

MORE THAN CHILD'S PLAY

ROSA FREUDENTHAL'S

ARTS AND CRAFTS WORKSHOP



מוזיאון ישראל, ירושלים
the israel museum, jerusalem
متحف إسرائيل، أورشليم القدس

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Alona Farber

On August 3, 1921, at 12:09 pm (!), Patent no. 1315 - for a child's model sukkah kit - was registered at the district court of Breslau, Silesia, in Weimar Germany (today Wrocław, Poland). The name of the patent holder was given as Rosa Freudenthal, née Graetzer, widow of the physician Dr. Freudenthal.¹ This was probably the first object for children she developed, and it would be sold wholesale, displayed in exhibitions, mentioned in the German-Jewish press, and welcomed wholeheartedly by children, parents, and teachers.

That year also saw the founding of Kunstgewerbestube Freudenthal Breslau (KFB; Freudenthal Arts and Crafts Workshop, Breslau).² The Workshop produced Jewish ritual objects in modern designs and decorative craftworks, as well as children's games with Jewish content. These were games of a new kind, part of a recent



Rosa Freudenthal, Haifa, 1938

1 *Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preußischer Staatsanzeiger*, October 10, 1921, p. 30.

2 *Stube* means "room" - the KFB was not an actual workshop; rather, it developed products, which were executed by outside artists, designers, or studios, and then exhibited and marketed them. At times, the KFB also referred to itself as a *Verlag* (publisher).

Although Rosa Freudenthal did not make the products, she exhibited them in her home, which was also her business headquarters. The word *Kunstgewerbestube* appears for the first time in 1921 in the Jewish press, where it relates to Freudenthal's enterprise. Beginning in 1925, we also find this term in reference to similar business, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Between 1925 and 1931, arts and crafts workshops run by Jewish women were opened in Frankfurt, Hamburg, Berlin, and Vienna.

educational trend that was gaining momentum in the 1920s. Rosa Freudenthal's various innovations were presented across Germany and beyond, in exhibitions which she organized by herself or in cooperation with Jewish organizations. Her exhibitions and products were mentioned in dozens of newspaper notices, advertisements, and articles, adding greatly to our knowledge.³

In time, the activities of the Freudenthal Workshop expanded. A 1925 newspaper item notes that its products were being marketed in Frankfurt and that women in five cities had expressed interest in opening similar "branches."⁴ KFB products were distributed by Jewish publishers around Germany, and the fact that the games were accompanied by instructions in German, English, French, and Hebrew testifies that these products were also marketed abroad.

The Freudenthal Workshop remained active until the end of 1934, when Rosa left Germany for the land of Israel in the wake of the Nazi rise to power. Some sixty years later, her granddaughter, Aviva Schmelzinger,⁵ donated the last surviving KFB games that had remained in the family to the Israel Museum. She also preserved photographs, documents, and letters, translating and annotating them to create a multifaceted family history. Aviva's daughters Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel gave us access to this family archive, which constitutes an invaluable source of information about Rosa's life and activities. Important information also came from the published memoirs of the German artist and writer Ruth Hoffmann.⁶ Hoffmann devoted a chapter in her book *My Friends from the House of David* to Rosa's older son Walter and described how she met him when working as a graphic designer for his mother, the "Frau Doktor."⁷

3 See the list of sources at the end of this article.

4 See *Der Orden Bne Briss* [periodical of B'nai B'rith in Germany], December 1925, pp. 242-43.

5 Aviva Schmelzinger, née Freudenthal, born in Berlin in 1922, was originally named Hannelotte but chose the Hebrew name Aviva when she moved to Palestine at the age of eleven with her family. Aviva worked as a kindergarten teacher at the pioneering Beit Hayered in Pardes Hanna, taught in Haifa's Shaanan religious teachers seminary, served as supervisor of kindergartens in the north of Israel, and was awarded a certificate of merit (*Yekirat ha-hinukh ha-dati*) for her contribution to education. She died in Jerusalem in 2022, one month before her 100th birthday.

6 Born in 1893 in Breslau, Hoffmann graduated from the city's art academy and between 1925 and 1929 worked as a graphic designer for the KFB. In 1929 she moved to Berlin following her marriage to a Jewish widower, Erich Scheye. Because she was married to a Jew, her first book was banned in 1936. Scheye was murdered in Auschwitz in 1943, but Ruth managed to rescue her Jewish stepson, who ended up in Canada. Until her death in 1974, she wrote novels, memoirs, plays, short stories, and children's books that she illustrated herself, and was also active in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

7 Ruth Hoffmann, *Meine Freunde aus Davids Geschlecht* (Berlin: Chronos, 1947), pp. 75-81. This book of reminiscences about Hoffmann's Jewish friends in the prewar era is dedicated to two of them: Walter Freudenthal and Lucy Marcus.

THE WOMAN BEHIND THE WORKSHOP

Rosa (Rivka) Freudenthal, née Graetzer, was born in 1870 into an established Orthodox Jewish family of cement manufacturers that had been living in her native town of Groß Strehlitz, Silesia (today Strzelce Opolskie, Poland), for four generations. Her father, Simon (Yeshayahu) Graetzer, a member of the city council, was known for his endeavors on behalf of Groß Strehlitz,⁸ and in his will he even bequeathed his house to the town; in addition, he was a committed supporter of the Zionist movement. Rosa was the second of five siblings, who all received a broad Jewish and general education. When she was twenty-one years old, Dr. Samuel Freudenthal of Breslau asked for her hand in marriage, writing to her father:

Breslau, December 15, 1891

Esteemed Sir!

[...]

During our joint sojourn in Kolberg this summer, I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with you and your dear family. The warm relationship, the unaffected cordiality, and the openness and integrity of the family members were most appealing, and I was privileged to share happy days that are engraved in my memory.

I became especially friendly with your elder daughter, Fräulein Rosa, in whom the beautiful qualities of the Graetzer family are so evident. [...] I write these lines in order to ask for the hand of Fräulein Rosa in marriage. I will endeavor to justify your confidence in me, making your daughter's life by my side so pleasant that you will never regret having entrusted her to me. [...]

Following their marriage in 1892, the couple lived in Breslau and had two sons, Walter and Erich. Samuel died in 1907 after a lengthy battle with cancer; Rosa raised the boys on her own and never remarried.

During these years her younger brother Alfred began to be known as a promising painter of landscapes and portraits.⁹

⁸ According to Aviva Schmelzinger, Simon was involved in building a railroad for the town, promoting the manufacture of cement, as well as other industries, opening a produce exchange, and establishing vocational schools for apprentices.

⁹ Born in 1875, the Silesian painter Alfred Graetzer participated in large exhibitions in Dresden (1904), Breslau (1910), and Berlin (1911); some of his works entered the collections of museums in Breslau and Berlin. The German Jewish art historian Dr. Karl Schwarz (who in 1933 established the Jewish Museum in Berlin and briefly served as its director, before becoming the Tel Aviv Museum's first director) wrote about him in the Jewish cultural periodical *Ost und West* and penned a booklet devoted to Graetzer's memory in 1911, the year of his death. According to Schwarz, Graetzer was inspired by his good friend Hermann Struck to create a series of portraits of Eastern European Jews, which led to his becoming known as a "Jewish artist."



