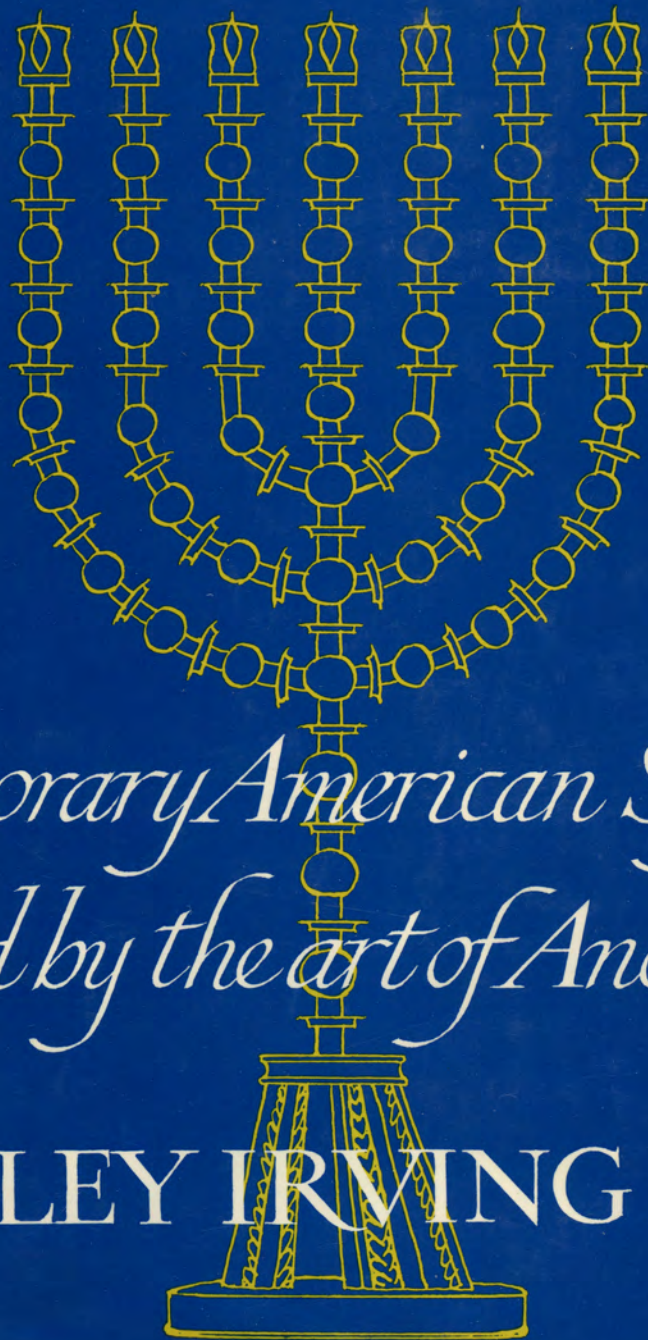


LET THEM MAKE ME A
SANCTUARY



*A contemporary American Synagogue
inspired by the art of Ancient Israel*

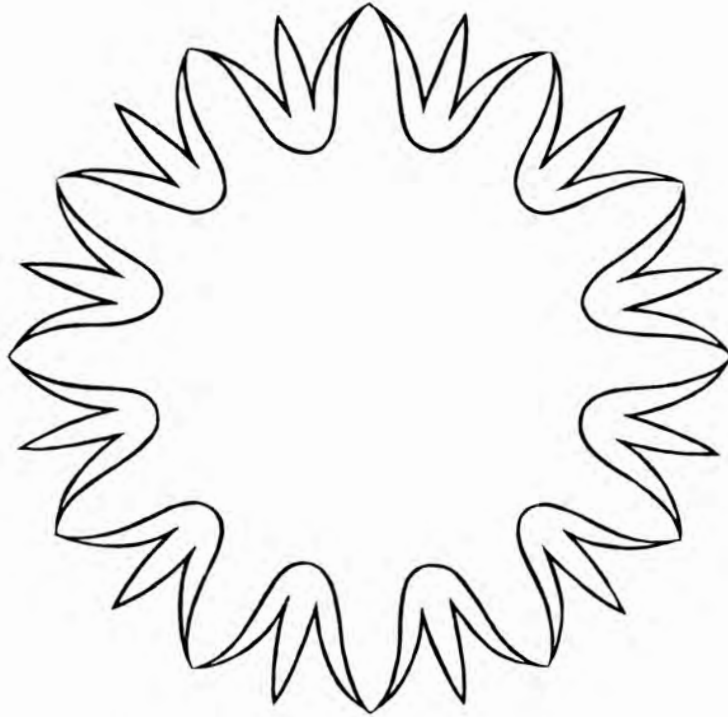
by STANLEY IRVING BATKIN

LET THEM MAKE ME A

A Contemporary American Synagogue

Inspired by the Art of Ancient Israel

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To my parents and grandparents for their inspiration;

to my darling wife, Selma;

to my children and grandchildren as a legacy.

WALL OF THE MARTYRS



I LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS.
FROM WHENCE DOES MY HELP COME?
MY HELP COMES FROM THE LORD,
WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.

—*Psalms 121:1-2*

Jews have suffered persecution and martyrdom without parallel in the history of any other people. Nevertheless, the world's historians, scholars, and artists—whether by chance or design—have, for the most part, chosen to ignore or to give but cursory attention to this tragic saga.

Even the Hitler Holocaust, so enormous in its dimensions, so obscene in its horror, standing forever as an indictment of Western civilization, has now been relegated to an obscure footnote on the vast pages of world history.

Our Jewish martyrs cry out for an end to this neglect. Their cries find expression in the monumental bronze mural, *Wall of the Martyrs*, sculpted by Luise Kaish. The wall depicts major episodes in the more than two thousand years of Jewish martyrdom.

Unique in theme, *Wall of the Martyrs* is the only work of such scope and dimension to have been commissioned by a synagogue on the American continent.

The idea for this project originated early in my life. As a youth I was appalled by the neglect of Jewish history and the lack of mention of both the great achievements and the persecution of our people—both in textbooks and in the history courses of the public school system.

Many years later, when I became chairman of Beth El's building committee, I conceived the idea of a mural on martyrdom to educate our people about our heritage, the monstrous crimes perpetrated against our ancestors, and the heroic stand taken by our people to affirm their faith.

