

# FOUNDATIONS

“Foundations” is a course designed for parents of young children.  
The material has been created by the **seed** UK team.  
Our goal is to stimulate Jewish learning in the home,  
by equipping parents with easy access to Jewish knowledge.  
Parents *can* take the lead in the process of transmission.

# FOUNDATIONS

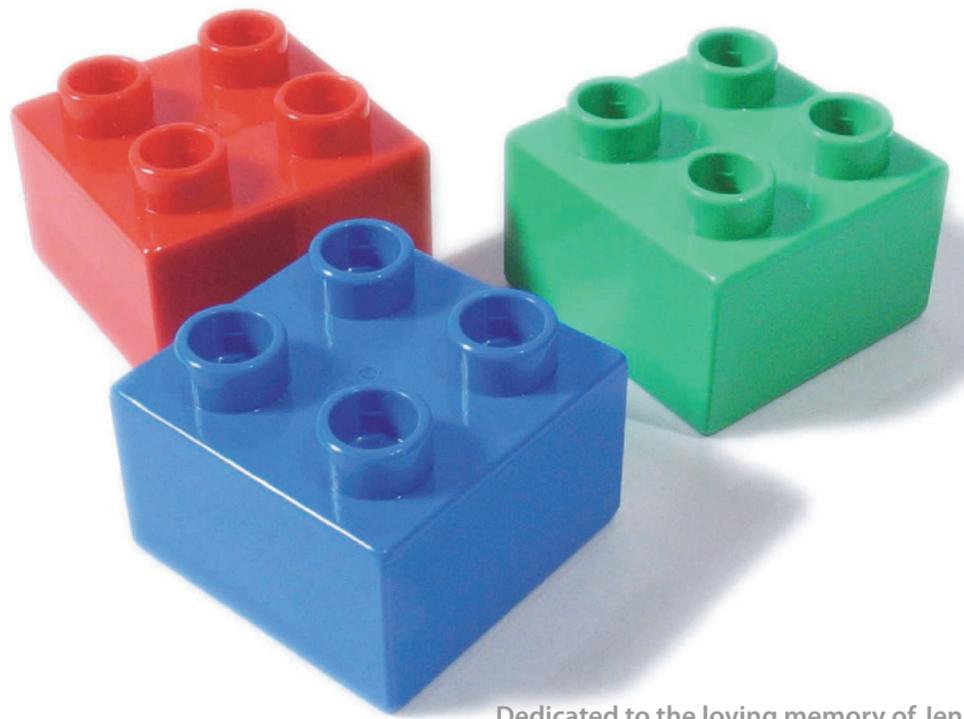
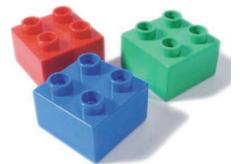
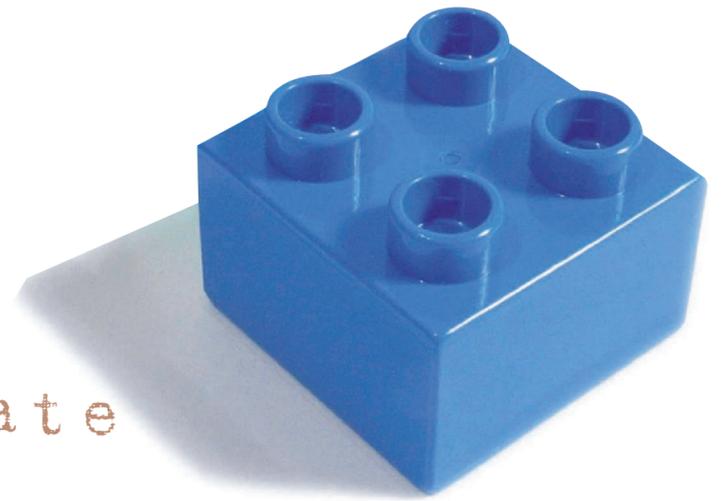
A pioneering 5-week course for parents of young children

Adult ■ useful  
child ■ friendly

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Dedicated to the loving memory of Jenny Dagul - ז"ל - חנה בת בצלאל ז"ל

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## FOUNDATIONS

### “Adult-useful-child-friendly”

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# FOUNDATIONS

It is with a sense of pleasure and pride that we present you with the Foundations Folder. This is the result of many months of conscientious work from Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman and Sari Bordon, together with Rabbi Malcolm Herman. Avrohom has utilised his formidable combination of intellect and creativity to produce this work. Sari has introduced a design template which is both sophisticated and accessible. In addition, Rabbi Avi Lazarus has worked with meticulous care to check and edit this material, together with Mr Yitzchok Silkin – my professional partner of over 25 years.

It was Mr Jonathan Faith who first proposed the concept of a “down to earth” user-friendly course on basic Judaism. Jonathan and Sharon Faith are well known in the field of philanthropy, fronting a determined battle against the forces of assimilation. Many years ago, on their own spiritual journey, Jonathan compiled an informal course on basic Judaism to share with others. We feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to recreate it in a format suitable for the wider public.

This booklet has been dedicated by the Dagul Family in memory of Mrs Jenny Dagul. This is indeed a fitting tribute to a Jewish mother who clearly imbued her children with a love of Judaism and a deep sense of responsibility to the world around them. The Dagul Family have been longstanding and loyal friends of **seed** and we appreciate our ongoing partnership.

Thank you to the team at Jewishpathways.com. Jewishpathways.com takes “web-education” to a whole new level, complementing direct-education programmes throughout the world. Jewishpathways.com has been very generous in the sharing of material when we have needed it; cooperation at its best!

**seed**'s specialty is the family, with a focus on parents of young children. In the last twenty five years there has been enormous investment in Jewish primary schools. Our goal is to strengthen the link between the classroom and the home. “Educate a parent, and you create a teacher.”

Ultimately this publication has been designed as a resource for Jewish parents. Our children come home from school and cheder, brimming with knowledge. This offers a beautiful opportunity to engage with them “Jewishly”, participating in a process of transmission. Yet sometimes we are inhibited - their knowledge surpasses ours! Sometimes we are unsure - they have the answers and we have the questions!

