



Jewish Wedding Ring

Central or Eastern Europe, 18th century

Gold

Weight 6.8 gr.; circumference 64.2 mm.; US size 10.75; UK size V ½

The Jewish custom of giving a wedding ring seems to have been known as early as the seventh and eighth century in Babylonia and then spread to other parts of the Diaspora. Possibly to date the first mention of a ring being given during a Jewish wedding ceremony, rather than as a symbol of betrothal, goes back to Rabbi Jakob hal Lewi Mölln in the Rhineland, about 1400 and is mentioned in the *Mabaril* (Par. 5). The earliest surviving examples of Jewish wedding rings were found in the Colmar and Erfurt Treasures dating to the first half of the fourteenth century and during this period illustrations of the ceremony begin to appear in manuscripts. According to the rituals such rings were not allowed to include gemstones; color is introduced in some elaborate examples only through the use of enamel. Most Jewish wedding rings bear an inscription with good luck wishes "Mazal Tov" in Hebrew, and this would suggest an Ashkenazim tradition and origin in Western or Eastern Europe. Due to the continuous exodus of the Jews through history the attributions of where a ring is made remains complicated, especially as some designs are influenced by the goldsmiths of the regions they settled in.

Description:

The wide band of gold sheet metal has along the edges a fine corded wire which resembles chain. On the exterior is a frieze of six openwork filigree bosses alternating with pairs of globules. A rectangular shaped-plaque which is bent along the curvature of the hoop has the engraved Hebrew inscription "mazel tov."

Provenance:

Michael and Judy Steinhardt Collection, United States

Published in:

The Collector's Room: Selections from the Michael and Judy Steinhardt Collection, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1993, no. 29 (illustrated).

Literature:

Examples of this ring type exist as single or double bands, some with more intricate twisted wires, others alternating bosses and enameled forget-me-nots or as in this case – a simple filigree ornament. Various examples of this particular ring style are in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection, Swiss National Museum, Zurich (Chadour 1994, vol. II, nos. 1088 (single row) and 1089 and 1090 (double row) and with a similar engraved inscription plaque with the Hebrew lettering "mazel tov," cf. nos. 1091-2.

Reference number: R526

Price : \$28,000