

# Winter Holiday MAGAZINE



A SUPPLEMENT to the  
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## GOES (WELL) BEYOND Menorahs, Mezuzahs *and* Seder Plates

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**I**n days past, those wishing to purchase Judaica were limited to a narrow selection of conventional items at synagogue gift stores or, if you lived in a heavily Jewish neighborhood, the local Judaica shop.

Some Judaica shops have since closed their doors and they and synagogue gift stores now compete against online sellers, but the variety of Judaica-themed gifts available appears greater than ever. In other words, you're not confined these days to menorahs and mezuzahs. And if you look around, you can find Judaica in nontraditional places, including stores and websites not mentioned here.

## Judaica

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believe are trite. "People try to go beyond that."

On a much larger scale is the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH) Museum Store ([judaicashop.net](http://judaicashop.net)).

Store Manager Kristen Kreider said the store sells some traditional items, but its patrons — both in-person and online — are looking for something different.

"It's more often they're happy to see something they haven't seen before," she said.

"We do push the envelope a little. We try to have more personality in the items we carry."

Those items range from a pewter flask emblazoned with "LCHAIM" to Orthodox Chews saltwater taffy to a Ruth Bader Ginsburg mug.

One popular example Kreider cited is the "YO SEMITE" T-shirt, whose designer was "inspired by her day job at a Jewish summer camp near Yosemite National Park," according to the museum website.

Also popular are *ahava* (Hebrew for "love") items, which include necklaces, T-shirts, tote bags, earrings, bracelets and rings.



The YO SEMITE shirt is among the top-selling items available at the National Museum of American Jewish History Museum Store.

“ We do push the envelope a little. We try to have more personality in the items we carry.”

KRISTEN KREIDER  
STORE MANAGER, NATIONAL MUSEUM  
OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

The word is written in the same style as Philadelphia's famous "LOVE" statue by Robert Indiana. The artist created a 13-foot "AHAVA" statue outside the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 1977, a year after the "LOVE" statue went on display here.

Proceeds from *ahava* items benefit both the NMAJH and the Israel Museum, Kreider said.

Other big sellers include handbags by Kent Stetson. One features

the brightly illustrated words "KVETCH KVETCH KVETCH," while another features mahjong tiles. (Other handbags have more secular themes, such as marijuana leaves or vinyl records.)

Fans of the World Series-winning Chicago Cubs can buy a team hat with the name spelled out in Hebrew letters. Phillies hats are also available, as are (gasp!) those for the Yankees and Red Sox.

No Judaica selection would be complete without some food-related items, and Kreider said the inexpensive (\$7.95) Bagel Whizz, which scoops out bagel innards, is popular.

And of course there are a few nods to nostalgia, including a replica key fob for the gone-but-not-forgotten Grossinger's resort in the Catskills.

Some of the museum's top-selling items aren't really Jewish at all, such as jewelry fashioned out of piano wire.

"We joke that it's made out of the strings of Irving Berlin's piano," Kreider said, noting that the jewelry is crafted by a Jewish artist in Atlanta.

And while this article isn't about the old standbys such as menorahs, Kreider said she expects to sell lots of travel menorahs this year since Chanukah begins on Christmas Eve.

One particularly clever travel menorah is an Israeli-made 7-inch piece of anodized aluminum with a sleeve that opens each day to reveal another candle holder. It's available in silver, pink, purple, turquoise and cobalt.

Given the store's significant local following, Kreider said the product mix is constantly evolving.

"To keep things changing, I'm sometimes improvising," Kreider said, pointing to the nine iron, copper and steel candlesticks she grouped together as the Northern Tribe Hanukkah Menorah.

Kreider said 78 percent of the store sales are made at the museum, with the remaining 22 percent coming in online — which she described as a high percentage.

Online vendors are another source of not-your-usual Jewish-themed items.

A search for "Judaica" on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) turned up more than 58,000 results, although the vast majority are conventional in nature.

Interesting items in the first few pages of the search results included a kosher bone plush dog toy with squeaker, a "mah jongg tiles guest soap set," "SHALOM" door mats and a CD titled *Aleph Bet Boogie* by Rabbi Joe Black.

Another option is [moderntribe.com](http://moderntribe.com), which offers both reverent and irreverent gifts.

Irreverent gifts include a "Jewdolph Knit Koozie," with Rudolph's antlers depicted as a menorah; "Jew Jitsu" knee-high socks; a Jewish pet bow tie; "Star of David Kosher Kubes" ice trays; and "Hanukkah Fortune Cookies," to name a few. ♦

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This handbag is among several available from artist Kent Stetson, who individually signs each one. Another handbag is emblazoned with mah jong tiles.



Above: The Bagel Whizz, which scoops out bagel innards. Below: An AHAVA necklace and a bracelet made out of piano wire.

