

## 2.2 Identification of Judaica Objects

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Identification of Judaica objects is the first step or steps in provenance research. Inscriptions, dates, material, style, size, hallmarks, and old labels are indicators of the origin of Judaica objects and therefore have to be thoroughly examined.

### 2.2.1 Inscriptions

The most obvious evidence indicating an object to be an object of Jewish ritual use is an inscription. In general inscriptions on Judaica feature Hebrew letters. This does not necessarily mean that the language of the inscription is Hebrew, however. In Ashkenazi communities it can be Yiddish, in Germany also German, especially from the era of the emancipation onwards; in Sephardi communities Ladino or Judeo-Espagnol; in regions of Italy the Judeo-Italian dialect Italkian; in Romaniote communities a Greek dialect called Yevanic; in Arabic countries Judeo-Arabic; in Iranian communities Judeo-Persian or Dzihdi; in eastern Caucasus communities Judeo-Tat or Yuhuri; as well as Judeo-Marathi in Indian communities, Judeo-Tajik in Bukharan communities, the neo-Aramaic Hulaulá in Kurdish communities. All of these are written in Hebrew letters. But there are also Judaica objects which have inscriptions in Latin letters. Inscriptions referring to a donation are mostly set into cartouches or on hanging plates.

Inscriptions may hide different meanings, larger dimensions of letters, a dot or a small dash upon it may be an indication of a year or an owner's name. Emphasized letters may also form an acrostic bearing relevant information. The inscriptions to be found on Judaica objects may indicate their purpose (e.g., this beaker is „for the sanctification of the Shabbat“), the specific community it was used in (e.g., this object was given „here, in the holy community of Vienna“), the donors (e.g., this is a donation „by the humble man N.N. and his wife N.N.“) or a private owner (e.g., „this belongs to N.N.“). Donations sometimes commemorate an individual life-cycle event or a special occurrence crucial to a community.

#### 2.2.1.1 Names of Individuals

Prior to the 20th century numerous spellings could be used for the same name. Be aware that names of individuals may appear in their Hebrew version as well as Yiddish or other form: e.g., a person with the first name in Hebrew of „Yitzhak“, may have been known in Yiddish or German as Isak, Eisik, Segil or Sekkel. A person by the Hebrew name of „Ariel“ may have been called Löw in German (because „Ariel“ means „lion“). The latter might be transliterated in different forms, either on the object in question or on documents to be researched: Loebh, Lebh, Löbh, Loew, Lew. The Hebrew name Sara may have been Serle or Serel in Yiddish.<sup>377</sup> In many cases publications have to be consulted for ideas.<sup>378</sup> The transliteration dilemma is true for last names, too: i.e. the last name Heimann can be transliterated as Heyman, Heymann, Haiman, Haimann, Hayman.

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<sup>377</sup> For German names the following website might be helpful:

<http://spurensuche.steinheim-institut.org/inallgemein.html>

<sup>378</sup> Alexander Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names. Their Origins, Structure, Pronunciation, and Migrations*, Bergenfield 2001.

Sephardic first names may be written in their Aramaic rather than in their Hebrew version. For example the common Hebrew name Malka will be spelled with an „heh“ (ה) at the end in Ashkenazi lands, but with an „Aleph“ (א) in Sephardi communities. As Malka means queen, the civic name may have been Regina in Ashkenazi communities and Reyna or Reina in Sephardi ones.

In both Ashkenazi and Sephardi tradition, the last name may provide hints as to the origin of the family: e.g., the famous Oppenheimer family has its origin in the Upper Rhine town of Oppenheim, the Morpurgo family Italianized their hometown Marburg (today Slovenian Maribor), whereas Elias Canetti's family originated in Spanish Cañeto. For the longest period of time though, family names were not common, rather people called themselves „N.N. son/daughter of N.N.“ In Ashkenaz this would read N.N. ben David, in Sephardi and Arab communities N.N. ibn Daoud, both meaning son of David.

In case there are traces to an emigration of individuals they may have naturalized/Anglicized their names, i.e. the female name of Raisel may have been changed into Rose, the last name Austerlitz into Astaire to give a more complicated example. In case of emigration/flight to Palestine/Israel, German names may have changed into Hebrew ones, i.e. Gerhard to Gershom, Hermann to Zwi, Susanne to Shoshana or the last name Eskeles to Eshkol. The genealogy website <http://www.jewishgen.org/> features thousands of databases, research tools, and other resources which may be of help.

For a case in which genealogical research resulted rather easily in establishing provenance see Appendix 2.A

### **2.2.1.2 Names of Communities/Towns**

Many Judaica objects donated for community purposes give the name of the respective community preceded by the abbreviation for „kehillah kedushah“, i.e. „holy community“. These names are very valuable sources to trace the provenance of objects but are often highly complicated to identify.

