רבי יונה

مبחר רימונים לספרי תורה
נ沅וסו על משפחת אירופה

יובל התרע"ס

אופרסטון תל אביב

הmóויוao לייזדה, בית אכסניה ומרשת לייזדה א"ש יוסלבישט

50
המיזואלאיים

הказанות הפסיפס הם אלמנטים המתח מסוגים שונים, כדוגמת אובדנאות, שהם ממוקמים על המסגרת הטופוגרפית של ההודו. הם משמשים לתיאור תufs של הרים ופשיסות נחלים, כמו גם לתיאור התהליך הגענוני. המיזואלאיים הם גם основе לאלמנטים המתח של ההודו, כמו גם למתכונת התלולים של הרים והנמלים.

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לכל רכמן
Iraq

Iraq, late 19th-early 20th century
Silver, engraved
H 17.5 cm  Diam 5.1 cm

inscription on each stem:
"Joseph son of Mas'udah 'Ali."

This pair of finials was the initial acquisition of the collection. It reflects the "simple", unadorned form of the kinoria, the fruit "growing" on the etz-hayyim, the Tree-of-Life — the Torah Stone — and serving as its finial. Very often the lower end of the stem of such kinoria are shaped at an angle, to fit on the onion-domes of the Torah Cases for which they were made.

The Jews of Iraq — the large "Babylonian Community" — represented the oldest diaspora community of Jews, going back to the Exile after the Destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. This community also comprised the major center of Jewish learning in Talmudic times, a millennium and a half ago. Most of the Jews of Iraq immigrated to Israel in the early 1950s, bringing much of their synagogue silver with them. Only a handful of Jews remain today in Iraq.
India (or Iraq), late 19th century
Silver, chased, cast, parcel-gilt
H 22.0 cm  Diam 5.4 cm

Inscription on each body:
"These are the Torah Finials for the repose of Jamila daughter of Sarah."

This form of Finials closely resembles Iraqi-Persian examples, though in workmanship these Rimmonim seem to be Indian. The same general form is to be seen in Erets-Israel as well, and it is intended to be used on a Torah Case.

Many Iraqi and Persian Jewish merchants settled in various Indian and South-east Asian centers, from the early 19th century on. Founding new Jewish congregations, they often relied on local craftsmen for their Torah silver.
India

India (or Persia), 19th century
Silver, chased, parcel-gilt
H 16.2 cm  Diam 4.6 cm

Much more Indian in character than Finials No. 2, above, these charming Rimmonim are quite delicate in their ornamentation. In form, they were probably derived from the Iraqi form seen above. Rather small, they were surely intended for a flat-topped Torah Case of modest dimensions. Like Finials No. 2, they were probably made for an Iraqi congregation in India.

The “native” Jewish communities are to be found in India in several areas. Mainly in the Bombay region, but also scattered in the larger cities, the Bene Israel community remained largely unknown until the 19th century. Many of them served in the British civil and military services. About 12,000 were in Israel by 1970. The history of the Cochin Jews in the Kerala region goes back a thousand years. Early contacts were made with them in the 16th century, and in the 17th-18th centuries, under Dutch rule, the community flourished, numbering around 2,000 ca. 1795. Very few remain there today, most having immigrated to Israel, where there were 4,000 in 1970. The interior of the Cochin "Kafahambagam" Synagogue has been transferred to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.
Afghanistan

Balikh (?). 19th century
Silver, chased, pierced; turquoise; glass
H 25.7 cm  Diam 9.1 cm

There is a later inscription on one Rimmun, on the body: "This is the Rimmun... Malkah daughter of Hayyim (?), wife of Yehudah Avieh Lazardol...!" Lazardol.*

These rich, beautiful Rimmuns are hinged, and can be opened to receive aromatic herbs, to enhance the atmosphere surrounding the Torah Scroll. In many Jewish communities, especially in Muslim lands, flowers and grain were affixed to Rimmunim, particularly during the major festivals. But unlike other Muslim lands, the silversmiths in Afghanistan were not Jewish.

The Jewish community of Afghanistan, the origins of which are lost in Antiquity, was a somewhat isolated satellite of Persian Jewry. Concentrated mostly in three main cities (Herat, Balikh and Kabul), the Jews there suffered persecution and massacres throughout the second half of the 19th century. Most of the community, about 5,000 souls, immigrated to Israel in the 1930s, and there are about a dozen Afghan synagogues in Israel today. After 1978, no Jews are known to have remained in Afghanistan.
Bokhara

Moscow, 1908
Silver, pierced, engraved, parcel-gilt
H 16.5 cm  |  Diam 10.8 cm

Inscription on each stem: “This is the (pair of) Torah Finials which were dedicated by Triziona Rahmann for the invocation of the soul of the late Mr. Eise Esther daughter of Jehudah Faziel, to the Holy Congregation of Andidjan, [in the year] 5568.” On each knob: “Moshe Abaram... Miriam daughter of Abraham Agiland."

Though made in Russia, and of a type used by Ashkenazi Jews in Europe, these Rimmonim sufficiently resemble the spherical types of Central Asian lands to have been accepted there into local usage. This is clearly indicated by the names in the inscription, Andidjan being a small community in the Bokhara district. This dependence on outside sources for Torah ornaments is typical of Bokhara.

Ties between the Jews of the Emirate of Bokhara and Russia were very strong, and much silver of all types was imported by Jewish merchants — for trade and for their own use. The Bokhara Jewish community, which probably never numbered more than 20,000, was quite wealthy but somewhat isolated from other major Jewish communities. A Bokhara quarter, quite modern for its time, was founded in Jerusalem already in the late 19th century, and several splendid synagogues still flourish there. A remnant community — largely of non-Bokhara origin — remains in Central Asia still today.
Daghestan

Menjelis, late 19th century
Silver, engraved, cast, die-stamped, nielloed
H 29.8 cm  Diam. 10.8 cm

Inscription around body: “These are the Torah Finials of Dan son of Elkanah and of Desdelef daughter of Jacob, from the village of Menjelis, who dedicated them, may their fate be good.”

The spherical form of this Rimmon (see Finials No. 5) is characteristic of Daghestan and neighboring regions, as is the black inlay (niello) ornamenting it. A remarkable feature are the fantastic animals depicted on the Rimmon.

The “mountain” Jews of Dagestan, in the eastern Caucasus, were scattered in numerous small towns. Today, a mere remnant of their communities survive, and in many places the synagogues are no longer active. The synagogue of the town mentioned here is still in existence.
Aden, early 20th century
Silver, chased, granulated, die-stamped
H: 23.3 cm  Diam: 8.0 cm

Inscription on the stems: Various biblical passages: ‘This is the Torah Scroll named Yaqutiel, from his wealth and labor, from what the Lord... gave him, to study in it, may the Lord grant him... he and his children and his children’s children... amen. Thus may the Lord’s will be... He who made the craftwork, Yehua... The good brother, whose pleasant name is known in the gates, was worthy and bought it, Hassan, may his light shine for ever, the son of... the honorable deceased, venerable Yehua... called Al-Ghakhil.’