The Graetzer children: from left to right, sisters **Elise**, **Helene**, and **Rosa**, with **Alfred** sitting on the floor and **Isidor** standing at the back, Groß Strehlitz, ca. 1883



Alfred Graetzer at work, ca. 1905



Rosa and Dr. Samuel Freudenthal, ca. 1892



Rosa Freudenthal with her sons Walter and Erich, ca. 1908

His letters to Rosa in 1910 indicate that she encouraged him with practical advice - as he writes: "I can tell you that I conduct my affairs just as you taught the raw beginner in Breslau."¹⁰ In 1911 Alfred died at the age of thirty-five. When, after the First World War, Rosa began to organize exhibition sales of Jewish art in her apartment, she included works by her beloved late brother.

When World War I ended, Rosa's sons came back safely from serving on the front and took up their lives. Walter, who had become a physician like his father, lived alone in a small apartment at the Breslau University Dermatology Clinic; Erich moved to Berlin, where he opened a small lighting fixture factory, married, and had two daughters.

¹⁰ She may also have supported his advancement through her connections in Breslau; for example, Alfred painted portraits of the prominent Breslau doctor, patron of the arts, and collector, Albert Neisser and his wife, Toni; it may be that he became acquainted with them through Rosa, whose husband was a physician.

His older daughter Aviva Schmelzinger recalled in her memoirs:

Grandmother found herself alone in a large apartment, financially secure but without occupation. [...] Instead falling into depression or inactivity, she began a “second career.” [...] She traveled to old communities, visited synagogues and exhibitions, and collected Jewish motifs from bygone eras. [...] She was very successful; communities and individuals in various countries bought her products. She never made a lot of money, but her work was stimulating and satisfying and brought her into contact with the sort of interesting people she liked.



Erich and Rosel Freudenthal, née Neustadt, with their daughters **Hannelotte (later Aviva)**, age five, and **Marianne (later Miriam)**, age three, Berlin, 1927

Ruth Hoffmann described things somewhat differently:

Inflation had taken its toll on her capital, and the Workshop was intended to supplement her income. [...] I think that the entire family paid in so that the Workshop would survive, so that Frau Doktor wouldn't lose her toy and would be able to constantly think up “novelties.” [...] She collected all sorts of pictures of rare old ritual objects, which revealed to me a new world, a pious inner world that found a refuge in Frau Doktor's rather gloomy living room with its ordinary 1890s furniture during a time of confusion when customs and precepts seemed to be disappearing.¹¹

The first Rosa Freudenthal exhibition-sale to be mentioned in the German Jewish press was a Hanukkah exhibition held at her home from December 1 to 15, 1920. Since it was called an “annual exhibition,” there presumably had been at least one other; the tradition may go back to 1919. At the same time, she became involved in producing objects of Judaica and educational games. In 1921 she gave her small business a name: Kunstgewerbestube Freudenthal Breslau (KFB; Freudenthal Arts and Crafts Workshop, Breslau).

Breslau had become the third-largest Jewish community in Germany, after Berlin and Frankfurt. Rosa's enterprise met the needs of a market eager for artworks and objects with Jewish content, and it flourished until the Nazis came to power. In addition, Breslau was a multicultural center that brought Jews together with Catholics and Protestants, offering sources of inspiration for some of her innovations.

11 Hoffmann (above, note 7), p. 75. The discrepancy between these views may have a chronological explanation: although Rosa had been well off at the end of the war, her situation might have deteriorated by the time Hoffmann came to work for her in 1925.

Following an incident that occurred during the Nazi anti-Jewish boycott on April 1, 1933, Erich and his wife were arrested and brought to a local center of the S.S. in Berlin, but were fortunate enough to be released the same day. After this traumatic event, they became determined to emigrate to Palestine-Eretz Israel. About half a year later, they celebrated the High Holidays in Haifa.

Walter was removed from his position and in 1933 arrived in London, where he continued to practice medicine. He married Violet Mendel; the couple had no children.

At the age of sixty-four, Rosa decided to join Erich and his family in the land of Israel. Before her departure towards the end of 1934, her brother Isidor bade her farewell on behalf of the siblings¹²:

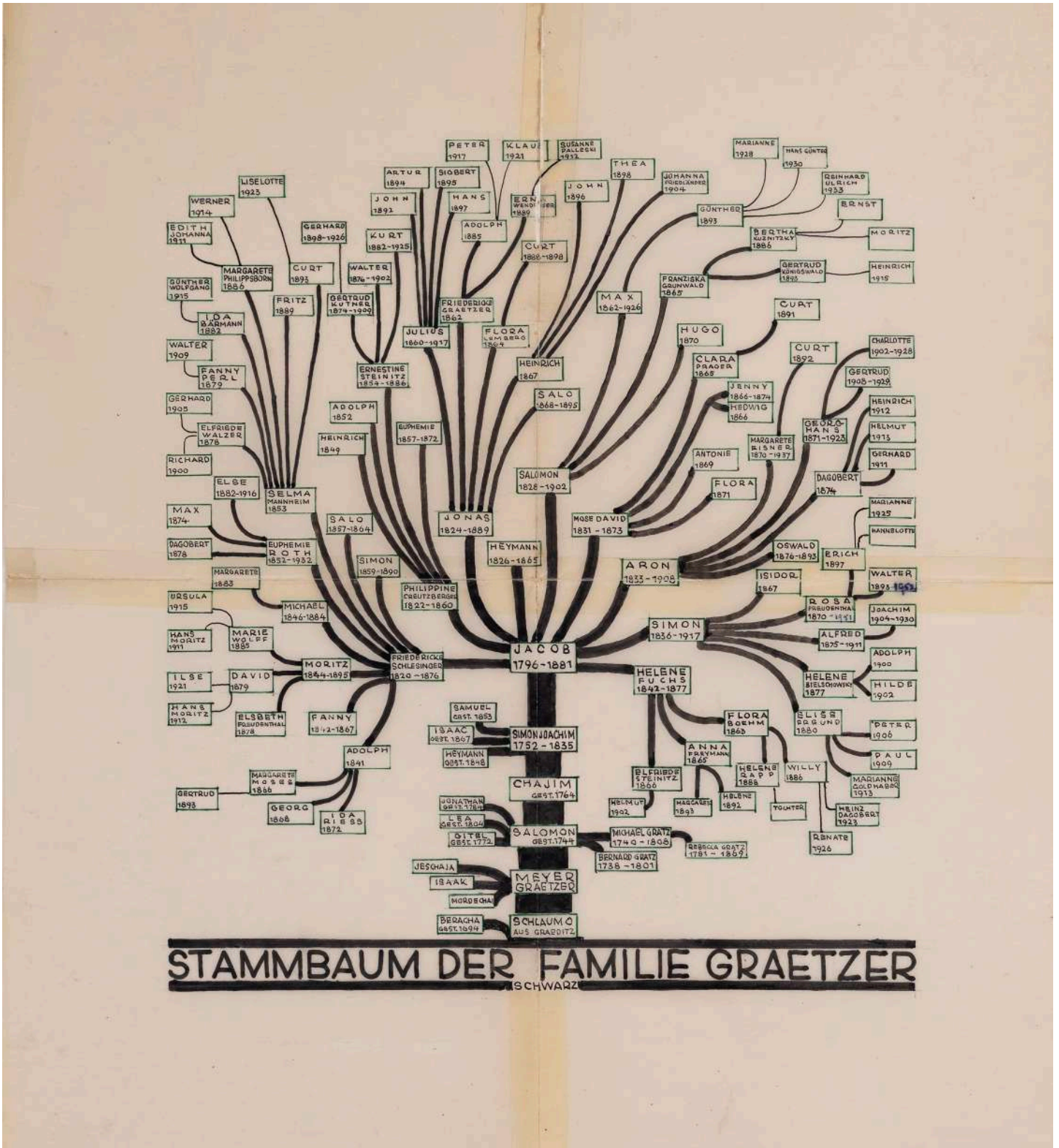
Now, when Rosa is leaving us for a foreign country, we take note of what she means to all of us [...] What industriousness, what creativity, what endless plans, what keen intelligence, what a priceless sense of humor, what wit! Dashing here and there like a whirlwind, until one's head is whirling too. [...] Along with healthy commonsense, she has profound erudition. [...] The creation of the workshop demonstrated all her hidden abilities! With her special wisdom, she was like the Wise Son in the Haggadah: she knew to ask, and she was always asking. She didn't ask in order to bow slavishly to the opinions of others, but rather to have a firm grounding for her own considered decisions.

