 major Jewish organizations of Hungary were founded:*
 - *the largest became the modern Neolog movement* ***Dohány Street Synagogue***
 - *the conservatives joined the Orthodox movement* ***Kazinczy Street Synagogue***
 - *"middle-of-the-roaders" became known as the Status Quo* ***Rumbach Street Synagogue***

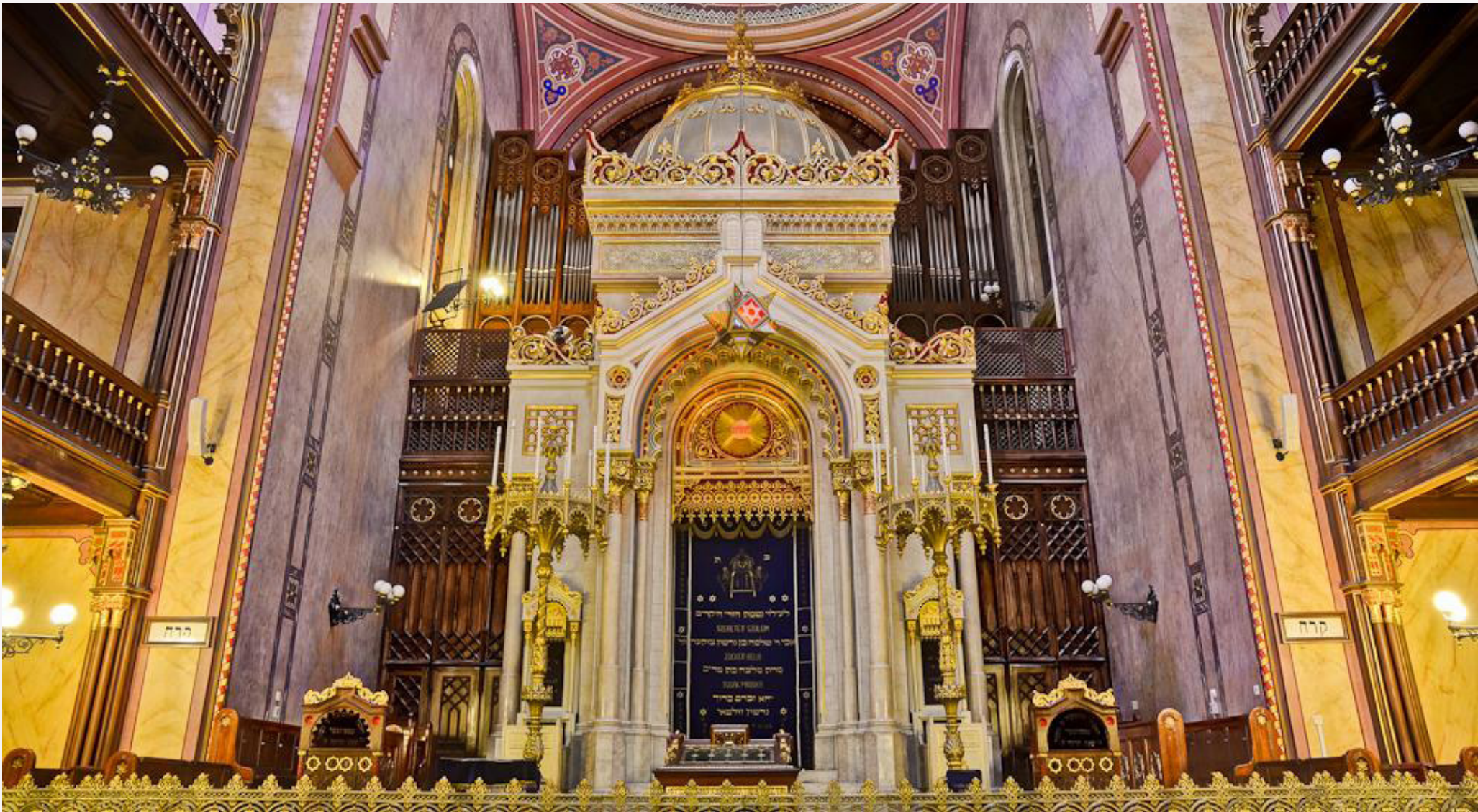
"The Jewish Triangle of Budapest"

Dohány Street Synagogue

- *monumental synagogue: largest synagogue in Europe and the world's second largest*
- *1497 seats for men downstairs + 1472 seats for women on the two balconies*
- *built between 1854-1859*
- *designed by a German architect Ludwig Förster, teacher at the Vienna Academy*
- *it shows features of Moorish Revival style*



Dohány Street Synagogue



Kazinczy Street Synagogue

- *masterpiece of the late Art Nouveau architecture built between 1912–13*
- *building complex includes the synagogue, the religious headquarters, a kindergarten, a Talmud school and a bath (mikveh), center of the Orthodox community*
- *designed by Sándor and Béla Löffler*

- *the bimah stands in the middle of the space*
- *women and men can not be in the same premises*
- *the rabbi speaks Yiddish, they reject clerical clothing and organ as well*



Kazinczy Street Synagogue



Jewish Heritage in Hungarian Architecture

Kazinczy Street Synagogue



Rumbach Street Synagogue

- *built between 1869-1872*
- *designed by the famous Viennese architect Otto Wagner*
- *it shows features of Moorish Revival style*
- *the octagonal interior is topped by a high dome, with eight slender iron columns and Moorish-style Alhambra capitals*



Rumbach Street Synagogue



Jewish Heritage in Hungarian Architecture

Rumbach Street Synagogue



Jewish Heritage in Hungarian Architecture

Rumbach Street Synagogue



Jewish Heritage in Hungarian Architecture

Have a good time in Budapest!

Pál Gyürki-Kiss MSc Architect