Whereas the Rimmonim of Yemen proper are quite well known to the Judaica world (see Finials No. 10), those of the area to the south are less familiar. The form and workmanship of these Rimmonim (and of Finials No. 9) is typical of Aden. They were intended to adorn the small, flat-toped Torah Case common in this region.

Aden had a relatively large and important Jewish community already in the 13th century. By the time of the British takeover in 1839, however, there were only 500 inhabitants in the town, mostly Jews. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Aden and its 2,000 Jews once again flourished. The Jews were occupied mainly as merchants and silversmiths. By 1947, the Jewish community numbered almost 5,000 souls, but late in that same year pagroms broke out and with the founding of the State of Israel a general exodus began. In 1967, the last remaining 150 Jews left Aden, bringing a millennium of Jewish history there to a close.
Aden

Aden, 19th-20th century
Silver, chased, filigree, die-stamped, engraved
H 20.8 cm  Diam 8.0 cm

Later inscription on each stem: "Donation of Yeshua" son of Aziza, for the Synagogue of Immigrants from Egypt, Midrash Keter Torah, died on Wednesday, 1 Heshvan, [5]699, may he be bound in the bonds of [eternal] life."

Of form similar to Finials No. 8, these are much cruder in workmanship.

The inscription on them indicates that they were rededicated by Adeni immigrants from Egypt to a synagogue in Israel, probably that on Lilienuhm Street in Tel Aviv. This is not a "mixed" congregation, but the synagogue of Adenis who had long been settled in Alexandria in Egypt, where they had their own synagogue.
Yemen

Yemen or Jerusalem, early 20th century
Brass, cast, chased
H 33.5 cm  Diam 4.1 cm

These Torah Finials, intended for use on a Torah Case, are of the most typical Yemenite form. An unusual feature is the fish motif appearing on them. The fish is symbolic of the month of Adar (Hodesh), the time of Purim. It is also a fertility symbol, and was considered an effective counterforce to the Evil Eye, for a fish's eyes are always open and vigilant.

The Yemenite return to Israel began in the late 19th century. This community, to some 30,000 Jews, zealously guarded its unique character until the flood of immigration from Yemen and Aden in 1950-51. In Jerusalem and such towns as Hadera, the Yemenites retained separate educational and social institutions, and "intermarriage" with other communities was kept known upon. Today, the well-integrated Yemenite community in Israel is a conspicuous and colorful element, particularly strong in the entertainment world.
Italy

Venice, circa 1700
Silver, cast, repoussé
H 67.5 cm  Diam 15.2 cm
Made in the Ongaro (?) workshop

This magnificent Torah Finial is an excellent example of the fine Torah Silver produced in Venice during the 17th and 18th centuries. The ornate Venetian Baroque-style, a feast for the eyes, set the trend for much Italian Torah silver for centuries to come. This type of Rimmonim generally (but not always) had its bells hanging on long chains. Always used in conjunction with a large, open Torah Crown, the Finials’ bells would clang against the inner sides of the Crown when the Torah was borne to and from the Holy Ark.

The Jewish community of Italy is a multifaceted mosaic of Jews of varying origins. The earliest Jewish communities were founded in Roman times, and many of the early ‘Roman’ rite customs are still preserved. In late medieval times, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews began settling in Italy, establishing communities of their own and influencing not only the ‘indigenous’ Jews but also one-another. The wave of Jews from Spain after the Expulsion of 1492 had a great impact on all the material aspects of Jewish ritual art in Italy, an influence which subsequently had great effect on communities outside Italy as well.
Italy

Tunis, 1779-1793
Silver, chased, cast, engraved
H 53.2 cm Diam 12.9 cm


The display of motifs connected with the ritual in the Jerusalem Temple — as seen on these Torah Finials — is a recurring element on Italian Torah silver from the early 18th century on. This is directly related to the regard for the synagogue as a "Minor Temple", and is an expression of the yearning for the Return to Zion. The general form of these Rimmonim — a modified tower — originated in Spain. It became dominant in many parts of Italy, as well as in North Africa, and influenced development of Rimmonim in Holland, as well.

The Jews of Piedmont, soon after these Torah Finials were made, fell under the emancipation of 1788, introduced by the French, who had just taken control over this region. Though there was a brief relapse at the beginning of the 19th century, by mid-century the Jews were able to participate freely in general political and cultural life. By this time there were about 6,500 Jews in the region, about four times the present Jewish population.
Italy, early 19th century
Silver, chased, cast, parcel-gilt
H 33.0 cm  Diam 10.8 cm

Italian inscription scratched within one lid: "Moshe Levi together with his brothers."

These attractive Torah Finials are of somewhat unusual proportions. Here, too, as on the previous pair (Finials No. 12), we see objects from the Temple ritual. The very fine workmanship is typical of Italian silver of the early 19th century.

The previous owners of these Rimonim held that they and an associated Torah Crown were used by the Jewish community of Parma, in northern Italy. Jews are noted in Parma already in the late Middle Ages. They were granted political equality there in 1803, by the French (see Finials No. 12, above). The Jewish community there, never large, numbered around 230 in the 1930s, and in recent years only some 60 Jews lived there.
These small, charming Torah Finials reflect the form of a larger type of Piedmontese Kimnotim. They were probably made for a small, home Torah Scroll (see Finials No. 36. Artistically, the Torah silver of this period in Piedmont and in south-eastern France was closely related. Though rare altogether, its precise origin is difficult to ascribe specifically unless the silver bears legible hallmarks or inscriptions.
Algeria

Constantine, 1877
Silver, chased, pierced and cast
H 56.8 cm  Diam 12.8 cm

Inscriptions: (A) "Made by the artisan Makhlof Sekkis, On behalf of the Treasurer Shalom Biton," (B) "Made by the artisan Moabe Sa'id, On behalf of the Treasurer Mekorah Halimi; Fit à Constantine le 5 Mai 1877."

This is one of the largest pairs of Algerian Rimonim in existence. An elaborate version of a design ultimately derived from Livorno in Italy, the general form is common in Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. The two artisans mentioned on the bases, like most of the silversmiths of North Africa, were obviously Jewish.

The Jewish Community of Constantine stems from antiquity, and in the Middle Ages it included many learned scholars. Already in the early 19th century it numbered 5,000, and in 1962, the year of Algerian independence, almost all of its 20,000 Jews emigrated to Europe and Israel.
This pair of Rimmonim seems to have been made in France. Its inscription would point to its use in Algeria, where the somewhat crude repairs were apparently carried out. Its form is derived from Italian prototypes.