After fourteen busy years, the Freudenthal Workshop was no more. In Eretz Israel, Rosa tried to sell some of the products she had brought from Germany. Her granddaughter Aviva recalls that she went further afield than Haifa, selling some items in the stores of Rubin Mass and Zeev Wilhelm Freyhan in Tel Aviv, as well as in Jerusalem. After a long and fulfilling life, Rosa Freudenthal died on September 21, 1951.



Four generations: Rosa flanked by great-granddaughters **Rivka** and **Sara**; granddaughter **Aviva** with her husband **Haim Schmelzinger**; and son **Erich** at right, Pardes Hanna, ca. 1949

12 Rosa's sister, Elise Freund, and her family would emigrate to the land of Israel in the late 1930s, but her brother Isidor and sister Helene both perished in the Holocaust.



The Graetzer Family Tree

Breslau, Germany (today Wrocław, Poland), 1938

Design: Artur Schwarz. Handwritten in ink on tracing paper, 40 x 35.5 cm

Presented as a wedding gift to Dr. Walter Freudenthal and his bride,

Violet Mendel, on the occasion of their marriage in London, August 18, 1938

Walter's Aunt Helene traveled from Breslau to represent the family.

Gift of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem, from the estate of their mother,

Aviva Schmelzinger, née Freudenthal | B24.0593

PLAYING AND EDUCATING "JEWISHLY"

Nothing remains more etched in memory than what we did as children, when we were playing. If we want adults to love and value their Judaism, then our children should already be playing Jewishly. How this can be done is shown in the Freudenthal Workshop . . . (Willy Cohn, 1927)¹³

In the nineteenth century, educators began to see games as a way to learn. They understood that children learned through their senses, and images – whether in books or on games – were not mere decorative additions, but effective pedagogic tools.¹⁴ This idea reached the Jewish world slightly later. In Germany the first picture book for Jewish children (aged three to seven), including depictions of Shabbat and holiday customs, was published in 1911, written and illustrated by Adele Sandler.¹⁵ With its appealing colorful, child-oriented images, the book became an immediate success. The first Jewish educational game that we know of was a “Historical Quartets” card game printed in Nuremberg in 1914. Aimed at acquainting youngsters with great Jewish thinkers from Rashi to Moses Mendelsohn, the plain design of this early game was not particularly attractive.¹⁶ It was in the 1920s that the development of educational games for Jewish children took on momentum,¹⁷ and Rosa Freudenthal was part of this process. The “Jewish games” she developed and eventually marketed in and beyond Germany featured a combination of traditional and modern Jewish symbols



Lithograph illustration from:
Bilderbuch (Picture book), 1911
 Author-Illustrator: Adele Sandler
 Publisher: Jüdischer Volksschriftenverlag,
 Frankfurt am Main
 Gift of Menahem and Zina Regev
 b/119175-10



“Quartets” (“Happy Families”) Jewish history game, November 1914
 Developed by Rabbi Dr. Isaac Bamberger
 Publisher: Jüdischer Kinderfreund, Nuremberg
 2477.92

- 13 Willy Cohn, “Jüdisches Kinderspielzeug” in *Menorah: Jüdisches Familienblatt für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur* 5:9 (September 1927), p. 562. The author of this article about games produced by the Freudenthal Workshop was a historian, educator, journalist, and humanist. His personal diary describing life in Nazi-era Breslau became an invaluable historical source. Dr. Cohn and most members of his family were murdered in Kovno (Kaunas, Lithuania) in 1941.
- 14 See Ayala Gordon, *Hebrew Illustrations: The Hebrew Illustrated Children's Book. The International Period, 1900–1925* (Tel Aviv: Nahum Gutman Museum of Art, 2005; Hebrew). Although Gordon, founder of the Israel Museum's Youth Wing, focuses here on books, she does include a photograph of an illustrated game.
- 15 Adele Sandler, *Bilderbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Volksschriftenverlag, 1911). A pioneer of German-Jewish children's culture in the early 20th century, Sandler (born Karlsruhe 1883, died Jerusalem 1946) was an artist, writer, and publisher. For more about her, see [in German] Julia Schweisthal, “Adele Sandler, Künstlerin, Autorin, Verlegerin: Vorreiterin deutsch-jüdischer Kinderkultur zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Chilufim: Zeitschrift für Jüdische Kulturgeschichte* 27 (2020): 27–61.
- 16 *Ein jüdisch-geschichtliches Quartettspiel*, developed by the Orthodox educator Rabbi Dr. Isaac Bamberger (1874–1950).
- 17 Julia Schweisthal, “Jüdische Pädagogik im ‘Jahrhundert des Kindes’” in: *Medium Buch. Wolfenbütteler interdisziplinäre Forschungen* 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019), p. 225.

in the visual style that met the pedagogic expectations of games at the time - colorful, clear, simple, and striking. Positively received by educators, these games were seen as a way to teach Hebrew and also to promote Jewish identity. Thus, for example, in a newspaper article about an exhibition of the Freudenthal Workshop that was presented when the Bavarian Jewish Teachers Association held its Assembly in Ansbach:

If one wants to bring Judaism to young people, whether for cultural or religious reasons, then they should be introduced to Jewish values as early as possible and of course in a way that befits the soul of a child. Jewish holidays are extremely well-suited to the child's psyche . . . A Jewish child who is presented with something just as worthwhile as a Christmas tree will not be inclined to ask for the tree. (*Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung*, September 15, 1931)

The effort to create positive experiences and thereby strengthen Jewish identity was aimed first and foremost at children who had little knowledge of Judaism, as is evident, for example, in the following item about an exhibition of the Freudenthal Workshop in 1924:

