

# Judaica Continental Silver Besamim Spice Tower.



Objects used in religious ceremonies frequently feature extraordinary craftsmanship but even among this rarefied group of objects, this Silver Besamim Tower was made with exceptional design and attention to detail. Michaan's Auctions was proud to offer a **Judaica Continental Silver Besamim Spice Tower** which sold for \$11,050 in our May Gallery Auction, held on Friday, May 17th.

The Besamim holder plays an important role in the Jewish holidays, especially in the weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath (or Sabbath) is the day of rest in many Abrahamic religions, a practice that originated in Judaism and which is still practiced today. The practice has taken place since at least 630 BCE, and

similar practices existed in Babylon from 1500 BCE. The Sabbath, commonly translated as “rest” or “ceasing [from work], is connected to the Biblical origin story and is meant to allow Jews the opportunity to contemplate spiritual aspects of life, especially the Genesis creation narrative and the Exodus from Egypt, and to spend time with family.

In contrast to Christianity, Jewish Sabbath takes place primarily on Saturday, although as the Jewish calendar counts days from sundown to sundown, it begins a few minutes before sundown on Friday evening, continuing until three stars are seen on Saturday night. The Sabbath begins on Friday with the lighting of candles and the Kabbalat Shabbat, a prayer service. Dinner on Friday night is customarily a festive meal, begun with blessings over wine and challah bread before participants sing two traditional religious songs. The

following day consists of synagogue services and two additional festive meals, one at lunch and one in the late afternoon. The Sabbath is closed with a ceremony called the Havdalah that symbolizes the start of a new week, it is during this ritual that the Besamim holder is used.

The Havdalah begins with the lighting of a special multi-wick candle and continues with the blessing of a cup of wine, before continuing to the smelling of sweet spices. These spices, called Besamim in Hebrew, are either branches of aromatic plants or cloves depending on the participants’ denomination. While prayers are recited, the spices are passed around in the tower to be smelled by each of the participants, an act which draws attention to the senses in preparation for the resumption of daily life. After the

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service, the candle is extinguished in any leftover wine.

This Besamim holder is an elegant silver tower, resembling a candleholder or tall chalice. The Besamim is likely of German origin and features fine ornamental details, including a cover with a knop emitting flowers and leaves. The cup portion features figural cartouches to the body, pedestal, and base, with foliate motifs throughout. This workmanship

continues underneath the base and cap, each of which has rings of floral motifs as well. The Besamim is marked with a crowned eagle, an A over two stars above a S, and a bull head. Overall, this silver piece represents an exceptional piece of Judaica and stands as evidence of the cultural importance placed on beautifully crafted religious objects.

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next sale will be Michaan's Auctions June Gallery Auction on Friday, June 14th. This sale features a deep collection of well-regarded pieces from the Jewelry Department, in addition to refined collections from the Silver & Objects de Vertu Department, and several fine examples from the Rugs, Carpets & Textiles Department. The auction is led by the Jewelry Department, which will be offering rings, necklaces, and chains in gold, many featuring diamonds, while the Silver & Objects de Vertu

Department offers collections of flatware and a notable tea service. Also included in the sale are several fine Persian carpets and rugs presented by the Rugs, Carpets & Textiles Department.

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