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See also → Anabaptists; → Hutterites; → Leyden, Jan van; → Reformation

Menorah

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism
- III. Christianity
- IV. Visual Arts

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

The Hebrew word *mēnōrā* (LXX *λυχνία*) refers generally to a lampstand whose function was to light a room (2 Kgs 4:10). It was one of the articles of pure gold that Moses made for sacred use in the wilderness tabernacle (Exod 25:31–40; 37:17–24) to light the Holy Place before the curtain that protected the ark of the covenant (Exod 27:21; Lev 24:3; cf. Heb 9:2). The menorah's description (Exod 25:21–32; Lev 24:17–18) suggests that three branches came out of each side of the central shaft, giving the lampstand seven bowls for lighting. However, Hachlili (11–12) argues that English translations misread the Hebrew text and that the branches are not intrinsic to the menorah. This is seen in other texts that describe only a central shaft with a single lamp that Aaron and his sons kept alight with pure olive oil throughout the day (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2–3).

For the temple in Jerusalem, Solomon commanded Hiram to make ten menorot of pure gold; on each side five lampstands were to light the area before the inner sanctuary (1 Kgs 7:49). No branches are mentioned on these menorot, which were among the booty taken by the Babylonians when they captured Jerusalem (Jer 52:19). Under Haggai and Zechariah the temple was restored in the late 6th century, but there is no mention of the menorot being among the sacred temple objects that Cyrus returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7–11). Zechariah's vision is the first description of a menorah with seven lamps (Zech 4:2). Whether his description is imaginary or based on reality is debatable as is the shape of his lampstand. Archaeological finds in this period from the ANE evidence various shapes for lampstands with seven bowls (see Hachlili: 19–20). Zechariah's lampstand may represent a transitional stage from the single menorah of the tabernacle and Solomonic temple to the seven-branched menorah of the Second Temple. Nevertheless, Sirach (26:17) mentions only one light on the lampstand.

According to Meyers (1992: 142), the idea of a menorah with seven branches is an early post-bibli-

cal Jewish interpretation of the Exodus texts, which present contradictory information about the number and shape of the lamps. The menorah was among the objects taken from the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BCE (1 Macc 1:21; Josephus *Ant.* 12.250). Whereas 1 Macc used the singular form, Josephus mentions that menorot were removed. The Maccabean restoration of the temple included an improvised menorah of iron rods overlaid with tin (*bMen* 28b). That these rods numbered seven (*MegTa* 9) is the first mention of a seven-branched menorah in the Hasmonean period (Hachlili: 22). After Judas Maccabeus purified the temple in 165 BCE, new sacred objects were made for it including a menorah (1 Macc 4:49). This menorah apparently had seven branches because multiple lamps were lit on the menorah to provide light for the temple (v. 50). In 39 BCE the menorah paired with the table of showbread appeared on a lepton coin issued by Mattathias Antigonus (40–37 BCE). This was perhaps a propaganda effort to stave off his usurper Herod, who was backed by Rome. Herod's rebuilt temple contained the seven-branched menorah made of gold (Josephus *J.W.* 7.148–49; *Ant.* 3.144–46). A graffito dated to the Herodian period was found incised in the wall of a house in Jerusalem's Upper City. It depicts a menorah with seven branches, probably representing the graffitist's autopsy of the temple menorah. The menorot in the graffito and on the lepton stand atop a solid triangular base.

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Mark Wilson

II. Judaism

- Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism
- Rabbinic Judaism
- Medieval Judaism
- Modern Judaism

A. Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism

The menorah is a lampstand that appears in Second Temple Judaism both in images and in texts. Only a few images from this period survive: (1) a lepton issued under the Hasmonean Mattathias Antigonus in 39 BCE; (2) five menorot inscribed in Jason's tomb in East Jerusalem; (3) one etched on a sundial found during the Western Wall excavations; (4) one in a house excavated in the Jewish Quarter excavations; and (5) three on ossuaries (Fine 2005: 149).

Of the literary references, 1 Macc reports that when Antiochus IV entered the temple, he took "the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils" (1:8), but when Judas retook the temple, "they made new holy vessels and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple" where they offered incense and lit the

lamps (4:49–50). Second Maccabees does not mention the menorah per se, but in 10:3, a passage similar to 1 Macc 4:50, after Judas recaptured the temple, “they offered incense and lit lamps and set out the bread of the Presence.” Ben Sira connects the menorah in the temple with the beauty of a good wife in 26:27: “Like the shining lamp on the holy lampstand so is a beautiful face on a stately figure” (cf. Philo on Sarah in *Preliminary Studies* 6–8).

The most significant references to the menorah in Second Temple period literature are found in Josephus and Philo.