With the integration of Algeria into the French state, from 1836 on, the Jews of Algeria thrived and prospered. These Torah Finsals are indicative of the strong ties with metropolitan France, strengthened by the migration of many Algerian Jews to southern France and Paris, where they established numerous congregations of their own.
Algeria

France, late 19th century
Silver, chased, cast, pierced and engraved
H 31.8 cm Diam 7.0 cm

Inscription: "Holy Congregation of Ammi Moussa."

These Rimonim were made in France, but the inscription clearly shows that they were used in Algeria, in a small community in the north-western part of the country. Their form is very unusual, reflecting European ecclesiastical architecture.

At the time these Rimonim were used in Ammi Moussa, it was the chief town of a district of mixed European and native settlement, located 70 km inland from the coast, not far from Oran. This pair reflects the scattered, rural nature of a part of the Jewish community of Algeria.
Tunisia

Tunisia (?), 19th-20th century
Silver, chased, pierced and cast
H 15.0 cm Diameter 5.0 cm

Rimmonim of this size and form are associated with wooden Torah Cases of a type common in Tunisia and Libya. Their workmanship points more to a Tunisian origin.

The Torah Cases of Tunisia are flat-topped, often painted in colorful, floral patterns. Some of them are very ornate and gilt, and bear poetic dedications.
Tunisia

Southern Tunisia, 19th-20th century
Wood, turned, painted, partly gilt
H 35.5 cm  Diam 7.0 cm

Wooden Torah finials of this type are typical of Tunisia and Libya in the 19th and 20th centuries, in association with wooden Torah cases. They are of a modified tower form and are often gilt. The staves of a Torah Scroll, whether in a case or not, are generally called "beit hayyim, "Trees of Life". It is thus only natural to call the "fruit" growing, as it does, upon them tafsimim ("apples"). This name, parallel to Binomim, is commonly used in North African and some Sephardic communities.
These wooden Rimmonim, typical of Tunisia and Libya, are used with wooden Torah Cases. Some wooden Rimmonim from this region, as well as silver ones from the neighboring Algeria, have holes or sockets for holding flowers and grains, placed there on certain Jewish holidays which were originally celebrated as harvest festivals.

The Jews of Libya were concentrated mostly in Tripoli and its vicinity, in the north-western part of the country, adjacent to Tunisia. About half of them were artisans, and there were many very small communities scattered about. The community began prospering under the Ottomans, and during the 17th century was strengthened, physically and spiritually, by Sephardim from Livorno. In 1931 there were around 25,000 Jews in the country; today there are less than a hundred, most of the others having come to Israel.
Morocco

Melones of Fez, 19th century
Silver, cast, engraved, die-stamped, parcel-gilt, enamel
H 26.0 cm  Diam 5.8 cm

These beautiful Torah finials are fine representatives of a typically Moroccan development of the "tower" theme in Rinnimim. The earliest extant Rinnimim are from the Spanish realm, and are of tower form. With the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, many sought refuge in the Maghreb, including numerous silversmiths. Continuing to make the tower-form Rinnimim there, they eventually evolved new variations, including the very Islamic form seen here, with its subtle color scheme in enamel.

The Jews of Morocco represent several different communities, somewhat blended in modern times: the long-standing communities along the coast, founded in Medieval times and with histories of both flourishing and persecution; the "Berber" mountain Jews of the interior; the Sephardi communities established after 1492; and "Frankish" (European) elements, mainly from Italy and Holland. There are also large communities of Moroccan Jews living outside the country, particularly in France. And today, most of Moroccan Jewry resides in Israel and represents the largest single community in the country, an important and active element in society.
Morocco

Morocco, early 20th century
Silver, pierced, cast, parcel-gilt
H 31.3 cm  Diam 9.8 cm

These sophisticated Torah Finials are typical of the urban synagogues of northern Morocco. They are variants of the tower-form Kimonim and are already far removed from their architectural forerunners, the sole architectural feature being the horseshoe-shaped arches, hung with bells. The motifs of the pierced decoration are entirely Moroccan in feel and execution. The crown above, however, reflects European influence.

The Jews of Morocco were involved in every aspect of general daily life: commerce, trade, services and crafts. There was even an efficient Jewish postal system in the late 19th century. Silverworking, as in most Muslim lands, was almost exclusively a Jewish occupation, and there are even hallmarks, for instance from the city of Marrakesh, written in Hebrew characters.
Morocco

Morocco, circa 1900
Silver, cast, chased, parcel-gilt
H 43.8 cm - Diam 11.5 cm

Inscription on each stem: "An endowment which was endowed by the late... Moshe Ben-Adhan, son of... the late Joseph, for the invocation of the soul of the late... Rabbi Isaac Nathan."

These majestic Torah Finials are of a "family" of Rimmonim which developed from an Italian (Livorno) town-form prototype. The "family" includes several variants from Gibraltar made in England, North Africa and the Balkans, each with its own specific character. Like Finials Nos. 22, these are from Spanish Morocco.

The continuation of Spanish elements in Moroccan crafts, Jewish and general, is seen not only in metalwork, but in pottery and textiles as well. Patterns, motifs, color-schemes and techniques can be compared directly with parallel material from the Spain of five centuries ago. In Spain, the Jews had been deeply involved in the crafts, working for Christian, Muslim and Jewish patrons equally. The extent of Jewish involvement in the crafts there is reflected in the various instances where the Church prohibited Christians, including churches and monasteries, from patronizing Jewish craftsmen.
Morocco, 19th-20th century
Silver, cast, chased
H 27.3 cm Diam 10.0 cm

This pair of Torah Finials is from the Moroccan interior, and reflects traditions entirely foreign to the urban, Sephardi Jews of the coastal regions of the country. But here, too, we see the horseshoe arch, an element generally not found in the interior.

The 'Berber' Jews of the Moroccan interior (the Atlas Mountains) generally led a rural and less sophisticated lifestyle than their Sephardi brothers of the coastal regions. They too were involved in a full range of daily occupations, and were largely self-sufficient as a community. Colorful, temperamental, they today are represented by a large element in Israel's population.
Egypt

Egypt, 19th-20th century
Silver, spun, die-stamped, engraved
H 23.5 cm  Diam 7.4 cm

Inscription on body: "Torah Finials, holy unto the Lord, for the invocation of the soul of the woman Selora Rahel, wife of Abraham Israel, daughter of Moise Zacuto."

The form of these Torah Finials is typically Egyptian, though it is found in Eretz-Israel as well (probably imported; and see Finials No. 28, modeled after this form, in wood).

