



THE 1951 DIPLOMATIC GIFT: THE ROLE OF A GERMAN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY HANUKKAH LAMP IN ISRAELI-AMERICAN RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

A diplomatic gift in the form of a Hanukkah Lamp, given to President Harry Truman by the Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion in 1951 was selected for this occasion by museum personnel from the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem and the Jewish Museum in New York. Based on primary sources found in archives in Israel and in the United States, this case study investigates the process of objects exchange between two museums, orchestrated on the basis of an existing collegial relationship, and illustrates how the Hanukkah Lamp becomes more than itself and signifies both the history of the Jewish people and the mutual obligations between the two nations. Drawing on the theories of Marcel Mauss, Arjun Appadurai, and Igor Kopytoff on the notion of the gift, the article highlights the layers of meanings attributed to a gifted object.

KEYWORDS

Hanukkah Lamp | Jewish Museum New York | Jerusalem | Harry Friedman | Torah Shield

INTRODUCTION

On May 8, 1951, President of the United States, Harry Truman was presented with a gift for his sixty-seventh birthday by the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion and by Abba Eban, liaison officer in the United Nations and the Israeli ambassador to the United States (Grafman, 1996: 81-83). The gift, an eighteenth century German bronze Hanukkah Lamp, was selected to mark the friendship between the United States and Israel. This token had been part of a series of diplomatic gifts given to President Truman to mark the gratitude of the people of Israel for his support during the first years of its existence.¹ The 1951 gift stands out, as the object was not part of an Israeli institution collection, but belonged to a non-Israeli collection — to the Jewish Museum in New York. [Fig. 01]

Since his election in 1945, and leading to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, President Truman showed support of the Zionist initiative.² In interviews, Truman addressed the urgent need for a formation of a Jewish State. His most meaningful encouragement was demonstrated at the 1947 United Nations vote, which led to the decision on the establishment of the State of Israel.³ At the time, Israeli president, Chaim Weizmann, expressed the people of Israel's appreciation, by giving the United States President a velvet Torah mantle embellished with the Star of David.⁴ Symbolically, the Star of David was chosen for the Israeli flag in October 1948.⁵ By focusing on this unique gift, this essay investigates the role art historians and museum personnel play in the exchange of diplomatic exchanges. Head curators of the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, Mordecai Narkiss, and the Jewish Museum in New York, Stephen S. Kayser, were key players in this political moment. As is suggested throughout the next pages, it was their personal

relations and expertise that made it possible for Israel to present the chosen, and symbolically appropriate, Hanukkah lamp, to President Truman.

Existing primary sources found in the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) in Jerusalem, and in the archives of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in New York, include, for example, correspondence between Narkiss, director and curator of the Bezalel Museum, representatives from the Israeli Prime-Ministers' office, and the Jewish Museum head curator, Kayser.⁶ Such documents uncover pieces of the process of selection and reveal that a replacement object was sent from the Bezalel Museum in exchange for the Hanukkah Lamp.

Although the discussion is based on documentation that spans from 1940 until 1952, letters found in these archives are limited to correspondence during and after the exchange. Despite the missing detail on the process prior to the selection of the Hanukkah Lamp, this three-way exchange, gives a good example of the importance of cultural driving forces in such diplomatic events.⁷

Additional considerations surrounding this case study include: the provenance of the items exchanged, the type of Jewish ritual objects selected, and their Jewish symbolism. These issues are addressed through key theories on material culture. Marcel Mauss' theory on the gift, determines that what appears as a generous gesture is in reality a well thought out transaction based on social moral obligations and self-interests (Mauss, 1990: 4-7).

Arjun Appadurai expands on Mauss's theory and identifies two different forms of trade: barter and the

1. The State of Israel was established in 1948 following the United Nations vote on the partition of the area between the Jewish and the Arab communities which took place on May 14, 1948. President Truman's recognition of the Jewish state was during the vote was crucial for Israel's founding.
2. Zionism is a national movement that developed in nineteenth century as result of growing anti-Semitism in Europe, in support of finding a permanent homeland for the Jewish people. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), an Austro-Hungarian journalist and political activist, is identified as the leader of political Zionism and the visionary of the Jewish state.
3. President Truman's library, *Recognition of the State of Israel: Documents*. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/israel/ (accessed May 7, 2015).
4. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/56, Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem, Israel.
5. Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Magen David*, Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE (2008) <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/magen-david> (accessed November 15, 2018).
6. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.
7. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.



