

Congregation B'nai Israel – Jackson, Tennessee

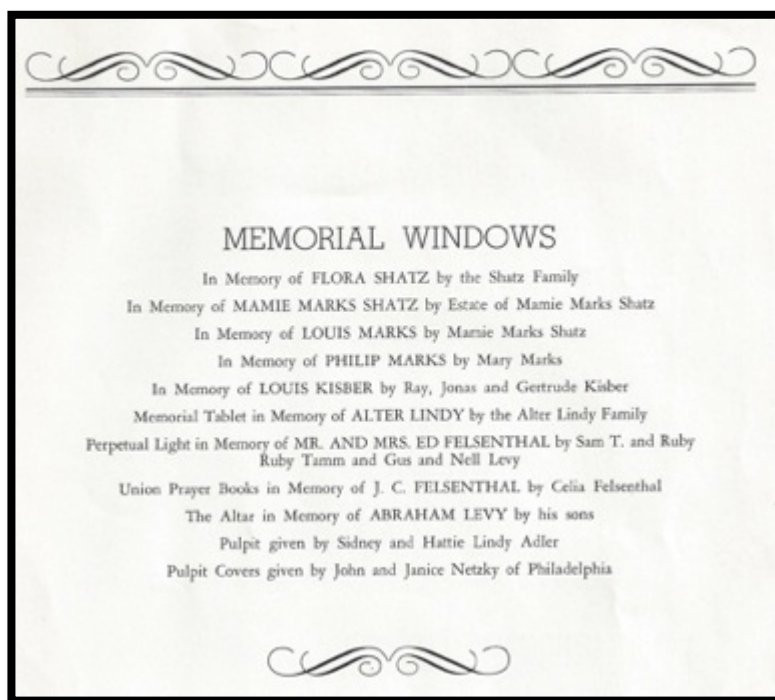
Stained Glass Windows

The American synagogue is awash in stained glass and has been ever since the late 19th century. The handiwork of anonymous craftsmen as well as celebrated artists, stained glass windows adorn the sanctuaries of synagogues from coast to coast. Flooding the space with light and color, they've depicted scenes from the Bible, showcased its heroes (Moses is a particular favorite), celebrated the flora and fauna of the Holy Land and played with all manner of geometrical forms, such as the six-pointed Jewish star. More strikingly still, the stained glass window has lent itself inventively to the charitable gesture, becoming a luminous vehicle for saluting the generosity of the congregation's members. By recording and inscribing in glass the names of those who contributed to the synagogue's well-being, it evolved into a medium of memory all its very own, one that bears the weight of history, pane by glorious pane.

<http://forward.com/articles/157730/through-stained-glass-brightly/?p=all>

Congregation B'nai Israel's beautiful stained glass windows were designed by an artist who was later employed by the Laukhuff Glass Company in Memphis. Unfortunately, we do not know the name of the artist.

Each of the windows in the sanctuary (and many in other parts of the building) is a memorial to former members of the congregation.



Page from 1942 Dedicatory Program listing original Memorial Windows donors.

SANCTUARY WINDOWS

*Wooden pews listening to the sounds of color
Shaped into songs by light through glass.*