There are different reasons for this:

The name given on an object may refer to a town which was called differently in Yiddish than in the national language – e.g., the Yiddish „Bumsla“ referred to the Bohemian city of Jungbunzlau, „Tselem“ to the Austrian town of Deutschkreuz, and „AMokum“ to Amsterdam. Some towns were given in Yiddish in an abbreviated form - i.e. „Asch“ for Austrian „Eisenstadt“. Others may go back to their Latin origin – i.e., „Spira“ and „Magenza“ for the German cities Speyer and Mainz.

The name given on an object may also refer to a former national name, but the different shifts of national borders in the course of the 20th century have caused name changes – i.e. what was once called Klausenburg in German and Yiddish was called Kolozsvár in Hungarian and is today Romanian Cluj. Another example: Yiddish Shtanislav or Shtanisle was Stanislau in German Galicia, Iwano-Frankowsk in Polish and is today Ukrainian Iwano-Frankivsk.

There can be also a combination of difficulties, the Yiddish name having differed from the German one and the German one differs from today's national one – i.e. the town of Stampfen was called Stampe in Yiddish and is today called Stupava in Slovak.

A first finding aid might be: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_city\\_name\\_changes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_city_name_changes). Extremely useful is: Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Sack with Alexander Sharon, *Where Once We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust*. Revised Edition, New Haven 2002.

In cases where the community name is given, further steps would be to research the specific community and its history. Where not, the inscription might tell the special occasion on which the object was donated – e.g., „for the inauguration of this synagogue, May 18th 1858“. If you have been able to characterize the object as an Austro-Hungarian one, Google could help to find out which synagogues in the empire were inaugurated on this specific date. In this case, it was the so-called Leopoldstädter Tempel in Vienna.

To draw as much information as possible from an inscription, it needs to be examined very carefully. For an example, see Appendix 2.B.

Make sure that the Hebrew characters match the overall style of the object. A Hebrew inscription might have been added to „Judaize“ an object and increase its market value.

### 2.2.1.3 Dates

Albeit written in Hebrew characters, some Judaica objects show the date of their donation not in Hebrew but in Arabic numerals. Still, the date given will be according to the Jewish calendar, which counts from the assumed creation of the world in 3761 B.C. E.– e.g., „5. Sivan (a Hebrew month) 5618“ equals the civil date of May 18, 1858. May 1, 2016 equals the 23rd of Nissan (another Hebrew month), 5776. Especially in Ashkenazi communities the thousand digits are often omitted (which can be a hint to the provenance on its own) and an abbreviation for the term „according to the minor reckoning“ is added. A number of online date converters are comfortable aids. You could use

<https://www.hebc.com/converter/>.



Figure 1: Ashkenazi Torah shield with crest  
Nürnberg, 18th century  
Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Switzerland, Basel,  
inv.no. JMS 1177

Make sure that the date given on an object matches its overall style. An earlier date may have been added to increase the object's value and might be a fake date.

### 2.2.1.4 Crests

Especially Italian objects and those of Sephardi provenance may feature crests at pretty early times, namely from the 17th century, which does not always mean that people were ennobled. In the Ashkenazi world, Jews were ennobled only beginning in the 19th century with peaks in the middle and the end of the century. Their crests were as proudly integrated in some Judaica objects as the Sephardi ones. Crests are highly valuable leads for research if you have established the regional origin of the object. You may find Jewish crests in publications on heraldry of the country in question. If

you do not find the crest, this may indicate that it was not a sign of official nobilitation.

For an example of an unofficial crest integrated into an Ashkenazi Judaica object see figure 1.

## 2.2.2 Sizes

The size of a ritual object can give hints as to its provenance - i.e. a Torah ark curtain which has a width of 2.5 meters and a length of 4.5 meters can only stem from a significant, big synagogue in a metropolis. One can figure out the dimensions of Torah arks of important synagogues in online or printed publications.<sup>379</sup> In contrast, a curtain which measures 90 cm wide and 80 cm high will probably have been used in a small shtibl or in a private prayer room.

The same is to be assumed for a Torah set consisting of a Torah shield and a pair of Torah finials of which the shield is 37 cm high and 30 cm wide, weighs 3 kg and the finials 1.5. A set like this must have been located in a wealthy, upperclass community that wanted to demonstrate its self-awareness with representative objects. In contrast, a shield with dimensions of less than 20 x 18 cm will have had its origin in a small, perhaps rural community or in a private shtibl. A very small shield covered with a Hebrew inscription might, by the way, not be a Torah shield but a so-called Shaddayah, a dedicatory plate unique to Romaniote communities. Tiny shields, engraved with the abbreviations for the Ten Commandments were also used in Kurdish communities. Here it was custom for the warden to present it to the participant in the service who was called up to the Torah. After the reading this plaque was returned.