Fig. 01 - President Harry S. Truman with David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister, and H. E. Abba Eban, Ambassador, of Israel. President Truman is receiving a gift of a menorah, May 8, 1951. Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.



Fig. 02 - President Harry S. Truman with David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister, and H. E. Abba Eban, Ambassador, of Israel. President Truman is receiving a gift of a menorah, May 8, 1951. Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

exchange of gifts (Appadurai, 1986: 9-13). Barter is suggested to be an exchange between two objects with no reference to money. In Appadurai's view, a gift functions within social relationships that are usually free of moral and cultural constraints. His theory then looks back at Mauss, who established a connection between the exchange of gifts, and economic and social expectations (Mauss, 1990:4-7). In the following pages, I inquire whether the case in question is compatible with both theories; first, as a procedure of considerable thought, based on long-term political aspirations, and second, interpreted as a non-monetary barter between two museums.

According to Igor Kopytoff, describing an exchange of gifts in order to evoke an obligation is an exception to the process of the transaction of things, that he titles commodities (Kopytoff, 1986:73-74). Unlike Mauss, who does not limit the commodity gifted to movable or immovable property of economic value, Kopytoff's theory implies that this case study is distinct from general gift exchanges. Furthermore, the political purpose of the gift turned the Hanukkah Lamp into a singularized item, by removing it from the art market (Kopytoff, 1986: 64-91).

Finally, physical and emblematic characteristics of the objects are analysed by applying British archaeologist, Ian Hodder's, theory on structures of meaning. In his investigation of cultural exchanges, Hodder associated three types of interpretation to an object (Hodder, 1994: 12). First, the object, which is a part of the material world, can take part in any kind of exchange.

Second, the meaning of an object is coded in social structure. Third, the meaning itself is created by the object's historical past and the associations relating to it. The artefact can thus have a value that is based on its function and the effect it has on the world surrounding it. An interrogation of elements comprising value, such as: size, medium, maker and decorative motifs, offers an understanding of the likely value of the Hanukkah Lamp and its counterpart.

While diplomatic gifts are a common affair between nations, the article examines the object gifted and the involvement of the behind-the-scenes actors. Through this and similar events, ritual artefacts, removed from their original religious context, assisted in strengthening diplomatic relations. The support of the Truman administration to the young State of Israel was crucial for its existence and development. Though not without challenges, the relationship formed during these years, has been pursued by Israeli and the United States leaders ever since.

The eighteenth century German Hanukkah Lamp given as diplomatic gift to President Truman in 1951 arrived at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1940. Harry G. Friedman, one of the Jewish Museums' major benefactors, was responsible for its donation. Friedman (1882-1965), who donated over 6,000 objects to the Jewish Museum collection, emigrated with his family from Poland to the United States in 1889. Growing up in a conservative Jewish home lead Friedman to attend Rabbinical studies at Hebrew Union College. He was ordained as a Rabbi in the early 1900s, but

MIGRATING OBJECTS

then decided to move to New York in 1904 to study political economy at Columbia University.⁸ This motivated him to change his lifestyle and eventually practice as a corporate finance statistician.⁹ Despite developing a secular lifestyle, Friedman began donating Jewish manuscripts and objects to the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in the 1930s.¹⁰

Originally established in the late nineteenth century, the JTS was composed of a university, a library, an archive and a museum, titled the Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects, by the 1930s. Friedman found the JTS appropriate for his donations as it was known for its collection of ancient Jewish manuscripts in which he was highly intriguing, side by side with Jewish ritual objects. He pursued this interest by regularly browsing through antiques shops and markets in New York, which he rarely left empty handed.¹¹

The Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects, the Jewish Museums' predecessor, officially opened in 1931. During the 1930s, it was expanding its collection rapidly with donations by wealthy collectors from the local Jewish community and Jewish immigrants. Several important donations arrived with Jews who fled the Pogroms in Eastern Europe. Many arrived to the United States bringing along their Jewish ritual objects that were often sold to cultural Jewish institutions in their new home countries.¹² Numerous objects purchased from immigrants forced to raise money on the streets of New York arrived into the collection of the Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects.¹³