1. Josephus. Josephus makes frequent reference to a menorah or to multiple menorot, including the presence of a menorah among the spoils of war in Titus’ triumph in Rome (*War* 7.148–52). Two aspects of these references require some comment. First, for Josephus, the menorah in the temple represented the planets and thus had a connection to the structure of the cosmos (cf. Philo below), a tradition likely stemming from exegesis of Zech 4 (Fine 2016: 38–9). In *War* 5.217, Josephus says, “The seven lamps ... represented the planets.” In *Ant.* 3.144–45, which is based on Exod 25, he notes that the decorations of the menorah totaled seventy – thus, keeping the sacred number seven as a multiple – and that the seven lamps represented the number of planets (cf. also *Ant.* 3.182). Second, Josephus on several occasions refers to more than one lampstand. In *War* 6.388, he records that a priest handed over the walls of the besieged Jerusalem “two lampstands similar to those deposited in the sanctuary.” The idea that there were multiple menorot likely originated in his description of the furnishing of Solomon’s temple, based on 1 Kgs 7:49, which refers to “the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north,” and 1 Chr 4:7, which enumerates “ten golden lampstands.” In his description of Solomon’s temple, Josephus, however, exaggerates this number greatly, as he often does elsewhere: “He [i.e., Solomon] also made countless lampstands [Gk. *murias*] in accordance with the commandment of Moses, one of which he set up in the temple to burn all day in obedience to the law” (*Ant.* 8.90). Later references to “lampstands” in *Ant.* 8.145 (Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem) and *Ant.* 12.248 (the actions of Antiochus IV) might reflect Josephus’ idea of the manufacture of such a large number of lampstands.

2. Philo. Philo pays close attention to the menorah that Moses constructed and gives it an allegorical interpretation. He treats the menorah most extensively in *Questions in Exodus* 73–81 and in *Her.* 216–27. In these texts, Philo offers detailed allegorical understandings of each aspect of the menorah. For example, the lampstand is constructed of various groups (e.g., lamps, flower-patterns, and lamp-bowls) each having seven members (*Her.* 219–20). Like Josephus, Philo understands the lampstand as

symbolic of the cosmos, but he offers a much more extensive comparison. He identifies the middle branch as the sun. “The three above are Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, and the three below are Mercury, Venus, and the Moon” (*Her.* 224). God’s plan of the lampstand, he reasons, was intended as a “copy of the archetypal celestial sphere” (*Her.* 225; cf. *QE* 75). In *QE* 81, Philo comments on the instructions for making the lampstand in Exod 25:31–39 (LXX) in which, in contrast to other implements, the text prescribes no dimensions. He takes the statement in verse 39, “All these vessels shall be a talent of pure gold,” to mean that the lampstand must itself be a talent. Weight, Philo explains, encompasses the entire lampstand and as such it becomes a symbol of the entire heaven, which is one and not like anything else in power or shape. Philo even understands the position of the lampstand in the temple symbolically. In *Moses* 2.102, he explains that Moses placed the lampstand on the south, because “the sun and the moon and the others run their courses in the south.” Thus, for Philo, the construction and position of the lampstand symbolizes the totality and unity of the heavens.

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B. Rabbinic Judaism

Early rabbinic literature shows considerable interest in the details of the seven-branched menorah (lampstand) that was located in the wilderness sanctuary (*miškān*) of the HB (Exod 25:31–40; 37:17–24), as well as in the First and Second Temples. It shows less direct interest in the many and diverse artistic representations of the menorah that adorned many synagogues, funerary sites, oil lamps, glassware, graffiti, etc., in late-antique and Byzantine times, both in the land of Israel and the Diaspora, with sparser (but significant) antecedents in late Second Temple times.

Notwithstanding great interest in the specifics of the dimensions, materials, design, upkeep, and susceptibility to impurity (*mHag* 3:7–8; *tHag* 3:35; *yHag* 3:8, 79d; Fraade) of the sanctuary/temple’s menorah, rabbinic texts oppose the construction of exact facsimiles, lest the latter be confused with the former, with the sacredness of the original being assumed for its later, post-temple representations, whether in private or public settings:

Another tannaïc teaching: A person may not make a house after the design of the temple, or a porch after the design of the temple porch, or a courtyard after the design of the temple court, or a table after the design of the table (of the showbread), or a lampstand after the design of the lampstand [in the temple]. One may,

however, make one with five, six or eight [branches]), but not with seven, even if it be made of other metals. R. Jose b. Judah [ca. 200 CE] says, "One should not make one even of wood, for thus did the Hasmonean kings make it." But they said to him, "Is any proof to be deduced from that [exceptional, short-lived incident]? In fact it was made of iron bars which they overlaid with tin [var.: wood]. When they [the Hasmoneans] grew richer they made one of silver, and when they grew still richer they made one of gold" (*bMen* 28b and parallels: *bRH* 24a–b; *bAZ* 43a; *PesRab* 2 [ed. Friedmann: 5a]; *MegTa* 25 Kislef Scholium P [ed. Noam: 105]).

Judging from the archaeological remains, these rabbinic strictures were disobeyed more often than not.