~ S. Cooper

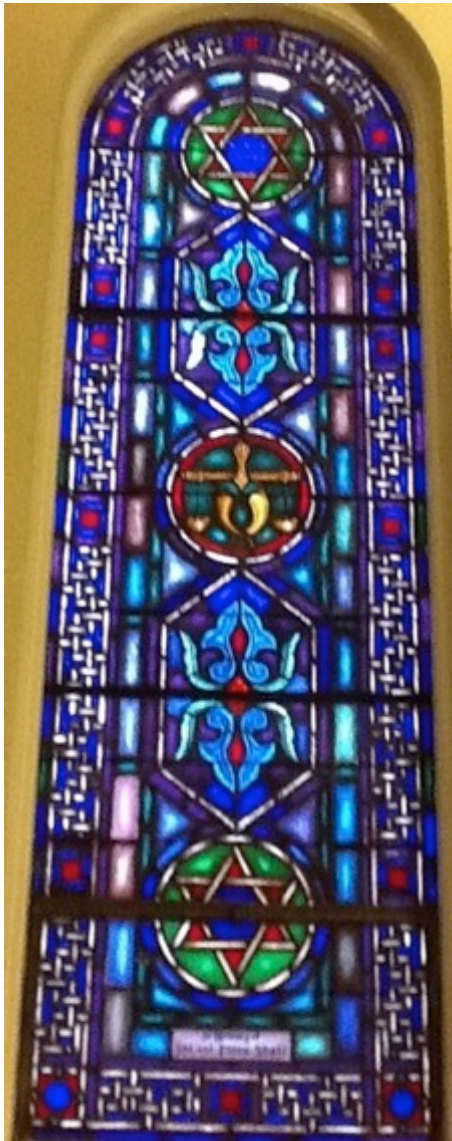


Left side – view from bimah



Right side – view from bimah

1 - Sol & Flora Marks Shatz Window

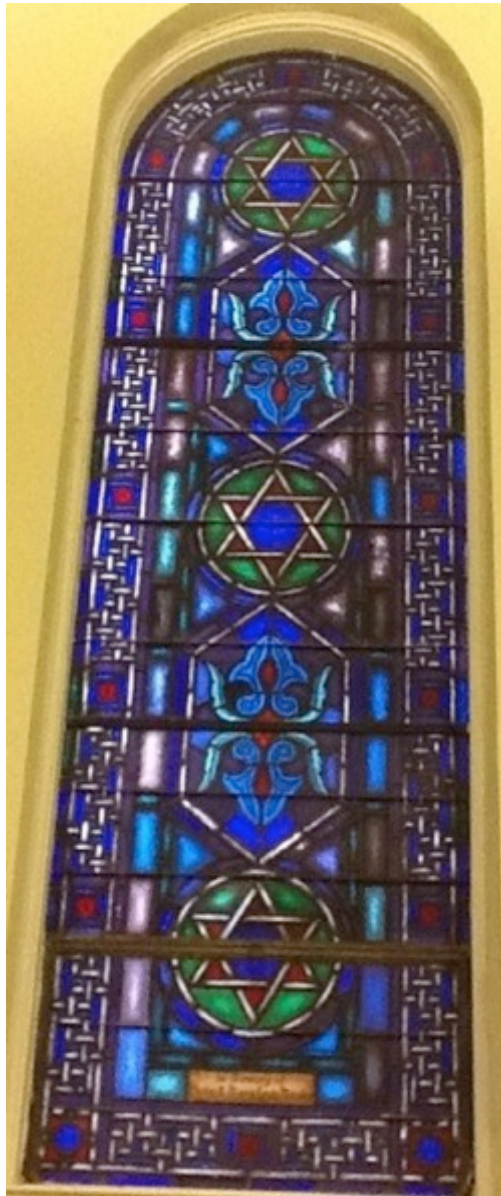


Sol Shatz was one of the first to own and operate a cotton gin in Obion County. He was also in the mercantile business. Flora Marks Shatz was the sister of Louis and Philip Marks.

The Shatz window features symbols of the High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). The shofar is one of the oldest Jewish symbols and has long been a popular motif in ceremonial and decorative art. Here, a scale is balanced on interlocking shofars. The holiday of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) centers upon the theme of judgment and repentance (represented by scales). In the High Holy Day liturgy, the metaphor of human deeds being weighed by God figures prominently.

Stars of David decorate the bottom and top of the window and blue stylized leaf/floral designs rest above and below the central shofar/scales motif. An interlaced woven design functions as a frame for the jewel tones of the beautiful Shatz window.

2 - Philip & Mary Levy Marks Window



The contributions of Philip & Mary Levy Marks to the congregation and the community were many.

The motifs in this window are the same as those in the Shatz window – Stars of David, the stylized blue leaf/floral images, and the interlaced woven design serving as a frame.

The number, THREE, is an important element in the window with the Star of David repeated three times. In Judaism, three usually represents completeness. For example, there are three ancestral patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and three major pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot), three verses of the Priestly Blessing, and three divisions of the *Tanakh* (Torah, Prophets, Writings). There is also the custom of making three circles with the hands upon lighting the Shabbat candles.

In Jewish law, three judges constitute a *beit din*, a Jewish court. Shabbat concludes with the appearance of three stars in the evening sky, symbolizing the end of the holy and the resumption of secular time.

Therefore, the Marks window is both beautiful and symbolic (reminding us of Jewish traditions and customs based on the number THREE). Appropriately, Philip and Mary Levy Marks were donors of one of the congregation's THREE Torahs.

3 - Louis Marks Window



Louis Marks was a merchant and the brother of those memorialized in the first two windows (Philip Marks and Flora Marks Shatz).