My plan was to engage a scholar to research the subject, and then engage an artist to translate this material into a moving and inspiring

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Luise Kaish

work of art. I asked the late Dr. Abraham J. Heschel, a dear friend of ours, to recommend a scholar.¹ While aiding me in the selection process, which lasted over a year, Dr. Heschel repeatedly insisted: "This wrong must be corrected. . . . You must do it."

With his encouragement, the work went forward. Finally, Dr. Aaron Kirschenbaum, a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary, to whom I was referred by Dr. Heschel, was engaged to research the subject.² Rabbi Edmund Winter, assistant rabbi at Beth El from 1970 to 1972, contributed additional writings. I, too, worked in the areas of research, artistic media, and the selection of the artist.

After a prolonged period of investigation, during which I went through studies of many art forms, including oil, stained glass, wood carving, and tapestry, I decided on bronze as the most effective medium for this project. Then followed my search for sculptors. I had already viewed with positive reactions three works by Luise Kaish. To locate her I called the Jewish Museum, the Kaish apartment in New York (which had been sublet to someone else), and a sister in Forest Hills; I finally found Luise at the American Academy in Rome, Italy, where she was a scholar-in-residence. When I visited Luise at the studio in Rome, surrounded by some of her work, I instinctively knew that she could successfully transpose my idea to reality.

Luise Kaish was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and studied at Syracuse University, Escuela de Pintura y Escultura, Escuela de las Artes del Libro, and Taller Gráfico—in Mexico.

She has been the recipient of the Syracuse University graduate fellowship, a Louis Comfort Tiffany grant, a John Simon Guggenheim fellowship, the Rome Prize, and a Rome fellowship.