Figure 2: Austrian Torah Mantle; *Habsburg Monarchy*, 1892; <http://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=4581>  
Courtesy of the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art, the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

## 2.2.3 Material



Figure 3: Sefardi Torah mantle; Izmir 1932  
<http://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=18258>  
Courtesy of the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art, the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Figure 4: Torah curtain dedicated 1774/75 to a Berlin synagogue by Moses Mendelssohn  
Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Berlin, inv.-no. KGT 97/1/0

The majority of Judaica textile objects which have survived up until the present are made of precious materials like brocade, silk, damask, and velvet, and of Torah ornaments and other ritual objects silver, often gilded, sometimes even gold.

### 2.2.3.1 Textiles

In general Torah textiles reflect the regional tradition in which they were produced. Thus an Austrian Torah mantle or desk cover from the end of the 19th century will be made in a secessionist style (figure 2), whereas covers from the Ottoman Empire often were reworked textiles originally used in a domestic context like bedspreads and cushions and feature traditional Ottoman thick gold thread embroidery (figure 3). Torah curtains were – especially in the upper classes – often reworked wedding dresses dedicated to a synagogue in honor

<sup>379</sup> i.e. for Germany [http://www.tu-darmstadt.de/universitaet/selbstverstaendnis/profil\\_geschichte/verantwortung/thema\\_verantwortung\\_k04.en.jsp](http://www.tu-darmstadt.de/universitaet/selbstverstaendnis/profil_geschichte/verantwortung/thema_verantwortung_k04.en.jsp); for Vienna: Bob Martens, Herbert Peter, *Die zerstörten Synagogen Wiens. Virtuelle Stadtpaziergänge*, Wien 2009; for Hungary: Rudolf Klein, *Zsinagógák Magyarországon 1782–1918: fejlődéstörténet, tipológia és építészeti jelentőség*. Synagogues in Hungary 1782–1918. Genealogy, Typology and Architectural Significance, Budapest 2011.

of the festive event (figure 4). The more elegant and extravagant a Torah textile is, the more likely is its origin to have been a wedding dress. This can be verified by examining the backside under the lining material and revealing the seams.

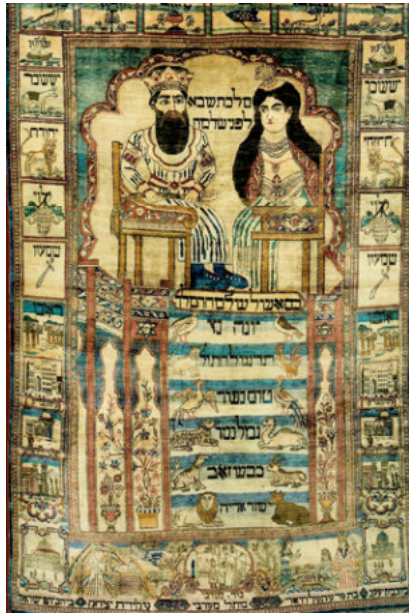


Figure 5: Kashan rug with Hebrew inscription and depiction of Salomon and the queen of Sheba  
 Courtesy of Anton Felton, Herzlia Pituach

A unique type of textile was developed around 1830 in Galician Sasow, namely a lace incorporating silver and gold threads, called *shpanyer arbet* in Yiddish which was apparently made exclusively for a Jewish clientele:

[http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Shpanyer\\_Arbet](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Shpanyer_Arbet).

Different clothes were decorated with *shpanyer arbet*, such as mens' kippot, cuffs of their festival clothes and collars of their prayer shawls (Hebrew: *atarot*), as well as women's *brusstikhl* (*kerchief*) and caps. Depending on ideological orientation, Jewish groups ordered specific patterns - i.e., Zionists commissioned *shpanyer arbet* with integrated stars of David. Although *shpanyer arbet*, which saw its heyday from the end of the 19th century until the 1930s, was not only produced in Sasow, the origin of such an object is Galician.

Another textile type was produced in the first quarter of the 20th century in Kashan style, namely a knotted tapestry with Hebrew inscriptions and traditional Jewish motifs (Fig. 5). At least one of them was definitely produced in Jerusalem, others may have been produced in Persia. The Jerusalem Bezalel School of Art also produced Jugendstil rugs with motifs of the Menorah and Jerusalem. Also in Palestine wall hangings with Zionist motifs were produced.

### 2.2.3.2 Metal

Silver was and still is the most popular material for Judaica production all over the Jewish world. It is easy to process, to work, to polish and it can be easily combined with other precious metals and stones. Especially European Torah ornaments were – sometimes completely but mostly partly - gilded for aesthetic reasons and to fulfill the requirement of the „adornment of the commandment“. It is self-evident that gilt and partially gilded objects hint at a Jewish community with wealthy members. Gilding techniques might provide hints to the date of production: Mercurial gilding was the most common gilding technique up until the beginning of the 19th century, when galvanic techniques began to replace the traditional mechanical techniques of gilding with gold leaf or fire-gilding.

