

From Physical Space to Cyberspace: Bringing Art to Or Zarua



A SPECIAL NEW YEAR ART REVIEW: THE OZ ONLINE GALLERY DURING THE TIME OF COVID

For almost two years now, communal life at Or Zarua has been muted — but not silenced. Our Social Hall, where the OZ Art Gallery has resided for the past 16 years, has remained our host for the synagogue's group activities — a meeting place for *kiddushim* and special socially-distanced gatherings. It remains our *Beit Knesset*, our gathering place. But for many months now, we have been unable to experience scenes like this, the opening of our *Bar / Bat Mitzvah* exhibition, "Today I Am...."



Starting in the spring of 2020, the OZ Art Gallery has moved out of its physical home, taking up a new domain in the realm of cyberspace and adopting a new name, The OZ Online Gallery. Instead of presenting twice-yearly exhibitions, the OZ Gallery now appears bi-monthly in full pages of the OZ Newsletter, where it offers art and learning on topical themes and festival or seasonal observances. In this digital realm, the OZ Gallery Committee continues to fulfill its mission of providing art that is beautiful, thought-provoking and inspirational to our OZ community

In this special retrospective of The OZ Online Gallery we look back at what we've presented since the Covid lockdown. It is our hope that we will soon be able to return home to our physical space at Or Zarua and once again adorn the walls of the Social Hall with the creativity and insight that art provides.

ART FOR ALL SEASONS



Image by Tal Shochat, *Rimon (Pomegranate)* 2010, C-Print, 47.25 x 50.75 inches.

Photograph courtesy Meislin Projects, NY.

As plans for reopening Or Zarua move forward, the Gallery Committee is also planning ways for art to remain part of synagogue life. This month, as we celebrate Sukkot, we share this portrait of a pomegranate tree by Tal Shochat, an Israeli artist born in Netanya who currently lives and works in Tel Aviv and whose works have been shown in museums around the world including in California, Nevada, London, New Delhi and, of course, Israel. This is from a series of portraits of fruit trees from Israel, captured at the moment of their peak ripeness, a visual affirmation for this time of celebration for the Fall harvest.

As you savor this striking image, we hope you have been enjoying *On Exhibit: 15 Years at the OZ Gallery*, the lively commemorative volume that was mailed to members last month, a gift from Or Zarua and the Gallery Committee. Reading it, you can recall the history of the space that became the OZ Gallery. On its 60-plus lushly illustrated pages are highlights of past exhibits in the Gallery and reminiscences by contributors, Gallery Committee members, Rabbis Scott and Amy Bolton and OZ's founding Rabbi Harlan Wechsler, Executive Director Helene Santo and Youth Education and Programming Director Sigal Hirsch. Produced under the direction of Gallery Committee Chair and curator Bobbi Collier, art director, artist and OZ Congregant Caroline Golden Ilberman and artist/illustrator Rudi Wolff, this commemorative volume is dedicated to our cherished member and congregant Charlotte Schwartz. And as you reflect on the Gallery's past contributions to OZ's history, watch for news about how the OZ Gallery will continue to play a vibrant part in OZ's life and future.

-Gerry Solomon

ONLINE OZ GALLERY



Ben Shahn, Welders, For Full Employment After the War, Register, Vote. 1944
 Gift of the CIO Political Action Committee.
 MoMA (Museum of Modern Art), New York City

Art for November! While the Hebrew month of Heshvan may be called Mar Heshvan (bitter Heshvan) because of the absence of a Jewish holiday or festival, the corresponding secular month of November is rich in holidays or special days that resonate with Jewish values. In reverse chronological order, we have Thanksgiving (see Page 1 of this Newsletter), Veterans Day, honoring those who have served their country, and Election Day, when we choose our leaders and express our views on the issues of our country. For artist Ben Shahn, the right to vote and be active in politics was an almost sacred duty. Born in Lithuania, he emigrated to the United States at the age of eight with his mother and two brothers. His upbringing in a traditional Orthodox Jewish family in Brooklyn greatly influenced his artistic career and his expression of the immigrant experience. He became known for works of social realism in his pursuit of justice and social reform. In the mid-1940's, Shahn was hired as chief artist for the newly-created Political Action Committee (PAC) of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), a labor federation that later became the AFL-CIO. Among his best known works, including the poster seen above, were those made in support of FDR's reelection campaign in 1944, calling upon the CIO's members to vote for Roosevelt and his platform of progressive legislation. In an interview five years before his death in 1969, Shahn expressed his belief that it is essential to integrate artistic practice with the desire for social reform. "A truly creative artist," he said, is "able to see the configuration of the future in present things [and] press for change." Ben Shahn, painter, lithographer, photographer, muralist, writer, immigrant and artist/activist.

