For many years, I have dreamt of creating a place to explore and encounter Judaism’s fundamental values. Recently, I was given the opportunity to join with others to flesh out this dream of a lush garden where we would use our senses, mind, heart, and soul to confront our 3,000-year-old quest to live as devoted, engaged Jewish human beings.

I decided to create a model of what such a place might be. Initially, I reviewed the vast culture we call Judaism: tales, peoplehood, family, history, ancestors, creation, revelation, Torah, mitzvot, meaning, memory, covenant, community, exile, homeland, time, seasons, nature, love, connection, desire, purpose, faith, sanctity, power, charity, loving kindness, justice, righteousness, vision, destiny, repentance, repair, soul, drives, awe, holiness, elevation, freedom, longing, potential, prayer, faith, and promise.

Then, I built a framework to give order to this rich but overwhelming treasure that is our inheritance. I sensed that the individual — you, me, the potential visitor — needed to be central. God created Adam as an individual to suggest, in some sense, that the world was created for each of us — with all the majesty and responsibility that implies.

I picked up the little wooden artist manikin in my studio and began to imagine her as the center of this new garden. She stood both exalted and enveloped by the three-dimensional model and created a two-dimensional fine-art print (see cover page). It is like a Jewish mandala, where — at the center — all of us can imagine ourselves. The structure embraces and envelops us. It is oriented in the Hebrew manner, with the past to the right and the future to the left. The color scheme of the three-dimensional model remains. I made the area of “Whom do I face?” an unfolding flower — the one of the “other” / the two of marriage / the four of family / the ten of community / the twelve of Jewish peoplehood / and the 70 embracing all of humanity.

I called my question-based conceptual map “The Multi-Dimensional Jew.” Indeed, we are all multidimensional Jews. We all live in a world of questions. We all live within reach of a precious tradition that has grappled with these questions for millennia. My attempt at mapping our Jewish universe may help to orient us within this wondrous Jewish world. I deeply appreciate this opportunity to invite others to enter the world of “The Multi-Dimensional Jew” and, using this compass and map, to discover both ancient and fresh lands, regions, and vistas for exploring Judaism and finding ourselves.