

The Menorah



The seven-branched candlestick known as the menorah is one of the oldest symbols of Judaism. Its form was reputedly given to Moses by God, as related in *Exodus 25:31-37*:

Make a lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out, base and shaft; its flower-like cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it. Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand - three on one side and three on the other. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. And on the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair - six branches in all. The buds and branches shall be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold. Then make its seven lamps and set them upon it so that they light the space in front of it.

The seven candle holders and three joints where the branches meet the central column represent the ten *sefirot* of the [Tree of Life](#) of the [Kabbalah](#). The central column corresponds to the central Pillar of Equilibrium on the Tree, the holders to its left correspond to the Pillar of Severity and the holders on its right to the Pillar of Mercy. Our discussion of the [Menorah and the Tree of Life](#) has further details.

The Jewish philosopher and theologian known as Philo of Alexandria or Philo Judaeus (c.15BC-c.45) linked the [seven 'planets'](#) of classical [astrology](#) to the seven branches of the menorah, with the sun being at the center. The seven branches may also be considered as corresponding to the seven days of Biblical Creation.

The menorah was adopted as an official emblem of the State of Israel in 1949, and it is featured on the president's flag. Menorahs with different numbers of branches are also encountered, the most common being the [nine-branched version](#) that relates to the Jewish festival of Chanukah.