-Gerry Solomon

ONLINE OZ GALLERY ART FOR DECEMBER



This Hanukkah lamp, made in Italy in the 19th century, depicts Judith holding a sword in one hand and the severed head of Holofernes in the other.

From the collection of The Jewish Museum, New York



Artemisia Gentileschi

Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes, c. 1623-1625.

From the collection of The Detroit Institute of Art.

A Heroine for Hanukkah

The Hanukkah song, *Mi yimalel...* asks, "Who can retell the things that befell us/Who can count them?" In response, we tell the story of Judah and the Maccabees and we sing, "In every age a hero or sage came to our aid." But what about a Hanukkah heroine? Enter Judith, a woman who lived a few hundred years before Judah! The Hanukkah lamp shown above depicts Judith's bold, brave action. There is much more to be learned

in this scholarly article by Professor. Deborah Levine Gera of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (the article can be found at this link: <https://www.thetorah.com/article/judith-a-chanukah-heroine>). Judith is described as a compelling and challenging figure, a beautiful and bold widow, pious, violent, seductive and wise. Judith "took the initiative to save her people," writes Professor Gera, "after the leaders of Jerusalem failed to act forcefully against their enemies." According to versions of the story passed down orally through the centuries Judith and her maidservant go to the camp of the enemy general Holofernes whose Assyrian forces have laid siege to her town. They bring food so they won't have to partake of their enemies'. Among the items are dry cake, bread and salty cheese, guaranteed to make the general so thirsty he will be forced to drink so much wine he gets drunk. When Holofernes does pass out—after trying unsuccessfully to seduce Judith—she turns the tables on him, takes his sword and beheads him, as depicted in this image.

Judith's story disappeared from Jewish tradition fairly early in ancient times. Professor Gera notes there is no trace of the tale in the Dead Sea Scrolls; she is not mentioned in the Mishnah, Talmud or other rabbinic literature. She doesn't reappear in Jewish literature for more than a thousand years after the apocryphal book was first composed. Professor Gera points out that in the medieval accounts of Judith, she is often associated with the holiday of Hanukkah and is connected with other Hebrew tales of the heroine, such as Jael killing Sisera, Miriam singing a victory song and Esther saving her people. At Purim, we'll give Esther her artistic tribute. For now, let's give Judith her moment along with the Maccabees. Behold this beautiful Hanukkah lamp, remember our heroines and heroes and Happy Hanukkah from the OZ Gallery Committee!

-Gerry Solomon and Bobbi Collier

ONLINE OZ GALLERY ART FOR JANUARY



Marc Chagall, *Birthday*, 1915
Oil on cardboard
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), NYC

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS!

Later this month—January 28th to be precise—Congregation Or Zarua will celebrate its 32nd birthday. A few days later (see page one for details) the Annual Lucy S Dawidowicz lecture will take place honoring the memory of Lucy Dawidowicz, noted author and early member of Or Zarua. For our birthday gift, the Online OZ Gallery presents this lovely painting, *Birthday*, by Marc Chagall, the best known artist of Jewish subjects of the 20th century. Renowned for his fusion of Cubist forms, vibrant colors and fantasy, Chagall rose from humble beginnings and lived through momentous and often horrifying times to become a trailblazer and a giant of the Modernist movement. To some he was also the forerunner of Surrealist imagery.

Throughout his long life he never forgot his Jewish roots. Born Moyshe Segal in 1887 in a town called Vitebsk in the part of Russia called the Pale of Settlement (in today's Belarus), the young artist was inspired by the life he saw all around him, especially Russian folk art and the practices of Hasidic Judaism. Rather than seeking inspiration from faraway places, he engaged with his everyday world. Local farmers, beggars, visiting rabbis, farm animals and family appear in his works. By slightly distorting their figures and using abstract backgrounds he made them symbols of his dream-like world. According to writer Jess Harrison, Chagall's "airborne subjects speak of his upbringing, representing wishes for freedom—something that was completely foreign to a Russian Jew at that time."

In 1911, he moved to Paris where he changed his name to Marc Chagall. He also met Pablo Picasso and became part of the French capital's thriving and dynamic art and cultural scene. Three years later, Chagall returned to Vitebsk to marry his adored fiancée Bella. Intending to stay in Russia for a few months, Chagall and Bella found themselves trapped by the outbreak of World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917. They were forced to stay in Russia for nine years.