There was a large Jewish population in Egypt already in Antiquity, particularly in Alexandria. In Medieval times, too, Egypt was a major Jewish center, with numerous famous scholars (including Maimonides). Much of Medieval Jewish life has been revealed by documents found in the Old Cairo Synagogue Geniza (depository), dating from the 10th century on.

The community in modern times was rather heterogeneous, with indigenous Egyptian and Sephardi, Ashkenazi and Italian elements all well-represented.
Egypt

Alexandria, after 1914
Silver, chased, cast
H: 27.5 cm  Diam: 7.8 cm

Inscription on side panels, on each: 'For the repose of Yehuda Avraham Salama, may his soul rest in peace, who died on the Sabbath, 21 Shevat (5)674' (there is a mistake in the date, as given).

This pair of Torah Finials appears to be from a synagogue in Alexandria. The family name noted here is found in both Egypt and Israel.

The Jewish community of Egypt, throughout its history, had close ties with Erets-Israel, and in modern times Zionism was an active force there. The community began to dwindle after 1950, and there were major expulsions in 1956-57 and 1967 – to Israel, Europe and the Americas. Today there remain no more than a few hundred Jews in the country.
Jerusalem

Jerusalem, 1888 or later
Silver, cast, engraved, parcel-gilt
H 29.0 cm  O 8.3 cm

Inscription on each body: “These are the Torah Finials [which were] donated [by] the woman Mme. Hannah, may she live, daughter of Abraham Levi, may his soul repose in Eden, for the invocation of the soul of her husband, Joseph, may his soul repose in Eden, son of the late Abraham, who died [on] 3 Elul [in the] year (5)648 of the minor reckoning. May his soul be bound in the bonds of [eternal] life. Here, the Holy City of Jerusalem.”

This is a common form of Torah Finials in the Sephardi synagogues of Erets-Israel, displaying remnants of features found on Italian and, ultimately, Spanish forebears, such as the corner columns-like elements here.

In Jerusalem, the Sephardi and “Oriental” congregations often share common synagogues and synagogue complexes, and there is a certain blending of customs amongst them, particularly in recent decades.
Jerusalem, early 20th century
Olivewood, turned, carved, printed
H 17.0 cm  Diam 5.7 cm

Inscriptions on the bodies: "Jerusalem/ Site of the Temple / Absalom's Monument / Tomb of Zachanah the Prophet / Western Wall."

This pair of Rimmnim was made to be sold as a souvenir of Jerusalem, and thus various revered sites around the Holy City are depicted. Such depictions appear on many other types of souvenirs as well, in olivewood, stone, mother-of-pearl, textiles and printed in ink on paper.

Olivewood and Jerusalem are almost synonymous, and these somewhat unusual Rimmnim reflect the uniqueness of the city. In material these Rimmnim are Judean, but in form they reflect Egyptian, spindle-shaped Finials, typified by Finials No. 25.

ךרמלים, חותמי מתנה
כ-1850
ע reconciler, מבריק, מודפס
H 17.0 cm  Diam 5.7 cm

הכתובות על כל הברך "יהורמה פסוקה ופתחה" ד"ב אבשלום ז"ל ואריה ח"ג".

והברכה היא המתאר את מבנה המקדש ובית המקדש, ו سنواتיו של חזון ביבייהו. אשר מעילות על מגלי המקדש, בראשון, ב_BUFF, לח''ג, קא''ג.

כברשים מתנה בין יד ליד.

ע reconciler, מבריק, מודפס
כ-1850
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H 17.0 cm  Diam 5.7 cm

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כברשים מתנה בין יד ליד.
Greece

Greece, 19th century
Wood, turned, carved, gessoed, gilt
H 27.8 cm • Diam 6.0 cm

These Torah finials, as well as other of the ritual objects of the Greek Jews, closely resemble parallel objects in North Africa. There are, for example, wooden rimonim very similar to these in form and ornamentation in Tunisia (but not finials Nos. 19 and 20, above). These rimonim, made for use with a Torah case, are said to come from Thessalonika.

The Jews of Greece are made up of two major groups: the predominant Sephardim, whose ancestors began settling in the western Ottoman Empire in the 16th century; and the "indigenous" Romanian (Byzantine) Jews, who can trace their sojourn in Greece back to early Roman times. The Romanian Jews are limited to just a few areas today, mainly Ioannina in north-western Greece. The Holocaust took a very heavy toll on the Jewish community of Greece, and the surviving remnant remaining in the country today is even much smaller (about 5,000), many of the survivors having immigrated to Israel early in the state's existence.
Galicia, early 19th century
Silver, Yozef Kahan, Lvov
Height 17,3 cm, Weight 300 gr.

Though certainly of the 19th century, these Torah finials are a classical 18th-century type. Their form matches the style of the magnificent Torah finials in the Synagogue in Lvov. The Synagogue in Lvov is the most richly decorated one in the Pale of Settlement, and many rabbis and scholars hail it as the summit of 18th-century Jewish art. The Torah finials in the Synagogue in Lvov are a direct outcome of the Hayyim Alper's influence on the artistic styles prevailing in the Pale of Settlement. The art of this period, known as the "Pereteg style," was dominated by religious elements, including the use of Hebrew script and the depiction of traditional Jewish symbols. This Torah finial set is a fine example of the combination of art and religion, and it was decorated with fine engravings of Jewish symbols, including the Star of David and the menorah, which were believed to bring good luck and protection to those who used them. The fine engravings on the finials are elaborate, with intricate designs that reflect the high level of craftsmanship of the period. The use of silver was also common in this period, as it was considered a symbol of wealth and status. This Torah finial set is a fine example of the combination of art and religion, and it was used in the Synagogue in Lvov, one of the most richly decorated synagogues in the Pale of Settlement.
Galicia

Galicia, late 19th century
Silver, cast, repoussé, engraved, parcel-gilt
H 20.9 cm  Diam 8.0 cm

The peculiar form of these Torah Finials is also found on several Torah Staves from the Ukraine, but these Kinnerot bear traces of hallmarks of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, placing them, surely, in Galicia, occasionally known also as Western Ukraine. Often the hand is depicted in ivory or bone. This hand motif, grasping the Torah Stave, is in direct reference to the saying in Proverbs 3:18: "[The Torah] is a tree of life to those who grasp her" recorded when the Torah Scroll is returned to the Holy Ark after the reading. A similar plastic inference is seen on several Galician Torah Pointers, where the shaft – which is grasped by the Torah Reader – is in the form of a tree trimmed of its branches.