[...] Boys - and girls as well, naturally - are not familiar with the synagogue and its contents, or with what happens there; nor do they know about how occasions are celebrated at home, about the symbols and their significance. [...] The Jewish home must once again be equipped with all the objects of domestic ritual that used to adorn it: Sabbath candlesticks, Hanukkah lamps, kiddush cups, spiceboxes, hallah covers, seder plates, mezuzahs, and Jewish pictures. The child's natural urge to play can also be harnessed to this endeavor. While playing, Jewish sensibility and knowledge can be imparted in a lasting way. These thoughts must occur to all those who visit the exhibition by Rosa Freudenthal's Arts and Crafts Workshop (Breslau) at the Kleiststraße B'nai B'rith lodge in Berlin. It is clear that Freudenthal's Workshop is striving, with great success, to bring Jewishness into Jewish homes and hearts. (*Israelitisches Familienblatt*, December 4, 1924)



The colorful box for Rosa Freudenthal's **Proverbs of Salomon card game**, 1931, with an eye-catching depiction of the wise king
 Design: Artur Schwarz
 Lithograph
 Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger,
 Jerusalem | 2479.92



Jewish New Year card (*Wunschbogen*) with rhyming greeting by Rosa Freudenthal's six-year-old granddaughter Hannelotte (later Aviva Schmelzinger), Rosh Hashanah 5689 (1928)
Design: Ruth Hoffmann, German, 1893-1974
Lithograph
On the inside: greetings for family members, including wishes that Aunt Rivka will find a match and Father will find a new job
Collection of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem



Jewish New Year's card (*Wunschbogen*) with handwritten comments, 1930
Design: Ismar David, born Breslau, Germany [today in Poland], active Germany, Land of Israel, and USA, 1910-1996
In pencil: David's "warm thanks" for Freudenthal's "valuable help"; in pen: a later explanation by granddaughter Aviva Schmelzinger. Another copy contains Rosa's suggestions for the design.
Lithograph
Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem
B22.0039



Pre-press sketch of a **Jewish New Year's card (*Wunschbogen*)**, 1933
Design: Artur Schwarz, born Kempen, Germany [today in Poland], active Germany, 1884-1941 (perished in Lithuania)
Watercolor on cardboard
Freudenthal comments in pencil on the colors, and Schwarz responds "there will be no change to the drawing."
Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem
B22.0092

FROM THE FREUDENTHAL WORKSHOP

Holiday Items for Children

Beginning in the eighteenth century, ***Wunschbogen*** (wish-sheets) were used in Germany by Christian children to wish their parents and grandparents a happy Christmas, to thank them, and to promise good behavior. The size of the sheets, which allowed plenty of room to write inside, as well as the fact that some sheets were ruled, was presumably intended to make things easier for younger children. German Jews adapted this tradition for the Jewish New Year, and it was customary to place *Wunschbogen* under the hallah cover on the Rosh Hashanah holiday table. Rosa Freudenthal's Workshop designed them with Jewish and Zionist motifs and traditional Hebrew inscriptions.

The *Wunschbogen* showing a man blowing the shofar is an early, hitherto-unidentified work by Ismar David, the versatile designer and illustrator who is best remembered now for his David

typeface.¹⁸ Newspaper mentions of this New Year's greeting, which he didn't sign, do not include his name. However, we know that David designed the image and text, thanks to a written exchange between him and Rosa Freudenthal on copies of the *Wunschbogen*. A press notice points out that "the shofar-blower is a worthy old man who, instead of wearing the top hat and tails commonly seen today, is clad in a kittel [a robe that is also part of Jewish burial shrouds], a reminder to search one's soul" (*Jüdische Schulzeitung: Monatsschrift für Pädagogik und Schulpolitik*, Hamburg, September 15, 1930).

In September 1933, a new *Wunschbogen* with a colorful design by Artur (or Arthur) Schwarz was praised in short articles that appeared in a number of German-Jewish papers:

Many of our teachers have been recognizing the pedagogic uses of the Freudenthal Arts and Crafts Workshop's Jewish games for some time, and they welcome any new product with the liveliest interest. This time it is a new *Wunschbogen* that acquaints Jewish children with the four holidays of Tishri in an appealing way. Framed by a Star of David, a boy practices blowing the shofar, while his little sister holds a lulav and etrog. A memorial candle signifies the solemn Day of Atonement, and merry flags allude to Simhat Torah [the Rejoicing of the Law]. (*Jüdische Schulzeitung*, etc. September 15, 1933)

The notice, published half a year after the Nazis took control of Germany, ended with: "We sincerely hope that on the eve of the New Year, this lovely sheet will bring a little happiness and some festive spirit to the houses of parents filled with anxiety."

The *Wunschbogen's* designer, Artur Schwarz, lived in Breslau and worked with Rosa Freudenthal between 1931 and 1934. His signature, at times accompanied by an identifying symbol, appears on a variety of Workshop products.¹⁹

The **model sukkah kit** of 1921 became the Workshop's "flagship" product, beloved by both children and their parents,²⁰ as a letter to the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* by the German-Jewish scholar Ismar Elbogen testifies:



Friday night in a German Jewish home: Father, wearing a top hat, returns from synagogue

Lithograph illustration from:
Bilderbuch (Picture book) by Adele Sandler, 1911
Publisher: Jüdischer Volksschriftenverlag,
Frankfurt am Main
Gift of Menahem and Zina Regev
b/119175-10



Signature and cat-shaped symbol of Artur Schwarz

18 Ismar David was born in Breslau. Between 1929 and 1931, he studied at the Berlin-Charlottenburg municipal academy of arts and crafts, and during that time he lodged at the house of his uncle Dr. Ismar Freund, who was married to Rosa Freudenthal's sister Elise.

19 Unfortunately, we know very little more about Artur Schwarz, apart from the fact that he was an architect and commercial graphic designer, he perished during the Shoah.

20 Thus Anna Beate Nadel, "Kunstgewerbestube Freudenthal," in *Die jüdische Frau*, June 7, 1925, pp. 10-11.



[...] For Sukkot my children received a beautiful set of sheets to assemble a model sukkah. Everything is made with the greatest taste and artistry: the walls fit together smoothly and have interior decoration on the other side; the roof is made of foliage adorned with garlands; and inside are a table with chairs, candles, a kiddush cup, and hallahs. Every child who sees it is entranced - rarely is a plaything used with such enthusiasm. (*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, December 9, 1921)

Assembled model sukkah; sheets for assembly (at left); and envelope (below), 1921

Design: Erna Selten, born Breslau, Germany [now in Poland], active Germany(?), 1880-1942 (perished in Theresienstadt)

Lithograph; cut-outs

Model: gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem; sheets/envelope: on loan from/gift of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem, from estate of their mother, Aviva Schmelzinger, née Freudenthal 2440.92, B23.0173-74

Rabbi Elbogen goes on to recommend another Freudenthal product recently received by his children, Hebrew letter stamps, and writes that both items can be purchased in Berlin at Jewish bookshops as well as at 86 Große Frankfurter Straße - the address of Erich Freudenthal's business.

As Willy Cohn later wrote,²¹ children could also use the sukkah model as an extension to their dollhouses, which is presumably why it was not only advertised before the High Holidays, but also in price lists for Hanukkah gifts. The designer of the model kit was paper-cut artist Erna Selten, later Selten-Schreier, who was born in Breslau in 1880 and perished in Theresienstadt in 1942.