Chagall's wife Bella was a profound inspiration—his Muse—throughout his life. The intensity of their relationship is expressed in *Birthday*, the 1915 work seen above. Years later, Bella recalled how she visited him on his birthday carrying flowers and food in embroidered shawls. After the food was unwrapped the shawls were draped around the room and Chagall began to paint. The result, observes writer Harrison, captures "the weightlessness of love...with the couple's heads both twisted to meet the other, testament to the gravity-defying magnetism of their relationship [and] a challenge to Bella's upper-class parents who did not approve of the union." Using similar language, writer Monica-Bohm-Ducher describes *Birthday* as providing a "vivid testimony to the gravity-defying self-sufficiency of their partnership...[a] bliss that cannot be contained by drabness or gravity."

For more details, click: <https://tinyurl.com/ChagallJan2021>

Marc and Bella Chagall were married for 29 years. They emigrated to the United States with their daughter (under the sponsorship of MoMA) when the Nazi threat became too great. Bella died of an infection in 1944 and although Marc Chagall married two more times his love for Bella was enduring. Throughout his long life—he died in 1985 at 97—Marc Chagall never lost his deep attachment for Bella, nor did he forget his Jewish roots. Chagall himself said in 1922: "If I were not a Jew...I wouldn't have been an artist."

-Gerry Solomon and Bobbi Collier

Online OZ Gallery For February

Benjamin Marcus Creates Unique Illustrated Megillah



Megillah Esther - completed work (right side).

Creating the Marcus Megillah This beautifully illustrated *Megillat Esther* is the personal megillah of Jerome Marcus, an attorney in Pennsylvania and the brother of OZ's Benjamin Marcus. Benjamin—architect, graphic designer and illustrator, and our Shabbat Gabbai Sheini—decorated the scroll. It took a year of preparation—of study and research, of testing and working with different media, of sketching and planning—and more than a hundred hours of working on the parchment before Benjamin's vision was realized. Two years ago, Jerome purchased the base scroll from a sofer in Jerusalem and commissioned his brother to do the illustrations. Challenged to explore his own concerns about the history and tradition of Jewish art while also dealing with the ritual prescriptions for making megillot, Benjamin began his research. As *The Book of Esther* is set in ancient Persia, Benjamin looked to the Met's permanent collection of artworks from the sixth to fourth centuries BCE. There he found inspiration for patterns that would be the background of the megillah's panels, artwork that would provide context and a sense of historical accuracy.

To help Benjamin further understand the character of the Book of Esther, his brother gave him a commentary written by the 19th century commentator Malbim who, as Benjamin told *Tablet* magazine, "looks at the story essentially as a story of politics...about the bureaucracy that existed and the role it had in our near annihilation." Taking notes while reading the Malbim, Benjamin says, helped him work out the details of his visual storytelling.

-Text continued on the next page.



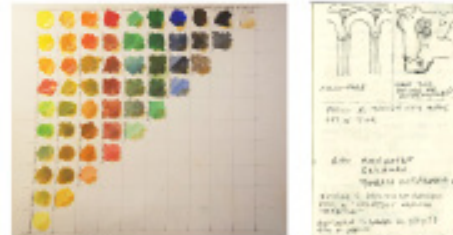
Inspirational artifacts from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the NYU Institute for Study of the Ancient World.



Painting patterned background panels before returning to apply the figures.



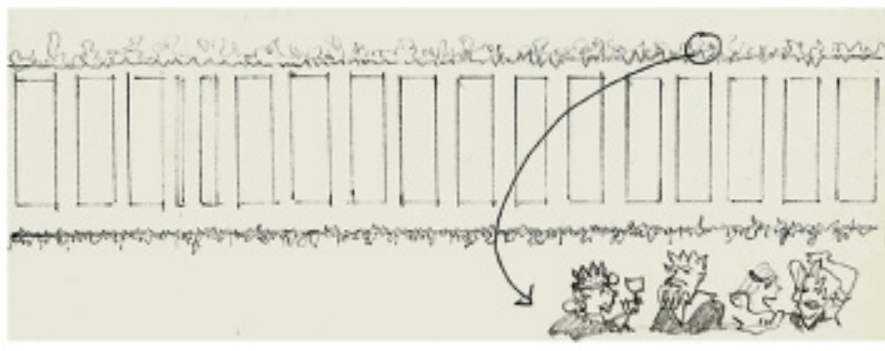
Testing paints & inks on k'l sample and mixing new colors of egg tempera.



Sketches at the Met.