Jewish silversmiths of exceptional ability abounded in Galicia, particularly in such centers as Lvov (German Lemberg, today Lviv) and Cracow. They displayed their virtuosity by inhaling their products – especially Torah Shields and Crowns – with a plethora of flora and fauna, often "citing" the animals mentioned by the second century sage Judah ben Tema, in the Mishnah (Perek Avoth 5:20): "Be strong, as the leopard and swift as the eagle; fleet as the gazelle and brave as the lion to do the will of thy father which is in heaven."
This pair of Torah Finials, like Finials No. 33, developed in parallel, and was influenced by the common Viennese form of Rimonim in this period. In general, like the larger Viennese examples, it is derived from the basic ‘Galician’ form, reflecting the Empire style. Indeed, Vienna often set the tone for Torah silver throughout the Austrian Empire during the 19th century.

The tax stamps on these Rimonim place them in Troppau at the very beginning of the 19th century. There was a Jewish community there in late Medieval times, but this was revised only in the first half of the 19th century — a small community of some 130 souls. In the 1920s and 1930s, Zionist activity was especially strong there. The synagogue was burnt by the Nazis in 1939, but the community was revived after World War II.
Moravia

Brünn (Brno), 1821
Silver, chased, filigree, parcel-gilt
H 15.3 cm Diam 6.5 cm

In type, these Torah Finials are a fine but modest version of the Rimmonim represented by Finials No. 32.

Brünn had a large Jewish community in Medieval times – about 1,000 souls - but dwindled to nothing through expulsions and persecutions. At the beginning of the 18th century there were only 50 odd Jews there, and their fate was one of ups and downs. A Jewish community was formally founded only in 1840, with about 2,000 Jews in the town. The first synagogue was built only seven years later. During World War I there was a large influx of Jewish refugees from the east, and in 1930 the Jewish community there numbered around 10,000. Practically the entire community perished in the Holocaust, and after World War II about 1,000 Jews returned. The synagogue was restored in the 1950s.
Germany

Hamburg, 1698-99
Silver, repoussé, pierced, cast, parcel-gilt
H 46.5 cm  Diam 18.8 cm
Made by Tobias Felsch, active 1690-1706

Inscription in English on the stem: "New Synagogue / Leenderal St.

These majestic Torah Finais are one of the earliest pairs of German Kimronim known. They are the oldest of their form and set the style for Hamburg Kimronim for the entire 18th century. The form was adopted in Berlin as well, and from there spread throughout the north and into Poland, evolving into a lighter form in the early 19th century.

The Jewish community of Hamburg had an early Sephardi element from the 1590s on, besides a Ashkenazi congregation from 1627 on. Altana, and its Jewish community – across the river Elbe and then in Danish controlled territory – often served as a refuge for the Ashkenazim of Hamburg in times of expulsion, while the wealthy Sephardi merchants were able to protect their families from such persecution and expulsions. From 1671 to 1811, the Ashkenazi communities of Altana, Hamburg and Wandsbek (to the east) formed a united community, which was led by several famous rabbis over the years. In the 19th century, Hamburg became the fourth largest Jewish community in Germany. Of the 20,000 Jews who lived in greater Hamburg before the Nazi era, most managed to emigrate, but about 5,000 perished in the Holocaust.

During World War II, all the Jewish community’s Torah silver was confiscated and deposited in the local Historical Museum. After the war it was returned to the small, revived community, which still survives.
Nürnberg, late 1760’s; ca. 1840
Silver, repoussé, pierced, cast, parcel-gilt
H 37.0 cm  Diam 9.4 cm

Inscription on the book held by one lion atop "... may the people be joyful."

These Torah Finials are of the classical 18th century Nürnberg tower form – austere, and with a large, bulbous element below, reminiscent of the fruit-form origin of Torah Finials. An interesting feature of this pair is the replacement of the crowns at the top, in the mid-19th century. The original crowns, which must have become too damaged to salvage (probably through the Rimonim being dropped too often), were probably of a slightly smaller, more closed type. The original maker is unidentified, as is the smith who placed his mark on the new crowns, but the latter is known to have made much Judaica – Torah Shields, Pointers and Rimonim – the last including Finials No. 39.

By the mid-18th century, the situation of the Jews in the German states had stabilized somewhat, though secure civil rights were still a century off. Jews lived in essentially every part of Germany, many of them in small, scattered rural communities. Today, with renewed scholarly interest in these communities, surveys have revealed the existence of hundreds of rural synagogues, many now used for such public purposes as cultural centers and the like.
Germany

Hamburg, 1798
Silver, filigree, gilt
H 15.7 cm  Diam 4.6 cm

Spiral inscription on the stems, in Latin:
 "Abm. Meldola: Not: Publ: Ao. 1798" (Abraham Meldola, Notary Public, Year 1798); in Hebrew:
 "Abraham Meldola, Imperial Scriber, year 3358."

These miniature Torah Finials are essentially identical with a large group of Rimmonim in Amsterdam and London — as can be seen in the Dutch Finials No. 43.

Abraham Meldola, the son of David Meldola, Hakham (Chief Rabbi) in Amsterdam, was born in that city in 1734, settling in Hamburg in 1772, where he served as a Hazzan (Cantor). He was the author of many books, some in Portuguese. His first cousin, Rabbi Raphael Meldola, was Hakham of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of Great Britain from 1805 till his death in 1828.

The Torah Scroll on which these Rimmonim stand (and have surely stood for some 200 years) was "Made by the youth Meir son of Shlomo Felderheim... Monday, 18 Adar, 5533" (12 March, 1773), as is recorded on the silver staves. The Torah Mantle is contemporaneous with the Scroll.
Germany

Berlin, 1788-1802

Silver, chased, cast

H 38.7 cm  W 9.3 cm

Made by August Ferdinand Gentzner, active 1788-1802

These Torah Finials, made by a silversmith who produced numerous pieces of Judaica, are representative of the larger, formal Kimnonim typifying Berlin. Several similar pairs of Kimnonim by this same smith are in the Danzig Collection at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Much of the Jewish silver made in Berlin in the 18th-19th centuries was exported to other cities in northern Germany, such as Danzig in the east and Rendsburg in the west. Such silver then often served as patterns for local silversmiths, who developed local variations of their own.
Germany

Augsburg, 1804
Silver, chased, pierced, cast, gilt H 42.5 cm Diam (base) 14.1 cm
Made by Franz Anton Gutwein, active 1759-1805

These splendid Torah Finials were made by the silversmith who brought their style into fashion, already several years before 1800. His known production of Judaica numbers some 20 pieces. This pair of Rimonim is outstanding in its fine bases, as well as its pleasing proportions.

Augsburg was one of Germany's main silver-production centers, and Judaica made there was to be found in many of the smaller, rural Jewish congregations of Bavaria. Besides Rimonim, there are Torah Shields, Havdala Spiceboxes and Hanukkah Lamps made in this same, bold Empire style.

