Zechariah’s Messianic Menorah by Yosef Ha’Tzofati

The seven-branched golden Menorah is surrounded by two olive trees, representing the High Priest Yehoshua and the political leader Zerubbavel. These two leaders were involved in the restoration of the Temple in 516 BCE after the return from the Babylonian exile. The olive trees provide the Menorah with a continuous supply of fuel. The description of the Menorah from Zechariah is read in the Haftorah for the first Shabbat of Hanukkah, and concludes with a messianic vision of peace, “Not by Might, and Not by Power, but by my Spirit.” (Zechariah 2:14 ff.) (The Cervera Bible, Spain circa 1300)
A Folk Celebration of Hanukkah

Chair Menorah and Dreidels from Eastern Europe

The chairs are made of lead, usually by children, and often melted down after use because lead has a low melting point. (Courtesy of Henry and Bella Muller)

The Statue of Liberty and American Flag Hanukkah Menorah, by Mae Shafter Rockland

This unique Menorah synthesizes modern American and ancient Jewish symbols of freedom. The Statue of Liberty, donated by the Republic of France in honor of its sister Republic, is adorned with a quote from the Jewish poet Emma Lazarus which appears on this menorah as well: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.” (Art Resource/Jewish Museum of New York. Princeton, NJ, 1974. Wood covered in fabric with molded plastic figures)
The Israeli-American Hanukkah Stamp
by Hannah Smotrich
The joint issue of U.S.A. and Israel, 1996
(Courtesy of the Israeli Philatelic Service)

Lubavitch Mitzva Mobiles Visit an Israeli Army Camp on Hanukkah

Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin Lights a Thirteen Candle Bar Mitzvah Menorah
(Government Press Office, Israel, c. 1994)
King Antiochus IV and the Maccabean Revolt

Josephus Flavius, History of the Jewish War  (France, last quarter 15th century; Musee Conde, Chantilly, France. Giraudon/Art Resource, NY)
Hanukkah by David Sharir

Mattathias and his five sons battle the Greeks and their war elephants

(Courtesy of the Safrai Gallery, 19 King David Street, Jerusalem 94101, Fax: 972-2-624-0387; serigraph 225; A225 E.A. 50, 1981)
Judith, The Maiden of Peace
by Sandro Botticelli  (Italy, 1445-1510)

This Renaissance image still embodies the medieval identification of Judith with Fortitude, Chastity, Temperance, Wisdom, Humility and Justice. Judith represented not only the ideal woman — a paragon of chastity who slays the sexually aroused aggressor with his own phallic sword — but also the model for a wise and just Christian prince. Her perfection allows for no defects or complexity, even though other artists may consider her a seductive betrayer.

Judith uses her fortitude to lead Israel in battle against its impious enemy. She is portrayed with her maid running quickly from the camp of the Assyrians with the battle raging in the background. Even though Judith carries in one hand the bloody sword of Holofernes whose head she has removed, she is portrayed as a pastoral maiden of peace. She holds in her other hand an olive branch since her heroic act has brought peace to her people. Judith’s transcendent beauty — truly Divinely given as the Book of Judith emphasizes — partakes in no way of earthly sexuality or seduction. (based on Margarita Stocker, Judith: The Sexual Warrior, p. 24-25)
Judith: Images of a Heroine/Villainess

Judith, My Murdering Mistress and Her Mother by Cristoforo Allori (Italy, 1577-1621)

Judith the upper class widow is draped in magnificent tapestries, yet she has found the inner strength to kill and to display the head of her people’s would-be destroyer. This might be a viewer’s first reading of the picture. However, art historians add that Allori had a personal grudge to bear in this portrait. Instead of an embodiment of all Christian virtues, Judith, the heroine-cum-femme fatale, has been chosen to express his ambivalence toward an entrancingly beautiful yet cold, cruel woman. Judith is portrayed with the face and figure of Allori’s mistress who has just abandoned him — figuratively slain him. The severed head of the love-struck Holofernes is a self-portrait of the artist himself. The accomplice of this remorseless betrayal is the maid, bearing the face of the mistress’ own mother. Judith’s beauty explains to all the fatal attraction of this heartless, homicidal heroine. (based on Margarita Stocker, Judith: The Sexual Warrior, p. 27)
Uri-On: The Israeli-Jewish Superman

Michael Netzer, Jonathan Deutsch, and Yossi Halper created the first Israeli comic book (Israel Comics Ltd.) in 1987. The story sought to give an Israeli-Jewish content to an American Superman who was defending his ancient homeland against invasion of extraterrestrials. Israelis on the religious right wing as well as those on the secular left responded positively to the comic book. The hero is called Uri-On meaning “Light and Power” — and his emblem is the Menorah, the Israeli national symbol. (Courtesy of Michael Netzer)