Notes taken on the Malbim.



Sketching out the Megillah columns to plan figures.

-Image set continued on the next page.

Online OZ Gallery For February Benjamin Marcus Creates Unique Illustrated Megillah



Megillat Esther - completed work (left side).

The next step: understanding the conventions of illuminating a manuscript, the rules of working on animal-skin parchment, of Kashruth. Benjamin had to school himself in the practice of painting with egg tempera, not an easy medium to work with. Needing to practice on a spare sheet of kosher klaf parchment—which isn't easy to find—he finally located a sofer in Williamsburg. Next problem? Finding the sofer's exact address and, ".....even though he's living in the 21st century in Brooklyn, he doesn't speak any English," Benjamin said. Ultimately, they did find each other and figured out how to communicate.

A word about color scheme: Benjamin chose to illustrate a fable in which intrigue, extended feasts, and impending doom dominate the early narrative. "I started off illustrating the panels with neutral colors and then it slowly gets darker and darker as you go along," he says. Once Haman is foiled, the color scheme lightens, with more light blues and blends of orange and yellow. The end of the story is "majorly festive," says Benjamin, "with brighter colors and looser geometric patterns."

Reflecting on this years-long project Benjamin says it is the "process that interests me most. Art is about making things....knowing things, learning things.The artist, when he's successful, shows people how they have an innate ability to see, how to be able to engage with the world." And he adds, "When you do what you love, it goes into your head, it goes into your heart." Clearly, this illuminated manuscript, the "Marcus Megillah," comes from the heart and inspires the mind.

Yasher koach, Benjamin, and Hag Sameach Purim.

For more information, go to <https://www.benjaminrmarcus.com/megillat-esther>.

-Gerry Solomon



The first feast.



Ahasuerus asks Haman what he thinks should be done for such a person who the king wants to honor; Haman answers that such a man should be led on a white horse through the kingdom (which Haman must then do for Mordechai).



Ahasuerus shocked to find Haman prostrate on the couch upon which Esther is lying.



Outside the palace gates the document declares the date of the 13th in ancient Persian cuneiform; Ahasuerus & Haman drinking together.



The ten sons of Haman put to death, their hats on the ground below.

Online OZ Gallery For March *Artistic Visions of the Ten Plagues*



James Jacques Joseph Tissot

Left: *Water is Changed into Blood*, c. 1896-1902

Right: *The Fourth Plague: The Plague of Flies*, c. 1896-1902

Imagining the Ten Plagues

No wonder Pesah is such a popularly celebrated holiday! We get together with family (soon, we hope), share a fabulous meal and retell a thrilling, inspirational tale of victory over oppression, of hope and salvation, a tale packed with colorful and dramatic moments of conflict and almost unbelievable happenings. For centuries, the Exodus story—and particularly the recounting of the Ten Plagues—has inspired artists' imagination as expressed through illuminated Haggadot to engravings to fine art to drama to cinema. (Here's looking at you, Cecil B DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* or Charlton Heston's *Moses*.)

For example, the two images seen above are by French-born painter and illustrator Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902), whose name was Anglicized as James Tissot. Tissot became a successful painter of Paris society before moving to London in 1871. He was famous as a painter of fashionably dressed women shown in various scenes of everyday life. He also painted scenes and characters from the Bible. Tissot's parents were both devout Catholics and his mother instilled a pious devotion in her son at a very young age, lessons he would not forget. Late in his life, Tissot would reward his mother's religious teaching by working on engravings and painting of subjects from the Hebrew Bible.

A Google search for visual expression of the Ten Plagues led us to SEFARIA: *The Art of the Ten Plagues* by Rabbi Bolton: <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/150370?lang=bi>. In this luminous source sheet, Rabbi Bolton places relevant text from Exodus alongside images of each of the Plagues. Asked about the importance of these images in our appreciation of the Pesah text, Rabbi Bolton says: "In the case of the Plagues, artists' interpretations invite us to wonder about not only the visual scenes but the emotions that are stirred. Viewing [the images] encourages us to re-live the experience of going out of Egypt, as we are commanded in every generation: *hayav Adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatza m'Mitzrayim*. What did it look like? How did it feel? Where is God to be located? From which perspective shall I paint the picture?" Rabbi Bolton adds: "The artist presents a view that is to behold! Then the work stirs us to artfully use our religious imagination ourselves."

From the OZ Gallery Committee to all, a joyous, fulfilling and, A Zissen Pesah!