The modern Jewish community of Augsburg was organized only in 1803. It numbered but 900 Jews on the eve of the Holocaust. The main synagogue, a masonry building, was burned on Kristallnacht in 1938; but the structure itself survived the war and was beautifully refurbished in the 1980s; the local Jewish Museum is contained within it.
Germany

Nürnberg, ca. 1840
Silver, repoussé, die-stamped, engraved
H 37.0 cm  Diam 10.9 cm

Inscription on medallions held by lions:
"God is unto me, and I shall not fear."

This pair of Torah Finials is typical of the somewhat ungainly, variegated style of mid-19th century Germany. These Rinomim were made by the silversmith who replaced the top crowns on Finials No. 35 and, as noted above, made much other Judaica as well.

The period in which these Rinomim were made saw the rise of the Reform movement in Germany – the advent of modern, non-halakhically based Judaism. The struggle between the traditional, "Orthodox" Jewish authorities and the "Reform" movements – fierce in its early stages – is no less fierce today, and in the 50th year of the State of Israel it has yet to be resolved.
Germany, late 19th century
Silver, chased, engraved, parcel-gilt
H 35.2 cm • Diam 9.4 cm
Inscription on stem: ‘Wolf Sartorius’.

These unusual Torah Finials represent a fanciful trend in Jewish ritual art, and are unique. Though they incorporate elements known on other Sartorius, their exact form is otherwise unknown in Central Europe, though their workmanship, and the inscription, would point to Germany.

Though it is well known that many of Germany’s Jews perished in the Holocaust, what is not so well known is that the Jewish community authorities in such centers as Berlin continued many of their activities, particularly in the realm of social welfare, well into 1943, and even published regular reports and articles on such matters. Further, Jewish ritual literature was being printed in Germany, in both Hebrew and German, up to the very outbreak of World War II, in 1939.
Holland

Amsterdam, 1773/74
Silver, filigree
H 48.0 cm, Diam 14.0 cm
Made by Willem H. Roos, active 1725-75

Later inscription on each stem: "Donation of...

These sumptuous Torah Finials are a filigree development of the earlier tower-form Rimonim of Amsterdam (for the form itself, see the London copies, Finials No. 43). The silversmith who made them, Roos, made several pairs of Rimonim which are today in various synagogues and collections. This pair was rededicated to a London synagogue in 1844/45, and remained there for over 150 years.

The form here is typical of the Rimonim used by the Portuguese Sephardic congregation in Amsterdam, as well as in its offshoots in Holland and abroad (London, Caracao, etc.). The Portuguese Innschik Congregation of Amsterdam was founded very early in the 17th century by Marranos, secret Jews who had kept their true faith hidden from the Catholic authorities in Portugal and Spain, where their ancestors had been converted forcibly a little over a century before. Arriving in such Protestant locales as Hamburg and Amsterdam, they threw off the cloak of secrecy and began openly practicing the religion of their forefathers.
In the Portuguese congregations of Holland, when the Torah Scrolls stand in the Holy Ark or are carried (whether being taken to or from the Ark, or in festive processions), they are dressed with the larger "tower" finials (see Finials Nos. 41, 43 and 44). The smaller Torah Finials seen here are known in Dutch as "hil-rimonim", "raising finials"; being lighter in weight, they are used only at the time of the raising of the Torah Scroll so as to display it before the people prior to the weekly reading itself. Initially, they seem to have been made as an adjunct to the larger tower types; when the tower Rimonim were ordered, a pair of "hil-rimonim" was also made to accompany and complement them.
Spiraling inscription on each stem: "These crowns with bells, as well as this Torah Scroll and the Torah Mantle with hand-work with precious stones, was the donation to God to the Great Synagogue; on the first day of the Feast of Pesach [in the year 5378 of the minor reckoning]. From me, Samuel son of the late... Elijah Neumegen of Amsterdam, may [that city] be preserved by God, amen."

This majestic pair of Torah Finials was made in a family workshop which produced much Judaica, including many Rimmunim. The tower form here may initially have been used by Ashkenazi congregations, in contrast to the Portuguese form exemplified by Finials No. 45.

Early in the 19th century, these Rimmunim were taken from Holland to London by a Dutch Jew whose name in English was Daniel Elson ("son of... Eliah"), who became well-known as a personage in the Jewish community there.
Holland

Amsterdam, 1861
Silver, filigree, engraved
H 37.8 cm Diam 10.9 cm

Inscription on each stem: "S. son of M."

These Torah Finials are a popular 19th century version of the Dutch tower-form Rimmonim. They were used in both Portuguese and Ashkenazi synagogues.

Ashkenazi Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe, began settling in Holland slightly later than their Portuguese brethren, but they soon became the more numerous of the two communities. The major Ashkenazi synagogue in Amsterdam, today part of the Jewish Historical Museum, was built in 1671, a year prior to the Portuguese synagogue just across the street, which is still functioning. A very high proportion of Dutch Jewry was lost during the Holocaust, and the Portuguese community especially suffered this bitter fate. There are less than 10,000 Jews remaining in Holland today.
England

London, 1730
Silver, cast, chased
H 42.3 cm / Diam 12.2 cm
Made by Abraham Lopes de Oliveira, active 1724-50

Inscription on the stems, in English:
"New Synagogue / Leadenhall St."

The form of these Torah Finials was copied directly from an Amsterdam type, the earliest example of which is dated 1650. However, in construction and workmanship, they are quite different from the Dutch examples, and display the fine hand of the English silversmith.

The person whose mark appears on these Rinnomim was an Amsterdam Jew who moved to London in the 1690s. He was known as an engraver, but it is not clear whether he himself was actually a silversmith or merely a registered owner of the workshop. He became an active member of the Sephardi congregation in London (at the "Bevis Marks" synagogue), and died in 1750. Eleven pairs of Rinnomim are known to bear his mark, as do several other Jewish and non-Jewish objects. This pair of Rinnomim is the only example of an Oliveira object presently in a private collection.
This pair of "Regency" Torah Finials is a typical example of early 19th century English silversmithing. The well-finished details and clean work exemplify this aspect. In form, they can be traced back directly to one of the oldest specifically English forms of Rimmonim, the earliest example of which is from 1719, almost exactly a century earlier.

At the time these Rimmonim were made, the Jews of England were still several decades away from political emancipation. As in Holland, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi congregations were active, the former being the older, but also smaller community. Later in the 19th century, there was a strong influx of Jews from Eastern Europe, and in the 1930s England served as a refuge for many Jews from Germany.
France

Paris, late 19th century
Silver, chased, pierced, cast, gilt
H 42.8 cm  Diam 13.1 cm

The form and style of these Torah Finals are typical of French Rimonim. The form is probably derived from Italian types.

