CARING FOR JUDAICA

Margalit Schindler (they/them)
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Check - In

Which BLOB do you relate to today?
Land Acknowledgement

Map showing traditional indigenous territories on what is now called Delaware.

Ruth and David Levine, September, 1958
Overview

Jewish People and Material Culture
What is Judaica?
Material Considerations
Sacred Considerations
Creative Thinking
Intention
Practical Steps
Jewish People and Material Culture
Ownership of Jewish Items

Eight-in-ten U.S. Jews say they own a menorah, a candelabra used to mark the eight days of Hanukkah. Nearly two-thirds own a mezuzah, which is a parchment containing scripture passages typically affixed to the doorposts in Jewish homes. Six-in-ten U.S. Jews say they own a Hebrew-language siddur (Jewish prayer book), and 56% say they have a Seder plate designed to hold the six symbolic foods associated with the Passover meal.

### Pew Study

### Most Jews say they own a menorah, mezuzah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of U.S. Jews who say they own a</th>
<th>Hebrew-language siddur</th>
<th>Seder plate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET Jewish</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews by religion</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews of no religion</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No particular branch</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18-29</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Jewish</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse not Jewish</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not married</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>High school or less</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>Some college</td>
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<td>College graduate</td>
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<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;$50K</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50K-$99,999</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>$200K or more</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>65</td>
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PEW RESEARCH CENTER
What is Judaica?

- Ritual Objects
- Sacred Objects
- Lifecycle Events
- Embody Jewish Values
- Hebrew Letters
- Jewish History/Person
- Israel
What is Judaica?

Ritual Objects

Sacred Objects

Lifecycle Events

Embody Jewish Values

Hebrew Letters

Jewish History/Person

Israel

Traditional Classification
# Traditional Classifications

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**Klei Kodesh Lifecycle**

**CREATION**
Made by Sofer with Kosher Materials and Intention

**LIFE**
Actively used in Ritual

**DEATH**
If object is beyond repair and no longer has use value, place in Geniza

- Reparable
- Not Reparable

**DAMAGE**
- Renders object NOT Kosher
- Does Not render object NOT Kosher

Sofer/et = Holy Scribe
Kosher = fit for ritual use
Geniza = ritual burial for sacred texts
What is Judaica?

Traditional Classification

Sacred Hierarchy

Contemporary Classification

Explicitly Jewish

Implicitly Jewish
Aron Kodesh – Holy Ark
This diagram illustrates the components and accoutrements of a traditional Ashkenazi (Eastern European) sefer Torah. The scroll itself is considered klei kodesh. All other objects are Tashmishei Kedushah, and are not, themselves, sacred. (The exception is an etz chaim that has already been attached to a klaf - it, too, requires geniza.)
Parchment rolled to read the weekly portion. Note pigmentation spots!

Text written in exact columns in special font. All handwritten!

Wooden rollers

Using a yad to point without introducing oils to the text
What Types of Materials are Represented?

- **Paper** (100% of collections)
- **Books** (Special Collections)
- **Books** (Circulating): 11%
- **Organic Material**: 22%
- **Digital Media**: 66%
- **Stone**: 78%
- **Wood**: 89%
- **Metal**: 89%
- **Glass**: 89%
- **Paintings**: 89%
- **Textiles**: 89%
- **Ceramic**: 89%
- **Plastics**: 89%
- **Photographs**: 89%

89% of collections contain Sifrei Torah, Tefillin, and Mezuzot.
Hi Margalit,

Greetings from the conservation lab at [unseen place] where I am currently a fellow in paper. I was hoping you might have some insight into a ketubbah on parchment that I am about to treat.

The ink on the document is flaking and I would like to consolidate it before it leaves for exhibition at the end of next month. I am considering the different consolidants we have in the lab, but want to rule out anything that wouldn't be considered appropriate for use with a Hebrew document. My instinct is to avoid any animal-based adhesives, but is there anything else I should know for choosing the consolidant?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this if you have time to answer; your insight would be a tremendous help to me.
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These are some common symbols; they usually appear on the front of a package. These are widely accepted by most rabbis.

Prepared by Gayle Levine Schindler | Foody Fun LLC
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Sacred Considerations

- What kind of object is it?
- Does it contain the written name of Gd?
  - Yes
  - No

Subject to Sofer and Geniza

No additional barriers

- Primary condition concern is legibility and perfection of the written letters
- Any imperfection in the text renders it not kosher, or fit for ritual use

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Creative Thinking and Embracing Jewish Values

Working with The Jewish Museum of Maryland to build custom housing and transport for extra-long artwork by contemporary artist Arielle Tonkin, which was exhibited in A Fence Around the Torah.

Aron Kodesh
Holy Ark
Kavanah – Intention

Kavanah requires both freedom from extraneous thoughts and distractions and the cognizance that a person is standing before a divine presence.

