

Lernen aus der Geschichte e.V.

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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

Symbolism on Jewish Gravestones

In contrast to the richly decorated gravestones in Eastern Europe, "our" tombstones are more austere. Nevertheless, we find symbols common throughout Judaism, such as blessing hands, jugs, Stars of David, and butterflies. Many symbols originated in classical antiquity, such as garlands, torches, and wreaths. They became very popular through Classicism.

Because they are prohibited by the Bible, it is unusual to find representations of angels or humans in Jewish cemeteries. Exodus 20:4 states: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Nevertheless, portraits carved in stone or cast in bronze are found, especially in cities.

The Levite's Cup [see Visuals]

Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah. He is considered the progenitor of the Levite tribe. Moses and his brother Aaron were members of this clan. The Levites, who performed services in the temple, included gatekeepers, treasurers, and cantors. Even today, the position of the Levites, who are sometimes recognizable through surnames like Levi, Lewin, and the like, is reflected in their right to be called for Torah readings immediately after the rabbi. Because they wash the rabbi's

hands for the benediction, the Levite vessel is their symbol on gravestones.

The Blessing Hands [see Visuals]

Priestly blessings were spoken at both morning and evening offerings in the temple. While in Jerusalem this still takes place daily, in the diaspora such blessings are used only on the Sabbath and on high holidays. God had entrusted such blessings to Aaron (Num. 6: 24-26). The priest gives these blessings with outstretched arms, and with his fingers open and thumbs touching. The community responds with an "amen" or a "hosannah." Blessing hands are often found on gravestones.

The Shield of David

The Shield of David is also known as the Star of David. Two triangles form a hexagram or a six-sided star. In biblical times, this was a decorative pattern that was not necessarily Jewish. In the Middle Ages, the hexagram became known as "Solomon's seal" or "David's shield." This symbol was first used as a symbol of Judaism by the Jewish community of Prague in 1527. Since 1949, the Star of David has been the emblem found on Israel's national flag.

The Crown

The crown of the priests' clan is often found together with the priest's hands. The crown also symbolizes the "good" name and the "crown of the Torah," the mark of lifelong learning of the five books of Moses.

The Butterfly [see Visuals]

The butterfly symbolizes the ascent of the soul, a sign of immortality. Butterflies were often interpreted as the wings of angels ascending to God.

The Ten Commandments [see Visuals]

Double tablets with the first letters of the commandments or the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet are less frequently depicted on gravestones. Many double gravestones of married couples are styled as linked tablets.