Alongside private individuals, European Jewish communities were making attempts to find solutions for the preservation of their archives and collections by removing it from Europe. In 1939, for example, the Jewish community in Danzig decided to ship their magnificent collection of Jewish ritual objects for safekeeping at the Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects.¹⁴ With funding assistance from the American Joint Distribution Committee, over two hundred items arrived to New York in July, 1939 (Register, 1940: 77-78).¹⁵ A second collection that arrived that year to the Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects is that of Benjamin Mintz of Warsaw. Mintz was able to obtain approval from the Polish government to take his collection of over five hundred objects to the New York World Fair in 1939.¹⁶ These are just a few examples of the process that was taking place in Jewish communities across Europe which was a critical factor in the expansion of Museum collections outside of Europe.

The Hanukkah Lamp, given to President Truman, was created in Bürgel, a small town near Weimar, Germany.¹⁷ It belonged to a couple who donated it to the local synagogue in 1767.¹⁸ In 1913 it was restored by Siegfried Guggenheim (1873-1961), a member of the Jewish community of Offenbach.¹⁹ Guggenheim, who practiced as an attorney, collected Jewish ritual art and patronised artists, including the designer Rudolf Koch.²⁰ In November 1938 Guggenheim was arrested and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. Upon his release, he was forced to leave Germany, arriving to New York in 1939.²¹ The following year, the Hanukkah Lamp made its

8. Steinberger, Chaim, unpublished essay about Harry Friedman [2012].

9. Obituary: 'Harry Friedman, Financier, Dies: Leader in Jewish Philanthropies', *The New York Times*, 23 November, 1965, 38.

10. *Great Books from Great Collectors*, 1993: 53.

11. Alexander Marx Papers 80/20, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), New York.

12. Several examples for Jewish ritual objects sold by immigrants can also be found in the Bezalel Museum that established the Ethnographic department with objects collected from immigrants from North Africa.

13. Alexander Marx Papers 80/20, JTS, New York. Alexander Marx Papers RG25/1/5, JTS, New York.

14. The Danzig Collection 60/8, JTS, New York.

15. They were to remain in the museum for up to fifteen years after which, if not returned to a renewed Jewish community in Danzig, the objects would become part of the museums' collection.

16. Alexander Marx papers RG25/1/27a, JTS, New York. Report on the Library and Museum, May 1, 1940.

17. President Truman's library, *Recognition of the State of Israel: Documents*, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/israel/ (accessed May 7, 2015).

18. Arnsberg, 1973: 30.

19. Klingspor-Museum Offenbach, *Sammlung –Schriftkunst*, <http://www.klingspor-museum.de/Sammlungen/Schriftkunst.html> (accessed November 15, 2018).

20. Guggenheim commissioned Koch with a Passover Haggadah in 1927. Leo Baeck Institute, *Offenbacher Haggadah*, April 5, 2012, <https://www.lbi.org/2012/04/offenbacher-haggadah/> (accessed November 15, 2018).

21. Alexander Marx Papers 80/20/17, JTS, New York. Haupt, 'Rituelle Kunst', 1927: 117- 144.

way to the Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects, and was listed as a donation of Harry G. Friedman.²²

A Letter, written on September 11, 1940, reveals that Guggenheim was interested in de-accessioning objects from his collection. Friedman, who took upon himself the role of the middle-man, wrote to Alexander Marx, head librarian of JTS and responsible for its early Jewish ritual objects collection, in an effort to find an interested buyer in Guggenheim's collection.²³ While no further correspondence regarding the purchase was found, the item is listed as a donation by Friedman soon after their communication. It seems that Friedman decided to obtain the Hanukkah Lamp and donate it to the museum.²⁴ This acquisition was typical to Friedman, who described his collecting methods in a letter, written on December 24, 1941:

"The Collection was accumulated, with comparatively few exceptions, in New York, over the last twelve

years. The greater part of the Collection, and the most important items reflect the coming of Hitler and the flight of Jews from Germany and subsequently from other Nazi-dominated countries. It may be of interest to you that while in the early days objects of Jewish interest were obtainable chiefly in the lower East Side, with the coming of the refugees from Germany, the market changed to Madison Avenue in the 50s, and later to 57th Street, and more recently to Third Avenue in the 50s."²⁵

This letter, in which Friedman described the donation of his entire collection to JTS, situates him as a wealthy New York Jew who was particularly interested in buying Jewish ritual objects from European Jewish immigrants often desperate for monetary support. He continued this system of purchase even after donating his collection in 1941, shipping new items directly to JTS and the Jewish Museum.

