Biblical and Jewish motives in art from Renaissance till contemporary times.

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During the Renaissance 17\textsuperscript{th} century c.e. great non-Jewish Grand Masters in the painting art have contributed a great part in the distribution of themes from the Tanach around the globe. It is to be said that these great Grand Masters created these art works in Christian influence and were commissioned by the church. The Grand Masters in painting art are some notably Rembrandt, Rubens, Michelangelo and many others. Aside Biblical artwork made by the Grand Masters from the Renaissance throughout the industrial revolution 19\textsuperscript{th} century c.e. Jewish artwork made by Jewish artists came at the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century c.e., artists as Maurycy Gottlieb. These artists will be mentioned in this essay as Jewish art work from the 20\textsuperscript{th} century c.e. as Marc Chagall, Chaim Gross and others.

I wrote this essay in full awareness that, in contradiction with any book about Jewish art, it would be more consulted and probably read. But art has always interested me and to see it combined with my interests in Judaism is a fascinating and encouraging experience. It is the ideal introduction and announcement of the Tanach towards everyone. This essay would be written with explanatory and information but it will consist mostly with images of these wonderful and beautiful artwork. This essay follows the chronological order of the Artists and not of the countries.

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Michelangelo (1475-1564)

Italian Renaissance sculptor, painter, architect and poet. Generally considered one of the greatest artists ever. He worked in Florence and Rome. In Florence Michelangelo create his masterpiece: David (1501-1504), now on display in the Academia in Florence.

Pope Julius II commissions the decoration of the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel (1508-12). The frescoes depict prophets, sibyls and scenes from Bereshit/Genesis. It shows Michelangelo’s preference for strong, muscular figures. For four years he paints the ceiling, lying on his back most of the time.
Statue of David, Michelangelo, 1 Sjmoeēel/1 Samuel 1:1.

fresco The Prophet Ezekiel, Michelangelo, Ezekiel 1:1.
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statue Moshe, Michelangelo, Sjemot/Exodus 34:29.
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**Pieter Brueghel the Elder 1520-1569**

South-Netherlandish, today Belgium, painter and father of his famous son Jan Bruegel. His contemporaries dub him 'Boeren-Bruegel' (Farmers-Bruegel) for his skilful sketches of country-life, a nickname that does not do justice to either his work or his talent. In addition to the famed Wedding and Kermis paintings, Bruegel creates landscapes, devout works and impressions of Hell in a confident and expressive style with great flair for composition and space. What is unusual about his religious work is the setting: the landscape and figures in many of his works are Flemish, not Middle Eastern, and Saul's/Paul's conversion takes place in the Alps – most likely a remnant of Bruegel's most recent trip to Italy.

Bruegel was probably born in the village of Brogel (also: Breugel or Brugel) in the Kempen, Flanders. In 1552-1553 he travels to Italy, where he is introduced to the works of, among others, Michelangelo. For the development of his style, the landscapes he paints on the way are of greater significance than the impressions Italy makes on him. Once back in Antwerp and after his marriage to his tutor's daughter (1563) he settles in Brussels, where he dies in 1569.

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*Saul (Battle Against the Filistines on the Gilboa), Brueghel the Elder 1* Sjmoëël/1 Samuel 31:4.
Caravaggio, 1573-1610

Caravaggio is particularly renowned for his use of chiaroscuro, a technique that uses light and dark to achieve a 3-D effect. Caravaggio breaks away from the tradition of symmetrical figures and detailed backgrounds. His figures do retain a traditional monumentality. His later work is less plastic.

Caravaggio takes his name from the village in Italy where he was born. He receives his first training in Milan, specializing in still-lives. Around 1592 he takes to Rome, the spiritual capital of the Italian peninsula, switching his subject matter to street-life and young boys.

painting David with the Head of Goliath, Caravaggio, 1 Samuel 17:51.

Rubens, 1577-1640

A.k.a. Pieter Pauwel Rubens, Flemish painter and draughtsman, famous during his life and thereafter.

At first Rubens paints mainly Biblical and mythological tableaux, while his Antwerp period (1608-1618) is characterized by its abundance of portraits. After Rubens retires to his country estate 't Steen at Elewijt in 1635, he dedicates himself to landscape painting.

Rubens is the embodiment of Flemish baroque. His temperament helps him break with the reigning, rigid style of his day.

Rubens draws more commissions than he can handle; in his workshop others do much of his work for him. Often Rubens would draw the composition and add the final touch.
painting Abraham meets Melchizedek, Rubens, Bereshit/Genesis 14:18.

painting Hagar (on the right) leaves the house of Abraham, Rubens, Bereshit/Genesis 16:6.
painting An Angel Gives Bread and Water to Elijah, Rubens, 1 Melachiem/1 Kings 19:7.
painting Samson and Delilah, Rubens, Sjoftiem/Judges 16:19.