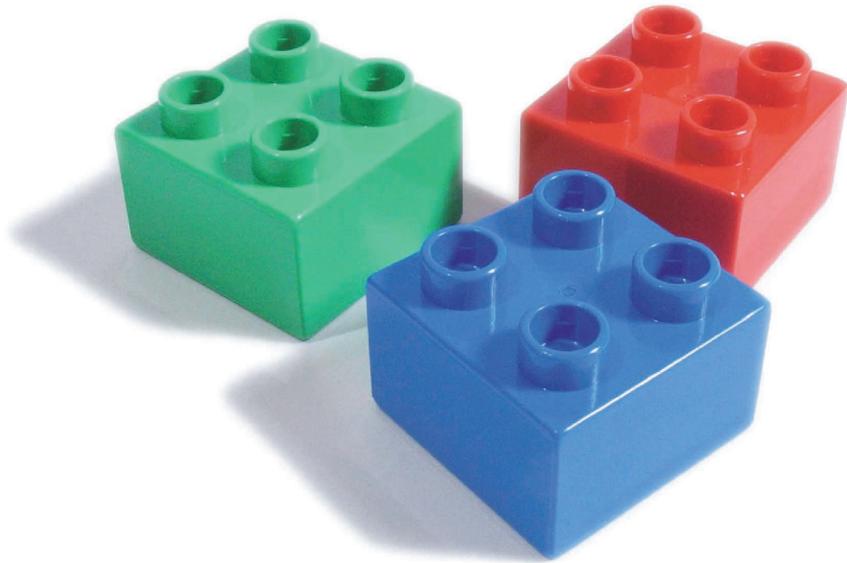
No longer. In combination with the lectures, Foundations offers a unique refresher and an access back to Jewish learning.

This folder has been designed with the family in mind. After much deliberation we have adopted a graphic style that is “adult-useful-child-friendly”. (The drawings have been drawn specially for this publication by our very own Avrohom Zeidman) It is our hope that this will allow parents and children to study at home together, as our people have done for thousands of years...

Thank you for joining us. We hope you enjoy the course!

*Rabbi Joey Grunfeld*  
*National Director seed UK*

# JUDAISM IN A NUTSHELL



# Introduction

We have often been called the “The People of the Book”. It is an apt title, although perhaps “The People of the Scroll” would be even more appropriate. Wherever Jews have travelled, the “scroll”- the *Torah* has come with them. All too often, it was adherence to the scroll itself that triggered the journey. But then this is no ordinary scroll. For thousands of years, Jews have risked life and limb to preserve its teachings.

It is the sole communication from heaven to earth. It is the reason why we are Jews.

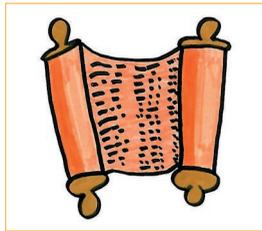
On the surface it is a story and a collection of laws, interwoven one with the other.

Beneath the surface, it is the history of our People and a mandate for a living connection with G-d. Within its columns we discover ourselves.

The word *Torah* itself means “instruction”. G-d’s manual for life. We also refer to it as the *Chumash*, meaning “five” as in the five books. It details the history of the Jewish People from Creation until the death of Moses on the edge of the Promised Land. The story continues beyond that in the subsequent books of the Bible. These were written by people of prophetic vision with whom G-d communicated. However the *Torah* is one grade up. It was dictated by G-d *Himself* to Moses. By definition it is multi-layered, spanning the ordinary to the mystical.

In this first session we take a whistle-stop tour through the *Torah*. First we establish terminology and then we review the narrative, placing people and events in context. En route we pause momentarily to highlight a concept or to accentuate an episode that will give meaning to the practice of Judaism. We encounter a code of law and a code of conduct and rub shoulders fleetingly with long gone personalities, whose lives still guide our own.

This opening presentation is the “foundation” of Foundations.



## What is the Torah?

### Jewish Meaning:

“*Torah*” means “instruction”. This is because the *Torah* is an instruction manual for life. Every invention or gadget comes equipped with an instruction manual. The more complicated the contraption, the larger the instruction manual. Life is complex - it too needs an instruction manual. That is why G-d gave us the *Torah*.

### In Practice:

The word “*Torah*” is used to mean different things:

1. The “Five Books of Moses” (also known as the Pentateuch)
2. The entirety of Judaism’s legal and ethical texts.
3. A “*Sefer Torah*” (“Book of *Torah*”) or *Torah* scroll, written on parchment by a scribe.

Let’s look at this in more detail:

When the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai over 3,300 years ago, every man, woman and child present experienced an encounter with G-d. After the original revelation, G-d spent 40 days dictating to Moses the laws and basic principles of the *Torah* which, once written down by Moses, would constitute the “*Torah Shebichtav*” – The Written *Torah*.

At this time, G-d also taught Moses a detailed, practical explanation of how to fulfil them called the “*Torah Sheb’al Peh*” – The Oral *Torah*.

Over a period of 40 years while the Jews wandered in the desert, G-d continued to dictate to Moses the words that would become the Written *Torah* (The “Five Books of Moses”). Later, the prophets wrote additional books. Together, these books constitute the “Bible”.

Thus we have two parts to the *Torah*:

1. The Written *Torah* (Bible)
2. The Oral *Torah*

### Did you know?

“Pentateuch” is a Greek translation of “Five Scrolls” in reference to the “Five Books of Moses”.



## Written Torah

The Written *Torah* is known in English as the “Bible”.

In Hebrew it is called the *TaNaKh* (pronounced “Te-nach”), which stands for *Torah* (T), *Nevi'im* (N) and *Ketuvim* (K).

The Written *Torah* contains:

1. The “Five Books of Moses” (*Torah*)
2. The Prophets (*Nevi'im*)
3. The Writings (*Ketuvim*)

The *Torah* is the book that was dictated by G-d to Moses. This book is also referred to as the “*Chumash*” which means a fifth, as there are five books contained within the *Torah*.

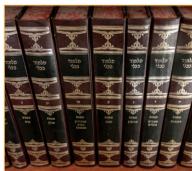
The five books are:

- I. Genesis (*Bereshit*)
- II. Exodus (*Shemot*)
- III. Leviticus (*Vayikra*)
- IV. Numbers (*Bamidbar*)
- V. Deuteronomy (*Devarim*)

A “*Sefer Torah*” is the scroll that contains the five books. A section of it is read every *Shabbat* in the synagogue.

The books of the Prophets (*Nevi'im*), containing narrative about the Jewish people during the prophet’s lifetime, are direct prophecies of what G-d said to them.

Writings (*Ketuvim*) are books written by the prophets with the guidance of G-d.



## Oral Torah

The Oral *Torah* is the expanded details of the Written *Torah*. Originally, it was passed down verbally from Moses to the Jewish people and then from each generation to the next. This oral process of transmission lasted until the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

### Did you know?

Christians refer to the *Tanakh* as the Old Testament to differentiate it from later writings which they call the “New Testament”. Jews do not believe in the “New Testament” and therefore do not refer to the *Tanakh* as the “Old Testament”.

### Did you know?

A *Torah* must be written letter perfect. If a *Torah* contains a single mistake, it may not be used.

## The Writing Down of the Oral *Torah*

### *The Mishna*

After the destruction of the Second Temple (68 CE), with increased persecutions and greater dispersion of the Jews, the oral chain of transmission was in danger of being broken. It became clear that the Oral *Torah* could no longer survive without being written down. Hence, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the Rabbinic scholar and leader of the generation, compiled a shorthand written version of the Oral *Torah* called the *Mishna*.

Although no longer completely oral in form, its concise and brief nature retained the need for an oral dimension.

