

# 'The Multi-Dimensional Jew': A Map of Judaism

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For many years, I have dreamt of creating a place to explore and encounter Judaism's fundamental values. Recently, I was given the opportunity to join with others to flesh out this dream of a lush garden where we would use our senses, mind, heart, and soul to confront our 3,000-year-old-quest to live as devoted, engaged Jewish human beings.

I decided to create a model of what such a place might be. Initially, I reviewed the vast culture we call Judaism: tales, peoplehood, family, history, ancestors, creation, revelation, Torah, mitzvot, meaning, memory, covenant, community, exile, homeland, time, seasons, nature, love, connection, desire, purpose, faith, sanctity, power, charity, loving kindness, justice, righteousness, vision, destiny, repentance, repair, soul, drives, awe, holiness, elevation, freedom, longing, potential, prayer, faith, and promise.

Then, I built a framework to give order to this rich but overwhelming treasure that is our inheritance. I sensed that the individual — you, me, the potential visitor — needed to be central. God created Adam as an individual to suggest, in some sense, that the world was created for each of us — with all the majesty and responsibility that implies.

I picked up the little wooden artist manikin in my studio and began to imagine her as the center of this new garden. She stood both excited and bewildered in the midst of a swirl of values. She responded in a primal and Jewish way — with questions. With the manikin in the center, I built around her a universe of six fundamental questions. Each question was given the color yellow. Dozens of little labels note the specific Jewish values that inform the question.

**What is behind me?** What is the past that we Jews all share? Whether we embrace, accept, resist, or deny it, we all share a vast, remarkable heritage. *A blue arrow points backward.*

**What surrounds me?** What is the physical and cultural environment I live in? It is the world, nature, the universe, the places I encounter, the voices I hear, the things I see. *A green circle envelops her.*



David Moss with his three-dimensional model, photograph by David Lonner

**What is deep within me?** What are the depths of my being? What drives me — what emotions, longings, triumphs, disappointments, pain? My soul. *Beneath a piece of glass on which she stands, dark circles spiral downward.*

**What is above me?** What of the elevation of spirit? What causes me to reach upward, to strive toward purity and holiness? God. *A disk floating above her.*

**Whom do I face?** What of the other? What of my relationships, family, society and the love, justice, friendship, equity, kindness, and responsibility I seek? *Another manikin faces her on the red circles of interpersonal relationships.*

**What is ahead of me?** What is destiny? What do we strive for? Peace, harmony, messiah, vision, and purpose. What is the quest? *The purple arrow points forward.*

To share the concept more widely, I took the three-dimensional model and created a two-dimensional fine-art print (see cover page). It is like a Jewish mandala, where — at the center — all of us can imagine ourselves. The structure embraces and envelops us. It is oriented in the Hebrew manner, with the past to the right and the future to the left. The color scheme of the three-dimensional model remains. I made the area of “Whom do I face?” an unfolding flower — the one of the “other” / the two of marriage / the four of family / the ten of community / the twelve of Jewish peoplehood / and the 70 embracing all of humanity.

I call my question-based conceptual map “The Multi-Dimensional Jew.” Indeed, we are all multidimensional Jews. We all live in a world of questions. We all live within reach of a precious tradition that has grappled with these questions for millennia. My attempt at mapping our Jewish universe may help to orient us within this wondrous Jewish world. I deeply appreciate this opportunity to invite others to enter the world of “The Multi-Dimensional Jew” and, using this compass and map, to discover both ancient and fresh lands, regions, and vistas for exploring Judaism and finding ourselves. 

David Moss, a Jerusalem-based artist, gives aesthetic and creative expression to Jewish ideas, values, and texts. He created *The Moss Haggadah*, collaborated with artist Noah Greenberg on *The Tree of Life Shtender*, revived the art of the hand-made *ketubah*, is a co-founder of Kol HaOt, and works with architects and institutions to breathe a Jewish soul into their buildings. “The Multi-Dimensional Jew” print is part of Moss’s ongoing subscription series of limited editions. These and his other published works are available at [beta-alpha-editions.com](http://beta-alpha-editions.com).

Learn more about the vision for “The Garden of Jewish Exploration” by visiting the website [davidmoss.com](http://davidmoss.com) and also [shma.com](http://shma.com), where our online gallery will exhibit several images and an explanation of the project.