

SANCTUARY WINDOW ETCHINGS

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COMMISSIONED BY

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THEME 1: PRAYER



QUOTATION

“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.”
(*Psalm 19:15*)

IMAGE

These familiar words which we say at the end of the Amidah are placed on the Menorah, the most enduring symbol of Judaism and the central emblem of Jewish survival and continuity. During the middle ages, the shape of the Menorah was often used to display the text of prayers. The Menorah has also been used as a symbol of divine protection and was often found on amulets. The Menorah refers as well to the service of the priests in ancient Israel. In our day, we all become our own priests in the service of the heart as we ask that our prayers be heard and answered. The Menorah is surrounded by flowering almond branches, a reference to the divine favor shown to Aaron.

THEME 2: IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL



QUOTATION

“Into Adonai’s hands I entrust my spirit Adonai is with me I shall not fear.”

(Solomon Ibn Gabirol, from the Adon Olam in the Siddur)

IMAGE

The soul or spirit is represented by a rose, a universal as well as a Jewish symbol, treasured for its perfection and beauty. This beauty is especially precious because it is so transient and fragile. In many traditions, including our own, the rose symbolizes source and creation, since its petals radiate out, revealing its center. The rose is surrounded by another stylized and perfect rose with thirteen petals. The opening lines of the Zohar, the mystical Book of Splendor, claims that “there is a rose above and a rose below,” and that God’s thirteen divine attributes of compassion envelop the Jewish People like a “thirteen petaled rose.” *

* From Ellen Frankel’s excellent book *An Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, published by the Jewish Publication Society.

THEME 3: JUSTICE



QUOTATION

“Let justice well up like water, righteousness like an unfailing stream.”

(Amos 5:24)

IMAGE

Justice is represented by the scales which are surrounded by the rushing water described in this eloquent verse. Just as the water in the clouds and rain above are connected to the river and waves below, so are all people of the earth connected by this ancient and powerful call for justice.

THEME 4: TORAH



QUOTATION

Large, central lettering: “And the study of Torah equals them all because it leads to them all.”

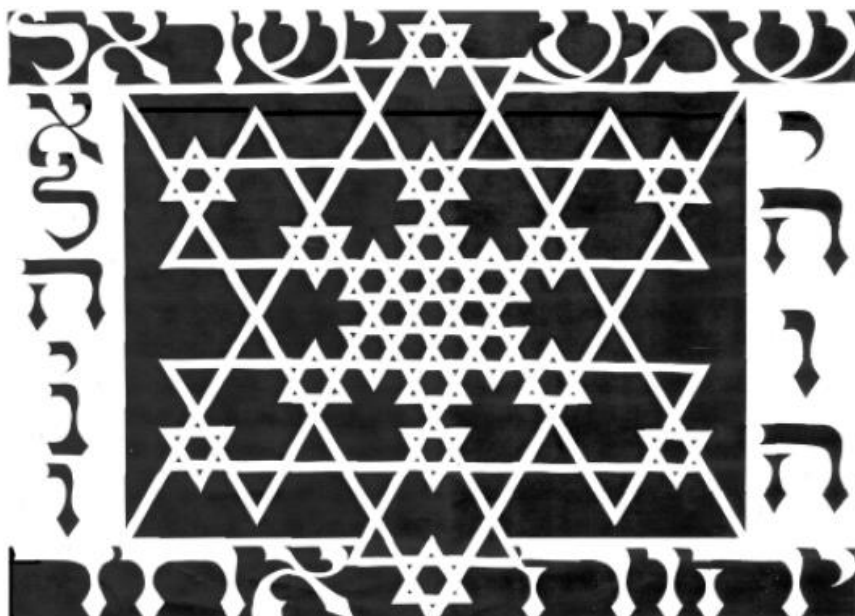
Small lettering on either side: “To honor father and mother, to fulfill acts of lovingkindness, to attend the house of study morning and night, to welcome the stranger, to visit the sick, to rejoice with bride and groom, to bury the dead, to pray with sincerity, to make peace between one person and another.”

(Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 127a)

IMAGE

The last part of this verse “And the study of Torah equals them all” appears in the center of an unrolled scroll of the Torah. The rest of the verse is written on either end of the scroll and stands for the wisdom of the entire Torah. The Torah is often represented by a crown, referring to God’s sovereignty. This one crown also reminds us of the verse from the Talmud: “There are three crowns - of Torah, of royalty, and of priesthood. But the crown of a good name is above all of these.” The mitzvot mentioned in this quotation would surely award a person the crown of the good name. The decorated tops of the poles on which the scroll is wound are called “Rimonim” (pomegranates) and are often shaped like this fruit which refers to the priesthood.