The death of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi in the early part of 200 CE marked the end of a period covering approximately 200 years (from circa 10 BCE to 200 CE), known as the era of the *Tana'im* (“Teachers”). The teachings of the *Tana'im* are represented in the *Mishna*.

### *The Gemara*

During the centuries following the completion of the *Mishna*, the chain of transmission of the Oral *Torah* was further weakened by increased persecution of the Jews. It became necessary to include more information in the recorded part of the Oral *Torah*.

The Rabbis’ legal debates in discussion of the *Mishna* were written down over the next 300 years. This became known as the *Gemara*.

The Rabbis represented in the *Gemara* are referred to as *Amora'im*, which means “explainers” or “interpreters”.

This process of writing the *Gemara* was done separately but concurrently by the Rabbis living in Babylon (part of the Persian Empire) and those still living in Israel.

The completed work of *Mishna* and *Gemara* written in Babylon is called the Babylonian *Talmud*.

The work completed in the Land of Israel is called the Jerusalem *Talmud*.

#### Did you know?

The Babylonian *Talmud* is studied and used more than the Jerusalem *Talmud* because it is more comprehensive and detailed in its discussions.

In subsequent generations, the Rabbis wrote further elucidations on the *Talmud* which have become known as “commentaries”.

The first generation of commentaries from the period: circa 500 to 1050 CE is known as the *Geonim*.

The second generation of commentaries from the period: circa 1050 to 1500 CE is known as the *Rishonim*.

The third generation of commentaries from the period: circa 1500 CE until this current day is known as the *Achronim*.

# TORAH

## WRITTEN LAW Torah Shebichtav

## ORAL LAW Torah Sheba'al Peh

TeNaKh  
Bible

### TORAH The Five Books of Moses

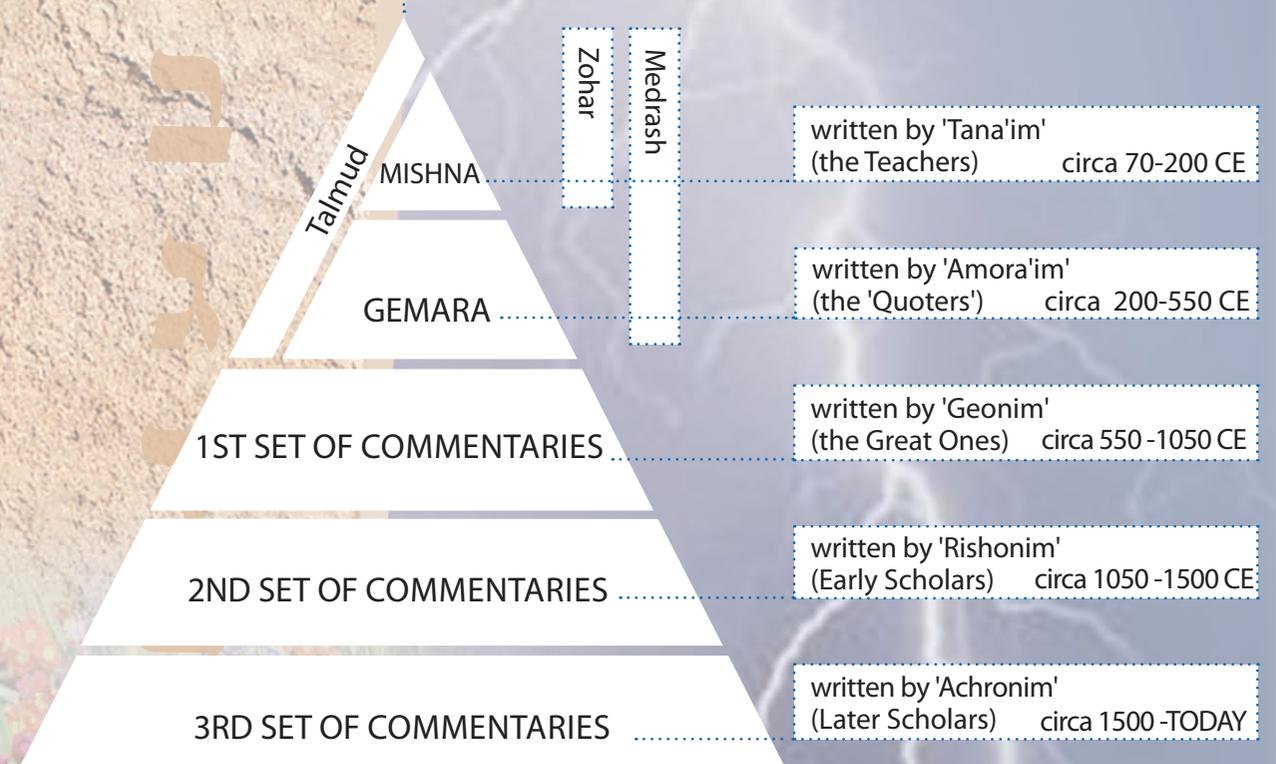
BERESHIT Genesis	SHEMOT Exodus	VAYIKRA Leviticus	BAMIDBAR Numbers	DEVARIM Deuteronomy
Bereshit	Shemot	Vayikra	Bamidbar	Devarim
Noach	Va'era	Tzav	Naso	Va'etchanan
Lech Lecha	Bo	Shemini	Beha'alotcha	Ekev
Vayera	Beshalach	Tazriah	Shelach	Re'eh
Chayei Sarah	Yitro	Metzora	Korach	Shoftim
Toldot	Mishpatim	Acharei Mot	Chukat	Ki Tetzei
Vayetzei	Terumah	Kedoshim	Balak	Ki Tavo
Vayishlach	Tetzaveh	Emor	Pinchas	Nitzavim
Vayeshev	Ki Tiso	Behar	Mattot	Vayelech
Miketz	Vayakhel	Bechukotai	Massei	Ha'azinu
Vayigash	Pekudei			Vezot Habracha
Vayechi				

### NEVI'IM Prophets

Joshua  
Judges  
Samuel  
Kings  
Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Ezekiel  
The 12 Minor prophets

### KETUVIM Writings

Psalms  
Proverbs  
Job  
5 MEGILLOT:  
Song of Songs  
Ruth  
Lamentations  
Ecclesiastes  
Esther  
Daniel  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Book of Chronicles