Her commissions have come from Syracuse University; Container Corporation of America; temples in Rochester (New York), Westport (Connecticut), Wilmington (Delaware), and Essex County (New Jersey); Holy Trinity Mission Seminary in Silver Springs, Maryland; the Jewish Museum in New York; and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Jerusalem.

She has had one-woman exhibitions at the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, the New York Sculpture Center, the New York Staempfli Gallery, the St. Paul, Minnesota, Art Center, and the Jewish Museum in New York.

¹ Dr. Abraham J. Heschel (1907–1973), prophet, philosopher, and scholar, was born in Poland to a Hasidic family. He settled in the United States in 1940, lecturing at Hebrew Union College, then at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He became one of the most influential modern philosophers of religion in the United States.

² Rabbi Kirschenbaum is now professor of Jewish law, and head of the department of Jewish law at the University of Tel Aviv.

Mrs. Kaish used the background material provided to her and added her own research, both in the United States and in Rome at the Vatican Library. I traveled to Rome from time to time, as work on the wall relief progressed, to approve the work in its various stages.

The eight panels of the wall produce an overall dimension of 17 by 7½ feet. The casting was by Fonderia Artistica Bruni of Rome, Italy.

Dr. Avram Kampf, professor of art history at Haifa University, and advisor and consultant to the Jewish Museum in New York, states, in a Jewish Museum catalogue:

There is a strong religious vein which runs through the work of Luise Kaish and which sets her apart from the sculptors of her generation. This religious element is a fundamental component of her work based on her own experience of the world and her personal attitude toward it.

In her art, she conveys the decisive moments in the life of man as he encounters the Holy. The image of man is represented in a primary state of inwardness, confronting the Divine in a fateful meeting and in a continuous dialogue between himself and an unfathomable world.

Noble in concept, inspired in design, and gifted in execution, the *Wall of the Martyrs* by Luise Kaish has gained recognition as a pilot work, opening new avenues of artistic expression in both history and religion. Beth El Synagogue justifiably is proud to serve as the repository for this eloquent statement of the Jewish experience.

Luise Kaish describes the wall as follows:

THE ETERNAL MARTYR

A figure symbolic of the prophets of Israel who listened to the Voice of God and, thus inspired, went forth to speak out against iniquity. The outstretched arm, the open mouth, the stance of the figure, are intended to show the quality of ecstasy as seen against the hovering spirit of the angel, the messenger.

THE FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM

The flight from Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. was inspired by the first passages from Lamentations in which Jeremiah wrote:

How doth the city sit solitary,

WALL OF THE MARTYRS



The Eternal Martyr



The Flight from Jerusalem

LET THEM MAKE ME
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The Ten Martyrs



Masada



The Crusades

That was full of people!
How she is become as a widow!

The Holy City, razed by the Babylonians, is shown engulfed in flames. The old men in their prayer shawls, the young men, and the woman with child, flee the desolation to death, exile, or slavery.

THE TEN MARTYRS

The agony and strength of Rabbi Hananya ben Teradyon, one of the Ten Martyrs, recalled in the poem "Eleh Ezkerah" ("These men do I recall") is recited on the Day of Atonement. Wrapped in the Torah from which he had been teaching, he was placed on a pyre of green brushwood, his chest drenched with water to prolong his agony, and burned alive. He is depicted here defiant, reaching forth from the circle of flames which consume him. Asked by his disciples: "Master, what do you see?" he replied, "I see parchment burning while the letters of the Torah soar upward."

MASADA

The formidable face of rock, Masada, is shown rising amidst the beautiful and desolate wasteland surrounded by natural mysteries of the Dead Sea. Most Jews are now familiar with the story of the heroic group who sought refuge and fought here. As a theme for this wall it is also symbolic of the countless times during successive occupations of the Homeland and centuries of exile of the Jew when a group, large or small, banded together to resist religious tyranny and died in a reaffirmation of their Faith.