According to several ancient accounts (e.g., Hecataeus of Abdera, ca. 300 BCE, as cited by Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.194–99), the light of the menorah, like that of the sacrificial altar fire (see *Lev* 6:6; cf. *Exod* 30:8 for the incense altar and 25:30 for the showbread table), illumined the inner sanctuary continually, signifying God's eternal presence ("a light which is never extinguished" according to Josephus' citing of Hecataeus), as in the expression "eternal light" (*nēr tāmīd*) of *Exod* 27:20 and *Lev* 24:2. However, the contexts in both places suggest that the menorah was kindled "regularly," every evening so it would burn until morning (*Exod* 24:3–4; 27:21; 30:7–8; *Lev* 24:3) rather than continually. Rabbinic literature seeks to harmonize these two uses of *tāmīd* (continually and regularly) by saying either that there was an eternally burning light alongside the menorah or that one of the seven lights of the menorah burned continually, from which were lit the other six that burned from evening to morning (see *SifBem* 59 [ed. Horovitz: 57; ed. Kahana: 1:149]).

Another tradition, appearing in several rabbinic texts, interprets *Num* 8:2–3, "facing (or opposite) the lampstand," with the help of *Num* 22:5, to mean that the three lamps on either side of the central branch inclined so as to face, as it were, the middle lamp, which in turn faced the Holy of Holies. See *SifBem* 59 (ed. Horovitz: 57; ed. Kahana: 1:148); *SifZ* 8:2 (ed. Horovitz: 255); *bMeg* 21b; *bMen* 98b (with Rashi); *Baraita di-melekheth ha-mishkan* 10.34–37 (ed. Kirschner: 199). It is as if the menorah itself is facing the Holy of Holies, that is, the divine presence, in worship. Interestingly, the remains of several ancient synagogues (e.g., Hammat Tiberias and Horvat Kur) contain mosaic artwork portraying the sanctuary/temple menorah with its three flames on either side directed toward the central lamp, which stands erect.

Finally, Josephus (*J.W.* 7.148–52, 158–62) reports that the temple menorah, among other temple sancta, was taken captive and triumphantly displayed centrally during Titus' victory march to Rome, where it was installed for public viewing in the Temple of Peace (*Templum Pacis*). The scene is memorialized to this day on the surviving Arch of Titus in Rome, dating from shortly after Titus'

death in 81 CE. Several rabbinic texts tell of 2nd-century tannaitic sages who traveled to Rome to view there the captive menorah (said to have been lit), among other temple relics (see *SifZ* 8:2 [ed. Horovitz: 255]; *ARN* A41 [ed. Schechter: 133]; cf. *bMeil* 17a–b; Fine 2007; 2016: 45–46). Such rabbinic visits to Rome to view the temple sancta as prisoners of war, assuming they actually took place, would have been bittersweet at best.

The fate of the temple menorah, if it was not destroyed in subsequent wars, is unknown. However, its memory, and thereby its symbolic presence, has been kept alive through its widespread figurative representations, as well as its detailed textual descriptions and elaborations from its biblical beginnings through its widespread rabbinic interpretive reception and transmission.

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C. Medieval Judaism

The biblical menorah (lampstand) was a subject of considerable interest to medieval Jews. Important discussions concern firstly its visual appearance, which was also reproduced by illustrations, secondly the exegetical problems concerning the biblical descriptions, and thirdly its symbolic understanding in philosophical, homiletical, and kabbalistic writings.

1. Visualization of the Menorah's Shape. The Torah (*Exod* 25:31–32) describes the menorah of the tabernacle as having a main shaft with six branches branching off it. It also mentions three cups shaped like almond blossoms each with knobs and flowers attached to each of the branches. The Talmud (*bMen* 28b) adds that the branches rise up on either side [of the main shaft] to the same level and adds the dimensions of the pieces and the spaces between the pieces, but also says nothing about the

shape of the branches. Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah* (Hilkhot Bet ha-behira [Laws of the Temple] 3.7) basically repeats the description given in the Talmud. However, in his Mishnah commentary at Menahot 3:7 he provides a drawing to concretize the description. He emphasizes that it is schematic and stresses it is mainly meant to show the relative position of the cups, knobs, and flowers. This portrayal is confirmed by his son, Abraham in his Exodus commentary at 25:32, who explicitly states that his father's drawing shows the branches of the menorah extending towards the top "in a straight line" (*be-yosher*), not rounded, as "others" depicted it (quoted in Fine: 82). The description says nothing about the shape of the branches, but the diagram shows the branches as straight. This goes against the majority of material evidence in art and archaeology from the first millennium, including the famous menorah of the Arch of Titus in Rome, and the frescoes at Dura-Europos (see Fine: 60), which show the branches curved. Maimonides' position as shown in the diagram (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Poc. 295, fol. 35v) has proven to be a source of curiosity and controversy ever since, with the Habad Hasidic movement campaigning vigorously on behalf of Maimonides' portrayal as being the true depiction of the menorah of the tabernacle and Solomon's Temple (see Brackman; Shurpin).