TRADING OBJECTS

In 1947 the Jewish Museum opened in the Warburg Mansion in Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, where it still resides today. Jewish ritual objects donated to the collection of the Museum for Jewish Ritual Objects were moved into the new museum space in addition to a selection of books.

Key art historians involved in the process of the selection of the Hanukkah Lamp for the diplomatic gift, were considered experts in the field of Jewish art. Stephen S. Kayser, head curator of the Jewish Museum, emigrated from Germany in 1938 and began his role as Chief Curator of the Jewish Museum in New York in 1947.²⁶ He grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home in Frankfurt, and received his Doctorate degree from the University of Heidelberg in art history and philosophy (Cohen

Grossman, 2000: 1-22). Guido Schoenberger, Kayser's research fellow and assistant who fled Germany after the rise of the Nazi regime, received his Doctorate degree from the University of Breisgau and from the Frankfurt University. Before immigrating to the United States, he was responsible for the catalogue of Jewish ritual objects in the Frankfurt Jewish Museum.²⁷ In 1939, he received a position as professor of art history at the New York University and catalogued many of the works in the Museum for Jewish Ceremonial Objects.²⁸ German academy and culture flourished between the two World Wars and scholars were often able to publish and promote their research internationally. Documents found in JTS archive reveal that several German scholars who immigrated to the United States were offered the role of director of the Jewish Museum

22. Jüdische Geschichte, Synagoge, Bürgel (Stadt Offenbach, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/buergel_synagoge.htm#Buergel (accessed May 7, 2015).

23. Alexander Marx Papers 80/20/17, JTS, New York.

24. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/56, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

25. Alexander Marx Papers 80/20, JTS, New York.

26. Jewish Museum 60/1, JTS, New York.

27. Wischnitzer, 'Guido Schoenberger (1891-1974)', 1977.

28. Jewish Museum 60/1, JTS, New York.

prior to Kayser's selection (Miller and Cohen, 1997: 309-362).

Director and curator of the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, Mordecai Narkiss, had been involved in previous selection of diplomatic gifts given by Israeli President Weizmann to President Truman upon the establishing of the State of Israel in 1948.²⁹

Narkiss immigrated to Palestine from Poland in 1920 after he was accepted to study at the Bezalel Art School. Following his graduation, he took upon himself the role of assistant to the founding director of the museum, Boris Schatz, and later became his successor.³⁰ In 1942, Narkiss started a campaign for the salvage of Jewish objects from Europe, which he called, the Schatz Fund.³¹ Jewish ritual objects that, before the war, belonged to Synagogues and private Jewish collections became with the outbreak of the Second World War, the last remains of perished Jewish communities. The social and the historical context of these objects made each of them, in Narkiss' eyes, a unique remnant that had to be saved at any cost.³²

In 1949 Narkiss' was invited to assist the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) staff working to identify and evaluate cultural items and Jewish ritual objects brought together at the Central Collecting Points across Germany by the Allied Forces. JCR was an organization established by Jewish scholars in New York in 1947. Its main responsibility was to redistribute Heirless Jewish cultural property discovered by the Allied Forces between existing and restored Jewish communities around the world.