The attention of our educators has been drawn to the attractive **Simhat Torah flags** that were published in recent years by the Freudenthal Arts and Crafts Workshop, Breslau. This year's innovation acquaints children with the emblems of the Twelve Tribes through charming little pictures; the animal figures are especially lively. [...] The flags have already been "tested" by the heads of Breslau's Jewish schools and by



21 Willy Cohn, "Spielzeug für die jüdische Kinderstube," *Breslauer jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, December 9, 1927, pp. 192-93; idem, "Jüdisches Kinderspielzeug" in *Menorah* (above, note 13).



“**Twelve Tribes**” flag, 1931

Design: Artur Schwarz

Lithograph

On one side, Hebrew quotation about the Torah - “It is a tree of life for those who hold fast to it, and those who maintain it are happy” (Proverbs 3:18) - on the other, the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel and their emblems

Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem | 5005.96 (2)



“**Lion**” flag, before 1931

Designer unknown (Ismar David?)

Lithograph

Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem

5005.96 (14-15)

numerous children; we can therefore assume that they will meet with approval both in educational circles and among our youth. (*Jüdische Schulzeitung*, Hamburg, August 14, 1931)

In her memoirs, Aviva Schmelzinger wrote of the Lion Flag: “When we visited my grandfather’s grave in the Weißensee cemetery in Berlin . . . Mother was very impressed by the tombstone of the writer Micha Josef Bin-Gorion (Berdichevsky) and photographed it for Grandmother. She, too, liked the stylized lion and turned it into a motif for one of her Simhat Torah flags.”

The Workshop produced a variety of paper and cloth flags in horizontal and vertical designs, not only for Simhat Torah.

Hanukkah and Purim were given particular emphasis in the Workshop, which offered many products for children related to these holidays. For Hanukkah there were: a colorful wood and brass Hanukkah lamp inscribed with the Hebrew words *‘al ha-nissim* (on the miracles) from the liturgy; a special board game for the whole family; and a wealth of **dreidels** - spinning tops that are a tradition for this holiday. These included painted wooden dreidels, which were unusual at this time; most painted dreidels date from after World War II. Another interesting innovation was her dreidel-doll. In this rare object, the doll’s arms would lift up as the dreidel spun. The idea of combining a doll and a top, as well as the idea of painting wooden dreidels, may have been inspired by traditional German wooden doll-tops that were also used to adorn Christmas trees.



Relief of a lion on the tombstone of **Micha Josef Bin-Gorion (Berdichevsky)**, Berlin

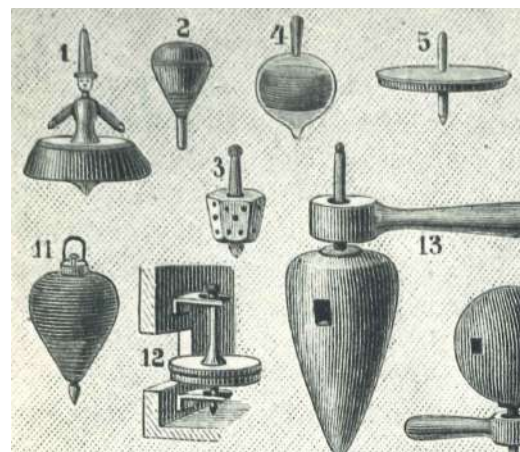
Photo: Winfried Hartwig / Friedhof - Ansichten



Dreidel-Doll, 1925

Painted wood

Collection of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem, from estate of their mother, Aviva Schmelzinger, née Freudenthal. The doll's arms were originally made of wire and would lift up as the dreidel spun. Eventually the arms broke and Rosa's granddaughter Aviva replaced them with threaded beads.



Wide range of spinning tops, 1896

A doll-top resembling that of the KFB appears in the upper left-hand corner.

Detail of an illustration from: *La Nature: Revue des sciences et de leurs applications aux arts et à l'industrie*, 1896

The Workshop also produced giant cardboard dreidels covered with sparkling tinfoil, which could be filled with candies²²; dreidels made of Galalith (a type of plastic popular in the early twentieth century); and chocolate dreidels that could be eaten once the game was over. Unfortunately, most of these items have not been preserved.

The idea of a **Hanukkah flag** is new and unusual, but Ruth Hoffmann writes - without offering any further information - that she designed such a flag for the Workshop. The collection received by the Israel Museum includes two flags bearing the brief signature "Freudenthal, Breslau" and adorned with a Star of David and olive sprigs. What tells us that these were probably the Hanukkah flags mentioned by Hoffman is the fact that they appear in a rare photograph from the "Jewish Woman and Jewish Home" exhibition held at the B'nai B'rith lodge in Köln in 1927, which shows a pair of these flags adorning the space devoted to Hanukkah.²³

According to Willy Cohn, the most appropriate time to play the Hanukkah board game *Ma'oz Tzur Yeshu'ati* (Refuge and Rock of My Salvation, the holiday's main song) was while the Hanukkah candles were burning and work-like activities were suspended. The game consisted of a folding board, two dice, and markers with Stars of David, and the goal was to collect the most markers (which, as the rules note, could also take the form of nuts). The fact that it



Hanukkah flag, 1925-27

Design: Ruth Hoffmann

Lithograph

Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem | 5005.96 (17)
Two of these flags can be seen in the photograph from the 1927 "Jewish Woman and Jewish Home" exhibition in Köln.

22 *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung*, September 15, 1931.

23 The article describing the event in the German-language Jewish press does not mention the Freudenthal Workshop by name, presumably because the exhibition had a great many participants; *Menorah: jüdisches Familienblatt für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur* 5:8 (August 1927), pp. 489-90.



Ma'oz Tzur Yeshu'ati game: folding board, sticker for box, markers, 1922
 Design: Dora Goldberg, Berlin
 Cardboard and printed lithograph, 34 x 34.5 cm (board), H: 17 x 35 cm (sticker)
 Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem | 5005.96 (25) (sticker)
 Gift of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem,
 from the estate of their mother, Aviva Schmelzinger, née Freudenthal
 B24.0226 (board and markers)

included instructions in English, French, and Hebrew, in addition to German, indicates that the game was marketed abroad. It could even be played throughout the year, and indeed was also marketed prior to the High Holidays.

For Hanukkah, the Workshop sold traditional German ginger cookies (*Pfefferkuchen*) in the shape of Stars of David and cookies decorated with an embossed stylized Hanukkah lamp, as well as chocolate squares. They were wrapped in cellophane or colorful tinfoil, both decorated with a Hanukkah lamp, the opening notes of *Ma'oz Tzur*, and a German inscription meaning “to our youth.”

On Purim the ginger cookies took the form of Queen Esther, and they were wrapped in paper decorated with figures of Mordecai and Haman from the Purim story. Other sweets were wrapped in tinfoil printed with silhouettes of Esther and Ahasuerus. The Purim images, designed by Ruth Hoffmann, later appeared on postcards. There were also scripts for Hanukkah and Purim plays.²⁴

Although we know of their existence from printed sources, none of the Workshop’s decorated wooden Purim noise-makers or small glass goblets for the Passover seder have survived. These goblets - with lead weights at the bottom for stability - were designed especially for children, and it was possible to order them inscribed with the Hebrew name for Passover or the child’s name.