At the base of the window (above the memorial inscription) two lions flank two tablets inscribed with the first ten letters of the Hebrew

alphabet representing the Ten Commandments. However, the central theme of the Louis Marks window is Pesach (Passover). Pesach is written in Hebrew letters in the central medallion (a Seder plate). The design on the plate (a palm tree with water beneath it) refers to Elim, the first place the Israelites camped after their victory at the Sea of Reeds (Exodus 15:27). At Elim, there were 70 palm trees providing dates to eat and water. The other images represent some of the symbolic food present at a traditional Seder. Stacks of matzah (unleavened bread) flank the Seder plate. The four wine goblets (two above and two below the matzah) are the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder. A spring of parsley (dipped in salt water at the Seder) refers to the tears shed during Egyptian slavery. A piece of horseradish (white object above and to the left of the parsley) suggests the bitterness of Egyptian slavery. An apple used to make *charoset* (a mixture of apples, nuts, wine, and spices) stands for the mortar the Hebrew slaves used to make bricks. A roasted egg (symbolizing both the festival sacrifice and spring) is at the top (beneath the Star of David). The cluster of grapes below the egg is a reference to wine. Grapes are often depicted on Kiddush cups and other Shabbat and holiday objects.

4 - Mamie Marks Shatz Window



Mamie Marks Shatz was the widow of Louis Marks and the second wife of Sol Shatz. Louis Marks was the brother of Flora Marks Shatz (1st wife of Sol Shatz). The lower portion of the window is the same as the Louis Marks window -- two lions flanking two tablets inscribed with the first ten

letters of the Hebrew alphabet representing the Ten Commandments). The upper section of the window depicts traditional symbols of Shabbat--candles, Kiddush cup (wine), and challah (braided bread). The decorative gold/red image (above and below the Shabbat motif may be a stylized pomegranate. Because of its decorative form, the pomegranate has long been a popular motif in Jewish art. According to the *midrash*, there are exactly 613 seeds in each pomegranate, corresponding to the number of *mitzvot* prescribed in the Torah. The Hebrew word for pomegranate—*rimonnim*—became the generic term for the decorative metal ornaments crowning the Torah rollers.

5. Sam & Lena Rosenbloom Window



Sam Rosenbloom (brother of Joseph Rosenbloom, Sr.) was a merchant and president of the congregation from 1944-1945. Lena Strasberg was active in the Temple Sisterhood.

This window, like the Mamie Marks Shatz window, depicts traditional symbols of Shabbat—candles, Kiddush cup, and challah. The whitish image behind the challah is a challah cover that has been folded back.

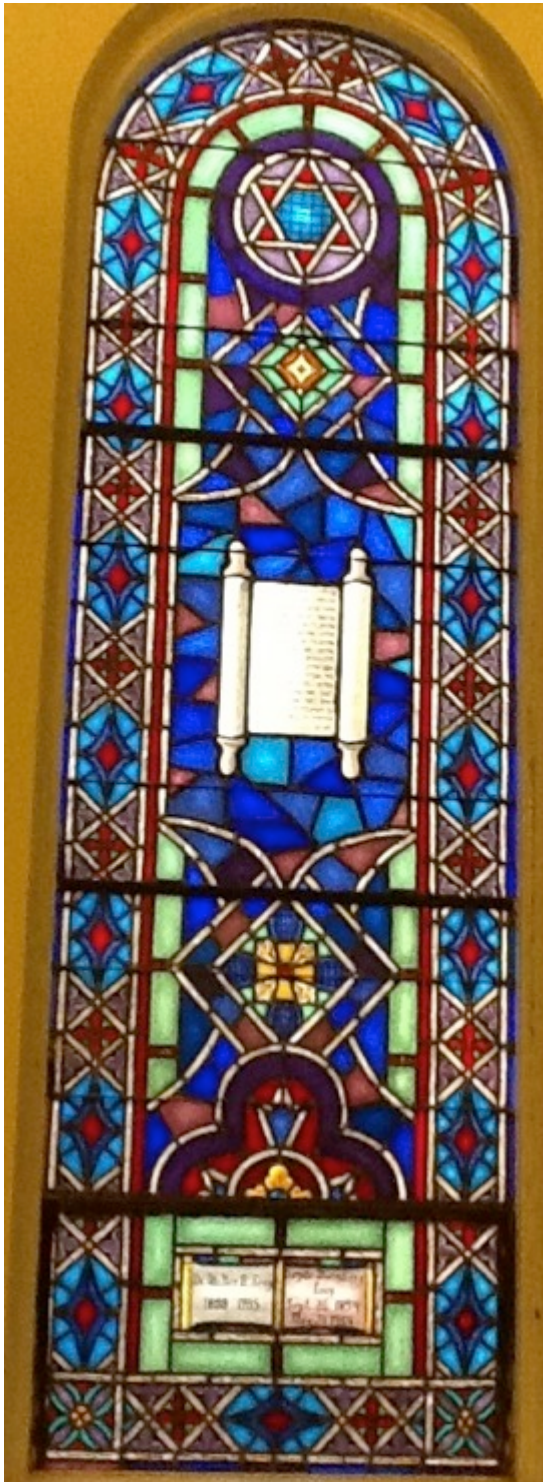
At the base of the window, a lion appears to guard the memorial inscription just below. From ancient times to the present, the lion (“Lion of Judah”) has been one of the most popular symbols of the Jewish people and often appears in Jewish ceremonial art. The writings of the Sages often draw moralistic analogies between the lion and the righteous individuals.