-Gerry Solomon

Online OZ Gallery For April

Counting, Commemorations, and a Celebration



Photograph Taken after Signing the Declaration of Independence of Israel, May 14, 1948
Photograph by Frank Shershel, courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

Counting Forward, Looking Back

This month of April (Nissan/Iyar on the Hebrew calendar) is a time of counting, commemorations and a celebration of the birth of the State of Israel. During the month we count the Omer as we mark the days toward Shavuot. On the 9th of April (27 Nissan), we observe Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, in memory of the almost six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. A week later, April 15 (4 Iyar) is Yom Hazikaron, Memorial Day for those who lost their lives in the struggle for Israel's independence and for all those military personnel killed while on active duty in Israel's armed forces. (In more recent times, this remembrance also includes victims of terrorism.) The next day, April 16 (5 Iyar) is Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, celebrating the formal establishment of the State of Israel.

In the above photograph, taken on May 14, 1948 (5 Iyar 5708), Golda Meir is seen shaking hands with Moshe Sharett, who became the second Prime Minister of Israel, as David Ben-Gurion, who became the first Prime Minister of Israel, looks on, after the reading and signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was a profound moment, one of jubilation and also sadness. In her luminous, definitive biography, "LIONESS Golda Meir And The Nation of Israel" writer Francine Klagsbrun, our OZ Congregant, captures the jubilant, deeply emotional sense of that historic time:

"After the entire proclamation was read and adopted, signers walked to the desk one by one in alphabetical order to write their names on a sheet of parchment Moshe Sharett and Ben-Gurion held between them. Golda's hands shook and tears flowed from her eyes as she signed 'Golda Meyerson' [her American name]. She thought about the signers of the American Declaration of Independence she had learned about as a child, and about her journey from Russia to this moment. She thought about people who were missing, who should have been there, and she couldn't stop weeping...When asked in later years what her most important day in Israel was, Golda replied without hesitation, 'Friday afternoon, when the State was declared. It was the greatest moment.'"

Seventy-three years later, it still is.

More about how Francine Klagsbrun's biography is being made into a mini-series, produced by Barbra Streisand and starring Shtisel's Shira Haas, can be found on Page 8.

-Gerry Solomon

Online OZ Gallery For May

Shavuot, Rembrandt and the Artist's Jewish Connections

PICTURE THIS. Fifty days after the Exodus from Egypt. The Jewish people are gathered at Mt. Sinai. Moses has ascended the mountain. On the mountaintop, God speaks to Moses with the words of the Ten Commandments and inscribes them on the tablets. Moses remains on the mountaintop for forty days and nights learning the law. Down below, the Jewish people become restless and fearful. The Golden Calf is created. Moses descends with the tablets in his arms and sees the people dancing around the statue.

In the image at the right, Rembrandt van Rijn, the Dutch master painter, engraver and draftsman, depicts what happened next. Using rich, deep colors, broad brushstrokes and a theatrical use of lighting, Rembrandt evokes this monumental, emotional moment when Moses smashes the tablets. Against a rich gold background, light seems to emanate from Moses' face. You can almost feel his anger and exhaustion. It is a masterpiece.

Rembrandt, a Christian, created many works—drawings, paintings, and prints—on Jewish Biblical subjects. According to University of Pennsylvania professor of art history Larry Silver, “Rembrandt was heavily influenced by the Bible.” Among his other works are: *Abraham Sacrificing Isaac*; *The Condemnation of Haman*; *Esther Preparing to Intercede with Ahasuerus*; and *Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph*. Also there are paintings and drawings such as *Jews in the Synagogue*, *Portrait of a Young Jew*, *The Jewish Bride*, and *Portrait of a Rabbi*. Rembrandt's first wife, Saskia Uylenburgh, is reported to have been the model for the print, *The Great Jewish Bride*, as well as the model for Rembrandt's depiction of Queen Esther.

It's also important to note Rembrandt's Dutch nationality. Holland at that time was a haven for Jews who had escaped from persecution or had been expelled from much of Europe. Sephardic

Jews began settling in the Netherlands after 1600 and Ashkenazic Jews somewhat later. From 1633 to 1635 and from 1639 to 1658 Rembrandt lived in the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam, coincidentally also the home to many other artists. Additionally, Rembrandt was said to be friendly with several prominent, well-to-do Sephardic Jewish doctors and merchants. He was also said to be familiar with Jewish environments such as synagogues and private homes; some may have been portrayed in his artwork.