THEME 5: GOD'S UNITY



QUOTATION

“Hear O Israel: Adonai is our God Adonai is One .”

(Deuteronomy 6:4)

IMAGE

These six most famous of all Hebrew words surround an elaborate six pointed Star of David, which represents the centrality and essential unity of God. The star is itself created from many other stars, indicating the holistic (fractal) nature of our perception of God, that everything is part of and created by one divinity.

THEME 6: LOVE OF GOD



QUOTATION

“You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

(Deuteronomy 6:5)

IMAGE

The Hebrew phrase “You shall love Adonai your God” is written in large letters on either side of the central image, a Tree of Life. This tree represents the blessed life we see in the third paragraph of the Shema, if we in fact love Adonai and follow the teachings of the Torah. The tree itself brings forth the Etrog, a symbol of the heart. The soul is often portrayed in Jewish tradition as a deer from the verse in Psalm 42: “As a deer thirsts for water, so my soul thirsts for you.” This reference reinforces the yearning of the soul for God. The third component of our love of Adonai – might - is illustrated by the lion, a universal image of strength and courage.

THEME 7: ISRAEL



QUOTATION

“From out of Zion will come the Torah and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem.”

(Isaiah 2:3)

IMAGE

The words of this familiar phrase which we sing every Shabbat during the Torah Service are found above the traditional representation of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The word “Torah” is found on an unrolled scroll of the Torah. The rolling hills of Israel support the Wall and two lions. The lion, symbol of Judah, the largest tribe of Israel, is one of the oldest symbols of the people of Israel. A crown is found below the hills and refers to the kings of Israel, especially David. In one corner we see sun and rain; the resulting rainbow appears in the opposite upper corner and represents the promise of hope in the story of Noah. We also see a dove carrying an olive branch symbolizing our longing for peace in Jerusalem and Israel.

THEME 8: SINAI



QUOTATION

“Adonai came down upon Mount Sinai [on the top of the mountain, and Adonai called Moses to the top of the mountain] and Moses went up.”

(Exodus 19:20)

IMAGE

Mount Sinai is shown surrounded by the clouds and lightning described in Exodus 19:16: “...there were thunders and lightnings and a thick clouds upon the mountain.” The mountain itself is covered with flames, as we are told in *Exodus 19:18*: “Now Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the lord descended upon it in fire.” The two tablets and the Ten Commandments are found above and beyond the mountain. Shofars, whose blasts announced the event on Sinai, are found in the corners.

THEME 9: PEACE



QUOTATION

“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; never again shall they learn war.”

(Micah 4:3)

IMAGE

The full quotation from Micah tells us that in the peaceful future: “And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; never again shall they learn war. But they shall sit, everyone beneath their vine and fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.” The words of the famous verse are found in a rainbow, a symbol of peace and hope in the future, as is the dove carrying an olive branch. The appearance of the vine and fig tree together refer to this time when we will all live in peace. The placement of a predatory and a non-predatory animal (wolf and lamb) recalls the traditional Prophetic image of peace found in *Isaiah 11:6*: “And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.” In this image, the powerful wolves not only refrain from destroying the helpless lamb, but actually protect and nurture their vulnerable cohabitant of our planet.

THEME 10: BLESSING



QUOTATION

“May Adonai bless you and protect you. May Adonai deal kindly with you and graciously with you. May Adonai bestow favor upon you and grant you peace.”

(Numbers 6:24-26)

IMAGE

The words of the priestly blessing are associated with the gesture of blessing found at the top of the image. The words of the three verses are placed on the shield which decorates the Torah. The twisted columns of the ancient Temple, where the priests used to bless our ancestors, are found on either side. Winding around the columns are pomegranates, another symbol of the priests on whose robes this desert fruit was embroidered. Grapes and wheat refer to the blessings of life, health, sustenance and joy requested in the priestly blessing. The columns/candlesticks also support the candles of Shabbat in whose light we bless our children each week with these words. The sun and moon in the top corners refer to our wish to be blessed at all times in our lives: “Blessed are you when you go out and blessed are you when you return.”