Zohar  
Medrash

Talmud

MISHNA

GEMARA

1ST SET OF COMMENTARIES

2ND SET OF COMMENTARIES

3RD SET OF COMMENTARIES

written by 'Tana'im'  
(the Teachers) circa 70-200 CE

written by 'Amora'im'  
(the 'Quoters') circa 200-550 CE

written by 'Geonim'  
(the Great Ones) circa 550-1050 CE

written by 'Rishonim'  
(Early Scholars) circa 1050-1500 CE

written by 'Achronim'  
(Later Scholars) circa 1500-TODAY

# Jewish History in a Nutshell

Common Date	Jewish Date	Event	Era
3760 BCE	0	Adam & Eve	The Birth of Monotheism
2704	1056	Noah Born	
1812	1948	Abraham Born	
1712	2048	Isaac Born	
1652	2108	Jacob Born	
1568-1561	2192-2199	Tribes Born	
1522	2238	12 Tribes descend to Egypt	Egypt, Exodus & Revelation
1312	2448	Jews leave Egypt and receive the Torah at Sinai	
1272	2488	Jewish Nation enters Israel	The First Temple
907	2854	David Born	
848	2913	Solomon Born	
832	2928	First Temple Built	
796	2964	Kingdom Divided	
555	3205	Northern Kingdom destroyed; 10 Tribes exiled	Decline of the 1st Temple and Exile
422	3338	First Temple Destroyed	
422-352	3338-3408	Babylonian Exile	
355	3401	Purim Events	
352	3408	Second Temple built	The Second Temple
139	3622	Chanukah	
68 CE	3828	Second Temple destroyed	
c. 150-200	c. 3900-4000	Compilation of Mishna	
c.200	c.4000	Jewish Centre shifts to Babylon	Development of Mishna and Gemara
c.500	4300	Gemara compiled	
1040-1105	4800-4865	Rashi's Life	Medieval Period
1096	4856	First Crusade	
1135-1204	4895-4965	Maimonides' (Rambam) life	
1492	5252	Expulsion of Spanish Jewry	
1698-1760	5458-5520	Baal Shem Tov's Life / Chassidism	Modernity and Movements
1803	5563	"Volozhin" (First Modern Yeshiva) created	
1810-1883	5570-5643	Life of Rabbi Israel Salanter/Mussar	
1939-45	5699-5705	Holocaust	
1948	5708	State of Israel born	

## The Narrative of the Torah!

This is a whistle stop tour of the storyline of the *Torah*. We have deliberately chosen a narrative style interspersed with occasional quotes to give a flavour of the real thing.

These are the stories that are taught from earliest ages. Of course, they are more than just stories. This is our history; replete with message and meaning. An instruction for living.

When you open the *Torah* you will see that it reads as a synthesis of narrative and law. Whilst the first book is almost exclusively narrative, the second begins that way and then quickly becomes a combination of both. The third book is almost exclusively law! The fourth and fifth are again a blend. Here we capture the narrative.

(The dates used in this section are the “Jewish dates” which place Creation as year 0. We are currently in the year 5770\*.)

*The fabric of this chapter has been reprinted from "Foundations of Judaism" by Akiva Aaronson, with permission from Targum Press and the author; with elaborations from the seed team.*

### Did you know?

There are four categories of Creation:

**Inanimate objects:** A form but no life-force.

**Plant life:** A form and enough life-force to reproduce but not to move sufficiently.

**Animal life:** A form and enough life-force to reproduce, to move, and to act by instinct.

**Humanity:** Humanity has a Divine soul and the power of speech, which sets it above and apart from the rest of Creation.

## Creation

“In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth...”  
(Gen. 1:1)

These famous words open the *Torah* itself and introduce the six days of Creation. In short, this is what happened

**Day 1:** Heaven and earth, Light and darkness.

**Day 2:** The sky.

**Day 3:** The seas, dry land, and vegetation.

**Day 4:** The sun, moon, stars, and planets.

**Day 5:** Living creatures of the sky and sea.

**Day 6:** Mammals that walk the land; man and woman.

**Day 7:** G-d blessed the seventh day and “rested”. (*Shabbat*)



## The Beginning of Mankind

Adam was the first man. G-d created him from the earth of the Aground, and so he was called Adam, meaning “earth”. G-d created a wife for Adam. Adam called his wife Eve. In Hebrew her name is *Chava* (“life giver”) because she was the mother of all people.

G-d planted a garden in Eden and placed Adam and Eve there. By definition, their existence was “other worldly”, albeit on this earth.

G-d told them, “Of every tree of the garden you may eat, but from the Tree of Knowledge of good and bad you may not eat”. (Gen. 2:17-18)

In the garden there was a serpent that could communicate miraculously. The serpent persuaded Eve to eat from the tree and she in turn offered the fruit to Adam. Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, and G-d banished them from the Garden of Eden. They could no longer live in the earthly paradise.

Eve conceived and bore a son and named him Cain. She bore a second son named Abel. Abel became a shepherd and Cain a tiller of the ground. Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to G-d, but G-d accepted only Abel’s offering. In jealousy, Cain killed Abel. G-d cursed Cain and punished him with a life of wandering.

Adam and his wife had another son called Seth. In those early days of human existence, the world was a very different place. Initially G-d gave humanity longevity and power and people lived for much longer. Sadly, they abused this privilege and G-d gradually reduced human years to a maximum of 120.

## The Ten Generations from Adam to Noah

The world was populated by the descendants of Adam and Eve. After ten generations, in the year 1056, Noah was born. He lived for 950 years. Noah had three sons: Shem, Cham, and Japheth. In Noah’s generation, the world was corrupt and evil. People practised idolatry, and theft was common. Only Noah remained righteous, as it says:

“Noah was faultless in his generation; Noah walked with G-d.” (Gen. 6:9)

G-d told Noah that he must build an ark, for He intended to bring a flood that would destroy all life on the earth. G-d told Noah to bring to the ark one pair of all non-



**Did you know?****The Seven Noahide Laws are:**

1. Do not murder
2. Do not steal
3. Do not worship false gods
4. Do not be sexually immoral
5. Do not eat a limb removed from a live animal
6. Do not curse G-d
7. Set up courts and bring offenders to justice



kosher creatures, a male and a female, and seven pairs of all kosher creatures, so that life could be replenished after the Flood.

In the year 1656 after Creation, the Flood came and destroyed all life. The fountains of the deep opened up, and the rain fell from the heavens for forty days and forty nights. It took a full year before the earth was habitable again. The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, and only those in the ark survived – Noah, his family and the animals. After the Flood, the world was repopulated through the children of Noah.

G-d gave mankind seven laws as the basis for life. In essence these constitute the fabric of civilisation and a moral society.

These seven *Mitzvot* are known as the *Seven Noahide Laws*, and all of mankind is required to maintain them.

## The Ten Generations from Noah to Abraham

Abraham was born in the year 1948 after Creation and was the father of the Jewish people.

At the time of Abraham the people were evil and they gathered together to build a tower to reach and conquer heaven. G-d confused them by causing them to speak different languages. The Tower became known as the *Tower of Babel* (Tower of Confusion). In this impossible situation, the construction had to stop, and the people were dispersed across the region.

Abraham had set himself apart from the rest of the world. He was called Abraham *Ha'Ivri*. Literally this means “The Hebrew”. The word also means “the one from the other side”. Ideologically, he stood on one side, while the rest of the world stood on the other. He preached monotheism and they practised paganism.

## The Command to Abraham and Abraham's Journey

Abraham left his birthplace and travelled to Haran, together with his father, Terakh. G-d then told Abraham to leave Haran and to journey to the land of Canaan. His mission demanded that he leave the past behind. G-d promised Abraham:

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great.” (Gen. 12:2)

Later, Abraham underwent *Brit Milah* (circumcision).

