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What's the World Lacking? Jewish Emojis!

In a call for inclusion, the Conference of European Rabbis has asked for emojis to be created that represent Jews and the Jewish religion.

By Tsivya Fox-Dobuler, United With Israel

While practically every sport, food, emotion, and skin color is represented by an emoji, the Jewish people and its religious symbols have been lagging behind.

Emojis are small digital images that enable people around the world to communicate in a universal visual language.

Last month, the Conference of European Rabbis wrote the Unicode Consortium, the non-profit organization that approves new emojis, requesting "to create a new emoji [to] symbolize the Jewish religion and its symbols."





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“There are emojis of women in the hijab and Arab clerics, and the Jews have been forgotten,” wrote chief of staff of the Conference of European Rabbis Gadi Gronich.

Until now, the only Jewish-related emojis were a synagogue, the Star of David and the Israeli flag.

Rory Kress, chief marketing and engagement officer for Sefaria, the largest free online library of Jewish texts, agrees. *JTA* recently reported that Sefaria is working to create a Torah emoji to put a “kinder, gentler face on Jewish scholarship.”

“The Torah is a very specific-looking object,” Kress said. That is why Kress believes that it is a perfect candidate for being a new emoji.

Kress thinks a Torah scroll emoji would be more inclusive than an image of a person — since Jewish people come in all colors and all kinds of traditions, *JTA* reported. “It’s about inclusion,” she said. “It is about creating a digital place for us.”

Sefaria hired graphic artists to design the Torah emoji. Placing the options on its social media platform, they received thousands of visitor votes. The two winning candidates were an open Torah scroll and a closed Torah scroll wrapped in a blue cover with a Star of David on its front.

Kress said that they received some “anti-Semitic” backlash and questions as to why such an emoji is needed, but “it is definitely time that we have a voice and a place.”

However, the Conference of European Rabbis has a different goal. Seeking images of more traditional Jews, like Rabbis and people wearing a skullcap, they wrote, “The need for equality and non-discrimination begins with the small things, which in this case may seem minor but have enormous significance and long-term effects. The WhatsApp application is used daily by millions of citizens around the world, especially the young.”

‘The Emoji Haggadah’

Stating that nearly every religion is represented by emojis, the letter noted, “The Jewish religion should not be left behind; it should be brought to the center of public discourse and made equal among the other religions.”





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So lacking are Jewish emoji symbols that, this past year, the *Times of Israel* reported that a special emoji Haggadah was published through the use of what limited Jewish emojis exist.

Martin Bodek, an IT specialist from New Jersey, published “The Emoji Haggadah.” The language aficionado created this Passover Haggadah using only available emojis.

“It’s a universal language,” explained Bodek, who pointed out that there are no specific emoji symbols for exodus, Purim, or so many other Jewish related events.

The article explained that Bodek struggled to come up with emoji symbols for things represented in the Haggadah. For example, lacking proper Jewish emojis even for the title, “Haggadah shel Pesach,” (“Haggadah” means “the telling,” “shel” means “for,” and “Pesach” stands for the sacrificial lamb,) he used an emoji of a man speaking, a sea shell and a ram.

The Unicode Consortium currently has over 2,800 approved emojis, with 230 approved this past February.

It is currently processing proposals for 2020.

<https://unitedwithisrael.org/whats-the-world-lacking-jewish-emojis/>

