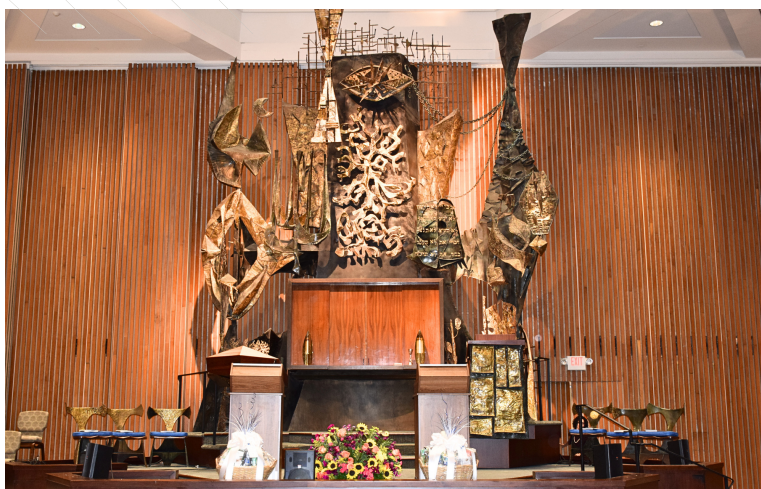


# Temple Israel's **ORIGINAL** bimah



## **ABOUT TEMPLE ISRAEL'S ORIGINAL BIMAH**

Our original bimah, constructed in 1962 and used for worship services through 2014, features a sculptured wall containing the symbols of the Jewish faith. This piece is the work of well-known St. Louis artist Rodney M. Winfield. The metal sculpture took two years to create and weights around 3,000 lbs. with an additional five tons of steel framework supporting it.

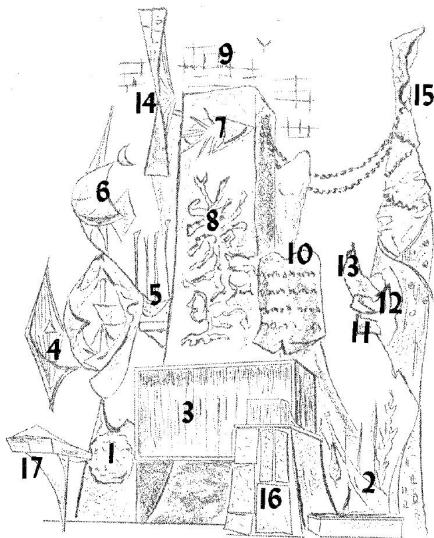
"When you are dealing with a three-dimensional concept, it not only is something that happens — it's welcome that you play hide and seek with the forms. That's the nature of the sculpture. If you lose one thing from a particular vantage point you gain another. I have tried to make the entire bimah work and function as sculpture from every position of the congregation, whether it be in the sanctuary only or pivoted to face the enlarged room," said the artist.

The material in the ark wall is steel — sheets cut, hammered, and formed — many of them under tremendous tension and heat, brazed heavily in areas for gold coloring, and welded together.

Once the model was generally approved, Winfield "took each individual piece and developed it with love and care, each to be beautiful in itself, but knowing the big basic design to be assembled. Beauty in the sanctuary is a biblical tradition as prescribed in the Book of Exodus, the second book of the Torah."

After renovating the Sanctuary in 2014, this special structure is no longer on display for weekly Shabbat worship, but can be enjoyed annually during High Holy Days services.

# THE MEANING OF THE BIMAH



The Burning Bush (1) and the Tree of Life (2) are an affirmation of monotheistic Judaism, the ever-presence of God, and the goodness of God on earth.

The Ark (3) itself is a simple austere box not integrated with the wall because it is that which could be moved readily by a nomadic people. The Harp of David (4) suggests the joy in religion as expressed in the Psalms.

The Menorah (5) is the oldest Jewish symbol. The harp-like cloud form points to the joy of religion and the primeval darkness which prevailed before the moon (6) the lesser light was created to rule by night and the sun (7) the greater light to rule by day and the pillar of fire (8) by night and the pillar of cloud (9) by day are reminiscent of Gold's leadership of the Children of Israel in the wilderness.

The tablets of the Ten Commandments (10) were done three-dimensionally with some of them inverted as a reminder of the tablets broken by Moses. The unique acrostic of the Hebrew letters Aleph and Shin (11) meaning "Almighty God" were worked out with Rabbi Issermen as a monotheistic reference.

The Shofar (12) proclaimed the revelation at Sinai, which was followed by the Perpetual Light (13) or eternal truth of Judaism. The Hourglass (14) form suggests infinite time and the chained figure (15) suggests the liberation from bondage. On the pulpit (16), the sculptor fashioned the Western Wall and offset its heaviness with the slim sweep of the Lectern (17) with its supporting structure representing outstretched arms of blessing and welcome.