THE CRUSADES

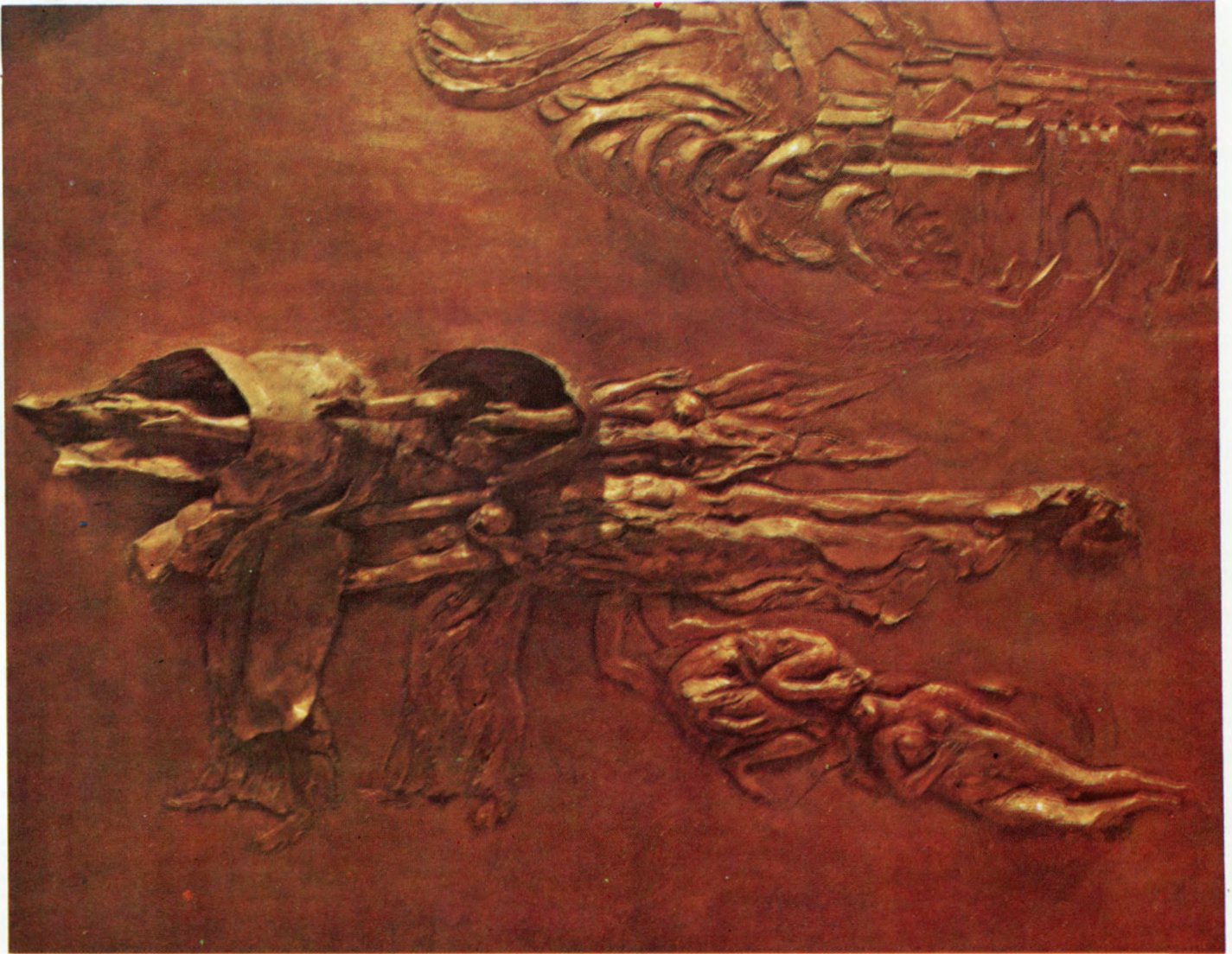
The Crusades lasted almost four centuries, from 1096 to 1475 C.E. For the Church and the ignorant populace, the Jew, characterized eternally by his willingness to suffer death rather than renounce his faith in God, remained an enigma and as a consequence a threat to their essential teachings. How did the Jew, unlike other conquered and subjugated peoples, manage to survive and retain his beliefs? The fifth panel recalls the persecutions during the Crusades. It encompasses those centuries when power and conquest, in the







