

# Judaica

## Key Ideas

- *Hiddur mitzvah* is the principle of adding a beautiful aesthetic dimension to the fulfilling of commandments.
- Biblical interdiction of graven images.
- Sanctification of everyday elements of life. Rarified environments and magnificence not necessary.
- Objects constantly threatened by loss or destruction--- as Jews fled, they only took as much as they could carry and what they carried was small and/or made of valuable materials.
- Lovers of arts so lots of styles. The styles were often influenced by the general culture of the place and time of the artist and/or patron.

## Terms and Concepts:

(See glossary for additional terms)

**Etrog:** citron fruit, used in the rituals of Sukkot.

**Synagogue:** the building where a Jewish congregation meets for religious worship, education, and social activities.

## Scripture outlines a sanctuary:

- In Exodus: Build a holy sanctuary that I may dwell among you.
- Include a gold, silver and brass ark for the Torah covered with blue, gold, purple and scarlet linens topped with a crown of gold. Decorate the ark with cherubim and flowers.
- Make a candlestick of pure gold- 7 branches going out of the sides, three branches on one side and three on the other.
- A man: Bezalel to devise skillful works. Ex 31:1-8

**What to do after the Temple was destroyed? What developed was a synagogue.**

**Architecture is not dictated. It is usual for the ark to be on the wall closest to Jerusalem.**

**What do you find in every synagogue?**

- A Torah: A scroll with the first 5 books of the Hebrew Scripture
- A place to protect the Torah: Mantle, breastplate, crown/ rimonim, yad or Tik
- A place to keep the Torah when not in use: an ark (either curtained or cabinet doors)
- A menorah/lampstand and the eternal light (ner tamid)
- A place to read the Torah: bimah

## Symbolism in Jewish art

- Hands: reaching for light; priestly benediction (shin), candle benediction
- Tablets: originally personification of Judaism in Christian art (upside down to indicate inability of Jews to grasp the allusions of Christian teaching); adopted into Jewish books at the same time to illustrate Revelation at Mount Sinai. Since 16th c. a general symbol of Torah in Jewish art. Widespread in 19th c. --on facades of synagogues, on holy arks and ritual objects. The tablets symbolized Judaism and the Torah for Jews and non-Jews alike.
- Gateway and pillars: Ever since ancient times, symbolize the transition from the secular to the sacred, from life to death and from the world of matter to the world of the spirit as well as the destroyed temple. It grew increasingly vital and took on mystical and cosmic symbolism of great intensity as a result of Kabbalistic influence.
- 7 branch menorah: since ancient times a central role in Jewish art. In many synagogues it was depicted alongside the gate and pillars and near the ark with the Torah scroll. It was a ritual object in the Temple; it developed into a national and religious symbol which was to accompany the Jewish people and express messianic longing.
- Micrographics (tiny words): The written word enhanced the symbolic use of circles, rosettes, menorahs and fish.
- Lion and wild ox: Jewish legend. Both have super-human strength, enabling them to perform divinely-inspired miracles. The legends take on a messianic dimension as well when King David is also introduced as a witness to these feats. Lion and unicorn both symbolize the monumental and hostile powers of the enemy while also standing for honor, valor, divine power and self-restraint.
- Animals-- both predators and their prey---represent the satanic forces in the universe.
- 2 headed eagle: Kabbalah regards as a symbol of providence and divine protection.
- Bear: Slavic origin: Bear searching for honey in the treetops was likened to a Jew in quest of the Torah, which is as sweet as honey.
- Pairs of Animals: standing for the abundance of creation:
- Palm trees: tree of life; Torah is often called the Tree of Life
- Fish: fertility and protection against evil powers
- Lions: associated with the Messiah; House of David. They often appear on either side of the tree of life. The tree is sometimes a menorah. Often carrying a crown: symbolizing the nearness with infinity or crown of Torah. The crowned figures of the lions standing over a gateway can symbolize both earthly and celestial kingship. "Judah is the lion's whelp, the Messiah, son of David, who is descended from two tribes: his father is Judah and his Mother, Dan and both are called lions". Daniel was rescued from the lions.
- Crown: priesthood by Aaron; kingship by David; crown of Torah remains for all generations to come ....Ecclesiastes Rabah 7

- Star of David: hexagram and hexagram in a circle in ancient time is found in lots of places: deity. Called a compass rosette: While the sign was ancient, its connection with the Jewish people was relatively recent. As early as 3rd millennium BCE, in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israelite Palestine. Later in Cyprus and Greece and especially in Persia. Scholars say printer's marks started the use. 16th c. For most of history, no Jewish connotation. Height of popularity in 19th and 20th c. In Moslem countries, it is an organic part of the traditional decoration based on circles, rosettes and the star.
- Hebrew alphabet: Kabbalah, mystical role of Hebrew letters in creation.
- Gematria: Each letter has an associated number and when you put the letters together, they spell/count. Eg. 18= life; 26 = God's name, etc.
- Metals and minerals: Gold= divine light the glory of God. Silver= moral innocence and of holiness; Brass= hardness and strength. Salt = essential, takes the place of blood
- Colors: blue from the blue of the threads on the tallit/tzitzit
- Pomegranate: Jewish tradition teaches that the pomegranate is a symbol of righteousness because it is said to have 613 seeds, which corresponds with the 613 mitzvot, or commandments, of the Torah. For this reason and others, it is customary to eat pomegranates on Rosh Hashanah. Moreover, the pomegranate represents fruitfulness, knowledge, learning, and wisdom.
- Interestingly, many Jewish scholars believe that the pomegranate was the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, the pomegranate is listed in the Bible as one of the seven species of fruits and grains that are special products of the Land of Israel.

