

On Israel's 75th Anniversary, the Decade's-Long Odyssey of an Historic World's Fair Sculpture is Commemorated

*From the British Mandate, to the 1939
New York World's Fair, to Chicago's Lake
Shore Drive; After 84 Years, a Return to Israel is Imminent.*

NEW YORK, USA, May 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 28, 1939, at the New York World's



My grandfather's World's Fair sculpture represents an artwork of immense aesthetic and historic significance for Israel and the Jewish People. We are glad to see progress towards its return to Israel."

Eric Ascalon

Fair – 84 years ago this month – the Jewish-Palestine Pavilion was dedicated. The pavilion was intended to introduce the world to the concept of a modern Jewish State; which a decade later – after the atrocities of the Holocaust – would become the State of Israel. The pavilion's façade was adorned with an imposing 14-foot-tall relief sculpture, an Art Deco representation of three figures created by a 26-year-old Israeli sculptor by the name of Maurice Ascalon (1913-2003) (born Moshe Klein). Maurice would go on to become a pioneer of modern Israel's decorative arts movement. Ascalon's hand-hammered copper World's Fair sculpture, entitled "The Scholar, The

Laborer, and The Toiler of Soil", depicted three vocational facets of a successful civilization: scholarship, industry, and agriculture, that Israel would embody.

The pavilion's opening ceremony featured speeches by Albert Einstein, and New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. Both spoke from a podium beneath Ascalon's sculpture to a crowd of 100,000. During the fair's run, the pavilion saw 2 million visitors. With the start of World War II, logistical constraints made it impossible for the sculpture to return to Israel as intended. It was therefore auctioned off, finding a new home at Chicago's Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies on Lake Shore Drive, where it has remained since. Today, the Spertus, together with Ascalon's family and Toronto-based Israeli memorabilia collector and historian David Matlow, are in the process of arranging to finally see to the return of Ascalon's sculpture to Israel for permanent exhibition – completing a round trip that began in the late 1930s.

In honor of the 75th Anniversary of Israel, and to commemorate the unique artistic and historic importance of Ascalon's sculpture, a limited edition of 250 replicas of "The Scholar, The Laborer,

and the Toiler of Soil", produced as 1KG resin casts, are being released this week by Piece of History, an Israeli-based studio for decorative items with Israeli history and Judaic themes. The intent is to raise awareness among Jewish communities worldwide about the artwork, and to promote its return to Israel. [For more information, click here.](#)

[ABOUT MAURICE ASCALON](#)

Maurice Ascalon (born Moshe Klein) was born in the eastern Hungarian town of Fehérgyarmat. From an early age, he was drawn to art, which was frowned upon in the "shtetl" in which he was raised. When he was 15 years old Ascalon left his boyhood home to study art at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. He took with him an understanding of Jewish rituals and traditions which knowledge he later incorporated in his work.



Maurice Ascalon (left) in Tel Aviv putting the final touches on "The Scholar, The Laborer, and the Toiler of Soil" before it takes its voyage across the seas to the 1939 New York World's Fair

In 1934, after undertaking his formal artistic training in Brussels and later Milan, Maurice Ascalon immigrated to Israel (then the British Mandate of Palestine). In the late 1930s, Ascalon founded an Israeli decorative arts manufacturing company, Pal-Bell, which produced bronze menorahs and other decorative and functional items that were exported worldwide. During Israel's War for Independence in 1948, at the request of the Israeli government, he retrofitted his factory to produce munitions for the war effort. In 1956 Maurice immigrated to the US.

During the late 1950s through the 1960s, Maurice resided in New York and Los Angeles. He gained a reputation as a master silversmith, creating synagogue Torah crowns and other objects of Jewish ceremonial art. He taught sculpture on the fine arts faculty of the University of Judaism (now the American Jewish University) in Los Angeles.

In the late 1970s, Ascalon relocated to the Philadelphia area where he co-founded Ascalon Studios, which became (and still is today, under the direction of Maurice's son, David Ascalon (b.1945)) a multifaceted studio for the design of and creation of site-specific art for worship and public spaces.

In February 2003, Maurice Ascalon celebrated his 90th birthday as a resident of Cuernavaca, Mexico, where he lived with his eldest son, Adir Ascalon (a surrealist painter and sculptor who collaborated with the noted Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros). In August 2003, Maurice Ascalon succumbed to complications from Parkinson's disease.

CLICK HERE FOR PHOTOS OF ASCALON'S SCULPTURE & THE WORLD'S FAIR PAVILION

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Eric Ascalon
Ascalon Studios, Inc.
+1 856-220-0522
eric@ascal.one

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