Five Essential Elements

For Proper Prayer according to Maimonides in Mishnah Torah

Kavanah – Intention/Mindfulness
Clean hands
A covered body
A clean space
Removal of distractions

These are all good practices for collection care professionals regardless of collection or object!
Practical Steps

• Determine the type of object you have and identify whether it has additional sacred considerations

• Basic Storage Enclosure is okay
  - Anything to buffer against fluctuations in RH, pests, dust, and light

• Respect - Do not store objects on the ground or in/near a restroom

• Do your best – protect objects using what is available

• Don’t know? ASK
  - Reach out to local synagogues or Jewish communities or contact Pearl Preservation for recommendations

Kavanah – Intention/Mindfulness
Clean hands
A covered body
A clean space
Removal of distractions
Overview

The purpose of this poster is to introduce traditional classifications for Jewish holy objects and suggest ways that their cultural significance may be recognized and respected in tandem with modern preservation practices. By looking at these traditions and techniques, we can examine the values they are trying to communicate and apply those larger values to collection care work. This poster is designed for anyone who may steward Judaica in an institution, community, or home.

Traditional Classifications

According to the traditional classification of sacred Jewish objects, there are four categories, each with different rules about the creation, use, and end of the object. Some categories have strict rules, others are more relaxed. These traditional classifications only consider traditional ritual objects and are based on a halakhic - Jewish rabbinic law - which are laid out in the Talmud, a compendium of Jewish law and rabbinic interpretation.

In this system, there is a hierarchy of sacred objects and rules that dictate how they are to be made, handled, repaired, and disposed of through burial. Keli kodesh are holy objects (literally translate to "vessels of holiness") because they have the name of God written on them one or more times. They are considered sacred whether they are in use or not. Examples of kli kodesh are a sefer Torah (Tora scroll), tefillin or mezuzah parchment scroll, all of which are carefully crafted by a scribe, or scribe, who must handwrite every letter flawlessly. The very creation of these items involves spiritual lessons - intent - to infuse them with kedusha - holiness. Objects that are traditionally "moveable" have special handling guidelines, aimed at preserving the structural integrity of the ink on the parchment and legibility of the text, which, if damaged, destroys the objects no longer kosher, or fit for ritual use.

Other objects fall into one of three categories, each different in nuanced ways, but for the sake of collection care practices can all be considered "not sacred."

Outlined below are some practical collection care notes for the most spiritually sensitive, the Sefer Torah, or Torah scroll, which is kli kodesh, the most holy object in the Jewish tradition. The following recommendations are based on a Sefer Torah still in ritual use, which must stay free from impurities to remain kosher and be used in ritual. These are the strictest limitations, and do not apply to all Judaica. However, by examining these traditions and techniques, we can examine the values they are trying to communicate and apply those to collection care work.

Sefer Torah

Read the ‘bereshit’ (first few verses of Genesis) with a “klitah” (a middle vowel added to the end of a word). Be sure to place the chumash (the manuscript of the Holy Scriptures) next to the Torah and not on top of it. If the Torah is on the Ark, the ark door must be closed, and if the ark is open, the Torah must be covered. If a Torah scroll is open, the reader must use a beit midrash. If the beit midrash is closed, the reader must use a beit midrash. If the beit midrash is closed, the reader must use a beit midrash. If the beit midrash is closed, the reader must use a beit midrash.

Storage

When storing or making, care is necessary to not touch the written surface of the Torah scroll. The tovrat ha-musar (the scroll is elevated on a platform) is a place to store the scroll. The Torah must be elevated on a platform when not in use. The platform must be placed on a stand or a base. If the base is not made of wood, it must be made of wood.

Handling

When handling a Torah, one should touch the written surface of the Torah scroll. The Torah should be handled with the right hand. The Torah should be handled with the left hand. The Torah should be handled with the right hand.

Fishing Problems

When fishing or making, care is necessary to not touch the written surface of the Torah scroll. The tovrat ha-musar (the scroll is elevated on a platform) is a place to store the scroll. The Torah must be elevated on a platform when not in use. The platform must be placed on a stand or a base. If the base is not made of wood, it must be made of wood.

End-of-Life

Religious meaning, including d'orat eit (that time or human being once used for religious purpose) for any piece or "tovrat ha-musar" is important. For example, it is usual to have a d'orat ha-musar for any object that is no longer used for religious purposes. "Tovrat ha-musar" may be applied to religious objects, such as amulets, talismans, and written prayers. Ritual objects, such as "tovrat ha-musar" may be applied to religious objects, such as amulets, talismans, and written prayers.

Emergency Preparedness

The Torah is considered to be a sacred item. If a "tovrat ha-musar" becomes contaminated with other substances, the Torah should be washed and dried. The Torah should be washed and dried. The Torah should be washed and dried.
Upcoming Publication!

- Shares topics in this lecture in more detail
- Discusses the paradox of the Holocaust Torah
Resources

- MyJewishLearning.com [https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-torah-service/]
- BimBam [https://www.bimbam.com/]
- WorldWideReb – Rabbi David Paskin [https://www.youtube.com/c/DavidPaskin]
- BreadandTorah [https://breadandtorah.org/]
- JudaismUnbound [https://www.judaismunbound.com/podcast/episode-270]
- Pearl Preservation LLC [https://www.pearlpreservation.com/]
- Annotated Bibliography: Judaica Preservation and Jewish Museums and Collections

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