Only a few medieval exegetes attempt to visualize the menorah of the tabernacle and describe its shape. Two differing views of the design of the menorah are presented by the medieval Northern French exegetes, Rashi (1040–1105) and Joseph Bekhor Shor (12th cent.) in their commentaries to Exod 25:31–37. According to Rashi (at 25:32), the branches are straight and branch off diagonally (*ba-alakhson*; from the Gk. λοξόν, slanting) from the main shaft, "extending upward until [they were] level with the top." They are of varying length, the length increasing from top to bottom, resulting in the seven branches all reaching the same height as the main shaft, which would seem to agree with the description in the Talmud. While this seems to be Rashi's intent, Fine argues that *ba-alakhson* might not necessarily mean straight diagonal and might mean curving upward, bringing as proof an illustration in a Rashi MS that shows just that and arguing further that the larger medieval context, in which curved branches are the norm, would also justify this understanding (see Fine: 77 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fol. 69, fol. 40r). According to Joseph Bekhor Shor (comm. at 25:34), the branches branched off the main stem like the branches of a tree. The top of the main stem was the highest and the height of the three pairs decreased slightly from top to bottom, *kefi ha-alakhson* (at a slant) since the branches were all the same length, with the lowest branches reaching the lowest height (cf. Gersonides' [1288–1344] Torah commentary at Exod 25:32, who

holds a similar view re the tree-like branching off of the branches, though he makes no mention of their length). Bekhor Shor does not seem to express an opinion on whether the branches are straight or curved and the comparison with the branches of a tree also is not helpful, as tree branches can curve upwards, branch off straight at a ninety-degree angle to the trunk, or branch off upwards at some other angle.

Finally, Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1167), seems to be of the opinion that the branches were curved, each pair forming a semicircle (*hatsi 'iggul*; Short comm. Exod 25:37; Long comm. 27:21). In the final analysis, both visualizations of the menorah's branches – the curved and the straight – seem to have support in the sources and both versions are halakhically permitted. While curved branched menorahs have been the norm through the centuries, the straight-branched version has enjoyed a renaissance thanks to its ardent promotion by Habad – Lubavitch. In this story, Bekhor Shor is the outlier; his depiction seems to be unique, perhaps a function of a peshat mentality, that interpreted the text as it saw it and was not swayed by rabbinic tradition. (BDW)

2. Midrash and Exegesis. A unique midrashic tradition in the early medieval *Targum sheni* (The Second Targum) to the Book of Esther (ch. 1), describes a golden menorah on top of King Solomon's throne with seven branches on each side, apparently modeled after a Byzantine device with mechanical figures; upon one branch were "portrayed" (according to Steven Fine based on the term "engraved" that was added in Targum Onqelos to Exod 25:33) the "seven Patriarchs of the world" (from Adam to Job), and on the other side the "seven pious ones" (from Levi to Haggai); the high priest was portrayed upon an abundantly light-soaked golden vessel filled with olive oil at the top of the lampstand (Fine: 67). A connection to Hanukkah is shown by Nahmanides (1194–1270; comm. on Num 8:2); he follows the tradition reported in *Megillat setarim* (The Concealed scroll) by Nissim of Kairouan (fl. 11th cent.): the princes' offerings for the dedication of the altar (Num 7) precede the lighting of the menorah by Aaron and his sons (Num 8:2) in order to hint at the dedication of lights (*hanukkah shel nerot*) by the Hasmoneans at the time of the Second Temple. As a final example, David Qimhi (ca. 1160–1235) identifies in his commentary on Zech 4:2 the lampstand of the prophet's vision with the menorah in the Torah (*menorat ha-torah*), and explains the light placed on the middle shaft as referring to the divine power of uniting contraries; this points to the seven so-called double letters – according to *Sefer Yetsirah* – forming two categories of opposites (because each of these letters has two sounds), and they represent the seven planets that govern the three-dimensional world, which has six sides ruled by a

seventh aspect, the central point, which is the temple. In this context, eschatological explanations of the “golden menorah” hinting at the future redemption are given by an array of medieval exegetes (e.g. Rashi, Abraham Ibn Ezra [1089–1167], Isaac Abarbanel [1437–1508]).

3. Philosophy and Kabbalah. The interpretation of the menorah as representing the seven planets was quite common in the Middle Ages. Thus, Jacob b. Abba Mari Anatoli (1194–1256) conveyed an allegorical meaning for the interior of the sanctuary in his homiletic book on the Torah *Malmaḏ ha-talmidim* (Goad of the Students), the menorah facing the table of showbread (Exod 25) symbolizing the planets and the zodiac (fol. 137b). Another wide-spread comparison was the analogy of the seven branches to the seven powers of the soul (Idel: 146); the number seven links the menorah also to the “seven eyes of God” (Zech 4:10; Recanati: 121). The astronomical context was also applied by kabbalists like Abraham Abulafia (1240–ca. 1291), or his student Joseph Gikatilla (1248–1325), but more influential was the reference to the seven lower *sefirot*, which correspond inter alia to the seven days of creation. An important feature is the making of the menorah out of “hammered work” (Num 8:4), “of one piece” (Exod 25:36), being a symbol for the unity of the ten divine manifestations (Idel: 144).

A messianic perspective is introduced by the third *sefirah* *Binah* (understanding), which refers to “the world to come,” the eighth *sefirah* when counting upwards; in this world the spiritual access to the light of the seven lower *sefirot* is symbolized by the menorah as well as by the harp of the sanctuary, which had seven strings (*baAr* 13b), while the messianic harp, leading to the complete understanding of a “ten-stringed [instrument]” (Ps 92:3) in the world to come, will consist of eight strings (Nahmanides 1963: 303; the menorah is compared to a harp in Abraham Ibn Ezra’s comm. on Dan 3:5). In addition, the “whole menorah” (cf. Rashi on Num 8:4) is related to Ezekiel’s vision as an allusion to God’s holy name (*Yalqut Re’uveni*, Be-ha’alotkha fol. 11b, referring to *Midrash ha-ne’elam* on Song of Songs, cf. *Zohar ḥadash*, fol. 62a).