A Torah ornament made of (plated) copper or brass might indicate a region where Jews were restricted from possessing precious metal. Pewter was used, especially for ritual objects in private households, to replace more costly silver - i.e., in Germany, Austro-Hungary and the Alsace. But pewter plates for different occasions may come from all over Europe.

Other copper objects, especially Hanukkah lamps, may hint at a Dutch origin, in some cases also to a Greek one. Brass lamps and candlesticks may attest to an East European one, mainly to what is today Poland and Ukraine, but can have been made also in the Nuremberg region. Copper reflectors in the synagogue were popular in Eastern and Central Europe.

Cast bronze was popular in Eastern Europe too, as it was also in Italy. A Niello work, i.e. an inlay of a black coloured alloy on silver, often was made in the Russian town of Tula. The related damascene work, which means inlaying different metals into one another, may stem from Syria, Persia or Spain, and from the early 20th century onwards also from Eretz Israel.

Popular at different points in time and in different regions was (and still is) silver or gold filigree. A filigree Torah finial type was developed in Amsterdam at the end of the 17th century. Elaborate silver-filigree spice towers with enamel plates are especially known from 18th century Schwäbisch Gmünd, but also - without enamel work - in Austro-Hungary, especially in Galicia, but filigree spice containers of different forms were greatly appreciated also in Vienna, Brno and elsewhere in central Europe. Small silver filigree boxes were made also in Italy, Russia and Hungary as souvenirs and utilized as spice boxes, bigger ones to store objects needed for ritual circumcision. Filigree caskets to store the etrog fruit are known from Italy, as are filigree containers for amulets. Besides for spice towers, in Galicia and Poland filigree was used especially on so-called Baal shem tov Hanukkah lamps and on bookbindings. Objects of filigree, sometimes gold-filigree, were also made in the Ottoman Empire from where filigree then spread to the Balkans. Gold filigree containers for Esther scrolls are known from Turkey, and a distinct filigree decor was developed in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greek Ioannina. The elaborate, often partly gilded cases for Esther scrolls produced here feature attached leaves and rosettes and often terminate in a cone, knob and bead, sometimes integrating colorful glass stones.

Filigree or silver wire combined with enamel work, so-called Cloisonné, is known in Italian finials and wedding rings.

There are rare extremely precious jewelled gold Judaica objects produced in Austria or in Poland for Hassidic courts in Galicia.

### **2.2.3.3 Wood**

Wooden objects, especially carved Torah pointers and mezuzot (small containers put on doorposts) may hint to an Eastern European provenance, whereas Esther scrolls mounted on a wooden handle in general imply a North African origin. Wooden Torah ark tops and wooden omer boards may come from all over Europe, whereas carved wooden plaques and panels indicating the direction of prayer hint to a Central or Eastern European provenance. Spice- and etrog- boxes, finials and kiddush cups carved from olive, sometimes from sandalwood, probably have their origin in the Land of Israel. Inlaid containers may have been produced in Syria or Egypt. Wooden Torah cases stem from the Near East, North Africa and Inner Asia as well as from Romaniote Greek communities where they were adorned also with painted wooden finials. In many Italian synagogues, the interior furnishing was made entirely of wood, including the Torah ark.

### **2.2.3.4 Paper**

Decorated works of paper are mainly to be found as so-called shiviti plaques, marriage contracts, sukkah booth decorations, omer calendars and amulets. A most popular craft is the art of papercutting. In Eastern Europe mizrah papercuts were made indicating the direction of prayer and using traditional folkloristic elements, as were shiviti plaques, meditative representations of the seven-branched Menorah to contemplate over God's name. Smaller, round papercuts called roisele in Yiddish were used as ornaments for special holidays such as the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Weeks. Shiviti papercuts with a foiled background refer to a North African provenance.

### **2.2.3.5 Other**

There have of course been glass objects in private Jewish ritual use. Due to the fragility of the material, the alleged old age of a Judaica glass object should be questioned. However, exceptions confirm the rule - for example, contemporary Hebrew inscriptions and illustrations were put on many Biedermeier glasses to raise their value.

The same must be said about works of ceramics and porcelain. But some pieces of folkloristic Judaica ceramics from around 1900 were collected in the Lemberg region and survived, as did

Pesach plates from that time made in Bohemia. A quantity of porcelain Judaica from the late 19th century onwards, which were produced in Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and England are known, too.

Ivory was used for handles of Torah scroll staves and to top them in Turkey, as well as in Greece and other Sephardi communities. Ivory inlays decorated Torah scroll handles in Eastern Europe and ivory integrated in bookcovers was used in the whole of Central Europe.