## The Three Patriarchs

Abraham's wife, Sarah, was childless for many years and she encouraged her husband to take a second wife named Hagar. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael - the ancestor of the Arab world. Ishmael had a *Brit Milah* at the age of 13.

Miraculously, Sarah bore Abraham a son in their old age, whom they named Isaac. Abraham was the example par excellence of the man of faith, the founding father of what was to become the Jewish People. G-d tested his faith no less than ten times. He stands for all time as a role model of belief in G-d. The ultimate test was the *Akeidah* - the binding of Isaac. G-d instructed Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham was ready to go ahead with this remarkable demand. At the last moment G-d stops him. He had passed the test, demonstrating for all time that his faith in G-d transcended all personal affiliations. It was this that defined his life. Abraham brought a ram as an offering in place of his son.

Now it was time to select a wife for his son Isaac. Abraham dispatches his trusted servant Eliezer to find a suitable match. Eliezer prays to G-d by a well of water, to assist him in this task. Altruism is the motif of the household of Abraham, and Eliezer asks G-d that the young lady display her kindness. He had hardly finished his prayer, before Rebecca walks past and responds to Eliezer's request for water with unusual generosity and sensitivity. After some discussion it transpires that she is a niece of Sarah.

Isaac marries Rebecca. Rebecca gives birth to twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Esau was the older of the two. They were very different personalities. Jacob was the spiritual heir of his father and grandfather. Esau, on the other hand, was a wild personality with an inclination for aggression. On paper, Esau as the eldest was entitled to become the head of the family. But he was clearly not an appropriate candidate. Isaac did not have a full appreciation of Esau's disreputable activities but Rebecca did. In two separate episodes Jacob moves to take the responsibility away from his brother. In the first episode he barter with him to exchange the birthright for some food.

On the second occasion Rebecca encourages Jacob to present



himself to Isaac as though he was Esau, to receive critical blessings from him. Isaac was poor-sighted and does not realise the switch of sons. Although, once it became clear to him what happened, he does not retract the blessings - on the contrary he endorsed them.

But Esau nurtures resentment, forcing his brother to flee home. En route, Jacob has a dream, “Jacob’s ladder”. In his dream he sees a ladder extending from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending.

Jacob had four wives. Together they gave birth to twelve sons and one daughter. Later on, the twelve sons became the Twelve Tribes of Israel. After twenty one years Isaac returns home. On the way he is attacked by an angel representing his brother Esau. Jacob defends himself successfully.

### Did you know?

Technically, Arabs are also Semites.

They are descended from Shem (Sem) the son of Noah and ancestor of Abraham.

One of the youngest sons of Jacob was Joseph, the son of his old age. Joseph sparked the jealousy of his brothers. He had recurring dreams that they would eventually bow down to him. Joseph’s brothers came together and sold him as a slave to traders travelling to Egypt. They told their father that he had been killed by a wild animal.

## Joseph Becomes Viceroy in Egypt

In Egypt, Joseph became a servant in the house of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s leading officers. Potiphar grew rich through Joseph’s enterprise. G-d had blessed Joseph, and he was successful in all that he did.

Joseph was wrongly accused of acting improperly with the wife of Potiphar and was imprisoned. In prison, Joseph correctly interpreted the dreams of two other inmates: Pharaoh’s butler and his baker. Eventually, the butler was released, but the baker was hanged. Later, when Pharaoh himself had two dreams that no one could interpret, the butler suggested that Joseph be taken out of prison to interpret them. Joseph told Pharaoh the meaning of his dreams – that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine in Egypt.



Pharaoh realised that G-d was with Joseph, and Pharaoh appointed Joseph viceroy over all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Joseph ordered the storing of grain in preparation for

the seven years of famine.

The years of famine began, and the famine affected the whole region. Eventually Joseph's own brothers came down to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognised them, but they did not recognise him. Over twenty years had passed since he left. Joseph decides to test their loyalty to each other before he reveals his identity. He frames a theft of his own goblet and accuses Benjamin, one of the brothers, of the crime. Judah valiantly defends Benjamin and Joseph understands that they had learnt the lessons of the past.

This time they stood by their brother and Joseph identifies himself to them. There is a tearful reunion. Then Joseph's elderly father, Jacob, joins him in Egypt. The whole family resettles there, numbering 70 people in total.

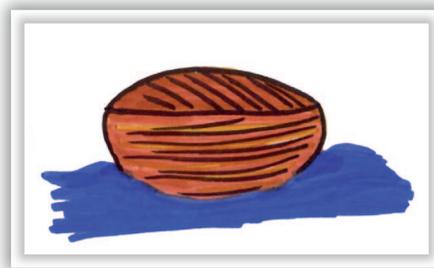
Pharaoh gave them the fertile suburb of Goshen in which to dwell, where they were to survive the years of famine.

With that, the period of exile in Egypt had begun.

## A New King in Egypt

The generation of Joseph died, and a new king came to the throne in Egypt. The Israelites had increased rapidly in number, and the new king saw them as a threat - dislike of the unlike. He enslaved them and ordered them to build the storage cities of Pithom and Ramses. However, the Israelites continued to increase in number, despite their slavery, and Pharaoh decreed the killing of all newborn Jewish males. His astronomers had informed him that a boy was about to be born who would be the saviour of the Jews.

At this time Moses was born, from the tribe of *Levi*. At his birth the whole house filled with light. He was clearly destined for spiritual greatness. His mother saved him from the Egyptians by hiding him. When she could no longer hide him, she made a reed basket for him and placed him on the River Nile. He was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, who had come down to the Nile to bathe. Moses' sister Miriam was keeping an eye on him and she offered to fetch a Hebrew nurse to look after Moses, she fetched his own mother Jochebed. Moses was brought to Pharaoh's palace.



## Moses

Moses grew up in the palace of Pharaoh. He was an Israelite by birth, an Egyptian prince by upbringing. This dichotomy was resolved one day when Moses sees an Egyptian taskmaster striking a Hebrew slave. Moses steps in and kills the taskmaster. The encounter is public knowledge and Moses flees Pharaoh escaping to Midian. In Midian Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of a spiritual leader named Jethro.

One day Moses was shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro in the wilderness – when he saw a bush burning with fire, yet it was not consumed. Moses turned aside to look at the bush, and from the bush G-d called to him.



G-d said:

“Take off your shoes for the place upon which you are standing is holy ground.” (Exod. 3:5)

Then G-d said:

“I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, the G-d of Jacob...now go to Pharaoh and you shall take My people the Children of Israel out of Egypt.” (Exod. 3:6-10)

Moses and his brother Aaron went to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go and instead increased their burden.

In the final resort, G-d brought the Ten Plagues against Egypt and revealed His Kingship over the entire world.

# The Ten Plagues

**Blood:**

The Nile and all other water in Egypt turned to blood.

**Frogs:**

Frogs were everywhere in Egypt.

