As I have mentioned many times, there are no rules in stamp collecting. Collectors should be able to collect what they want and include or exclude items, as they wish. This certainly should be so, for anyone collecting thematically, and especially in a Judaica collection. Variety and everyone’s collection being different is what makes the hobby so interesting. How boring it would be if everyone’s collection was exactly the same, and everyone collected the same thing.

With that in mind, I have discovered a set of stamps that were issued by the Austria post office in association with the Haagen-Daz ice cream company in 2006. The five stamp designs were issued in a booklet format and postcards, enabling customers to send their favourite Haagen-Daz ice cream flavours as a greeting.

The slogan on the stamps were “Let your tongue travel”. The stamps were gummed, and when licked, tasted of the ice cream flavour depicted on the stamp. Customers who bought ten scoops of ice cream, received the stamps and postcards. The campaign was scheduled to last for one month, but at the two-week halfway mark, all 12,000 booklets were out of stock at the participating Haagen-Daz stores in Austria.

Most of the booklets were probably used, with people enjoying the novelty of the stamps and cards, especially after “tasting” the flavour of the stamps. I doubt if many of these booklets still exist intact — as very few got into the hands of collectors.

You are probably wondering why I would include this issue in my Judaica collection. Well, the answer is simple, Haagen-Daz was founded by Jewish-Polish immigrants Reuben & Rose Mattus, in the Bronx New York in 1961. And that is a good enough reason for me to include these interesting stamps in my Judaica collection!

I believe, this issue to be one of the scarcest of modern sets – and I am always interested in obtaining mint, and commercially used items relating to this issue.

— Gary Goodman

EDITOR’S NOTE — Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream founders Ben Cohen and his partner Jerry Greenfield are both Jewish
The Dohany Synagogue in Budapest, Hungary

In Budapest’s “Golden Age” for Hungarian Jewry (1867-1918), over 23% of the city’s population was Jewish. This period saw the consecration of the Byzantine style Dohany Synagogue in September 1859. The architect was a Viennese by the name of Ludwig Forster who was not Jewish. It is the largest synagogue in Europe and the second largest in the world (the largest being the Temple Emanu-El in New York), and at one time seating over 3000 worshipers.

To give an indication of its size, especially during high holy days, there were four Rabbis leading the service simultaneously! With the pulpits standing at each corner, one commentator reported “… it seemed as if they (the Rabbis) were in an oratorical contest!”

The synagogue is situated in leafy Dohany Street. Dohany means tobacco in Hungarian. We can assume that tobacco traders or merchants were at one time situated in this Budapest street. The street was in fact known in Yiddish as Tabakgasse and the synagogue as the “Tabakgasse Synagogue” or simply the Tabak-Shul.

In February 1939, the Synagogue was bombed by Nazi sympathizers but never destroyed. During World War Two, it was used by the Nazis as a radio centre and during the Communist era thereafter, the damaged building once again was used as house of prayer by the very much reduced Jewish community.

Theodor Hertzl was born in a house situated next to the synagogue. Today this is the site of the Jewish Museum.

The Dohany Synagogue’s design is distinctly Moorish with two onion shaped domes. The building consists of three spacious richly decorated aisles, two balconies and unusually, an organ. This huge (5000 pipe) organ was built in 1859 and it is recorded that it was played at various times by the renowned composers Franz Liszt and Camille Saint-Saens.

It was only in the 1990’s, following a return to democracy in Hungary, that renovations could begin. These were funded largely by a five million dollar donation from Hungarian Jewish emigrant Josephine Esther Mentzer, better known as Estée Lauder, founder of the now famous US cosmetic and perfume empire. Another substantial donor to the restorations was actor Tony Curtis (born Bernard Schwartz) who was also of Hungarian-Jewish decent. Renovations and the restoration were completed in 1996. Today a Friday night service attracts around 200 worshippers.

The Dohany Synagogue has been featured on a number of stamps both in Hungary as well as in Israel. The earliest being in 1947, when Hungary issued the 12f featuring the President Franklin D Roosevelt (Four Freedoms Speech) together with the synagogue. The JNF (Jewish National Fund) featured this image as well as an IS 5.80 stamp issued by Israel in Sept 2000. A watercolour rendering of the Dohany Synagogue appears in the margins of a recent French souvenir sheet as a decorative element only.

— Hilton Israelson
Judaica with a Difference

Apart from stamps and covers I collect antique items that are involved with letter writing and sending mail. For example I have a collection of letter scales, stamp boxes - silver, wooden and even tortoise-shell and a couple of interesting inkwells.

But the one item I have illustrated is of a porcelain ashtray in the form of a postmarked envelope dated 1887 produced to advertise a Margate wine wholesaler and if you look on the back you will see who the manufacturer was. I thought it was an interesting angle on Judaica philately and I wonder if any readers have any other Judaica related objects?

— Alan Benjamin

New Austria Judaica — RUDOLF SCHINDLER

Rudolf Schindler, a Jewish architect, was born in 1887 in Vienna and died in 1953, in Los Angeles.

A stamp depicting the “Schindler Chase House” in Los Angeles, California, designed by Schindler was issued by Austria Post on May 1, 2011. The stamp was issued in a booklet of four self-adhesive stamps is part of a 10 stamp definitive Art and Culture buildings set.

The friends of Schindler, signed an agreement with the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts to create the Mak Center for Art and Architecture, at the Schindler Chase House, which is depicted on the stamp.

Karsh postscript

We failed to mention that a portrait of Eli Weisel is also included on Canada’s Karsh souvenir sheet.

Please submit Judaica articles and stories for consideration in future newsletters. There is limited space for advertising. Interested parties should contact garygoodman@talktalk.net for more information.