XXXII WALL OF MARTYRS *The Eternal Martyr*



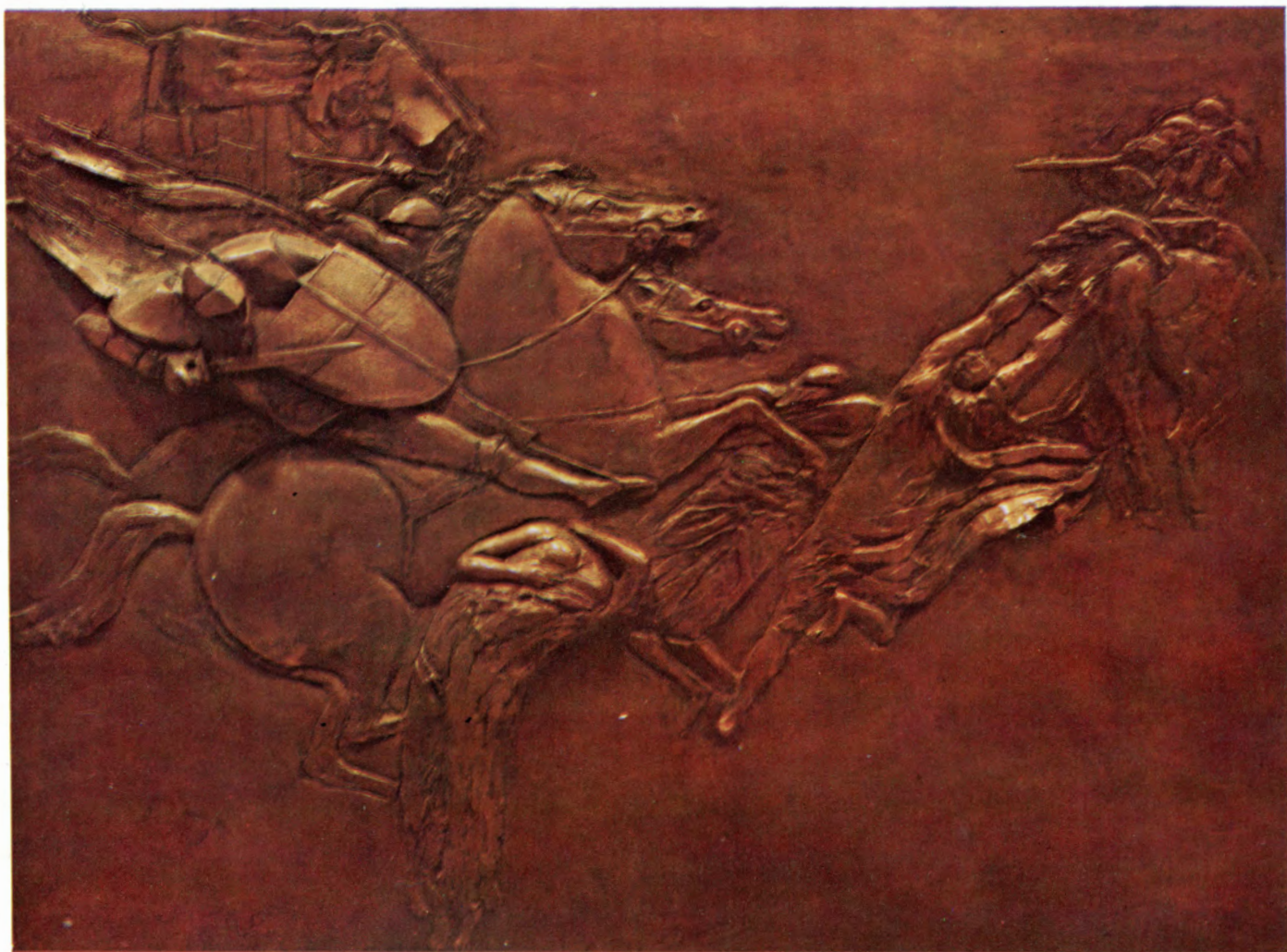
XXXIII WALL OF MARTYRS *The Flight From Jerusalem*