In his carefully-researched 2003 book *Rembrandt's Jews*, author Steven Nadler examines a “popular and romantic myth” about Rembrandt and the Jews that implies that Rembrandt—through his sympathetic portraits of Jewish faces and numerous use of Jewish themes—had a special affinity for Judaism. In Nadler's view, the relationship was much more nuanced. While benefitting from the financial support of his wealthy neighbors, Rembrandt often had contentious dealings with many in this community.

Nonetheless, his art is a blessing for the ages. We are pleased this month to highlight one of Rembrandt's masterpieces that reminds us of a foundational event in Jewish history.

From the OZ Gallery Committee, Chag Shavuot Sameach!!



REMBRANDT VAN RIJN

Moses With the Tablets of the Law, 1659

Gemaldegalerie, Berlin, Germany

-Gerry Solomon

Online OZ Gallery For June & July

'Tis Summer and a Good Time to Experience Outdoor Art

SUNDAY, JUNE 20, 2021, 11:32PM: The summer solstice, when the sun reaches its highest and northernmost points in the sky. The next day, June 21, is the longest period of sunlight hours and, thus, the longest day of the year. It is the official start of summer. (In our daily Amidah prayers we Jews have been saying the Summer "blessing to the earth" instead of Winter's "dew and rain to bless the earth" since Passover, but there's another explanation for that.) Whatever start date you choose, summer is a time for many kinds of activities outdoors. There's plenty of sunlight; trees and flowers are in full bloom and gardens of all types are in flower. Some of the finest examples of three-dimensional art from around the world can be seen outdoors.

In this issue of the OZ Online Gallery, we offer examples of some beautiful works of art—installations and sculpture—meant to be seen and enjoyed outdoors. We offer two examples of outdoor installations from Israel.

Whether your travels take you near or far, the OZ Gallery Committee wishes you a happy, healthy summer...and happy exploration! With thanks to Shmuel Bernstein, a longstanding Israeli friend, for connecting us to the Eretz Israel Museum.



Collaborative Effort
Ceramic flowers installation from 2017
Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv

In an email received by OZ Gallery curator Bobbi Coller, Miri Tsdaka, spokeswoman for the Eretz Israel Museum, says this installation of ceramic flowers was "not done by a [specific] artist "but rather is a collaborative effort created by some 70 clubs and Jewish community centers around Israel".

The Eretz Israel Museum was established in 1953 on an archeological site dating to the 12th century BCE. Its 20-acre campus in the Ramat Aviv district overlooks the center of Tel Aviv. Surrounded by native trees, shrubs and flowers (natural and man-made, such as these above) the Museum has displays relating to archaeology, Judaica and the history and culture of arts and crafts dating back centuries.



Henry Moore
Three Piece Sculpture: Vertebrae
Billy Rose Art Garden, Jerusalem

This work by the iconic British sculptor Henry Moore is part of the monumental collection of the Billy Rose Art Garden, the sculpture park designed by the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi on the western slope of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The garden is named for its founder, American entertainer, impresario and lyricist who wrote "Me and My Shadow," among other memorable popular songs. Its sculpture collection includes works by the great artists of the late 19th century (Rodin, Maillol) and 20th century (Moore, Picasso, Calder, LeWitt) among others. As in a Japanese Zen garden, the ground is covered in gravel and many different materials were incorporated into the garden's design: stones, exposed concrete and water. The paths are lined with local plants and trees. It is a place, visitors say, that offers a peaceful, relaxed environment in which to see an impressive lineup of inspiring works. Critics consider this garden to be one of Noguchi's masterpieces, a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures, set against Jerusalem's dramatic landscape.

Bobbi Coller & Gerry Solomon

Online OZ Gallery for the High Holy Days

An Artist Depicts the Complexity of the Days of Awe

These are the days of reflection and introspection, a period of deep, personal and complex emotions. We ask ourselves, "What have we done with our lives in the past year and what do we need to do better? How will we be judged and will we be forgiven for our transgressions? What fate will be sealed in the Book of Life?" Although we meet and pray as a community, our thoughts are mostly of ourselves and those closest to us. How does an artist convey and portray this emotional churning?



Maurycy Gottlieb
Jews praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, 1878
 Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

of Pennsylvania, explains the painting's contradictions as "Gottlieb's fullest affirmation of his Judaism as well as his most careful observation of the customs, costumes and settings of Jewish religious life in the sanctuary", with Gottlieb revealing himself as "a pensive outsider."

This is a work of complexity and contradictions, of distancing and drawing closer. So, too, the Days of Awe.

The OZ Gallery Committee extends our best wishes for a sweet, peaceful, healthy and safe new year. And, as we plan our return to our shul home in the coming weeks, we look forward with enthusiasm to bringing more learning, beauty and joy to our beloved Or Zarua.