6. Nathan Lindy & Fannye B. Lindy Window



This window is a memorial to Nathan Lindy and Fannye Bonn Lindy. Nathan was the brother of Alter Lindy and A.S. Lindy. The central image is the Ark of the Covenant (traditionally believed to have housed the first broken tablets of the Ten Commandments and the second intact tablets, as well as a jar manna and Aaron's rod). The Ark is covered by a *kapporet* (pure gold covering) with two sculpted gold cherubs attached. The two cherubs face one another and their wings wrap around their bodies and touch. Where they touch was considered to be the Throne of God. As a general rule, Judaism rejects physical manifestations of spirituality, preferring instead to focus on actions and beliefs. Today, Jews do not venerate any holy relics or man-made symbols. But in the history of the Jewish people, there was one exception to this rule. One man-made object was considered intrinsically holy—the Ark of the Covenant. Ironically, the Ark is most famous today as the subject of the 1981 film "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark." The movie tells of a hero's attempt to prevent the Ark from falling into the hands of the Nazis, who would harness its power for evil.

7. Walter R. Levy & Sadye Steinberg Levy Window



Dr. Walter R. Levy was a dentist and a congregational leader (Vice-President). Sadye Steinberg Levy, served as Sisterhood President in the 1940s.

The focus of the Levy window is a Torah scroll which contains the text of the first two days of creation from Genesis.

8. Louis Kísber & Rachel Frank Kísber Window

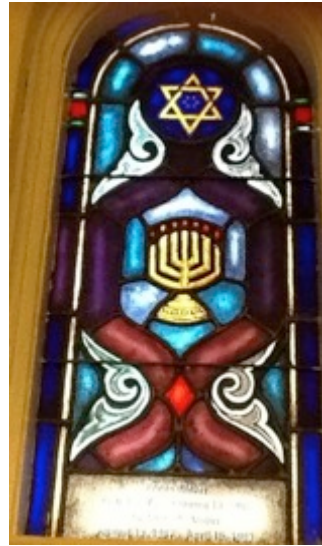


Along with his brothers-in-law, Alex and Ben Frank, Louis Kísber established the business, Frank Brothers and Kísber (later became Kísber's Department Store).

The Kísber window's central motif is a *chanukiah* (8 branched menorah). Chanukah, which means "dedication," is the festival that commemorates the purification and rededication of the Temple following the defilement caused by the Greeks during their occupation of that holy place. According to the legend, when the Maccabees entered the Temple and began to reclaim it from the Greeks, they immediately relit the *ner tamid* (eternal light), which burned constantly in the Temple and has a parallel in our synagogues to this day. In the Temple, they found a single jar of oil, which was sufficient for only one day. The messenger who was sent to secure additional oil took eight days to complete his mission and

miraculously, the single jar of oil continued to burn until his return. The rabbis of the *Talmud* attributed the eight days of Chanukah to the miracle of this single jar of oil.