### **Mia Objects (On view)**

- Jacob "Jack" Liebenberg; Designer: Chester Weston, "*Harmony*" stained glass window, 1928, 2002.173.3a,b
- Unknown artist, United States, *Torah mantle*, c. 1954, 98.136.17
- Unknown artist, Iraq, *Torah scroll case (Tik)*, early 20th century, 2003.165.1a-c
- Unknown artist, United States, *Torah crown*, late 19th-early 20th century, 2000.229.2
- Unknown artist, Probably United States, *Torah shield*, 19th-early 20th century, 2000.229.1
- Unknown artist, Morocco, *Rimmonim (Torah finial) (pair)*, early 20th century, 2000.66.3.1
- Unknown artist, Germany, *Yad*, c. 20th century, 98.136.9a,b
- Unknown artist, Vienna, *Yad*, 1870, 98.156.2a,b
- Unknown artist, Morocco, *Yad*, c. 1900, 2003.165.2

- Unknown artist, Persia, *Tzedakah (justice or charity) box*, mid-19th century, 2001.177.8
- Unknown artist, France, *Tzedakah Box*, 19th century, 2000.229.3
- Siegfried Wagner; Manufacturer: Mogens Ballin Workshop, *Tzedakah box for the Copenhagen Society for the Care of the Sick*, 1901, 2006.67.2a,b
- Robert Lipnick, "*Noah's Ark*" *tzedakah box*, 20022006.3a,b
- Tony Berlant, "*Pacific*" *from the Tzedakah Box series*, 1998, 98.138.
- Unknown artist, United States, *Mezuzah (doorpost)*, Date Unknown, 2004.200
- Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, *Sabbath candlesticks*, c. 1960, 2008.2.3.1a,b
- Moshe Zabari, *Shabbat candlesticks (pair)*, c. 1968, 2001.90.1a,b
- Unknown artist, Iraq, *Kiddush (sanctification) cup with lid and saucer*, c. 1920, 2000.67.2a-c
- Michael Ende, *Wine cup and saucer*, c. 1985, 2003.228.20a,b
- Michael Ende, *N'tilat Yada'im (hand washing cup)*, c. 1985, 2003.228.38
- Unknown artist, France, *Hanging lamp for Sabbath and festivals*, 19th century, 99.223.1a,b
- Unknown artist, Israel, *Spice container*, 20th century, 98.136.4.1,2
- Unknown artist, Netherlands, *Spice container*, late 19th century, 2001.177.4
- Unknown artist, Poland, *Spice container*, c. 1889, 2001.177.5
- Unknown artist, Czechoslovakia, *Spice container*, 20th century, 2000.66.2
- Michael Ende, *Spice container*, c. 1985, 2003.228.14a-d
- Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, *Megillah (scroll of Esther) case*, c. 1965, 98.136.8a,b
- Unknown artist, Germany or United States, *Hanukkah lamp*, early 20th century, 98.136.6a,b
- Robert Lipnick, *Hanukkah lamp*, 1989, 2005.145.2
- Michael Ende, *Hanukkah lamp*, 1986, 2000.172a-1
- Rotger (Rudiger) Herfurth, *Hanukkah lamp*, c. 1760, 2008.2.1a,b
- Unknown artist, Italy, *Hanukkah lamp*, 19th century, 98.136.13a,b
- Unknown artist, Poland, *Hanukkah lamp*, c. 1800, 2001.177.7
- Anatoli Luovitch Kaplan, *Hanukkah lamp*, early 1970s, 2005.24
- Unknown artist, European, *Dreidel (top)*, c. 1900, 98.136.1
- Unknown artist, Middle East or India, *Grogger (noise maker)*, 20th century, 98.136.15

- Unknown artist, Europe, *Grogger (noise maker)*, 20th century, 98.136.16
- Michael Ende, *Grogger (noise maker)*, c. 1985, 98.136.2
- Michael Ende, *Grogger (noise maker)*, c. 1985, 2003.228.41
- Unknown artist, Germany, *Seder plate*, 19<sup>th</sup> century, 98.136.14
- Unknown artist, Czechoslovakia, *Passover Seder Plate*, 1880-1890, 98.140
- Unknown artist, Israel, *Ceremonial wedding ring*, 1960, 2001.177.2a,b
- Unknown artist, Morocco, *Hand pendant*, about 1850, 91.141.17

## Additional Resources

YouTube videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wq23Tax1zh8>

Torah chanted in Hebrew and English. Pat Myers 7/14/2012.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0\\_XhZnQew0&sns=em](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0_XhZnQew0&sns=em)

Female cantor lighting Shabbat candles (traditionally a woman lights)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITxfUOlsIfI>

Shabbat blessings: all 3 blessings to start Shabbat. Temple Israel Boston male rabbi: candles, wine, challah bread

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LLWrKeh6tY>

Havdalah: Female cantor in her office with Debbie Friedman melody.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oc8G2C-oCac>

Bar mitzvah—Temple Israel NY