

## An Interesting and Happy Pewter Plate – A Jewish Purim Plate



This plate is 8 3/4" (22cms) diameter plate with wriggle-work decoration, ownership initials to the front (12 O'clock) of J.R. with crown over ANNO 1790. To the back are three maker's touch marks with a work commencement date on own account of 1774 leading me to think that maybe the plate was decorated around or before 1790. Perhaps the makers name ran around the top half ending in GER perhaps it also said BLOCK \*\*\*\* to the base of each mark.





Michael Kashden an Experienced Collector of Judaica and Pewter dealer explains -  
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Your plate has no Hebrew engraved on it which is unusual, yet it is of a Judaic form. I have no doubt that it is actually Judaica. I have had similar plates but always engraved with Hebrew lettering. The three entwined fishes in the centre is the giveaway I believe. This is usually taken to be a Jewish symbol and especially used at Purim.

There are two basic forms of Jewish pewter plate;-The Seder Dish used at Pesach (Passover) and your plate, a Purim Plate used during the festival of Purim. Purim is a self indulgent, noisy time that has all the ingredients of a European carnival. It celebrates the events recounted in the Book of Esther in the Old Testament which include the foiling of a plot to kill the Jews of Ancient Persia. The book is read in Synagogue from handwritten scrolls and every time that Haman, the leader of the anti-Jewish plan is mentioned in the text, the congregation explodes into a roar in order to drown out his name.

The engraving on your plate has typical naive engraving of Zodiac signs and other creatures which have no special significance, they are simply fun to see, Purim being largely a children's festival. Special food is eaten at Purim, especially a small triangular pocket of baked pastry with poppy seeds inside. These are called "Humentaschen"-Haman's ears, and would have been served on plates like yours.

(You can see this looks, as is said above, to be a happy plate and for children!)