## Accumulations

Museum collections may accumulate a large number of similar works over time to respond to serendipitous opportunities, preserve cultural and artistic heritage, and maintain important research functions. Despite their seeming redundancy, such groups reveal important information about artistic and social processes. Usually just one of a type is selected for display, while its duplicates languish in storage. This presentation instead revels in the collective visual impact of multiples to reveal new insights that might otherwise remain hidden.

## Tissot and the Bible

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These works by the French painter James Tissot (born in 1836, died in 1902) come from a group of more than 350 paintings related to the Hebrew Bible given to the Jewish Museum by the heirs of Jacob Schiff. The paintings span all of the books, from Genesis to the Prophets.

A realist painter, Tissot was trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In October 1886, following a religious vision, he traveled to the Middle East as part of a grand plan to illustrate the Christian Bible. Due to the wide acclaim for those illustrations, the artist decided in the 1890s to paint stories from the Hebrew Bible, inspired by the numerous books of Jewish history, law, and poetry.

The Bible project consumed the last two decades of Tissot's life. During his sojourn in the Middle East, he made detailed drawings of its peoples and places. Tissot also used photography and innumerable models to stage dramatic scenes—some problematically exoticized—as a basis for his imagery. The artist passed away in 1902, leaving the suite unfinished.

In 1904 Tissot's friend and business associate Maurice de Brunoff published works chosen from the more than 400 designs by Tissot and his followers, made between 1896 and 1904. The original designs on view in this gallery were painted in gouache on board, with touches of graphite and ink, and then translated into print using photographic techniques.