Carved objects made from soapstone, mainly souvenir objects like beakers, were produced around 1900 in Jerusalem.

## *2.2.4 Style*

### **2.2.4.1 Art-Historical Considerations**

The ability to identify the regional provenance of a Judaica object requires some fundamental knowledge of art history, aesthetic styles and traditions. While major European eras and their specific features may be known, specific regional characteristics and non-European styles may not. So the first stylistic question to an object should be: Does it look familiar? Can it be roughly classified as an object featuring Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Classical/Empire, Neo-Renaissance, -Roman, -Gothic, Art Nouveau/Secession/Jugendstil, or Art Deco elements? The next one: Does it look European at all, or does its style and ornamentation hint at the Near or Far East, the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia? Does it look like a folkloric piece from a rural region? Or does it feature elements of a specific folkloric tradition? Does it look like it was made by a learned craftsman or by a layman?

### **2.2.4.2 Inner-Jewish Differences**

As important as art-historical criteria are for identification, similarly important are references to customs, traditions, and languages specific to the different Jewish ethnic divisions. The variety of parts of the world and countries in which Jews have been and are still living implies an enormous variety of styles found in Jewish ceremonial objects. Through migrations, economic crises, lootings, redistributions, and military conflicts, objects with remote origins may have found their ways into European and/or American collections or popped up on the market. To trace their provenance, you should familiarize yourself with at least the main Jewish divisions and their material culture. Be aware that there exist many further differences within the divergent Jewish life worlds: mainly between capitals, smaller towns and rural regions; rich and poor; enlightened, reformed, orthodox, political and mystical-oriented groups; North and South; West and East.

The different groups can be defined by and large as follows:

#### *2.2.4.2.1 Ashkenazi Jewry*

Ashkenazi Jews: Ashkenaz designates the lands of Western, Central and Eastern Europe; Jews living in this common cultural region are called Ashkenazim. Their traditional areas of settlement are France, the Lowlands, the historic German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Switzerland, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia. Ashkenazi culture mirrors Western, Central, and Eastern European culture with a Jewish fashioning.

#### *2.2.4.2.2 Sephardi Jewry*

Sephardi Jews: Sepharad designates the land of Spain, in a broader sense the Iberian peninsula. After their expulsion around 1500 they settled in the Ottoman Empire from where they reached the Balkans and Austria, North Africa, Italy, Northwest Europe, Malta and eventually the Americas.

They are called Sephardim. For different reasons, European Sephardim were generally socially better off than Ashkenazim, and their material cultural heritage - which is influenced by Dutch, English, Italian and North-German aesthetics, though in keeping with old Sephardi traditions - reflects their economical success. Sephardi Ottoman and North African culture mirrors the Islamic molded culture in these countries.

#### *2.2.4.2.3 Oriental Jewry*

Another group is formed by Oriental Jewry, which is subdivided further into another two groups: Those of North Africa (if they are not Sephardim), namely Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia (including Djerba), and Libya, where they have partly settled since before the Christian era.

The second group are Middle Eastern Jews living in Iraq, Iran, Kurdistan, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Oriental Jewish culture mirrors the Islamic-molded culture in these countries, with Italian influences in North African objects and Indian influences in some Middle Eastern objects.

#### *2.2.4.2.4 Caucasian and Crimean Jewry*

Jews from the Caucasus and the Crimea are considered a further group: They comprise Georgian Jews, mountain Jews from Daghestan and Azerbaijan and Krymchaks whose material culture reflects majority culture, while there are typical Jewish costume traditions.

#### *2.2.4.2.5 South-, East- and Central-Asian Jewry*

South-, East- and Inner-Asian Jews used to live in different areas of India, in Bukhara, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China, mainly in Kaifeng. Their material culture also mirrors majority culture.

#### *2.2.4.2.6 Others*

Further non-Ashkenazi groups in Europe are the Bne Roma or Italkim who have been living in Italy since late antiquity (NB: there are also Ashkenazi and Sephardi Italian communities) and the Romaniotes who stem from the late antique Greek world in the lands of the Balkans.

### **2.2.5 Symbols**

Many Judaica objects are identifiable because they feature symbols specific to Judaism. The most common ones are the following:

Crown - The crown symbolizes the „Crown of the Torah.“ It is set on a multitude of ritual objects and stresses the Torah’s claim to authority. As many of the illustrated crowns are characteristic for different European dynasties, their form is often a lead to establish provenance.

