The Chicago Loop Synagogue was founded in 1929 to serve the needs of Jewish professionals working in Chicago's downtown business district, commonly known as the "Loop." In 1951, after the architecture firm of Loebl, Schlossman, and Bennett had completed the construction of West Suburban Temple Har Zion, in River Forest, Illinois, members of the Loop Synagogue congregation commissioned the firm to design their permanent home at 16 South Clark Street in downtown Chicago. Richard Marsh Bennett was named the lead designer of the structure, which was dedicated in the Fall of 1958.

Bennett designed the synagogue as a series of experiences, not only for visitors, but also for passersby. Above the entrance doors is a large, forced perspective sculpture by artist Henri Azaz, entitled the Hands of Peace. Set against a richly textured backdrop of scripture, priestly hands stretch out in benediction.

The main floor consists of a large foyer, office, cloak rooms, and a small worship space designed for daily use. An important requirement of the design was for elderly congregants to access upper sanctuary floors without climbing stairs. Bennett's solution was a system of gently inclining ramps that carried the congregants to the main sanctuary. The building's most distinct feature is the world-renowned stained-glass creation by artist Abraham Rattner on the eastern wall. The work is entitled Let There Be Light and symbolizes the nature of God's relationship to the universe, humanity, and the Jewish people. Set within the east glazed wall is the Holy Ark, also designed by Henri Azaz, which holds the scrolls of the Torah. Atop the Ark is a metal sculpture surmounted by the Eternal Light.

The building remains remarkably intact and stands as an outstanding example of Mid-Century religious architecture.
The Holy Ark holds the scrolls of the Torah, the five Books of Moses. In addition, it is decorated with the Ten Commandments and the Shofar, a ram’s horn, which is used in the call to prayer on the High Holy Days. The Ark is surrounded by the Flames of Fire, which symbolize the presence of God. Atop the Ark is a metal sculpture formed from stylized Hebrew script, resembling a basin. The text comes from Numbers 24:5. Surrounding the Ark are the Twelve Tribes of Israel, represented by the first letter of each tribe set in a square reminiscent of the breastplate of the High Priest in ancient times.

The six-pointed Shield of David dominates this panel. At its center is the Tree of Life, conceived as a seven-branched candelabrum, or Menorah, symbolizing the light of innermost perception. A spiral radiates out from this point, embracing the universe by spreading the light of the Torah and the Spirit of God to all. Surrounding the Star of David and the Tree of Life are the crests of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, represented by the first letter of each tribe.

The central crest represents the Crown of the High Priest, the symbol for priesthood, the members of which were guardians of the Torah and keepers of the rituals and ceremonies at the Temple of Jerusalem. Above this symbol is the Great Shin, represented by the first letter of the Hebrew word “Shaddai,” which signifies the Omniscient, the Supreme Being, the Creator of the Universe. The Great Shin is surrounded by concentric circles, symbolizing the rings of emanation, similar to the bands on a prayer shawl.

At the base of the tree is the Shofar, or Ram’s Horn, an ancient instrument used in the call for repentance on the High Holy Days, the sound of which reminds worshipers of the presence of God. Nestled within the crook of the Shofar is the Etrog, or Citron, a fruit from the Holy Land which is used in the harvest festival ritual of Succoth.

The Palm of Shins, which symbolizes the palm branch used in the Harvest Festival of Succoth, is featured on the right. Here, it is composed of shapes based on the Shin, the first Hebrew letter of the word “Shaddai.” While the seven shapes are different, they grow upward together, alluding to Jacob’s ladder, the connection between heaven and earth.

The Menorah is envisioned as the tree of life and light. Traditionally, the Menorah is a symbol of the light of God. However, in this instance, the Menorah’s relation to the tree represents the mystery of nature.

Stretching across the bottom of the window along its entire length is the Hebrew lettering of the morning and evening prayer, the Shema. In the bottom left are symbols of the Seven Elements and the Shofar, while the Tablets of the Law and the Scroll of the Torah are located in the bottom right corner. All of these elements are set within a matrix of concrete and epoxy resin using the art glass technique known as dale de verre.