Van Dyck, 1599-1641

Flemish painter, a major Baroque artist. Van Dyck was the son of a wealthy merchant from Antwerp. At the age of ten he already studied with a master painter. In 1615 he opened a workshop together with Jan Brueghel the Younger. His talent was recognized by his main example, his fellow Antwerp painter Peter Paul Rubens. Rubens employed Van Dyck in 1617.

In 1620 he made his first journey to England, where he stayed at the court of king James I. The next year he travelled to Italy, where he spent most of his time in Genua.
painting Moses and the Brazen Serpent, Van Dyck, Bemidar/Numbers 21:8.

Painting Samson and Delilah, Van Dyck, Sjoftiem/Judges 16:19.
Rembrandt, 1606-1669

Dutch painter, draftsman and etcher. Most sources claim he was born on 15 July 1606, although there is written evidence in which he himself mentions 1607 as his year of birth. Born in Leiden into a middle class family, Rembrandt becomes a pupil of the painter Jacob van Swanenburgh. In 1624, he studies in Amsterdam in the studio of Pieter Lastman, who will greatly influence his artistic development. Some say it is Lastman who illustrates to Rembrandt Caravaggio’s use of chiaroscuro – the application of light and darkness to suggest depth.

In 1639 Rembrandt and his wife Saskia move to the Breestraat, a main street bordering on the Jewish neighborhood, where the couple sets up household in the present Rembrandt House Museum. Their new address facilitates Rembrandt’s study of Jewish faces, making his Biblical work even more striking. All in all, Rembrandt creates over 300 works on Biblical subjects; most of them drawings and etchings.

As in everything he does Rembrandt's Biblical work reaches far beyond and above everybody else’s when it comes to capturing the decisive moment of a particular episode. In his last years Rembrandt produces several masterpieces, such as David and Saul(1657) and The Jewish Bride (1665).

painting Balaam and the Ass, Rembrandt, Bemidar/Numbers 22:27.
painting Moses Smashing the Tables of the Law, Rembrandt, Sjemot/Exodus 32:19.
Bernard Picart was a French engraver, son of Etienne Picart, also an engraver. He was born in Paris and died in Amsterdam. He moved to Antwerp in 1696, and then spent a year in Amsterdam before returning to France at the end of 1698. After his wife died in 1708, he moved to Amsterdam in 1711 (later being joined by his father), where he became a Protestant convert and married again.

Most of his work was book-illustrations, including the Bible and Ovid. His most famous work is Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde, appearing from 1723 to 1743. Jonathan I. Israel calls Cérémonies "an immense effort to record the religious rituals and beliefs of the world in all their diversity as objectively and authentically as possible". Although Picart had never left Europe, he relied on accounts by those who had and had access to a collection of Indian sculpture. The original French edition of Cérémonies comprises ten volumes of text and engravings.
Painting, Sukkah meal on Sukkot, Picart.

Drawing, Blowing of the Shofars on Rosh Hashanah, Picart.
Moritz Oppenheim, 1800-1882

A German painter who is the first Jewish-German painter of the modern era. Oppenheim was born to Orthodox Jewish parents at Hanau, Germany in 1800; he died at Frankfurt am Main in 1882. His niece was the wife of student and fellow painter Benjamin Prins, Rosa Benari.

He received his first lessons in painting from Conrad Westermayr, in Hanau, and entered the Munich Academy of Arts at the age of seventeen. Later he went to Rome, there he studied the life of the Jewish ghetto and made sketches of the various phases of its domestic and religious life, in preparation for several large canvases which he painted upon his return to Germany. In 1825 he settled at Frankfurt, and shortly after exhibited his painting David Playing Before Saul, to see which a great number of admirers from all parts of Europe visited his studio. In 1832, at the instance of Goethe, Charles Frederick, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach conferred upon him the honorary title of professor.
painting The Heder, The Jewish Elementary School, Oppenheim.

painting The Bar Mitzvah Discourse, Oppenheim.
painting The Conclusion of the Sabbath, Havdallah, Oppenheim.
painting The Examination of Talmud by grandfather, Oppenheim.
painting Shavuot, Oppenheim.
Gustave Doré, 1832-1883

Doré was born in Strasbourg, France, on 6 January 1832. At age five he had been a prodigy troublemaker, playing pranks that were mature beyond his years. At the age of fifteen Doré began his career working as a caricaturist for the French paper Le Journal pour rire, and subsequently went on to win commissions to depict scenes from books by Rabelais, Balzac, Milton and Dante.

In 1853, Doré was asked to illustrate the works of Lord Byron. This commission was followed by additional work for British publishers, including a new illustrated English Bible.

