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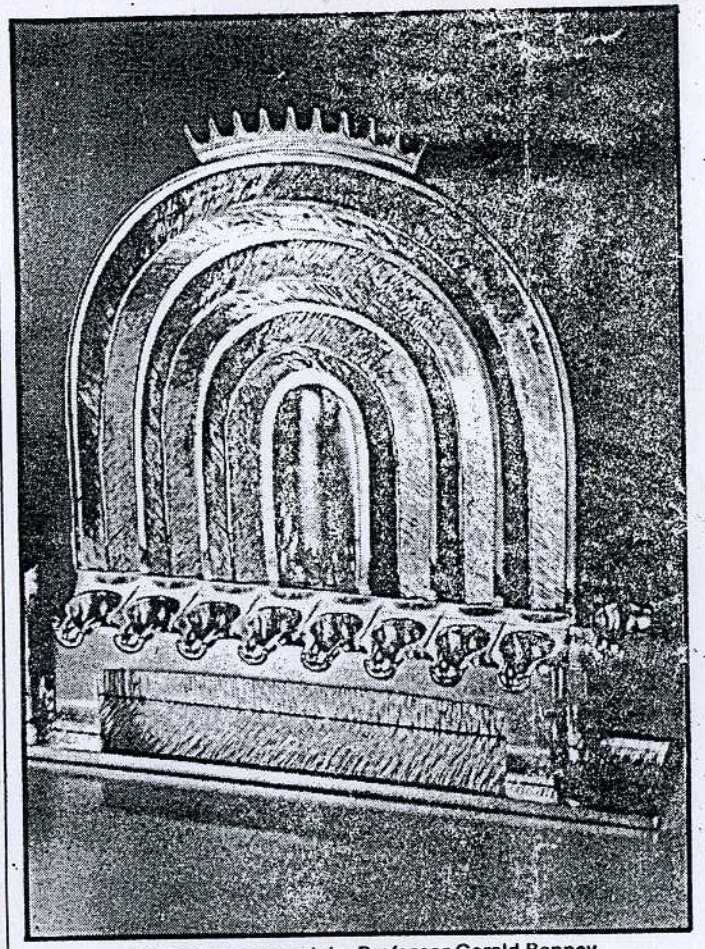
The beauty of holiness



Chanucah menorah by Professor Gerald Benney

THE EXHIBITION, Art in Jewish Ritual, at the Manor House Centre for Judaism, brings together for the first time in this country a collection of ceremonial objects created by contemporary artists and craftsmen. On display are examples of silver, ceramics, stained glass, embriodery, graphics and bookbinding, the majority on loan from synagogues and private collections. Though modest in scope, the exhibition offers ample evidence of the imagination, artistry and technical skills that have gone into the making of modern articles of Jewish observance.

Judaism has always been rich in ceremonies

a gracious, swinging rhythm. The set belongs to the New London Synagogue, which has been in the forefront of commissioning ritual art from contemporary artists.

Another noted graduate of Bezalel is the artist Ya'akov Agam, who was born in Israel in 1928. He has achieved international acclaim for his optic-kinetic paintings and sculptures which have been exhibited in the most prestigious art galleries and museums.

Agam's mezuza case, sculpted from fine leaded crystal and framed in silver, has as its component a 21-colour silkscreen which creates a three-dimensional illusion. As one turns from

smiths. He holds royal warrants of appointment to the Queen and other members of the Royal Family and his work has been widely exhibited throughout the world. In common with many makers of earlier Jewish ritual art, Benney is, however, not Jewish.

The Benney kiddush cup is of octagonal shape, stemmed and bearing an appropriate Hebrew inscription around the rim. Textured surfaces are combined with smooth, polished ones, and the inside is silver gilt. Though of distinctive modern appearance, the kiddush cup *projects an awareness of the classic eighteenth-*century German designs.