Hanukkah sweet wrappers, 1927
 Lithograph on tinfoil
 Framed German inscription:
 “[For] Our Youth”; printers’ name
 on the paper’s edge
 Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger,
 Jerusalem | B22.0090

24 Drafts for some plays which remained in the family were gifted to the Museum by Rosa Freudenthal’s great-granddaughters, Rikva Sklan and Sara Frenkel.



Hebrew Lotto, 1925
 Sticker for box cover, boards,
 and cards
 Design: Ruth Hoffmann
 Lithograph
 Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger, Jerusalem
 2389.92, 5005.96 (19)

Year-Round Games

Hebrew Lotto, 1925: The first lotto game in Germany to promote the learning of spoken Hebrew, published by Weltverlag in 1920, was black and white. Five years later, the Freudenthal Workshop produced a colorful, more child-friendly version featuring cards with the Hebrew words for 72 everyday objects (a few of them archaic terms not in use today). Willy Cohn wrote in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* that it “fulfilled all that one can rightfully demand in children’s games” (November 18, 1926), and a comparative look in the *Jüdische Rundschau* determined that the Freudenthal version had “clear, much larger images based on artistic drawings and produced as three-color lithographs. [...] It soon won the hearts of children [...] This lotto enjoyed considerable success and immediately led to an imitation.” (November 30, 1926)

Proverbs of Salomon, 1931: This game’s 48 cards featured, in colorful calligraphy, the beginnings and ends of 24 verses from the biblical book of Proverbs - in Hebrew and German, as well as English - once again indicating an international market. Although the overall artistic style is modern, the opening Hebrew words with their intricate images relating to the verses’ content recall medieval illuminated manuscripts. The goal of the game was to correctly match each proverb’s beginning to its end, reading the text aloud in Hebrew. In the upper corners of each card, a hint is provided: the chapter and verse numbers in a small Star of David. To choose the proverbs, Rosa consulted with children of various ages, experienced educators, parents, and youth counsellors. The



Proverbs of Salomon game, 1931

Box and cards
 Design: Artur Schwarz
 Lithograph
 Gift of Aviva Schmelzinger,
 Jerusalem | 2479.92

result was “a game that our young people will really enjoy and that every teacher will be able to recommend with a clear conscience” (*Jüdische Schulzeitung*, December 15, 1932).

“Proverbs of Salomon” may have been inspired by a card game involving sayings from the Bible, the Talmud, and midrashic lore, published by Chawer Verlag in Berlin in 1924. Both games set the bar of Jewish knowledge rather high, as a reviewer of the 1926 version acknowledges: “... regarding Germany, I am somewhat pessimistic. I fear that not too many children will have sufficient Hebrew to meet the demanding standards of this game. . . . Yet it is to be hoped that our schools will have a better influence from year to year, and then children will greatly enjoy this verbally and visually exemplary game” (*Jüdische Rundschau*, November 30, 1926). The author’s fears would seem to be borne out by the fate of the KFB’s similar card game five years later: according to Aviva Schmelzinger, despite concerted efforts to market it, the game’s splendid concept and design did not save it from being a commercial failure.

Two more games that have not survived are nevertheless known to us from the Workshop’s price lists and other written sources. The first, from 1921, is a set of Hebrew letter blocks (*“Hebraische Druckerei”*) with which children could print letters and combine them into words. Inspired by German-language letter stamps for children that were popular at the time, these blocks were regarded by Willy Cohn as appropriate for youngsters with a basic knowledge of Hebrew who, he suggested, could use them to make “visiting cards.” The other, from 1933, is board game entitled *Palästina* that may have been inspired by Adele Sandler’s 1921 *Palästina-Reisespiel* (Palestine travel game) version of “Snakes and Ladders” or by Sandler’s “Happy Families” card game called *Ba-aretz* (In the Land [of Israel]), from the early 1920s.



Palästina-Reisespiel (Palestine travel game)

by Adele Sandler, 1921 | Lithograph
 Publisher: Hajeled, Berlin
 5001.96

RITUAL OBJECTS

I am often asked how I arrived at my arts and crafts workshop. A few years ago there was a new upswing in modern Jewish literature and graphic art. These invigorated artworks stimulated and deepened Jewish feelings. Ritual objects were not affected by this trend. But their worn-out forms could no longer satisfy cultivated taste. My goal was to revive beautiful old motifs, to execute the designs of notable artists. (Rosa Freudenthal, quoted in *Die jüdische Frau*, June 7, 1925)

Unfortunately, we know very little about the Freudenthal Workshop's objects of decorative and ritual art. Almost no images of them have survived, and the written descriptions found in the press lack detail. Because they were most probably crafted by artists not affiliated with the Workshop and did not bear its stamp, the chances of ever identifying them are extremely slim.

According to newspaper accounts, the Hanukkah exhibition of December 6–12, 1925, included a set comprising a Torah ark curtain, a Torah scroll mantle, and other synagogue textiles, which had been commissioned by the synagogue in Neisse (in Silesia; today Nysa, Poland). The set, said to “infuse the space with a solemn atmosphere,” was made of white silk embroidered in gold and silver. A 1929 press item contained the photograph of a Torah mantle featuring a tree motif from the Freudenthal Workshop; this may be the same design publicized in 1926 as the “Tree of Life Torah mantle.”²⁵

The Workshop's earliest press notices already mention modern-style Hanukkah lamps designed by Alfred Grotte.²⁶ It seems likely that Grotte's expertise guided Rosa Freudenthal as she planned her first exhibitions – and his reputation no doubt endowed the Workshop with a certain prestige. The iron Hanukkah lamps he designed were produced in the workshop of Jaroslav Vonka,²⁷ described by Grotte as “one of the most recognized masters of modern artistic metalwork.” These lamps represented



Torah mantle produced by the KFB
1928/29 (Jewish year 5689)
From: *Breslauer jüdisches*
Gemeindeblatt 6:9 (September 1929)

25 Dr. Margarete Steinberg, “Jüdisches Kunstgewerbe,” *Breslauer jüdisches Gemeindeblatt* 6:9 (September 1929), p. 153; “Geschäftliche Mitteilungen,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, September 14, 1926, p. 520.

26 Prof. Dr. Engineer Alfred Grotte (born Prague 1872, perished in Theresienstadt 1943) was an architect, an expert on the preservation of historic buildings, a teacher, and an art historian. Contributing his extensive knowledge of Jewish art, he served as advisor to the Jewish museum established in Breslau during the interwar period.

27 The Czech metalsmith Jaroslav Vonka (“Wonka” in German; 1875–1952) became known for his singular style. Beginning in 1903 he taught metalwork in Breslau's school of applied arts, rising to the position of professor.



Hanukkah lamp designed by Alfred Grotte
In a Freudenthal Workshop advertisement,
Jüdische Rundschau 26:95 (November 29, 1921)



Hanukkah lamp designed by Alfred Grotte
No later than 1921
Hand-crafted wrought iron
Illustrating an article by Grotte, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 85:23 (November 11, 1921)

the Freudenthal workshop at exhibitions and were noted in the press for their “simple beauty.”