**Lice:**

The dust in Egypt turned into lice, attacking man and beast.

**Wild Animals:**

Wild animals attacked people throughout Egypt.

**Epidemic:**

An epidemic caused the death of livestock.

**Boils:**

Boils appeared on the bodies of people and livestock.

**Hail:**

Hail destroyed men, beasts, and vegetation throughout Egypt.

**Locusts:**

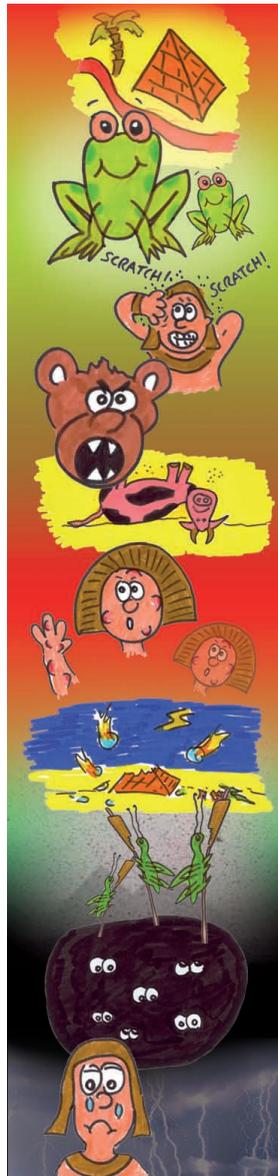
Locusts ate all the plants and trees in Egypt.

**Darkness:**

There was thick darkness over Egypt, except in the region where the Israelites lived.

**Death of the Firstborn:**

The male firstborn of each Egyptian household died.



On the night of the tenth and final plague, G-d passed through Egypt, killing all firstborn males of man and animal alike, except in the houses where the Israelites had marked their doorposts and beams with blood. This was the blood of the Passover sacrifice – a lamb or young goat – which the Israelites had slaughtered that afternoon and which they had eaten that night in great haste, ready to leave. The lamb was a sacred animal in ancient Egypt. This sacrifice was a demonstration of a

### Did you know?

Although an exile of 400 years had been prophesied, G-d brought His people out of Egypt after 210 years. Some commentators explain that the exile came to an end earlier because the degree of the suffering of the Israelites was so great.

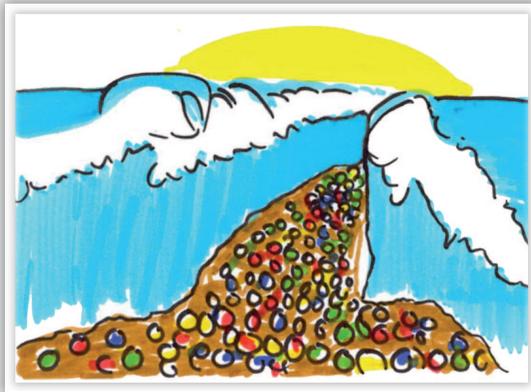
complete rejection of Egypt and all it represented. It was also a test of faith - an act of defiance towards the former taskmaster.

The plague generated a huge cry throughout Egypt. Pharaoh ordered Moses and the Israelites to leave. The Israelites asked for gold and silver from the Egyptians as Moses had instructed them - this was small reparation for decades of slave labour. In their haste, the Israelites did not have time to let their dough rise before they left. Their dough baked into unleavened bread called *Matzot*, which they had also eaten as slaves in Egypt. This was the night of the tenth and final plague in Egypt - the first *Seder* night in the history of the Jewish people.

The Israelites, numbering at least three million people, left Egypt in the month of *Nissan*, in the year 2448. It must have been a remarkable sight to witness. (A slave nation emerging triumphant, with the Creator of heaven and earth as champion of their cause!

## The Exodus

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan* in the year 2448, over 3,300 years ago. G-d's presence travelled before them by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire, so that they could travel by day and night. One week after the start of the Exodus, the Israelites reached the Reed Sea. But tragedy loomed.



The Egyptian army gave chase and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d.

G-d told Moses:

“Lift up your staff and stretch out your arm over the sea.”  
(Exod. 14:16)

Moses stretched his hand out over the sea and G-d split the sea - an unparalleled miracle! The Children of Israel walked through the sea on dry land, and the water formed a wall for them, on either side. The

Egyptians pursued them in great haste - every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.

G-d said to Moses:

“Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the waters shall return, coming down on Egypt, its chariots, and its horsemen.”  
(Exod. 14:26)

Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the waters returned to normal, crashing down on the Egyptian army, drowning them to a man. Defeat of an empire.

“On that day, G-d saved the Israelites from the hand of Egypt, and the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great hand that G-d had inflicted against Egypt, and the people feared G-d, and they had faith in G-d and in His servant Moses.” (Exod. 13:30-31)

Moses and the Israelites sang a song of praise to G-d for the miracle at the sea - celebrating their salvation. This song is called “The Song of the Sea” - (Exod. 15:1-19). Afterwards, Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Moses and Aaron, and all the women also sang a song of praise to G-d.

Five weeks after the crossing of the Reed Sea, the Israelites reached Mount Sinai in the Sinai desert. This was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of *Sivan*. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of *Sivan*, in Divine Revelation, G-d spoke the first two of the Ten Commandments to the entire Jewish people. This event was unique in world history. It was a mass revelation. Every man, woman and child heard the voice of G-d.

The following day, Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and G-d taught him the entire *Torah* – the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah*.

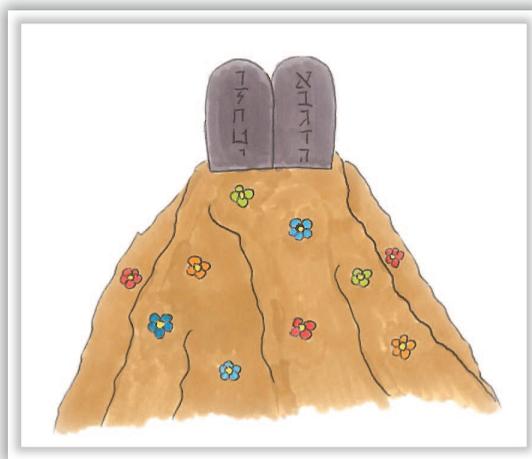
After forty days and forty nights, Moses descended from Mount Sinai carrying the Tablets of the Covenant. However, he found that in his absence the Israelites had made a golden calf. This was a spiritual tragedy.

On seeing the golden calf, Moses cast the Tablets from his hands and they smashed.

The next day he ascended Mount Sinai again to pray for forgiveness for the Jewish people. Later he ascended for a third time returning with a second set of Tablets on the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tishrei* (*Yom Kippur*).

The Israelites built a *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) - a mini, portable, Temple as instructed by G-d. This was the centre of Divine worship during the years of wandering in the wilderness. It was a place of intense holiness and spirituality. One could literally observe the presence of G-d.