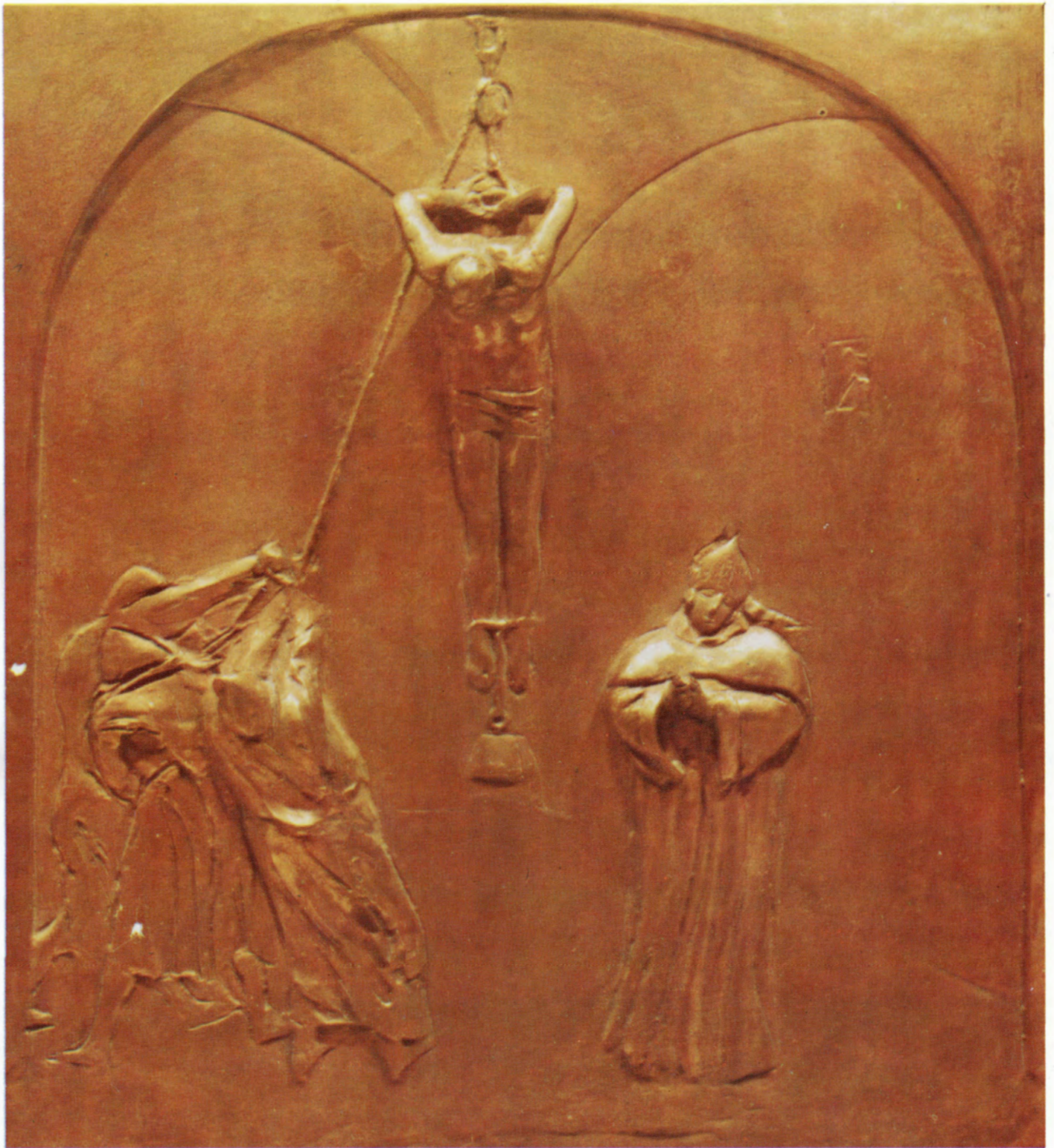


XXXIV WALL OF MARTYRS *The Ten Martyrs*



XXXV · WALL OF MARTYRS *Masada*





XXXVII WALL OF MARTYRS *The Inquisition*