One of the lamps designed by Grotte and pictured in an advertisement from 1921 has an unusual feature: the dreidel-like shape hanging from the shamash (above, left).²⁸ The photograph of another (above, right) illustrated an article on Hanukkah lamps he published that same year. In it, he writes that his inspiration came from the seven-branched Menorah in the Temple (and thus the additional light on either side is connected in a different way). In a footnote to the article, Grotte mentions that his Hanukkah lamp is being sold by Rosa Freudenthal.²⁹

The Workshop also produced replicas of traditional objects, such as a Hanukkah lamp on which the blessings for lighting holiday lights are inscribed (next page).³⁰



Medical staff lighting a Hanukkah lamp designed by Alfred Grotte
University Dermatology Clinic, Breslau, 1921-33
Walter Freudenthal (1893-1952) is first from the right.
Courtesy of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem

²⁸ In two of the extant examples known today, the dreidel is missing. Just recently, a third example, which does include the dreidel, entered the collection of the North Carolina Museum of Art.

²⁹ Alfred Grotte, “Der Chanukaleuchter,” *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, November 11, 1921, pp. 266-67. The actual Hanukkah lamp can be found in the collection of the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, and the illustration in Grotte’s article makes it possible to connect this object to him and to the Freudenthal Workshop.

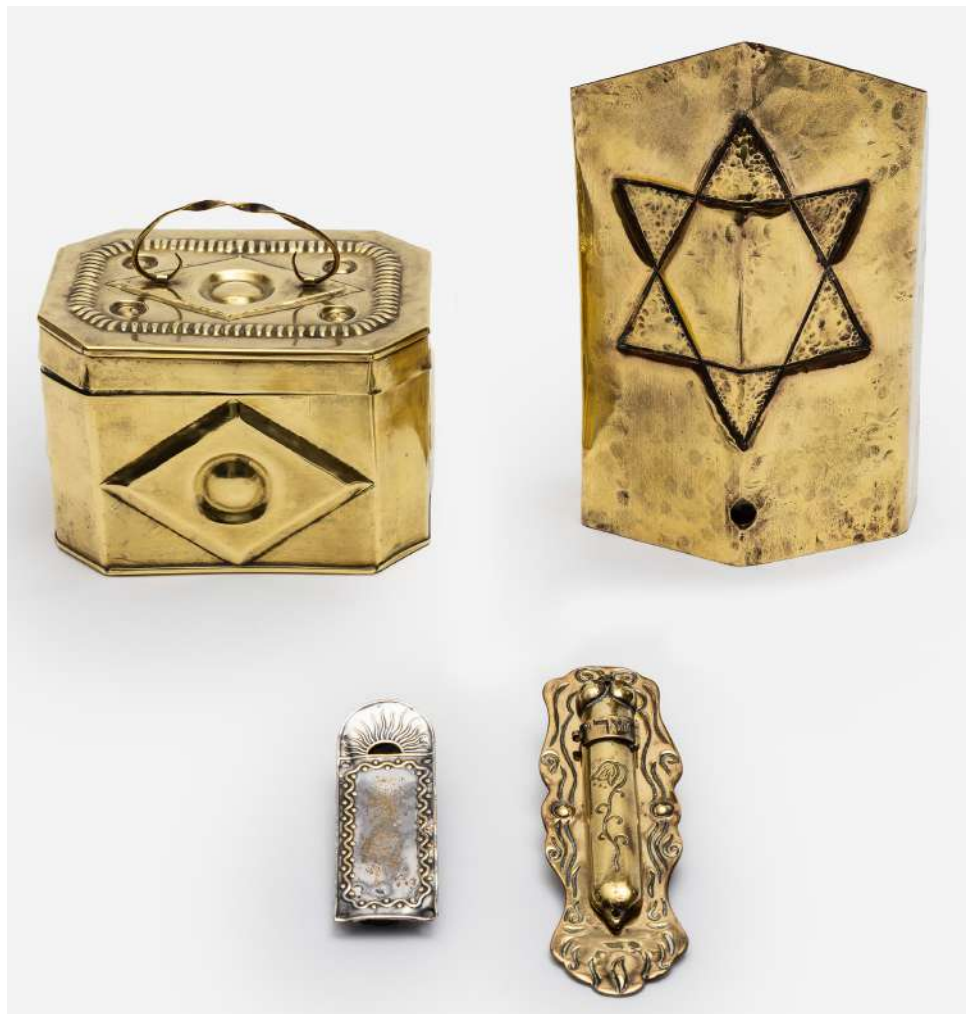
³⁰ “Kunstgewerbestube Freudenthal,” *Die jüdische Frau*, June 7, 1925, p. 10. According to the article, the original that inspired this lamp belonged to Frau Prof. Badt, Breslau. A lamp with the same unusual design, but without the blessings, may be found in the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague: Svícen chanukový | Jewish Museum Collections. In addition to the Freudenthal Workshop replica shown in our exhibition, another (damaged) replica was discovered in the Skirball Museum, Cincinnati.

Ritual objects produced by the Freudenthal Workshop
Collection of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem

Etrog (citron) box, ca. 1924
Brass sheet, hammered and chased, 7.5 x 12 x 9 cm

Electric memorial lamp, 1932
Brass sheet, hammered, chased and engraved; light bulb, 17 x 10.5 x 7 cm
Hebrew inscription on the back: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" (Proverbs 20:27)

Mezuzah cases, ca. 1924
Brass, stamped, silver plated, traces of gilt, 7.4 x 2.6 cm; brass, cast, 11.8 x 3.8 cm
According to Freudenthal's granddaughter, the floral design adorning one case was inspired by an ancient motif. The back of the smaller case bears the Workshop's monogram, KFB.



Hanukkah lamp with blessings, 1925 or earlier
Brass, cast; ink on parchment, glass, 31 x 27.5 x 10 cm
A decorative element below the oil holders is missing.
Collection of Gila Tamir, Rosa Freudenthal's great-granddaughter, Yakir

EXHIBITIONS

In addition to engravings by Alfred Graetzer . . . many ritual objects are exhibited: from the simplest seder tablecloth to a Torah ark curtain, from a mezuzah to a seder plate, and Hanukkah lamps - from a simple, inexpensive lamp based on a sketch by Prof. Grotte to unique, valuable lamps created by Henoeh Barcinski and Mendelssohn. Some of the exhibited textiles were produced by the [Freudenthal] Workshop, or by others that are similar to it. [...] It is delightful that games with Jewish content aimed at Jewish children are presented, and especially praiseworthy that the Hebrew language plays an important role in these games. (*Israelitisches Familienblatt*, January 4, 1923)

Our only information about Rosa Freudenthal's exhibitions comes from items in the German-Jewish press of the time, unfortunately almost never accompanied by photographs. It is also possible that she presented or participated in more exhibitions than were mentioned. Since Germany experienced a severe economic crisis after its defeat in World War I, the exhibitions of the early 1920s may well have been intended to assist Jewish artists seeking to market their work. They apparently were accompanied by cultural evenings, as indicated by a 1921 notice relating to a talk about "Rembrandt and the Jews" that Dr. Freher (Freuer?) of Berlin gave in the Freudenthal exhibition.