Close to the land of Israel, the Israelites sent out a spy mission. Twelve spies spent forty days in the land. But ten of the twelve



returned with a gloomy report, expressing a lack of faith in G-d's ability to conquer the land. Sadly their view prevailed, despite the protestations of the two righteous spies, Joshua and Caleb. The Jewish people lost hope. G-d then decreed that all those between the ages of 20 years to 60 years had forfeited their right to enter the land. The people would now wander for forty years and only those below twenty years old at the time of the episode would inherit the land. This was with the exception of the two honourable spies.

There were several incidents of note that took place in those forty years. There was the rebellion of Korah, a cousin of Moses. He maintained that he had been passed over in the distribution of honours and he mustered a mutiny. There was also the attempted cursing of the Israelites by the non-Jewish prophet Bilaam. G-d turned his curse to rich blessing.

In fact, Moses himself erred on one occasion and didn't quite follow the instruction of G-d. For this he was not permitted to enter the Land of Israel. Nonetheless, he receives the ultimate obituary from G-d himself:

"There never again arose in Israel, a prophet like Moses who knew G-d face to face." (Deut. 34:10)

Joshua became the leader of the Jewish people after Moses, and led a new generation of Israel across the River Jordan into the Promised Land.

### Did you know?

Joshua was not the son of Moses but his closest disciple. He is compared to the moon against Moses as the sun. In other words he most closely "reflected" the light of the master, as the moon reflects the sun.

Parents' Assistant

**Aim:** To illustrate our rich heritage and portray the importance of the transmission

**Activity:** Compile a family tree - interview grandparents, look at old photos

# The Book of Bereshit

**1**

## Bereshit

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| I Six days of creation                          | of Eden                 |
| II The sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge | IV Cain kills Abel      |
| III Expulsion from Garden                       | V Decree of destruction |

**2**

## Noach

- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| I The Flood         | IV The Tower of Babel      |
| II Covenant         | V Ten generations to Abram |
| III Curse of Canaan |                            |

**3**

## Lech Lecha

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| I Abram journeys to Canaan  | V The birth of Ishmael           |
| II Pharaoh takes Sarai      | VI Abram's & Sarai's name change |
| III Abram battles the kings | VII Circumcision                 |
| IV The Covenant with G-d    |                                  |

**4**

## Vayera

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| I Sodom destroyed              | V Covenant with Abimelech |
| II Abimelech takes Sarah       | VI Binding of Isaac       |
| III Sarah gives birth to Isaac | VII Rebecca is born       |
| IV Ishmael expelled            |                           |

**5**

## Chayei Sarah

- |                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I Sarah dies                         | IV Abraham dies                     |
| II The purchase of cave of Machpelah | V Descendants of Ishmael are listed |
| III Isaac and Rebecca                |                                     |

**6**

## Toldot

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| I The birth of Jacob and Esau   | III Jacob takes the blessing of Esau |
| II Jacob buys Esau's birthright |                                      |

**7**

## Vayetzei

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| I Jacob's ladder      | IV Birth of eleven Tribes |
| II Jacob meets Rachel | V Jacob's journey home    |
| III Jacob marries     |                           |

**8**

## Vayishlach

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| I Confrontation with Esau                | V Isaac dies                     |
| II Dinah's kidnap                        | VI Esau's and Seir's descendants |
| III Jacob has "Israel" added to his name | VII Kings of Edom                |
| IV The birth of Benjamin                 |                                  |

**9**

## Vayeshev

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| I Jacob settles in Canaan    | IV Judah and Tamar           |
| II Joseph's dreams           | V Joseph imprisoned in Egypt |
| III Joseph sold into slavery |                              |

**10**

## Miketz

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| I Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams | III Famine strikes                        |
| II Joseph becomes the viceroy        | IV Joseph's brothers are accused as spies |
|                                      | V Benjamin arrested                       |

**11**

## Vayigash

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| I Joseph reveals himself to his brothers | III The family settles in Goshen  |
| II Jacob brings his family to Egypt      | IV Effects of the famine on Egypt |

**12**

## Vayechi

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| I Joseph's promise to Jacob                 | Twelve Tribes                |
| II Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh | IV Jacob's death             |
| III Jacob's blessing of the                 | V Joseph's death and promise |

We would like to thank [www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com](http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com) for permission to use material in the completion of this chart.

# The Book of Shemot

1

## Shemot

- |                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| I Pharaoh enslaves the Jewish people | IV The burning bush        |
| II Birth of Moses                    | V Moses is sent to Pharaoh |
| III Moses is forced to flee          | VI Pharaoh's response      |

2

## Va'era

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I Moses protests the mission | Pharaoh                        |
| II Moses's genealogy         | IV The staff becomes a serpent |
| III Moses returns to         | V The Ten Plagues begin        |

3

## Bo

- |                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| I Final plagues                  | IV Sanctification of the firstborn |
| II The first <i>Pesach Seder</i> |                                    |
| III The Exodus from Egypt        |                                    |

4

## Beshalach

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| I Escape from Egypt          | V <i>Manna</i> from heaven |
| II Splitting of the Reed Sea | VI <i>Shabbat</i> laws     |
| III Song at the Sea          | VII Water from a rock      |
| IV Bitter waters             | VIII Amalek attacks        |

5

## Yitro

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| I On the advice of Jethro, Moses appoints judges | III The Jewish nation receives The Ten Commandments |
| II Preparation for receiving the <i>Torah</i>    | IV Other laws                                       |

6

## Mishpatim

- |                               |
|-------------------------------|
| I Social laws                 |
| II Sealing the Covenant       |
| III Moses ascends Mount Sinai |

7

## Terumah

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| I Contributions for building the Tabernacle (Mini Temple) | ing the Tabernacle |
| II Instructions for build-                                |                    |

8

## Tetzaveh

- |                              |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| I Oil for the <i>Menorah</i> | Priests and the Altar |
| II The Priest's clothing     | IV The Incense Altar  |
| III Consecration of the      |                       |

9

## Ki Tisa

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| I The half-Shekel for census      | (Tablets)                    |
| II The <i>Shabbat</i>             | V Plea for Divine mercy      |
| III The Golden Calf               | VI The Thirteen Attributes   |
| IV Moses breaks the <i>Luchot</i> | VII The Second <i>Luchot</i> |

10

## Vayakel

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| I The <i>Shabbat</i>                     | III Construction of the Tabernacle |
| II Materials for building the Tabernacle |                                    |

11

## Pekudei

- |                                       |                                |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I The Jews are counted                | Tabernacle                     |
| II Making the garments of the Priests | IV The Cloud of Glory descends |
| III Placements into the               |                                |

# The Book of Vayikra

1

## Vayikra

- I The Burnt-offerings
- II The Meal-offerings (*Mincha*)
- III The Peace-offerings
- IV The Mistake-offerings
- V The Guilt-offerings

2

## Tzav

- I Additional offerings (*Musaf*)
- II The portion of the Priests
- III Installation of the Priests

3

## Shemini

- I Inauguration of the Tabernacle
- II Death of Aaron's sons: Nadab and Abihu
- III Priests are warned against drinking
- IV Laws of *kosher* animals and fish