The menorah, or parts of it, could be identified also with specific aspects of the kabbalistic system, including the angelic world, but the most popular significance of the menorah happened to be a magical one: starting in 14th-century Italy, its visualized protective power became known by the seven verses and forty-nine words of Psalm 67 whenever arranged in the form of a menorah (Juhász). In particular the variety and potency of practical and theoretical kabbalistic associations (summarized in *Menorat zahav tahor* [Lampstand of pure gold], a commentary on Psalm 67 by Solomon ben Jehiel Luria; Prague 1581) contributed to the constant symbolic presence of the menorah, which opened the way to its national reassessment in modern Judaism. (GN)

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D. Modern Judaism

The term “menorah” refers to the biblical seven-branched lampstand and to lampstands modeled after it. In Ashkenazi tradition, the Hanukkah lamp is called a Hanukkah menorah, a designation adopted by American English.

The most important seven-branched menorah of the modern period is depicted on the Arch of Titus (ca. 81 CE), which was disseminated through various media and then more broadly through photographic reproduction. The Arch relief rose to prominence as part of the modern fascination and identification with the classical world and its art. The Arch menorah became a marker for both Jews and Judaism in European culture and was adopted by the broadest range of acculturating European Jews.

Despite its occasional use in Christian contexts, by the 1880s, Jews across Europe and beyond had adopted the menorah, and particularly the Arch Menorah, as a significant symbol of Jews and Judaism. Seven-branched menorahs became standard appurtenances of newly built “cathedral” synagogues, often flanking the Torah shrine on a large stage (*bimah*). This adoption was part of the general ethos of these often monumental buildings, many called “temples” after the Jerusalem temple. In a related development, Freemasons found the Arch menorah meaningful, and Jewish masons (and the associated Bnai Brith lodges) adopted this symbol broadly. Zionists of every ideology also adopted it. Seven-branched menorah lightings were central to ceremonies developed by all of these fraternal and political organizations.

Perhaps the most significant single menorah of the modern period appeared on a brass hat pin created for the Jewish Legion of the British army near the end of World War I. At the center of the pin is

a menorah modeled on the Arch of Titus menorah. Advocated for by Legion founder Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky (1880–1940) (q.v.), this badge later became the emblem of the Revisionist Zionist Betar movement. After an extensive competition, the emblem of the State of Israel chosen in 1949 was dominated by the Arch menorah. This symbol, desecralized, became central to Israeli civil religion and national iconography.

Some Orthodox thinkers have rejected the prominence of the Arch of Titus menorah in modern Jewish culture. Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) (q.v.) polemicized against it in his *B'ur* (commentary to Exod 25), writing that the relief does not conform with rabbinic interpretations, is false, and undermines traditional faith. During the 20th century, Isaac Halevi Herzog (1888–1959) (q.v.) wrote that the base was not historically accurate and was added by Roman artisans – he too wrote in defense of rabbinic tradition (Herzog: 95–98). Yosef Qafih (1917–2000) went a step further, drawing attention to a drawing by Maimonides (1138–1204) which shows straight branches, a tradition preserved in a small group of mainly Yemenite manuscripts, thus criticizing the shape of the branches of the Arch menorah (Maimonides: 3:119–20). Both of these authors were responding to the symbol of the State of Israel and thus against Israeli civil religion. This was part of their larger plan to create a more rabbinic ethos within the new state. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1902–1994), leader of the Habad Lubavitch Hasidic sect with an alternative messianic agenda to the civil religion of modern Israel, branded the Maimonides/Qafih menorah as the symbol of his movement. An activist post-Zionist religious group, the Temple Institute, adopted the form of early 20th-century synagogue menorahs, creating a life-size gold-plated aluminum menorah which they claim is usable within a rebuilt temple. In recent years, small versions of similar lamps have become popular among both Protestant and Catholic laity.

A wide range of Hanukkah menorahs have been created during the modern period, both bench-type and eight-branched lampstands. Public Habad Hanukkah menorah lightings are now ubiquitous, and many Habad dwellings display the menorah year-round.

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Steven Fine

III. Christianity

Christian references to the menorah appear as early as the Book of Revelation, which mentions the “seven golden lampstands” seen by John (Rev 1:12), who identifies them with the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 1:20). Ancient Christian theologians associate church architecture and furnishings with the Jerusalem temple. In early patristic allegories, the seven-branched lampstand represents Christ, the Light of the World. Menorahs appear alongside Christian symbols in art and on artifacts such as oil lamps and glass jars. In the Latin West, these lampstands are seen on altars of churches by the 8th century. These represent the church as a new, and more perfect temple of Solomon, with Jesus as its high priest. The Epistle to the Hebrews establishes this view (Heb 9). Some large elaborate candelabra, from the 12th to the 16th centuries, found in cathedrals across Europe, are inscribed as “Solomon’s candelabra.”