The first recorded exhibitions at Rosa Freudenthal's home are described in great detail, informing us that the so-called *Graphik* part of the exhibitions featured paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, and papercuts by numerous Jewish artists, including her brother Alfred Graetzer, Käthe Ephraim Marcus, Siegfried Laboschin, Jacob Benor-Kalter, and Erich Brill. A few of the works - by Isidor Aschheim, Hermann Fechenbach, Resi Lebrecht, and H. Graetz - were preserved in Rosa's estate, with the selling price still on them, and displayed in the Israel Museum exhibition.

Along with traditional exhibits - historical ritual and other objects of value that had been borrowed from museums, synagogues, and private collectors³¹ - there were modern items; for example, an Amsterdam Haggadah from 1695 next to a Haggadah illustrated by Joseph Budko, which had been published in 1921. Some of the works were by well-known artisans - Friedrich Adler, Leo Horovitz, Georg Mendelssohn, and Arnold Zadikow. There were representatives



Alfred Graetzer
Young Woman (the Artist's Sister Elise Freund?)
Reading a Newspaper, 1909
 Lithograph, 47 x 31 cm
 B03632

31 Among those mentioned are the collections of Salli Kirschstein, Nikolassee (Berlin); Willy Falk, Breslau; the Jewish Community and Archive of Berlin; the Frankfurt Association for the Study of Jewish Monuments; synagogues in Goldin and Dyhernfurth; and the Landschule synagogue in Breslau; as well as books from the library of Rabbi Zacharias Frankel.

of what were regarded as “women’s crafts”: ceramics and painted porcelain by Irene Wolfson and Ruth Hoffmann; embroidered and painted hallah and matzah covers, as well as synagogue textiles, by Rosa Weyl and Sophie Schlesinger; and batiks by Hilda Zadikow. Also on offer were gifts for children - books, games, and holiday accessories, including Freudenthal Workshop items.

Beginning in 1922 Rosa Freudenthal’s exhibitions and selected objects from her Workshop were presented across Germany and even abroad, in conjunction with Jewish events or holidays. They were usually hosted by Jewish associations³² - communal, Zionist, women’s, pedagogic, and rabbinical - and publishers.³³ Between 1925 and 1931, the Freudenthal Workshop participated in the exhibitions accompanying four Zionist Congresses, in Vienna, Basel, and Zurich. In a description of the “Palästina” exhibition in Vienna, we read:

... the Freudenthal Workshop attracted great interest. At first visitors thought that the objects came from Bezalel, and were astonished to discover that these good Jewish works were produced in Germany and, yes, in Breslau. (*Die Wahrheit*, September 18, 1925)

In 1928 “Jewish games” from the Freudenthal Workshop were displayed in a Tel Aviv exhibition by the Hebrew Women’s Organization (*Histadrut nashim ivriot*). That same year, a newspaper in Kraków published an article about the Workshop’s games,³⁴ and it may be that they were exhibited and/or marketed in Poland.

The Workshop was also represented in exhibitions that were aimed at the wider German public, seeking to highlight Jewish cultural achievements and underscore the community’s contribution to German society past and present. In 1929, for example, “The Jews in the History of Silesia,” organized by the newly founded Breslau Jewish Museum and presented in the city’s Museum for Antiquities and Decorative Arts, featured traditional objects of artistic and historical value. Rosa Freudenthal’s model sukkah had a place of honor. Willy Cohn, who served as historical advisor to the exhibition, wrote:

In this room the focus is Jewish holy days. Here, wonderful kiddush cups greet the Sabbath, there, lovely Hanukkah lamps remind us of this holiday, and here spiceboxes bring in a new week. The sukkah model



Matzah cover, ca. 1925
 Designer unknown (Hilda Zadikow?)
 Batik on cotton, Diam. 39.5 cm
 Aramaic inscription: “This is the bread of affliction”
 (from the Passover Haggadah)

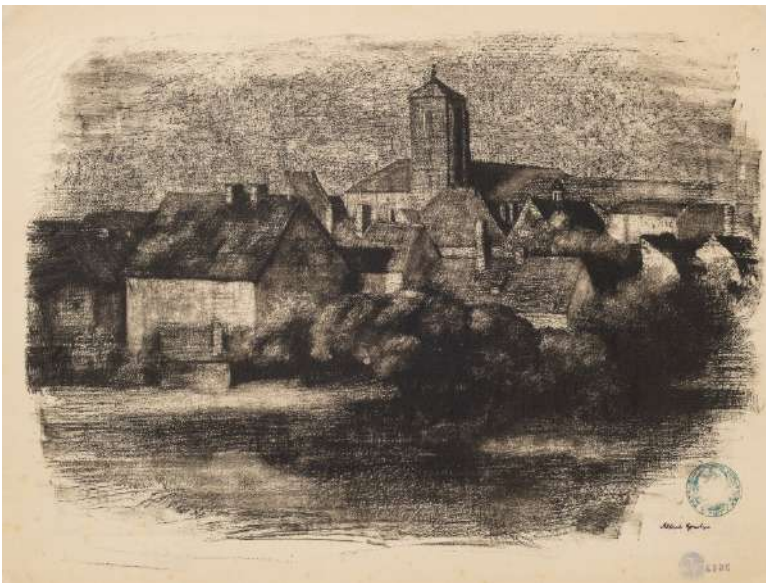
32 These included the ZVfD (Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland; Zionist Federation of Germany); the JFB (Jüdische Frauenbund; Jewish Women’s League); the Reichsverband der jüdischen Lehrvereine (National Union of Jewish Teachers Associations); and the Allgemeine Rabbinerverband in Deutschland (German General Union of Rabbis).

33 Rubin Mass, Brandeis, and Goldschmidt were only some of the publishers.

34 “O zabawkach dla dzieci żydowskich,” *Nowy Dziennik*, June 7, 1928, p. 6.

tells visitors about the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness [...]. All these are not a hoard of dead objects; they are Jewish life which continues to this day. Such is the strongest message the exhibition conveys to visitors who feel alienation and perhaps even hostility when it comes to Judaism. May their hearts be filled with some reverence for us and our religion."³⁵

More than Child's Play: Rosa Freudenthal's Arts and Crafts Workshop represents a fitting tribute to the exhibitions Frau Dr. Freudenthal mounted a century ago and to the "art room" that she ran from her home in Breslau. Thanks to a fruitful collaboration with her descendants, and the collection, written documents, and photographs they have entrusted to us, we are now able to present our exhibition at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The timing was fortuitous, since many of the interwar newspaper and archival sources have only recently become available. Thus we were able to conduct the necessary research, to study Rosa Freudenthal's enterprise in its historical context, and to recall some all-but-forgotten Breslau personalities involved in this story. The exhibition offers, for the first time, an opportunity to view these rare objects and learn about a fascinating, little-known episode in interwar German Jewish education and culture.



Alfred Graetzer
View of Breslau, before 1911
 Lithograph, 38.5 x 51.5 cm
 B03643

35 Quoted in Bernward Deneke, "Zum Modell einer Laubhütte aus Breslau," in *Schlesien: Kunst Wissenschaft Volkskunde* 32:3 (1987), pp. 132-33.



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All Freudenthal family photographs courtesy of Rivka Sklan and Sara Frenkel, Jerusalem

Scans © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Oleg Kalashnikov

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