

# THE DOMAŽLICE TORAH SCROLL

(WRITTEN IN THE LATE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)

*“Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite [the Torah] to your children and talk about [these words] when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” - Deuteronomy 6:6-7*

This scroll was housed in the Jewish communities of Moravia and Bohemia, and then secured as a pillar of strength during the emerging threat of Nazi Germany when that region was known as Czechoslovakia. As war drew near, the scroll was saved from destruction – a fate the Jews in that region themselves could not avoid – and made its way to England in the 1960s, and eventually to the United States, where Deerfield acquired it on permanent loan from the UK-based Memorial Scrolls Trust.

## WHAT IS A TORAH SCROLL?

The Torah, given to Moses by G-d, is one of the three sections that makes up the Tanakh, the central collection of texts in Judaism. A Torah consists of 304,805 letters, detailing the five books of Moses: תְּשֵׁבַע (Genesis) תּוֹמֵשׁ (Exodus) אֶרְקָיו (Leviticus) נְבִדְמָב (Numbers) and מִרְבָּד (Deuteronomy). The Hebrew word torah translates to “law” in English. Physically, a Torah is made up of a handwritten scroll wrapped around two ornate wooden rollers. Torah scrolls are written on kosher animal parchment by specially trained scribes known as sofrim. It takes around a year for a sofer to write a Torah scroll, and if a mistake is made, the entire section must be buried, returning G-d’s name to nature.

## WHY HAS DEERFIELD ACADEMY ACQUIRED IT?

Usually, Torah scrolls are kept in a cabinet at Synagogues called an ark, and read aloud on Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Holy Days. Before the words are chanted aloud, the scroll is carried around the sanctuary as the congregation sings in celebration. Deerfield Academy’s acquisition of this scroll affirms our community’s commitment to wholeheartedly promote and understand the stories and traditions of the Jewish faith experience.

*Mim Pomerantz (2018) and Zev York (2018)*