It was this project that introduced Narkiss to Kayser and Schoenberger, who subsequently re-evaluated the items, once they were shipped from Germany to the Jewish Museum. Later, a selection of the objects was shipped once more — from New York to Jerusalem — to the Bezalel Museum.³³ A long correspondence between Narkiss and Kayser can be found in the Central Zionist

Archives (CZA) in Jerusalem. Much of the concerns and interests these men shared is expressed in exchange of research ideas and questions about objects, and is not exclusive to the gift of the Hanukkah Lamp in the Jewish Museum collection. Letters found reflect mutual respect and similar interests in Jewish culture and in Jewish ritual objects. Schoenberg, for example, shared his hope to meet Narkiss in person in a letter written on June 2, 1949:

"You see, there are so many questions and problems which I would like to discuss with you personally and I hope very much that a meeting will be possible sometime in the near future."³⁴

A letter conveying a similar sentiment was written by Kayser on December 21, 1951. In it, Kayser suggested ways for the two institutions to cooperate:

"...I hope that in the meantime I will be able to see you as we do have to cooperate as closely as possible in view of our common interests [...] I would be most willing to make myself available to be of assistance in the raising of funds for your institution [...] I also think it would be good if we sent you a loan exhibition of some of the pieces which would not be represented in your collection."³⁵

Kayser and Narkiss both identified the importance in collaborations. Partnering, by sharing and exchanging traveling exhibitions would not only expose a larger audience to works in these museum's collections but could also attract potential donors and necessary financial support. This letter ends with a sense of shared concerns regarding the future of the two museums.

As the Jewish Museum, the Bezalel Museum had a collection of Hanukkah Lamps, some similar in shape to the gifted lamp. However, they could have not been compared to the one selected in terms of their symbolism and size; the gifted bronze Hanukkah Lamp weighs 24 pounds, and is of a large stature — 56 cm

29. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/56, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

30. *Mordecai Narkiss: Memorial*, 1957.

31. The Schatz Fund, Mordecai Narkiss Archive, 2/15, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel. In 1942 he established the Schatz Fund, a foundation for the salvage of Jewish remnants in Europe

32. The Schatz Fund, Mordecai Narkiss Archive, 2/15, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

33. Hannah Arendt, *letter to Louis Finkelstein*, 1 May 1950, IF.86.14.1950, JTS, New York.

34. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

35. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.



Fig. 03- The Truman Menorah, 1951. Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

high and 72 cm wide.³⁶ The nine-branched Hanukkah Lamp, decorated with leaves, is an emblem of the seven-branched Menorah dating back to the time of King Solomon and the first Temple in Jerusalem. The representation of the Menorah, surrounded with two olive tree branches, was selected in 1949 as the official seal of the State of Israel, making the chosen Hanukkah Lamp significant by its symbolic context (Reissner, 1961: 135-137). [fig.03]

Once chosen as a diplomatic gift, a replacement object was promised by the State of Israel to the Jewish Museum, from the collection of Jewish ritual objects at the Bezalel Museum.³⁷ Thus, in 1951, Narkiss was requested to assist in the selection of a replacement object for the gift to President Truman. The replacement was an eighteenth century, silver Torah Shield made in Oettingen, a small town located between Weimar and Hannover.³⁸ It belonged to the local Jewish community, which is considered one of the oldest Jewish communities in Germany. After its arrival to the Bezalel Museum, it was restored, based on an almost identical piece that remained in the museum collection (Grafman, 1996: 81-83).

It was sent on December 12, 1951, by Narkiss via the Prime Ministers' office and the Israeli consulate in New York, to the Jewish Museum with the attached description:³⁹

"I respectfully hand over a silver plated Torah Shield, created in the early 18th Century in Oettingen, Bavaria. This Torah Shield is bigger than the one that we have and I selected (for the Jewish Museum) one that is almost intact."

The collection of Jewish ritual objects originating in Jewish communities that perished during the Holocaust, and which arrived to Israel from the Central Collecting Points in Germany includes eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Torah decorations from Poland, Austria and Germany. Although its provenance has not been fully investigated, I propose that the Torah Shield arrived during the 1940s to the Bezalel Museum collection. Moreover, similar Jewish ritual objects were later identified by the Israel Museum as part of the items that the Bezalel Museum received after the Holocaust.⁴⁰

36. Information received in correspondence with the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library Museum Registrar, Mr. John Miller (April 9, 2015).

37. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

38. Jüdische Geschichte, Betsaal, Synagoge, *Oettingen (Landkreis Donau-Ries)*, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/oettingen_synagoge.htm#Oettingen (accessed May 7, 2015).

39. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

40. Imagine, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, *World War II Provenance Research Online*, <http://museum.imj.org.il/imagine/irso/en> (accessed November 15, 2018). The objects that remained in the Bezalel Museum are kept by the Israel Museum today.