Medieval Christian commentators in the East, like some Jewish interpreters of antiquity, consider the menorah, and the whole tabernacle, a metaphor for the cosmos, giving it eschatological significance. Consistency in images of the menorah can be seen across Christianity in the Middle Ages, drawing from scriptural descriptions (Exod 25:31–36) and from the 1st-century Arch of Titus, with its prominent image of the menorah looted by Romans during the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Later church lampstands become tree-like, referring to the genealogical tree and “root of Jesse” (Isa 11:1) leading to Jesus Christ. The seven lights correspond to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit hovering over this root of Jesse, from Isaiah’s vision of the lineage of David culminating in the Messiah. The tree motif recalls the cross, as Tree of Life; and in the Renaissance, the cross becomes explicit in the candelabrum’s structure.

In the early modern period the Arch of Titus, with its looted menorah, gains a place of prominence in Christian triumphalism with papal processions and parades. Wall paintings with menorah images decorate churches in Rome in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1925, Adolph Ochs, President and publisher of the *New York Times*, offered to donate to New York City’s Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine two large seven-branched menorahs, modeled after the menorahs in Solomon’s temple. The donation was accepted and the menorahs built and installed on either side of the altar. For Ochs, a Reform Jew, and for Bishop William Manning, of the Cathedral, this placement of the menorah in the Cathedral was seen as a symbol of religious universalism. For Bishop Manning, this also served as reminder “of the worship of God in the temple of the older dispensation,” as “a symbol of the relation between the old and new testament,” and as a symbol of the hoped for “brotherhood of men which Christ,

our Lord, teaches us shall be brought to pass" (Schwartz: 32–33, 40). In the hand-illuminated St. John's Bible, commissioned for the new millennium, Matthew's Gospel, with its genealogy of Christ, begins with an illumination of a menorah, structured as a family tree, and serving as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments.

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Mary Kantor

IV. Visual Arts

Menorah (pl. *menorot*) is a Hebrew word that simply means "candelabrum" or "lampstand." In the biblical context the term typically refers to the menorah that was devised by the artisan, Bezalel ben Uri, for the tabernacle that moved with the Israelites during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Exod 25:31–40; 31:1–6), and that was subsequently placed in the temple in Jerusalem – the First Temple built by King Solomon (1 Kings 6) and later, the Second Temple. That menorah was a stylized tree-like formation with seven branches; three on each side of a central branch that rose in a direct line from the stem. In some depictions, the branches are curved and in others they are straight diagonals.

This form of the menorah would appear in two primary, parallel Jewish and Christian contexts over the centuries. It emerges early on as the premier symbol in Jewish art – recalling the temple and also the covenantal relationship between Jews, as spiritual descendants of the Israelites, and God. Its seven-ness connotes the moment at the foot of Sinai – on the path from servitude to freedom, from Egypt to the Promised Land – when the Israelites embraced that covenant, with its promises and obligations, and were, among other things, commanded to keep the seventh day holy.

1. Ancient Period. Ironically enough, perhaps the earliest image of the temple menorah is found on the Arch of Titus, built by Emperor Domitian (ca. 82 CE) to honor the memory of his brother and recording Titus' most signal accomplishment, the completion of the suppression of the Judean revolt against Rome; the high-relief carved image shows the menorah being carried in a triumphal procession into Rome. The context of that depiction notwithstanding, the menorah dominates Jewish art until the end of the 19th century. One sees it on the capital of a pillar from the 1st-century synagogue in Caesarea and on the bottoms of glasses in the Jewish catacombs outside Rome (ca. 4th–5th cent. CE),

where typically two *menorot* flank a holy ark with scrolls, in gold leaf pressed between layers of glass.

Depictions are found in an array of media and locales, from the mosaic floors of 6th-century synagogues such as that at Bet Alfa in the Lower Galilee – where two *menorot* flanking the Holy of Holies refer either to the First and Second Temples or to the destroyed temple of the past and the rebuilt temple of the messianic future – to *parokhot* (ark curtains) such as that handsome work from 1772 Bavaria, created by Jakob Koppel Gans (Jewish Museum, NYC). There the menorah is flanked by two columns that represent the temple by synecdoche.

Typically, the menorah either stands alone in these Jewish contexts, or accompanies other symbols of the temple. On occasion, as in the wall paintings in the synagogue at Dura Europos on the Euphrates River (ca. 245 CE), it appears in a full temple scene – not within but outside, in the courtyard in which Aaron is portrayed, as the High Priest, together with his acolytes and three animals for sacrifices.