(A first finding aid is:

[https://www.google.at/search?biw=1600&bih=712&noj=1&site=webhp&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=european+crowns&oq=european+crowns&gs\\_l=img.3..0i19.43851.47214.0.47493.15.14.0.1.1.0.162.94.9.11j2.13.0....0...1c.1.64.img..1.14.951...0j0j0i30i19j0i8i30i19.1z-R3rCEMoc](https://www.google.at/search?biw=1600&bih=712&noj=1&site=webhp&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=european+crowns&oq=european+crowns&gs_l=img.3..0i19.43851.47214.0.47493.15.14.0.1.1.0.162.94.9.11j2.13.0....0...1c.1.64.img..1.14.951...0j0j0i30i19j0i8i30i19.1z-R3rCEMoc))

Tablets of the Law – Often showing the Hebrew beginning of the Ten Commandments, these in the middle of many ritual objects not only refer to the central element in the Five Books of Moses but also to where they were originally kept, the Temple in Jerusalem.

Drawn Back Curtain - The European heraldic tabard served as the basis of modern national and aristocratic coats of arms, which in turn were used for the design of a lot of Torah shields,



Hanukkah lamps etc., the edges of which imitate cloth. In this way, it obviously refers to the royal status of what it adorns, namely the Torah, and turns the object itself into a symbol of power. At the same time, the cloth conjures up the association with the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The leaned-on form of the heraldic tabards used may help to establish provenance.

(A first finding aid is:

<https://www.google.at/search?q=european+heraldry++coat+of+arms&client=safari&rls=en&tbnisch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiEw7P70eHNAhXJNxQKHUzyCdwQsAQILw&biw=1600&bih=712>)

Torah Shrine – The Torah shrine belongs to the Temple symbols. Being integrated into Torah shields or Hanukkah lamps, its doors may be opened. All Temple symbols are not only commemorative links to the past but also links to a believed future reconstruction of the Temple in the world to come.

Ark of the Covenant – With two guarding cherubs as known from depictions of reconstruction of the sanctuary during the wandering in the wilderness, this symbolizes the essence of the Torah.

Table with Show-Breads - This is another symbol for the sacrificial service in the time the Temple in Jerusalem existed.

Altar – Two different altars may be seen on an object, the incense altar and the fire altar. They both refer to Jewish cult in the era preceding the destruction of the Temple.

Aaron's Priestly Garment – The garment, which is decorated with small bells at the lower seam, may be featured. It also refers to the Temple and the priestly service.

Hoshen - The High Priest's breastplate was sacred. The symbol again commemorates the time of the Temple and expresses the hope of a Messianic era to come.

Headgear – The headgear of the High Priest, commonly in the shape of a tiara, belongs to the Temple symbols.

Censer – Without the censer and its fragrant incense, Aaron could not complete his priestly work.

Menorah - The lighted seven-branched candelabra is one of the best known Temple symbols. It is often to be seen on Hanukkah lamps, as it is linked to the historical events on which the festival is based. But it also appears on many shiviti- and mizrach- plaques and other objects.

Flames – Flames leaping out of amphoras symbolize that light in the Temple, which according to tradition was never extinguished and which lives on in the “small sanctuary,” as the synagogue is also called, in the Ner Tamid, the Eternal Light.

Columns – In front of the Jerusalem Temple stood the columns Jachin and Boaz. Remembering those, columns frame the Tablets of the Law or the ark on ritual objects.

Tree - Equating the Torah with the “Tree of Life,” sprouting trees are often to be seen.

Moses and Aaron – With their specific attributes - i.e. Moses with the rod and the Tablets of

the Law and Aaron with the censer wearing his priestly garment – these go back to the time of and prescriptions concerning the building of the tabernacle.

Lions – Lions were associated with the Tribes of Israel, Judah and Dan, at an early date. In numerous depictions from late antiquity, the “Lion of Judah” is already shown guarding the Torah shrine. They often come as escutcheon holders as in coats of arms. The appearance of lions on Jewish ritual objects may possibly come from a popular saying in the Mishnah, Pirkei Avot, V:20: “Judah the son of Teima would say: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, fleeting as a deer and mighty as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven.”

The appearance of the lions is often typical for the region in which the object was made.

(A first finding aid is:

[https://www.google.at/search?q=Lion+Europe&client=safari&rls=en&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiVzdX20uHNAhVFzRQKHY3gC8EQ\\_AUICCGB&biw=1600&bih=712#tbn=isch&q=Lion+european+iconography](https://www.google.at/search?q=Lion+Europe&client=safari&rls=en&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiVzdX20uHNAhVFzRQKHY3gC8EQ_AUICCGB&biw=1600&bih=712#tbn=isch&q=Lion+european+iconography)

A lion may also symbolize the name of the owner of the object in question: Löw/Ariel. A Lion, an Eagle and a Deer - may feature on an object to illustrate the above mentioned quotation more completely.

Griffins - instead of lions, griffins are often placed on Eastern European objects.