Jewish settlement in France began already in Antiquity. In Medieval times Southern France (Provence) was a center of Jewish scholarly activity, with close ties to Spanish Jewry. During the French Revolution, the 40,000 Jews of France attained full citizenship, and an "Assembly of Jewish Notables" (the French Sanhedrin) was set up by Napoleon in 1806 to manage the affairs of the community.

Anti-Semitism was a major problem in France, especially in the decades prior to World War I. Between the two World Wars there was a considerable influx of Jews from Eastern Europe. During the Holocaust, some 85,000 French Jews perished, while 180,000 survived the war. Particularly after World War II, large numbers of North African Jews emigrated to France, bringing about a Sephardi majority and strengthening Jewish communities throughout the country. Today, over half a million Jews live in France.
These Torah finials closely resemble a Viennese type often exported to the fringes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and still to be found in congregations in those regions. It soon evolved into the most common form of Ṛammonim encountered later in the 19th century and early 20th century throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. More of this later type of Ṛammonim were manufactured than probably any other form of Ṛammonim anywhere, for Vienna set the trend not only for the empire but for various lands beyond its frontiers.

The Jews of Vienna suffered numerous ups and downs over the centuries, and the modern community was able to arise only well into the 18th century, when Jews were allowed to resettle there after a lengthy period of being banned. There was a relatively large and long-standing "Turkish" (Sephardi) congregation in Vienna, as well, alongside the Ashkenazi majority. During the 19th century the Jewish community there thrived and prospered, giving the world many outstanding personalities and developments, in medicine, finance and other fields.
United States

United States (or England), ca. 1900
Silver, chased, filigree, cast, engraved, parcel-gilt
H 17.0 cm  Diam 11.0 cm

Inscription on each stem: "This was donated by [Moshe Eliehu son of David, together with his spouse Liba Fishman."

In form, these Torah Finials resemble a well-known late 19th century type encountered in Russia, the Ukraine and Poland. This pair of rimmonim, however, bears Russian St. Petersburg hallmarks for 1888, which are most certainly false. Much Jewish ritual silver was made in both England and the United States in imitation of Eastern European types. Since the new immigrants did not recognize the "Sterling" marks placed by local smiths on such wares, these new customers hesitated to buy. Only when they saw hallmarks that they recognized were they satisfied. Thus, American makers soon learned to add false Russian marks to the Jewish silver, and gain the confidence of their customers of Eastern European origin. This phenomenon became quite widespread with the increase of immigration in the decades just before and after the year 1900.
This pair of Torah Finials represents the large field of modern Judaica. Carmel Shabi, the Tel Aviv silversmith who fashioned them, is one of many contemporary artists who are devoted, partly or exclusively, to producing Jewish ritual objects.

Contemporary Rimmonim differ from all of the other objects in the present exhibition in several respects. In the past, Rimmonim were produced in local, identifiable styles, often based on architectural forms. Today they are fashioned mostly in what could be termed "international" style, which stresses contemporary design. While there are occasional subtle references to Jewish concepts, values, and symbols, the objects are much more identifiable with the artist himself rather than with the ritual objects he adorned with his own personal style and concepts.

Until recently, Torah Finials were fashioned to be used on the Sefer Torah in a synagogue. Today many Rimmonim are produced directly for collectors and museums, without ever passing through ritual use. This new "artistic" emphasis, is perhaps representative of those swift currents in contemporary Jewry which question the centrality of religious ritual in Jewish identity.
Notes to the Catalogue Entries


6. Cf. J. Petit, Tel Aviv, Judaica, January 22, 1886, No. 228 (illus. 1886).


12. From the Alessandria Synagogue, Piedmont, France.

13. Cf. somewhat similar pair, by the same silversmith, in the Gross Family Collection, Ramat Aviv, Nos. 10, 50, 130.


15. Cf. Barnett, No. 16 (PL. X, lower left); Magness Museum, Berkeley, No. 79.497.7, Encyclopedia Judaica 7, col. 1077, Fig. 2.


19. Cf. Than, p. 93, Fig. 8; La vie juive, p. 53, lower.


23. For silverwood souvenirs from Jerusalem, see Y. Fischer, ed., Art and Crafts in East - Israel in the 1980s Century, Jerusalem, 1979 (Hebrew), chapter 2 by K. Grahnman.


32. The same hallmarks appear on a cup and plate set in the Gross Family Collection, Ramat Aviv, Nos. 17.1,57 and 22.3.2 (dated 1820).


37. Cf. by the same silversmith, also with large bases, Magness Museum, Berkeley, Inv. No. 73,11; and Barnett, No. 123 (by C. Bizer, 1802).

38. For a very similar pair of Finials by the same silversmith, cf. Grahnman 1996, No. 95.

39. For a drawing of one of the Finials of this pair, see J. Prikert, On Paths of Jewish Art, Merhavia, 1957 (Hebrew), p. 103.


44. Cf. e.g., Sotheby’s Amsterdam, Fine Dutch, Silver, Including Judaica, November 28, 1994, No. 192.


47. Cf. by the same silversmith, Deban Collection, pp. 26-27, No. 1.h (dated 1800); and the similar Finials, Sotheby’s Tel Aviv, Important Judaica, April 29, 1992, No. 432.

48. For a very similar pair, cf. Multi Es Jüdisch, II, p. 269, Fig. 26.

**Rimonim — The Historical Perspective**

*Rimonim* (Torah Finials) are first mentioned in Cairo Geniza documents of the eleventh century. What form they had then, and what their relationship was with the associated Torah Cases, is obscure. Most likely, they were intended to be affixed to the upper ends of the *atzei hayyim* (Torah Staves), jutting out above the flat roof of the case, just as they do today. But today we see *Rimonim* on domed Torah Cases, and on Torah Scrolls which are not kept in cases at all, but are "dressed" in precious textile mantles (see No. 36).

The Hebrew word *Rimonim* literally means "pomegranate", and this name for the Torah Finials is derived from the Bible: "a golden bell and a pomegranate" (Exodus 28:34), referring to ornaments on the hem of the High Priest's garment. This association of bells and *Rimonim* is still quite close, as can be seen on most of the Torah Finials in this exhibition. In some communities, the Finial is known as *tapuah*, "apple", possibly in reference to the fruit which grew on the "Tree-of-Wisdom".

The earliest extant examples of *Rimonim* are from the Spanish realm: a pair from the Jewish community of Camarata in Sicily, now used as verge-heads in the Cathedral of Palma de Majorca. These are apparently from the early 13th century and are of tower form. Tower-form Finials appear in almost every Jewish community, but in style they differ considerably from region to region. Italy was a nodal point from which the tower form spread, to Holland, England and Germany in the north; to the lands of North Africa in the south; and to the Balkans in the east.