L'Shana tovah!

Painted the year before his death, this work by Jewish Galician painter Maurycy Gottlieb (1856-1879) offers one artist's intensely personal take on the complex emotions he was feeling. This work portrays his synagogue's men's section in the foreground, where a seated rabbi holds the Torah scroll; the women's balcony is in the rear. Look carefully at the image and you can see Gottlieb himself portrayed three times: as a child in the bottom left corner; as a slightly older boy on the extreme right, resting his head on an adult's shoulder; and, in the center of the composition, we see the adult Gottlieb with his head resting in his hand. He appears self-absorbed and seemingly disengaged from his surroundings. In the women's balcony, Gottlieb twice shows us his fiancée Laura (who had broken off their engagement and, to his deep dismay, subsequently married someone else) holding her prayer book—pictured on the left side—and on the right side as she whispers near her mother's ear. Few of the figures in the composition appear to acknowledge one another.

Gilya Schmidt, professor and director emerita of the University of Tennessee's Judaic Studies program, says this work expresses the artist's personal suffering, "lifting him out of the mass melancholy that pervaded Diaspora life, though enveloping him in Jewish tradition, family and friends." Scholars at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art point out that Gottlieb seems to be tempting fate, suggesting that he would die soon when he put his own name in commemoration on the Torah covering. He did, in fact, die of health complications not long after. One wonders if that "health complication" was a broken heart.

According to Professor Schmidt *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, 1878* is "the first modern masterpiece on a Jewish theme by a Jewish artist in Poland." It reflects the emotional complexity and conflict many feel during these holiest of days. Larry Silver, art history professor emeritus at the University

-Gerry Solomon

Online OZ Gallery for November and December

Artistic Adaptations of Thanksgiving and Hanukkah Symbols

THANKSGIVING DAY AND THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS: Thursday, November 25th is Thanksgiving, the quintessential American holiday. Three days later, on the night of November 28, we light the first Hanukkah candle. During this long festive weekend we will gather with loved ones, eat generous meals, and give thanks for our blessings and our freedoms as Americans. This year, as the weekend



is ending we will light the first of eight candles (plus the shammes) in observance of Hanukkah, celebrating the victory of the Maccabees and the rededication of the second Temple in Jerusalem.

Along with the Star of David, the Hanukkiah (and the seven-branch Menorah) is among the most widely recognized and produced symbols of Jewish ceremonial art. The coincidental (or near-coincidental) observance of Thanksgiving and Hanukkah this year prompts a look at how some artists have adapted the messages from these well-known symbols to inspire, honor the tradition or simply to delight.

Eight years ago, for the first time in more than one hundred years, Thanksgiving and the first night of Hanukkah coincided on Nov. 28, 2013. In anticipation of this once-in-many-lifetimes event, nine-year-old Asher Weintraub of New York and his family produced the Menurkey, or as it came to be dubbed, "Thanksgivukkah."

Aided by exuberant media interest and publicity, the Menurkey was a commercial success.

Thousands were sold. Inspired by the theme of gratitude found in both holidays, the family pledged to use their creation as a force for good and donated a portion of their proceeds to various charities. The Menurkey is now included in the menorah collection of the Jewish Museum of New York. (By the way, if you missed it in 2013, it won't happen again for seventy-seven thousand years!)

This Hanukkah lamp conveys a very different message: Artist and author Mae Rockland Tupa was born in the Bronx in 1937 and



Mae Rockland Tupa,
Hanukkah Lamp Miss Liberty, 1974
Collection, The Jewish Museum of New York

spoke Yiddish in the home until age five. She attended a largely secular Yiddish shul where educators advocated adherence to Jewish customs and traditions as a way of assuring the survival of Judaism. Married to her first husband, a Foreign Service officer, she traveled widely and developed skills as an artist and writer. Her 1973 book, *The Work of Our Hands: Jewish Needlecraft for Today*, was a sensation – teaching readers how to make items such as tallit bags, kippot, and challah covers and how to incorporate Hebrew names and Biblical motifs in the design. The objects Mae Rockland Tupa made and the books that she wrote helped shape the field of Jewish Americana. According to a profile by Keren R. McGinity, PhD, for the Jewish Women's Archive, Tupa's work reflected her view that "just as Jews have become an integral part of the American scene, so can a classical American symbol be used to express a Jewish theme."