Deer – may replace lions as an indication of the donor’s or owner’s name: Zvi (Hebrew), Hirsch (German), Herschl (Yiddish)

Magen (מגן - Hebrew: shield) David – The Shield or Star of David is a symbol of modern Judaism. As such it became representative of Zionism. In the early modern period the hexagram is known only to have been used as a Jewish symbol by the Jewish community in Prague. Please note: Not every six-pointed star has to be a Star of David. Hexagrams were used in Christian Kabbalah, served as fire protection symbols and also as beer or brewing stars in tapping signs.

Shofar – A ram’s horn symbolizes the High Holidays.

The Priestly Blessing – The priestly blessing is often featured on objects by two raised hands. The symbol expresses that the donor or owner of the object is a Cohen (priest), a descendant from Aaron, the first High Priest.

Pitcher (and Basin) – A pitcher (and basin) is/are shown on objects to hint to the Levite (descendants of the Tribe of Levi) status of the donor or owner. It refers to the Levites' traditional duty of cleaning the hands of the Temple Priest prior to a religious service.

People Leaving a City – The Israelites leaving a city symbolizing Egypt is to be seen on objects related to Pesach.

Lamb – The Paschal lamb may be found on a number of Pesach-related objects, alone or lying on a table with girdled Israelites circling it.

People Passing through a Sea – This refers to the parting of the Red Sea through which the Israelites passed and the Egyptians drowned. The scene is depicted on objects related to Pesach.

Women Dancing and Playing Instruments – Miriam, joined by other women, played the tambourine after the Israelites safely crossed the Red Sea. The scene may be depicted on objects related to Pesach.

Sacrifice of Isaac – Abraham nearly sacrificing Isaac but being stopped by an angel or a heavenly hand may be seen on objects related to male circumcision.

Judgment of Solomon – Solomon's judgment is mainly depicted on plates used in the ceremony of the redemption of the first-born son.

Men with Grapes – Depiction of the two scouts bringing back a big bunch of grapes as proof of the fertility of the Promised Land is to be found on different Judaica objects.

Harpist – King David is often depicted playing the harp, especially in connection with psalms, since according to tradition he is the author of the Psalms, which were to be sung with musical accompaniment.

Pelican Feeding its Brood – The pelican ripping open its breast to feed its children with its own blood is especially to be found on Sephardic objects and symbolizes the Jewish mother.

Phoenix – The mythological bird is a symbol of rebirth and immortality.

Unicorn – The unicorn is a hunted animal, but in contrast to Christian folklore never captured.

Elephant – The elephant is a symbol of the Torah, wisdom and lovingkindness.

Squirrel – The squirrel is a symbol of wise foresight.

Bear - The bear is a symbol of strength; the male name of Baer/Ber/Dov (Hebrew)

The Temple Mount – This may symbolize the place of the actual sanctuary of the past, the place of the heavenly sanctuary of the future, or the place where the binding of Isaac took place.

The Temple - In modern times the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount is often represented as symbolizing the site of the First and the Second Temple. The Dome of the Rock served also as depiction of the Temple on the printer's mark of Marco Antonio Gustiniani in Venice.

Western Wall – Mostly in combination with David's Tower or Citadel, the Dome of the Rock, and cypresses, the Western Wall has become an iconic symbol for the city of Jerusalem.

Zodiac Signs – These symbolize constellations - called „Mazalot“ in Hebrew, the singular meaning „luck“ - the cycle of the year with its established cyclic holydays according to the Jewish calendar. In a number of cases, especially on wimpels, the zodiac sign designates the constellation under which the child was born. In other cases, i.e. on calendars, the zodiac sign accompanies the illustration of the monthly agricultural activity.

Some of the symbols enumerated above are far from being Jewish symbols only. Non-Jewish religious objects may feature identical/comparable symbols and images and refer generally to the Old Testament; some of them may also refer to Islamic content and some to mythological narratives.

### 2.2.6 Colors

The color white symbolizes purity. White or cream-colored textiles are used in the synagogue on the High Holidays Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.

Black or dark Torah textiles are related to death and mourning.

Purple is a popular color for Torah textiles because it was used extensively in the decoration of the Tabernacle and for the priestly garments.

As crimson symbolizes blood, special Torah curtains for the circumcision ceremony may be of a red color.

### 2.2.7 Hallmarks

Silver is too soft to be used in its “fine” or “pure” form but has to be alloyed with copper. For centuries in Europe the fineness of silver ranged from about 70% to 95.8 % (700, 800, 925). In former times guilds regulated and controlled standards, then governments took over. They approved and still approve the stated fineness by use of hallmarks.

A hallmark is an official mark or series of marks struck on items made of precious metals. It serves as a guarantee of a certain purity or fineness of the metal as determined by formal metal testing by an independent body or authority. In general, it is made up of several elements such as a mark denoting the type of metal, the maker’s or workshop’s mark, and the city and year of the marking. To test the metal purity a small sample of it is taken by the assayer and subdued to a chemical process to verify the fineness. Thus, the assay mark is often a zigzag line, but it can also be the assayer’s initials or the date. Tax free census marks were introduced after the invalidation of Napoleonic hallmarks in countries formerly under French occupation. A re-hallmarking from 1806 confirmed tax payments in relation to the metal value of objects in Austro-Hungary which otherwise would have been seized by the state and melted down. National regulations could and still can vary considerably.

