

FOR SALE: GOD AND OTHER ITEMS

The high holidays are a time to stop, reflect on the past year, and examine our relationship with God and with our fellow humans. Visual and applied artists, many of whom come from an Orthodox Jewish background, provide a unique lens by which to examine these relationships.

In the past few years, Israeli design of Judaica Art objects has taken a sharp turn. From being strictly ritual objects, they crossed over to the domain of art, thus subjecting them to scrutiny, criticism, and most importantly—dialogue. From the *Zimmun* Exhibit at Mishkan Museum of Art in Ein Harod, to the traveling exhibit *Judaic Twist—Innovations in Judaica Design* at ANU Museum, artists have explored and stretched the boundaries between the holy and the profane in all directions.

We must not forget, however, that artists walk a tightrope navigating those boundaries. The concept of separation between church and state is not actualized in many aspects of Israeli life and politics. In addition, there is a rift between some religious and secular populations. One aspect of this reality has an impact on public exposure to works of art. For example, in July 2021, a work of art was removed from an exhibition at the Mishkan Museum of Art in Ein Harod and the artist, Gregory Abou, was summoned for questioning by the police. His crime: a video in which he is seen burning a page on which the name of God was written. The damage: offending the religious public. In the art world and elsewhere, there was an outcry that this was censorship and a restriction of freedom of speech, and the artwork was displayed in an art museum and not in a public space.

Despite this and other similar incidents, artists and designers will continue to explore and translate their religious beliefs, deliberations, and intentions into works of art—sometimes even usable and wearable art!



Resources:

- Check out the [Judaic Twist—Innovations in Judaica Design exhibit](#)

For Sale: God and Other Items (continued)

HASHEM ONE T-SHIRT? SORRY, OUT OF STOCK.

Perhaps most surprising is the way some objects of Jewish applied art have found their way into the world of merchandising and fashion. Most recently, the designer and artist Arik Weiss, a religious settler, has taken his work to the streets of Tel Aviv, partnering with Roni Bar, a fashion designer. Their Hashem One T-shirt implies that “God is One.” It is designed as a road sign for Israel’s Highway 1, which connects Tel Aviv, the stronghold of secularism, and Jerusalem, the seat of religion. Other designs include “Parve” and “BSD” (בִּסְד), “with God’s help,” which is also a play on words poking fun at the BDS movement. Imagine what great conversations these shirts could prompt!

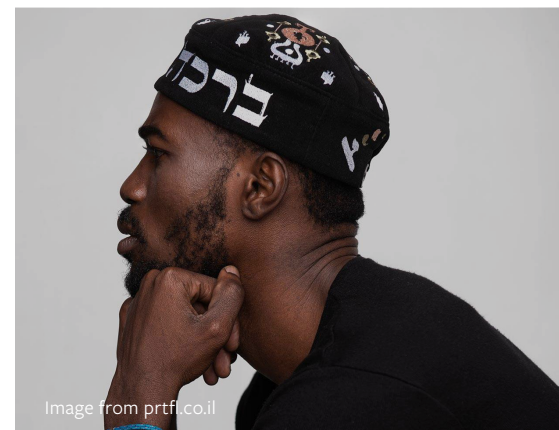
CLEAN HANDS SOAP BAR | נְקִי כַפַּיִם

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, it is customary to recite a verse from Psalm 24 reading, “Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who will stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken a false oath by his life or sworn deceitfully.”

In ancient times, when returning the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple Mount, only honest and moral persons were allowed to accompany it with the high priests. The “clean hands” (נְקִי כַפַּיִם), *neki kapayim*, metaphor for an honest and moral person, is taken literally by Arik Weiss, who created a soap embedded with the verse. It is available for sale—a befitting gift for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur—and a good start for the year with a *kavanah* (כוּוֹנֵה), intention, of honesty and virtue.

THE KIPPAH AS A FASHION STATEMENT

Romi Faylo, a fashion designer and graduate of Shenkar College of Design, draws on his Bukharan roots to design *kippot* (skullcaps or yarmulkes) for everyday use as a fashion statement. “This collection is designed with the agenda to bridge between culture and religion, between fashion and tradition.” Faylo’s *kippot* are inspired by his Bukharan heritage, geometric elements of Eastern architecture, Hebrew letterforms, and his family history. The embroidered *kippot* are adorned with biblical verses, such as “*hod v’hadar*” (הוֹד וְהַדָּר), “Honor and Majesty”; “*b’rachah u’tehilah*” (בְּרַכָּה וְתִהְיֶה לָהּ), “Blessing and Praise”; and “*kavod u’tiferet*” (כְּבוֹד וְתִפְאֶרֶת), “Honor and Splendor”—thus making them not only fashion statements, but also declarations of *kavanah* (כוּוֹנֵה), intention, and connection to Jewish heritage.



Resources:

- Explore [Arik Weiss'](#) mixing of ancient practices with modernity
- Find your favorite [Kippah](#) that melds fashion with tradition