2. Medieval Period. Throughout the medieval period, as Jewish and/or Hebrew illuminated manuscripts become increasingly common, the menorah makes scores of appearances. The earliest among these that is dated is in the "First Leningrad Pentateuch" (ca. 929; St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr.II B 17, fol. IV; see Bat-Tsvi, pt. 2) – in which the menorah appears twice, in two slightly different forms. One of the most outstanding representations is in the 1299–1300 Sephardi "Cervera Bible" (a rich Hebrew-language work signed by the illustrator, Joseph Ha-Tzarfati) that presents a tall, golden menorah against a deep-blue, patterned "sky" and flanked by two olive trees that surge out of the frame, reflecting the vision from Zech 4:1–14 (Lisbon, National Library of Portugal, MS 72, fol. 316v; Narkiss: 52–53). A number of other Hebrew-language Bibles with illuminations that include the menorah come from Iberia, particularly from Catalonia – from the "Enrico Nahum Bible" (1300; Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Heb 4° 5147); to the "Copenhagen Catalan Bible" (1301; Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, Cod. Heb.II), created by the scribe, Menahem, and filled with other paraphernalia to accompany the menorah, including the jar of manna from the wilderness; to the "Harley Catalan Bible" (ca. 1325–74; British Library, London, Harley MS 1528).

Even more extraordinary, perhaps, than these, is the so-called "Northern French Miscellany," a stunning 747-folio manuscript created in 1278–98 by diverse authors and illuminators (British Library, London, Add. MS 11639), which includes the menorah (together with Aaron) among other illustrated temple paraphernalia (fol. 114r). Intriguingly, it also offers an image of "the Tree of Life" – seven-branched, like a menorah – flanked by four angels,

no doubt emulating Christian images of the crucified or enthroned Christ flanked by symbols of the four Gospels (fol. 122r).

In Western (Christian) art the menorah might be expected in scenes depicting events in the temple, usually NT subjects, such as the *Presentation of the Virgin* or the *Presentation of Christ at the Temple*, or the *Young Jesus Among the Doctors in the Temple*, or driving away the money lenders – or perhaps intertestamental/apocryphal subjects, such as the Maccabees rededicating the temple and rekindling the menorah after defeating the Seleucids in 165 BCE. Yet the menorah is rarely part of these scenes, in stained glass, carved wood, paintings, and prints, from the medieval period to the end of the 19th century – either because the artists were unaware of its place or because they did not consider it significant enough as an incidental element of the décor.

On the other hand, in the East, images of the menorah do sometimes appear in Byzantine Octateuchs in the 9th century, just as actual seven-branched candelabra intended to connote the temple menorah also begin to appear in some Orthodox churches at around that time. Back in the West, in France, the great Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra's (ca. 1270–1349) Bible with commentary (ca. 1330; first printed in Rome in 1471) included two depictions of the menorah, based on his reading of Exod 31, together with that of Rashi, the great 11th-century Jewish rabbinic scholar (Klosterneuburg, Augustiner-Chorherrenstift, Cod. 10, fol. 105v).

One particularly interesting representation that appears in the West is found in the *Bible historiale complète* by Guiard des Moulins, vol. 1 (ca. 1320–40; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek [KB], 71 A 23), illuminated by the Fauvel Master, in which a very horned Moses is shown kneeling in prayer before God – whose Christ-like face is embedded within a cruciform halo – with an enormous menorah that he is being commanded to make standing behind him (fol. 64va). Depictions that are hardly different from those in Jewish Bibles are also occasionally found in other sorts of works, such as the 1299 *Historia scholastica* by Petrus Comestor, in which the two-page, six-paneled Gothic-styled depiction of Solomon's Temple and its contents includes a panel with the menorah (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Res/199, fols. 6v–7r).

3. Modern Period. Such illuminations and illustrations continue into the 17th and 18th centuries, together with a reinvigorated array of representations in a widening range of media and locations. Thus, for instance, the 17th-century wooden Torah ark doors from the synagogue of Rabbi Moses Isserles, in Kraków, Poland (now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem), are painted as if they are a gigantic illumination, with elements from the temple dominated by the menorah. Differently, the lunette above the entrance to the 1619 Chenemangalam

synagogue in Cochin, India is painted with a lush version of the vision from Zech 4 at the center of which is a bright, blue menorah. On the other hand, the 1625–26 painting of “The Destruction and Sack of the Jerusalem Temple” (Israel Museum, Jerusalem) by Nicolas Poussin (1593–1650), within its carefully articulated visual chaos, shows the golden menorah being hauled off by one of the plunderers.

It is interesting that, with the rise in importance of Hanukkah for Jews in the modern era, Jewish artists occasionally illustrate the Books of Maccabees, which are not considered part of the Jewish Bible. Thus, for instance, painter and illustrator Ori Sherman (1934–1988) produced a colorful work on paper (1985; Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, Berkeley, Calif.), *The Story of Hanukkah*, in which the temple menorah anchors the lower part of the complex image, framed by an arch within a stylized wall intended to represent Jerusalem.

In the upper left corner of the image is an unkindled nine-stick menorah. That detail underscores the fact that often the term “menorah” is misused in common parlance to refer to the Hanukkah menorah (*hanukkiyah*) of which over the centuries there are myriad examples, its eight level branches (and an elevated ninth to kindle those eight) intended to recall the miracle elaborated in the Babylonian Talmud (*Shab* 21a). Such *menorot*, typically wall-hanging versions, are often lushly decorated with floral, vegetal, faunal, or geometric elements, and in the modern era, sometimes figures such as Judah Maccabee and/or his namesake, the heroic Judith, apocryphal savior of Jerusalem from Holofernes and the Assyrians. Not surprisingly the temple menorah is also a common decorative element, dominating the *hanukkiyah* backplate.