Drawing of Jacob wrestling with the Angel, Doré.
Drawing, Moshe return from Sinai with the Torah, Doré.
Maurycy Gottlieb, 1856-1879

He was a Polish-Jewish realist painter of the Romantic period. He was born in Drohobych to a wealthy, Yiddish-Polish-speaking orthodox Jewish family living in Galicia, then part of the Austrian sector of the Partitioned Poland, now Western Ukraine. Considered one of the most talented students of Jan Matejko he died at the age of 23. Aside his young age he has left a heritage of 300 paintings, mostly which are unfinished.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain his works were rediscovered and his fame grew once again. His brother, who was born 5 years later, grew up to become an art painter himself.
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Boris Schatz, 1866-1932

Born to a religious Jewish family in Lithuania, Boris Schatz was sent to Vilna to study in a Yeshivah. There he broke from his religious upbringing and education to pursue his interest in art. In 1889 he went to Paris and was trained as a sculptor and painter in a traditional, academic style. While in Paris he began to achieve recognition for his own work, and at the invitation of Prince Ferdinand, Schatz moved to Bulgaria in 1895 as a court sculptor, and there founded the Royal Academy of Art in Sofia.

In 1903, Schatz met Theodore Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement, and became an ardent Zionist. At the Zionist Congress of 1905, he proposed the idea of an art school in the Yishuv Eretz Yisrael, and in 1906 he moved to Eretz Yisrael and founded the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem. Bezalel, which was a school for crafts as well as for graphic art, became successful very rapidly. Schatz added a small museum to the school, which was the foundation for the Bezalel Museum and later the Israel Museum. The exhibitions of Bezalel works in Europe and the United States arranged by Schatz were the first occasion that works from Eretz Yisrael were exhibited abroad. During World War I, the school was closed by the Turks, and despite its reopening after the war, suffered major financial difficulties. Schatz died in Denver, Colorado U.S.A. in 1932, on a fund-raising trip for the school.

Left: painted plaster Head of Mattathias the Hasmonean, Schatz.
Right: Sculpture of Theodore Herzl by Schatz.
Born in Belarus in 1887, Marc Chagall was a painter, printmaker and designer associated with several major artistic styles, synthesizing elements of Cubism, Symbolism and Fauvism. One work in particular, "I and the Village" (1911), pre-dated Surrealism as an artistic expression of psychic reality. An early modernist, Chagall created works in nearly every artistic medium, including sets for plays and ballets, Biblical etchings, and stained-glass windows. Chagall died in France in 1985. Today, he is widely regarded as one of the most successful artists of the 20th century.

painting Dance at the Jewish Wedding, Chagall.
painting Jew in green and yellow, Chagall.
Stained glass window of the tribe of Asher, Chagall.
painting The Praying Jew with Tefillin, Chagall.
A master of miniature painting and calligraphy, Szyk brought his unmistakable style to subjects as diverse as Biblical stories, literary classics, and political caricature and cartoon. Many of his works were published as limited edition fine art books and as editorials in periodicals such as Collier’s, Esquire, TIME, and The New York Post.

Other popular works, such as his celebrated Declaration of Independence of the United States, were reproduced and widely distributed as fine art prints.

A self-described “soldier in art,” Szyk was a committed activist-artist, advocating for religious tolerance and racial equality for minorities, especially for Jews and black Americans. Today, collectors around the globe prize Szyk’s art for its vibrant imagery and messages, which remain as stunning and timely as ever.
print Haggadah Family at the Seder on Pesach, Szyk.
print Haggadah Seder plate on Pesach, Szyk.
print Haggadah on Pesach about Baby Moses and princess Batiah, Szyk.
print Haggadah on Pesach Four Questions, Szyk.
print Visual history of Nations: Israel, Szyk.
Nachum Gutman was born in Romania and immigrated to Israel in 1905, where he was able to make a name for himself as a unique and renowned writer, artist, and illustrator. He served in the Jewish Legion during the First World War, after which he decided to study at the Herzlia Gymnasium in Tel Aviv and at Bezalel in Jerusalem (1912). It was noted, however, that not only were his studies there brief, but he was amongst numerous other students who began to rebel against the old school manner of instruction.

His sense of style was often portrayed in his exotic images of the Arab community and the Arab people, in which he depicted farm girls washing naked in the orange groves, depictions of shepards and shepherdesses, and a series done displaying Jaffa’s brothels, capturing the instinctual and sensuous atmosphere of the Middle East. However, his later works were said to have taken on a lighter and more buoyant feel, then some of his earlier paintings.

painting Pomegranates, Gutman.
painting Independence Day of Israel on the boats, Gutman.

drawing Jonah and the whale, Gutman, Jonah 7:12.
Chaim Gross, 1904-1991

was an American sculptor. He was born to a Jewish family in the then Austro-Hungarian town of Kolomyia (which since 1939 has been annexed into the Ukrainian SSR and from 1991 is part of Ukraine) and immigrated to the United States in 1921. His art studies began at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna shortly before he moved to the United States, where it continued at the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design where he studied with Elie Nadelman and at the Art Students League of New York, with Robert Laurent.

Primarily Gross was a practitioner of the direct carving method, with the majority of his work being carved from wood. Works by Chaim Gross can be found in major museums and private collections throughout the United States.

painting The Jewish Holidays, Gross.
Lithographic work entitled: Rebirth, Gross.

Poster of the 18th birthday of the State of Israel, Gross.
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**Colofon:**

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**Bibliography**

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