In the Middle East, and in Eastern Europe, different traditions are seen. In the Middle East, where Torah Cases are indigenous, the *Rimonim* are generally smaller than their European counterparts, and entirely different forms are seen, often closely related to the concept of a fruit. One outstanding exception is the tall, thin *Rimonim* typical to Yemen. Regional styles are often clearly defined, though there are several obvious "families" and forms – such as the Iraqi-Persian-Indian group.

In Eastern Europe, prior to the penetration of western Ashkenazi forms in recent times, the traditional form followed that of the upper Torah Stave handles. Indeed, in Galicia such *Torah* Finials were popularly known as *atzei hayyim*, "Trees-of-Life", even though they were removable from the top of the Staves. In Germany, too, the earliest Ashkenazi *Rimonim* were actually Torah Stave covers, in the shape of the upper handles and usually nailed onto them. The earliest clearly removable *Rimonim* in Germany appear to be relatively late, from the end of the 17th century.

All three of the main groups of Jewish communities – Middle Eastern, Sephardi and Ashkenazi – are almost evenly represented in the exhibition, along with examples from such special communities as Italy and the Romanians of Greece (see the Map on p. 7). Contemporary Judaica is appropriately represented by an Israeli pair of *Rimonim*, made by an artist of Iraqi origin, working in a modern style.

Rafi Graffman
A Collector's Credo

Why Rimonim? This is invariably the question that friends ask when they see our collection for the first time. There is not one simple answer to this question. There are many complex ones. It starts with the human urge to collect. There are several explanations for this – but we would rather not spend time here discussing them all....

The issue of what to collect is more complicated. You start with stamps, as a child, and usually end up, as an adult, with paintings, good paintings if you have a good eye and can afford them. But do you get real satisfaction out of this when, basically, you have no personal connection to these objects? At a certain moment we felt that just gathering together different types of objects was not enough. We wanted to have a direct link to what we were collecting, and to us there was nothing more meaningful than Judaica. It connected us to our past as well as our present.

But Judaica is such a vast domain. We realized that because of financial reasons, as well as lack of space, we would not be able to cover the whole range. We would have to choose one period, one region, or one type of object. We chose the latter. Selecting which item to collect was relatively simple, and we had many good reasons for deciding on Rimonim.

To start with, they are one of the few items in Judaica used by Jews all over the world. We are strong believers in the unity of the Jewish People. Universality across Jewish communities became contito sine qua non for choice of item to collect. (Strangely enough, many items of Judaica are only used by a limited segment of our people.)

We were fascinated by Rimonim because of their sheer beauty. They reflect the poverty or wealth of their respective communities, the style of the region they came from, as well as the period in which they were manufactured. Each single pair has its own, personal story. They were usually offered to a synagogue, and the offering reflected either sorrow (in memory of a deceased) or joy (to celebrate a happy event). These items were actually used for centuries, by generation after generation of mostly persecuted Jews, who gathered, prayed, and kissed the Torah Scrolls on which these Rimonim had been placed, and this made them especially important to us. Rimonim were a significant part of real Jewish life; Maimonides included them in his Mishne Torah among the very few holy things we revere, together with the Torah itself.

But there are a few more reasons for our choice of collection. The fact that Rimonim come in pairs might have influenced us, given our disciplined Teutonic upbringing and consequent sense of symmetry. Our love for and involvement in architecture must have played a role as well, as Rimonim sometimes reflect the structure of local towers. And last but not least, there existed no collection anywhere composed solely of Rimonim. So we had found a niche. We have never regretted our choice. Unfortunately, it is becoming more and more difficult to add "good" pieces to the collection.

We just want to point out two extremely different examples of Rimonim, both exhibited here: Pair No. 1 is from Iraq, late 19th century. It was our first acquisition, and it still is the purest, most literal example of what Rimonim should be – the simple, unadorned form of the rimmon, the pomegranate which lent its name to the object. No. 11, from Venice, end of the 17th century, is certainly the most elaborate of the collection. This tower, presaging Rococo, is a clear example of how wealth, location and period all converge to create a unique object. As different as they are in complexity and character, both pairs of Rimonim were used for the same purpose.

The selected 50 Rimonim take us through Jewish life, in time and space.

We are happy to be able to present them, for the first time to the public, in this Inaugural Exhibition at the new Judaica Museum of The Cymbalista Synagogue and Jewish Heritage Center, Tel Aviv University Campus.

N. C.
The Judaica Museum

The construction of The Cymbalista Synagogue and Jewish Heritage Center at Tel Aviv University is an extraordinary event in every respect. Intended not merely as a prayer facility for students, faculty and staff, it is to become a spiritual center for various activities, a stimulus for dialogue between the several currents in contemporary religious and secular Jewish life. It will play host to a variety of lectures, debates, symposia and gatherings. A Jewish studies room is to accommodate a basic library, as well as an array of computers with diverse data-bases. All this will be put at the service of students and faculty for the advancement and facilitation of their Judaic studies.

Its Judaica Museum, an integral unit of the Center, will house alternating exhibitions of Judaica themes or illustrative material in Judaic studies – prepared within the University or stemming from outside the University. It will thus constitute an expression of the artistic aspect of Jewish studies, as envisioned by the Cymbalista family. Being integrated within a most impressive piece of architecture, designed by the world-renowned architect Mario Botta, the Museum contributes an artistic dimension to the activities of The Jewish Heritage Center and constitutes its aesthetic realization.

In addition to the cultural and aesthetic message carried by the various exhibitions, the Museum is symbolic of the connection between Judaism and art. Judaism has very often been associated with beauty and art. Although not always sufficiently emphasized, this connection goes back to the very construction of the Temple, of which it was said “Blessed be the eye that saw it all,” and to the Mishkan, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, where Moses established a cadre of artisans to satisfy the artistic aspect of the construction, “for glory and for beauty”. He placed this artistic task in the hands of Bezalel ben Uri, whose name has become a synonym of art, art education and the assembling of art.

This initial exhibition, 50 Rimonim, under the auspices of The Jewish Heritage Center, is extremely symbolic. Not only does the number coincide with that of the Jubilee of the State of Israel, it also associates and binds the Jewish artistic tradition from the Tabernacle with the present. In the Tabernacle, Rimonim, “pomegranates”, served as an ornament on the robe of the high priest. In Solomon’s Temple Rimonim ornamented the capitals atop the pillars. Throughout the generations of Jewish history, and till the present day, Rimonim serve as ornaments crowning the Torah Scrolls. Nothing can better symbolize the continuity of Jewish artistic tradition. And no better choice could have been made for the inaugural exhibition of the Judaica Museum at the Center.

Aron Dotan,
Head of the Center
50
RIMMONIM
A SELECTION OF TORAH FINIALS
FROM A EUROPEAN FAMILY COLLECTION

ISRAEL 50 JUBILEE

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
The Judaica Museum, The Cymbalista Synagogue and Jewish Heritage Center