9. Jonas & Gertrude Kisber Window (upper window – left of Ark)



10 – Harry & Ethel Gold Window (upper window - right of Ark)



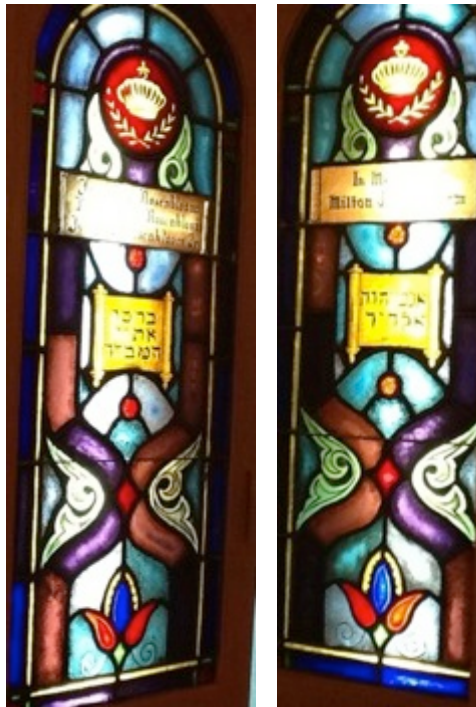
The twin windows on the walls flanking the Ark are memorials to Jonas Kisber, Sr. & Gertrude Strull Kisber and Harry & Ethel Gold (parents of Bess Crane). Both Jonas Kisber, Sr. and Gertrude Strull Kisber served as president of the congregation—Jonas, Sr. (1945-48) and Gertrude (1979-81—the congregation's first woman president). These smaller windows repeat designs found in the larger sanctuary windows. The central motif of the twin windows is a seven-branch menorah, an enduring symbol of Judaism. In the Torah, God specified exactly how the menorah was to be

made (Exodus 25:31-40): You shall make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be made of hammered work; its base and its shaft, its cups, calyxes, and petals shall be of one piece. Six branches shall issue from its sides; three branches from one side of the lampstand and three branches from the other side of the lampstand. On one branch there shall be three cups shaped like almond-blossoms, each with calyx and petals, and on the next branch there shall be three cups shaped like almond-blossoms, each with calyx and petals; so for all six branches issuing from the lampstand. . .

ARK STAINED GLASS PANELS

11 – Joseph L. Rosenbloom, Ray Marks Rosenbloom, Joseph L. Rosenbloom, Jr. (left Ark door) (esteemed members of the Rosenbloom family who contributed much to the Temple and the community)

12 – Milton J. Rosenbloom (right Ark door) (son of Sam & Lena Rosenbloom)



Scroll on the left door: *Bar'chu et Adonai Ham'vorach* (Praise the Blessed Adonai).

Scroll on the right door: *Anochi Adonai Elohecha* (I am Adonai, your God—the first of the Ten Commandments).



The crown images at the top of each stained glass panel represent an ornamental Torah crown –similar to the crown on our largest Torah (detail on the left). The Torah is associated with crowns to emphasize the respect due to it, as if it were royalty. The Hebrew phrase, *Keter Torah*, means Crown of Torah and symbolizes that respect. These crowns amplify the symbolism of the Torah as being the equivalent of royalty, essentially the royalty of the Jewish people.

SANCTUARY ANTEROOM

13 – Window



This stained glass window is unfortunately hidden in storage room (anteroom) on the right side of the sanctuary.

The design inside the Star of David adds a charming, decorative element to the otherwise plain window.

The six-pointed Jewish star (the *Magen David*, literally the Shield of David) is today the most commonly recognized sign of Judaism and Jewish identity, both within and

outside the Jewish community. Its shape is that of a hexagram, the compound of two equilateral triangles. The hexagram has been in use as a symbol of Judaism since the 17th century, with precedents in the 14th to 16th centuries in Central Europe, where the Shield of David was partly used in conjunction with the Seal of Solomon (the hexagram) on Jewish flags. Its use probably derives from medieval (11th to 13th century) Jewish protective amulets.

RABBI'S OFFICE

14 – Dr. Alvin Rosenbloom & Pearle Axelrad Rosenbloom Window

15 – Muriel & Victor Zager Window



The two memorial windows in the Rabbi's Office are similar to the window in the Sanctuary Anteroom with the Star of David as a central motif.

Dr. Alvin Rosenbloom was the son of Joseph Rosenbloom, Sr. and Ray Marks Rosenbloom. Pearle Axelrad Rosenbloom was the daughter of George and Rebecca Axelrad.

Victor Zager (of blessed memory) and Muriel Zager are Dr. Lynne Zager's parents.