Hallmarks are struck onto the objects with a steel punch. Most punches are stamps with letters, numbers, symbols, or ornaments executed reversed and raised. Their sizes may differ depending on the object size. By holding the stamp on to the object and hammering it, its image is transferred to the workpiece. As the striking often displaces material, the workpiece has to be refinished afterwards. Today laser markings are available.

The presence of a hallmark on a silver object is not only an official sign of approval. Hallmarks are also an invaluable aid for identifying the date, the regional provenance, and the maker of a silver object.

Unfortunately, not every metal object is hallmarked. In particular, filigree objects often lack hallmarks, as do objects from Galicia, the Ottoman Empire, Inner Asian and Oriental countries. The identification of a hallmark is not always easy, but there are a lot of finding aids.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> <http://www.925-1000.com/index.html>; Tardy-Lengellé (ed.), *Les Poinçons de Garantie Internationaux pour l'Argent*, 222 édition, Mayenne 2004; Marc Rosenberg, *Der Goldschmiede Merkszeichen*, 4 Bde, Frankfurt am Main 1922.

Pewter is hallmarked, too. Special finding aids exist.<sup>381</sup> As they were not as tightly controlled as precious metal objects, many pewter pieces were never marked.

Marks on porcelain are also common.<sup>382</sup>

Be aware that from the date there was a market for Judaica objects - i.e. from the early exhibitions of Judaica objects at world fairs, the beginning of private collecting, and the founding of Jewish museums around 1900 - fakes came also into being. One should differentiate between historical remakes, which did not pretend to be older than they were in fact (i.e. pseudo-hallmarks from the 17/18<sup>th</sup> century combined with a known Hanau trademark from around 1900)<sup>383</sup> and faked hallmarks which pretend to be historical ones. Faked Judaica especially with faked Russian hallmarks emerged in the 1970s when private collectors in the US and in Europe showed new interest in Judaica and boomed in the 1980s when post-war Jewish museums in Europe were established. To date counterfeiting Judaica makes for good business.

### 2.2.8 Labels/Stamps

Every trace on an object must be examined thoroughly and kept, as it might hint to the provenance. Labels, stamps, stickers, engravings, and numbers may indicate:

(Former) Museums' inventory numbers

Former Jewish community inventory numbers

Numbers from auction houses

Numbers from galleries

Vugesta numbers (Verwaltungsstelle für jüdisches Umzugsgut der Gestapo - Gestapo Administration Point for Jewish Removal)

JCR-tags: As explained in Part 1 of this *Handbook*, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction was founded in 1947 to function as the agent of the JRSO, the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization for heirless Jewish cultural property. It collected heirless cultural assets at designated collection points for redistribution mainly in the United States and Israel. As previously noted each object and book collected by the JCR received a JCR metal tag respectively a JCR bookplate.

Numbers for which no (immediate) explanation can be found may refer to an internal Nazi system, to a nationalization system, or to a system set up by a department of monuments/national heritage agency.

In the framework of the Holocaust, when objects were moved to central points of administration - not only to Nazi bodies but also to Jewish communities for safekeeping - they were often marked with labels containing a private or institutional name.

Every possibility to store a hint must be explored - i.e., an old note might be found in a charity or any other box or object that can be opened. Another example would be the clearance for the holiday plaques on Torah shields, which can be opened to change the plaques. Preventing the plaques from falling around in the clearance after a plaque was lost, they sometimes were stabilized by a small

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<sup>381</sup> <http://www.pewtersociety.org/collecting/european-pewter>, Stará, Dagmar, *Zinnmarken aus aller Welt*. Aus dem Tschechischen übersetzt von Kurt Lauscher, Hanau/M. 1987. Erwin Hintze, *Die deutschen Zinngießer*, Vols 1-7, 1921-1927, Reprint Aalen 1965; the last volume includes Austria, Hungary, Switzerland and Alsace. Howard Herschel Cotterell: *Old Pewter. Its Makers and Marks*, London 1929.

<sup>382</sup> <http://www.ceramic-link.de/icd/pages/marks/marksindex.htm>;  
<http://www.haberey.info/gold/keram-mk.htm>.

<sup>383</sup> [http://www.925-1000.com/Egerman\\_hanau\\_marks\\_01.html](http://www.925-1000.com/Egerman_hanau_marks_01.html).

object or often by a piece of paper. This paper may shed light on the time and the locality the object was used when the paper was inserted.

You might find traces of attempts to erase former engraved numbers or letters.