The Torah Shield and the Hanukkah Lamp were removed from Synagogues, where they were used for religious purposes, by agents or collectors who were responsible for their eventual entry into museum collections. In his ethnographic research on cultural objects, James Clifford identified four categories of classification of objects in institutions (Clifford, 1998: 220-224). The first two categories are aesthetic cultural artefacts which refer to art objects and collectible commodities representing cultural objects. The next two, mark the distinction between authentic and inauthentic items representing the difference between artefacts and masterpieces. Every object can transfer from one category to another, in that way a ritual object removed from a place of worship can become an art object. The two museums involved in this process took on an intermediary function, removing the objects from their original religious context into a secular cultural sphere. As Clifford suggested, by moving from one place to another, these objects' contextual meaning shifted

A letter from S. Kayser, written in December 21, 1952, confirmed that he was pleased with the chosen replacement object:

"I am looking forward to receiving the Tass⁴¹ from Oettingen and I hope that Dr. Harry G. Friedman, who is the donor of the Menorah⁴², will be pleased with this replacement. We have no Torah breastplate from that town. May I thank you in advance for your efforts."⁴³

By the reference to Friedman, the donor of the Hanukkah Lamp, Kayser indicated that Friedman was aware of the exchange of objects. Kayser's contentment with the Torah Shield was due to its potential to fill a gap in the Jewish Museum collection. The unique characteristics of both objects were identified by the two parties involved in the transaction; the unusual size and symbolism of the Hanukkah Lamp on the one hand, and the expensive material and place of origin of the Torah Shield, on the other. This mutual understanding accommodated an uninterrupted process of exchange.

MEANING OF OBJECTS

The distinct characteristics of each object assist in informing symmetry in their exchange. Hodder's theory provides three layers of meaning to an artefact (Hodder, 1987: 2-3). First, by investigating the material of the objects one learns that the Hanukkah Lamp is made of bronze, by an unknown crafts-man. The Torah Shield is made of silver by an unknown maker as well. It is nearly identical to an Augsburg model, and therefore could have been of the same maker (Grafman, 1996: 24-25). Of the two materials, eighteenth century silver and specifically Augsburg silver is considered a highly valuable commodity.

The second layer conveys the item's place in a social structure or code. Both Jewish ritual objects originate in eighteenth century German Jewish communities, and

were made for religious use. Although Torah Shields and Hanukkah Lamps are considered common and can be found in synagogues and private collections worldwide, eighteenth century Judaica is considered rare as fewer existing examples of it exist today. While there is no emblematic significance identified in the context of the Torah Shield, the Hanukkah Lamp was representative to the seal of the State of Israel, the seven-branched Menorah surrounded by two olive tree branches.

The third layer, exploring the content and story of the object conveys that both items arrived from devastated Jewish communities and were removed during the period of the Nazi regime. Their contextual historical value derives of their role as salvaged remnants.

41. Tass refers to a Torah Shield or a breastplate that is hang in front of a Torah scroll.

42. Though referred to in the correspondence as a *Menorah*, this was actually a nine branched Hanukkah Lamp, lit during the eight day celebration of Hanukkah.

43. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/56, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel. Mordecai Narkiss Archive 2/58, CZA, Jerusalem, Israel.

When the need rose to identify an equivalent object to the Hanukkah Lamp, Narkiss found it important to select an object of a similar or the same historic period and style or location. The two dissimilarities between the artefacts are the materials and the added symbolism. Since the Hanukkah Lamp was of large size by comparison to Hanukkah Lamps that were found in the Bezalel Museum collection at the time, it is likely that the size of the exchangeable object was a factor in its selection.⁴⁴ Silver, an expensive medium exchanged for bronze, confirms that the State of Israel was willing to trade an object of high economic value for a lesser one due to its symbolism. The diplomatic importance for strengthening relations between Israel and the United States is expressed here by having a Jewish emblematic object in the White House collection.⁴⁵

In his 1986 essay, Kopytoff argued that each commodity has value and is exchanged for a counterpart of equivalent value, while the gift, which can be a commodity of different kinds, is part of a chain of gifts and obligations that can be exchanged repeatedly.⁴⁶ The important value of the Hanukkah Lamp is historic and symbolic. As such, the exchangeability of the objects is plausible when taking into consideration their period and usefulness. However, the significant physical inequality is the material. Evaluating the objects in that way reinforces the idea that the intention behind its selection was a well thought out political act and that the symbolism of the Hanukkah Lamp was given importance.