A prime example: the *Hanukkah Lamp Miss Liberty* that you see above. According to author and curator Susan Braunstein in her book *Luminous Art: Hanukkah Menorahs of the Jewish Museum*, the artist remembered a special Hanukkah performance at her school that happened when Mae was eight or nine years old. "Eight of us, draped in sheets, wearing paper crowns, holding books in our left hands and candles in our right, were lined up across the stage," Mae recalled. "A ninth child (the shammes) lit our candles one at a time. As she did so we raised our candles in the air and recited a line from Emma Lazarus's poem 'The New Colossus: 'Give me your tired, your poor...' And we were proud because that poem was us. Our parents had immigrated to the Land of the Free... (and we) were the wretched refuse and we were breathing free."

The adult Mae who created the Hanukkiah moved beyond an innocent childhood memory. She brought current ideas from the contemporary art world to bear on her creation and layered the work with political references to America's treatment of the Jews. The plastic Statues of Liberty and inexpensive flags evoke the work of Jasper Johns and similar artists who worked with found, banal objects, suggesting how overexposure and commercialization can undermine the power of even the most potent symbol. Note how Tupa turned some of the Liberty statues backwards. As Susan Braunstein wrote, "The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France to America in 1886, has stood at the entrance to New York Harbor as a beacon of hope. But there have been times when Miss Liberty looked away and America closed its doors to the persecuted as when the steamship *St. Louis* was denied haven in Miami and nine hundred Jews were sent back to Nazi Germany." Tupa's Hanukkiah sends two messages: the back of Lady Liberty signals the shutting of the golden door; the statue facing front, its arm holding up the lamp, shows that the welcoming light has not gone completely out.

These iconic symbols of Thanksgiving and of Hanukkah express our gratitude for our blessings and for our victory over the forces of evil; they express our hope for redemption and renewal. May the warmth of Thanksgiving and the lights of the Hanukkiah sustain us and guide us on the right path. Happy Thanksgiving and Hag Hanukkah Sameach from the OZ Gallery Committee.

-Gerry Solomon

Online OZ Gallery for January and February Remembering Naomi Friedland-Wechsler Through Reflections on Chagall's Stained-Glass Windows in Jerusalem

We dedicate this special edition of the OZ Online Gallery to the memory of Naomi Friedland-Wechsler, beloved wife of Rabbi Emeritus Dr. Harlan J. Wechsler, loving Ima to her son, Rabbi Ezra Amichai and his wife, Malka Chana Amichai, and daughter Chana Leah Dror; and cherished Savta to five grandchildren. A graduate of Radcliffe College and Columbia Law School, Naomi practiced financial services law and later became an advisor and appraiser of fine and decorative arts. Her love of the arts and of Jewish learning, community and continuity were integral parts of her personal and professional life.

Naomi Friedland-Wechsler died in Jerusalem on December 18, 2021. In his eulogy, Rabbi Ezra (who has given us permission to share these words with you) noted that while his mother was in Hadassah hospital, the family spent Shabbat praying close by.

He wrote: "At the center of this main shul in Hadassah Ein-Kerem are the 12 stunning Marc Chagall stained-glass windows. Each one depicts a bracha that Yaakov Avinu shared with his children right before his death.... My Ima, of course, studied and appreciated art in a profound way, and I often felt like the Metropolitan Museum of Art was just another room in our house, but these stained glass windows were something different. This was art at its highest level, being used as an inspiration for the experience of prayer."

Each stained-glass window depicts what many consider to be a set of heraldic symbols for each of the first Twelve Tribes of Israel. According to an ancient Kabbalistic belief, the prayers of Israel reach God through these 12 gates of heaven; those who worship in the Hadassah synagogue in Jerusalem hope that these stained-glass windows will be the entryway through which their prayers will have direct access to heaven. Each pane represents Chagall's vision of the world, both real and fantastic, as well as his love for the people of Jerusalem and his profound sense of identification with the history, culture and continuity of the Jewish people. On the occasion of the windows' installation in 1962, Chagall described them as his "modest gift to the Jewish people." A gift of enduring beauty and spiritual meaning.

It was there in Jerusalem, on Shabbat Vayechi, the parsha in which the life of Jacob ends, that Naomi Friedland-Wechsler left this world. May her memory forever be for a blessing and for an inspiration.

—Gerry Solomon, Bobbi Collier and the OZ Gallery Committee



(Top) Marc Chagall, Hadassah Hospital, Jerusalem, southern view –Naphthali, Joseph, Benjamin-three of the 12 stained-class windows; (Middle) Chagall windows seen from outside; (Above) Ein-Kerem Synagogue of Hadassah University Hospital.