FOYER

16 – Jane Lindy Friedman Window



17 – Ensign David Felsenthal Window



Jane Lindy Friedman was the daughter of Julius Lindy and Minnie Lee Kastleman Lindy. Her husband, Don Friedman, was president of the congregation from 1974-1975.

Ensign David Felsenthal died in the Pacific during World War II. He was the son of Henry M. Felsenthal and Lucile Samuels Felsenthal Van Os. His grandparents were Emanuel and Carrie Anker Felsenthal (buried in B'nai Israel Cemetery).

STAIRWAY TO BALCONY

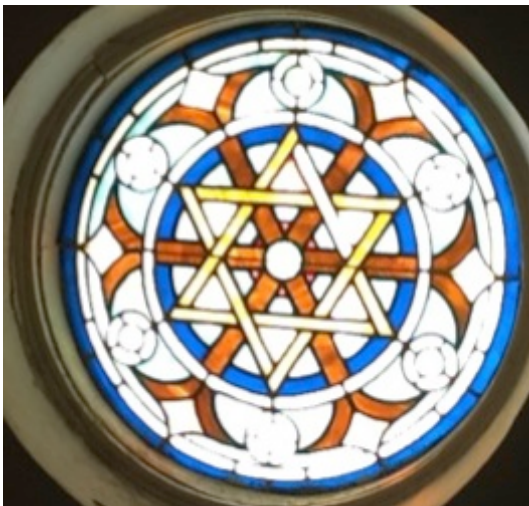
18 – Ruby Felsenthal Tamm Window (base of stairs) – daughter of Emanuel Felsenthal/Carrie Anker Felsenthal; wife of Samuel Tamm



19 – Stairs (side of building)



20 – Top of stairs (front of building)



There are six round windows of the same design. The stained glass colors on the two front round windows (20 & 22) differ from the others.

BALCONY

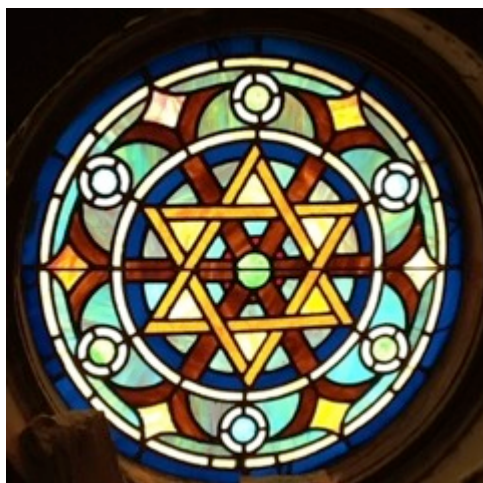
21 – Fan Window (front of building)



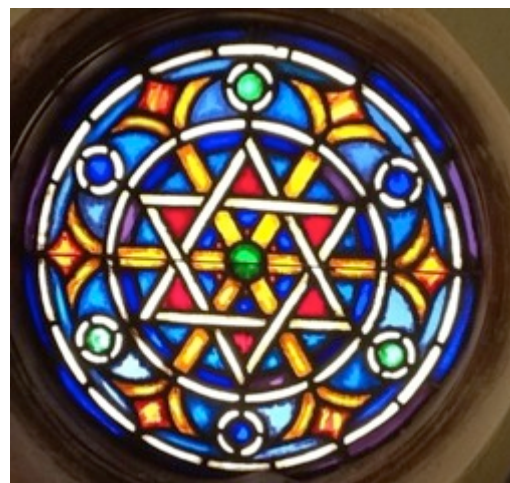
The beautiful fan window is used as Congregation B'nai Israel's logo. Six circles surround stylized six-pointed stars. Six smaller circles (with golden yellow interiors) rest between five blue spokes that look like candles "lit" by golden diamond shapes. Two arcs, each with six smaller white circles, complete the composition.

The other round windows in the balcony area are the same design as Windows 19 and 20. Their design is in perfect harmony that of the fan window.

22 – Round Window (storage room of balcony – front of building)



23 – Round Window (storage room of balcony – side window)



24 & 25 ~ Round Windows on sides of Balcony



DETAILS

For me a stained glass window is a transparent partition between my heart and the heart of the world. Stained glass has to be serious and passionate. It is something elevating and exhilarating. It has to live through the perception of light. To read the Bible is to perceive a certain light, and the window has to make this obvious through its simplicity and grace... -Marc Chagall (1962)