The exchange described in this case study would be divided by Kopytoff to two separate processes (Kopytoff, 1986: 64-91). The first is the exchange of the Hanukkah

Lamp for a political obligation between two countries, and the second is an exchange of commodities, the Torah Shield in return for the Hanukkah Lamp. Kopytoff suggests that a purposeful exchange of gifts in order to form a commitment is exceptional. The ultimate exchange of commodities is defined by him as "a universal feature of human social life" (Kopytoff, 1986: 68-71). Mauss's idea of singularization is expanded in Kopytoff's theory, thus, an object becomes unique for a particular purpose, as a result of which, it is removed from mercantile exchange. Accordingly, the Hanukkah Lamp, gifted to the President of the United States, was singularized while gaining political context (Gosden, and Marshall, 1999: 170).

Appadurai interrogates the political and social circumstance of a transaction, and suggests two trade forms, barter and gift exchange (Gosden and Marshall, 1999: 174). The compatibility of both is limited in this case study. Barter is described as completely separated from political or social aspirations and gift exchanges are illustrated as spontaneous and not profit oriented (Appadurai, 1986:10-11). Mauss's gift theory can be replicated to this case. He asserts that it is not the monetary equivalent that is given in return to a gift but a social or political relationship (Mauss, 1990: 4-7). In this case study it is the unspoken expectation of a reliable sustainable relationship between the United States and Israel. These objects, representing the promise of an alliance between Israel and the United States and in separate, between the Jewish communities in Israel and in New York, can still be found today in the White House and in the Jewish Museum.⁴⁷

44. The size of the Hanukkah Lamp is 56X72 cm and the size of the Torah Shield is 36.8X31.3 cm.

45. Susan K. Donius, *From the Archives: Hanukkah at the White House*, the White House, December 5, 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/12/05/archives-hanukkah-white-house> (accessed April 9, 2015).

46. Kopytoff, 1986: 68-69.

47. Parkinson, Hilary, *From the Presidential Libraries: Hanukkah at the White House*, December 4, 2013, <http://blogs.archives.gov/prologue/?p=13038> (accessed May 7, 2015). Jewish Museum, *Torah Shield*, <http://thejewishmuseum.org/collection/7550-torah-shield> (accessed May 7, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The social and political circumstances surrounding this case study describe a complex multi-country gift exchange. The State of Israel gave a symbolic object to President Truman, and the Jewish Museum, which was requested to remove an object from its collection, received compensation in the form of a valuable replacement object. While diplomatic gift exchanges occur regularly between political groups, this situation illustrates the involvement of non-political actors. This essay reveals the active part played by members of the art industry in both countries in the object selection process.

Theories on material culture were employed to assist in the interrogation of this case while situating it in the context of mid-twentieth century, post-Holocaust cultural salvage initiatives. The role of collectors and museums in de-contextualizing the objects and removing them from a religious to a secular setting was evaluated through Clifford's theory.

Hodder's theory was applied in the evaluation of descriptive characteristics of the two items. This assessment emphasized two unequal elements; first,

the material each object was made of; the Hanukkah Lamp made of bronze and the Torah Shield made of Silver. Second, the unique representation identified in the form of the Hanukkah Lamp. As a symbolic illusion of the emblem of the State of Israel, the Hanukkah Lamp became highly valuable for the diplomatic intention. The understanding of contextual meaning of the objects resolves the discrepancy of their value.

The main driver in this three-way exchange was the diplomatic gift. As Mauss's theory illustrates, the gift of the Hanukkah Lamp was given purposefully to signify the diplomatic relationship between Israel and the United States. This gift exchange was especially crucial as it took place during the very first years of the existence of the State of Israel, as part of an effort to establish an alliance with a powerful ally.

While this case is one in a series of diplomatic gift exchanges, it stands out due to the involvement of museum professionals, the emblematic characteristics of the item selected as the gift and the moment in the historic existence of Israel.

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