Conversely, modern Jewish artists have used the menorah symbol in interesting ways. Amadeo Modigliani (1884–1920), for instance, in one of his few extant landscapes, *Landscape of the South* (1917; Private Collection), offers a bleak tree dominating his bleak scene, and the tree takes the form of a menorah: three branches to either side of the roof peak and dark window of the house behind the tree in lieu of a central branch; two of the branches with leaves that resemble bursts of greenish flames. Marc Chagall (1888–1986), in his *White Crucifixion* (1938, Art Institute of Chicago), places the menorah at the feet of his Christ – but deliberately leaves out the redemptive, sabbatical seventh light, to underscore the paradoxical darkness of this bright painting done in the context of *Kristallnacht* and the beginnings of the Holocaust.

Arguably the most renowned modern engagement with the menorah arrived with Benno Elkan (1877–1960), who sculpted a 4.3 m.-high bronze work embellished with relevant biblical quotations and with low relief-carved scenes – both painful and joyful – from biblical and diasporic Jewish history.

The work was presented in 1956 by the Parliament of the UK (where Elkan had found refuge during the Holocaust from his native Germany) to the Israeli Knesset to celebrate the eighth anniversary of the Jewish return to political independence after nineteen centuries. It is located at the edge of the Rose Garden opposite the Knesset.

On the other hand, Siona Benjamin (b. 1960), an American Jewish artist whose work reflects her growing up in Hindu/Muslim India and attending Catholic and Zoroastrian schools, offers gouache and gold-leaf miniatures resounding with diversely euphonic sources. Her *Finding Home No.46 (Tikkun ha-Olam)* (2000; private collection; see → plate 13) – part of an extensive series reflecting on the idea of “home” – presents the menorah as six arms (the seventh rises from her head) of a female figure (a self-portrait, in fact) whose blue skin, dance pose and multiple appendages reflect the Hindu tradition; they terminate in Muslim-style *khamas* and small flames shaped as stylized little houses. The words of the subtitle, drawn from the Jewish tradition and meaning “repairing the world” – which is the point of her multicultural, interreligious images – flank the dancing menorah figure in Hebrew on one side and transliterated into Devanagari script on the other, creating a singularly original image.

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Ori Z. Soltes and David Selis

See also → Lamp, Lamps; → Orientation of Sacred Places; → Sanctuary, Sanctuaries; → Temple (Sanctuary)

Menstruation

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. New Testament
- III. Judaism
- IV. Christianity
- V. Islam

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. General Remarks. The menstrual blood flow of women in the ANE was generally not regular due to their low protein diet and frequency of pregnancies. Intercultural comparisons tend to lead to the general presupposition that women in ancient Israel

were excluded from social and religious life during their period of menstruation while obscuring the nuances of the matter. The archaeological findings in Israel do not seem to support the idea that the observance of the purity regulations was part of everyday life as *mikvaot* begin to appear in appreciable numbers only around the beginning of the common era. In the Mesopotamian gynaecological corpus we find reference to irregularities concerning the blood flow of women, but not to regular menstruation (Steinert). In Greek classical literature the phenomenon of cyclic discharge of blood is discussed at length in medical literature, which employs a variety of terms: Hippocrates refers to the monthly regularity of the menses; others speak of *καθαρισμός* (“purification”).

2. Menstruation as a Cultic Concept in Lev 12 and 15. The purity regulations relating to sexual discharges in Lev 15 establish the use of a specific term with respect to the cultic state of the woman caused by menstruation lasting for seven days: *niddah*. Etymological research does not provide a satisfying answer to the meaning of the term (“to abandon, to flee” cf. Greenberg). The authors of the early Greek translation had no such cultic term, but opted for an expression from the medical literature.

Through its structure, Lev 15 parallels the man’s ejaculation of semen with the woman’s menstruation (Ellens). The chapter on childbirth (Lev 12) links the postpartum blood loss with menstruation. Another term is used in Lev 15 which characterizes menstruation as physical weakness or perturbation (Erbele-Küster 2017). The statement made in Lev 15:22, which relates to a discharge of blood that would last an exceptionally long time, stresses the temporal aspect of the condition caused by the menstrual blood discharge. This condition will last for a specific period of time – seven days (cf. Lev 12:2) – whereas the actual period of blood loss may be shorter or longer. At the same time, the expression “her discharge being blood” (Lev 15:19) indicates a physical phenomenon. During a period of seven days, a menstruating woman is considered ritually impure; everybody who touches her, or comes in contact with something on which she has been sitting or lying, also becomes ritually impure until evening. Blood *per se* is never specifically called ritually impure; nevertheless, it is regarded as such in the interpretation history. The regulations in Lev 15 focus on possible polluting contact with men and women with genital discharge, which must be avoided.

In Lev 20, the technical cultic term for menstruation is used in a metaphorical way for disqualifying sexual intercourse with the wife of one’s brother.

3. Menstruation in the Narrative Texts. Menstrual bleeding plays a marginal role in narrative texts, which do not make reference to the purity