4

## Tazria

- I Childbirth
- II Laws of the diseases of the skin
- III Laws of the diseases on clothing

5

## Metzora

- I Purification from the diseases of the skin
- II Laws of the diseases on houses
- III The laws of purity and impurity

6

## Acharei Mot

- I The *Yom Kippur* service
- II Prohibition against eating blood
- III Forbidden relationships

7

## Kedoshim

- I Laws for a Holy nation
- II Laws for the First Fruits (*Bikkurim*)
- III The consequences of forbidden practices and forbidden relationships

8

## Emor

- I Laws of Priests
- II Laws of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest)
- III The Festivals

9

## Behar

- I The Sabbatical year (*Shmitta*)
- II The selling and redemption of land in Israel
- III Laws of lending money
- IV Laws of slaves

10

## Bechukotai

- I Reward and punishment
- II Endowment evaluations

# The Book of Bamidbar

1

## Bamidbar

- I The census
- II The camp arrangement
- III The census and the duties of Levites
- IV Redemption of the firstborn

2

## Naso

- I The Gershon family's responsibilities
- II The Merari family's responsibilities
- III Camp purification
- IV Suspected adulteress (The *Sotah*)
- V The Nazirite
- VI Leader's dedication offering

3

## Beha'alotcha

- I Menorah
- II Inauguration of Levites
- III *Pesach*
- IV Departure from Mount Sinai
- V Complaints and the *S'lav* (Quail)
- VI Miriam is quarantined

4

## Shelach

- I Moses sends the twelve spies
- II The decree of forty years
- III The laws of offerings
- IV The *Shabbat* violator

5

## Korach

- I The rebellion of Korah
- II The punishment for the rebellion
- III The almond-blossoming staff
- IV Responsibilities of Priests and Levites
- V Shares of the Priests and Levites

6

## Chukat

- I The *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer)
- II The death of Moses
- III Moses hits the rock
- IV Near war with Edom
- V Aaron dies
- VI The war with Canaan
- VII Snakes
- VIII Confrontation with Sihon and Og

7

## Balak

- I Balak hires Bilaam to curse Israel
- II Balaam's donkey speaks to him
- III Bilaam's attempted curse becomes a blessing
- IV Israel is lured by Moab

8

## Pinchas

- I Pinchas' reward for zealotness
- II Orders to attack Midian
- III A new census
- IV The division of Israel
- V The laws of inheritance
- VI Daily and holiday sacrifices

9

## Mattot

- I Laws of vows
- II The war against Midian
- III Reuben and Gad
- request Transjordan

10

## Massei

- I Journeys of Israel
- II The borders of Israel
- III New leaders
- IV The Levitical cities
- V The cities of refuge
- VI Inter-tribal marriage

# The Book of Devarim

## 1 Devarim

I Recollection of events, encounters and victories, by Moses in the final weeks of his life

## 2 Va'etchanan

I Moses' plea  
II Loyalty to G-d  
III Setting up the cities of refuge  
IV The Ten Commandments  
V The *Shema* (Hear O Israel)  
VI Warnings  
VII The Exodus

## 3 Ekev

I Reward for obedience  
II Warning against overconfidence  
III Warnings  
IV Following G-d

## 4 Re'eh

I The choice  
II Non-sacrificial meat  
III Idolatrous prophet and city  
IV *Kosher* and *Non-kosher* animals  
V Tithes  
VI Sabbatical year  
VII Firstborn animals  
VIII Festivals

## 5 Shoftim

I Establishing judges and police  
II Penalty for idolatry  
III Kings  
IV Priestly Gifts  
V Prophecy  
VI Cities of refuge  
VII Conspiring witnesses  
VIII Going to war  
IX Unsolved murders

## 6 Ki Tetzei

I Female captives  
II Firstborn's inheritance right  
III The rebellious son  
IV Marital Laws  
V Laws of employees  
VI Widows and orphans  
VII Gifts for the poor  
VIII Amalek

## 7 Ki Tavo

I First Fruits (*Bikkurim*)  
II Blessings and curses  
III Moses' final words

## 8 Nitzavim

I The Covenant with G-d  
II Returning to G-d  
III Life's choice

## 9 Vayelech

I New leadership  
II King to read Deuteronomy to all of Israel  
III Final preparations for entering Israel

## 10 Ha'azinu

I Moses' song  
II Moses told to ascend Mount Nebo

## 11 Vezot Habracha

I Moses blesses the Tribes  
II Moses' death

## Suggested reading:

### **BASIC**

“Artscroll Stone Chumash”

“Artscroll Stone Tanach”

“Bible Basics”

– Jerome Hahn

“The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Jewish History and Culture”

– Benjamin Blech

“The Foundation of Judaism”

– Akiva Aaronson

“Sand and Stars” (2 volumes)

– Yaffa Ganz \*Ideal for children

“Dor L’Dor Timeline”

– Ephraim Waxman

### **ADVANCED**

“2000 Years of Jewish History”

– Rabbi Chaim Schloss

“Miraculous Journey”

– Rabbi Yosef Eisen

“The Jewish Experience: 2000 Years”

– Rabbi Nachman Zakon

“Echoes of Glory” *The story of the Jews in the classical era 350 BCE-750*

– Rabbi Berel Wein

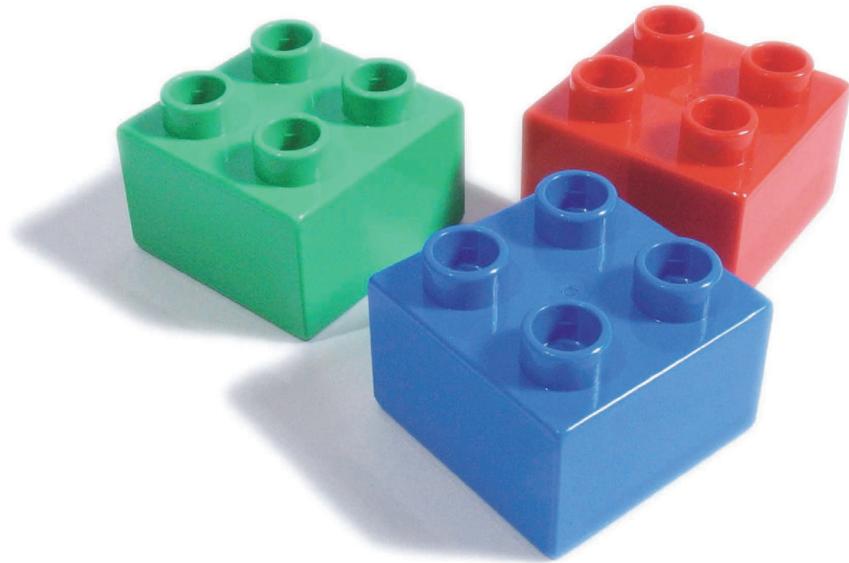
“Herald of Destiny” *The story of the Jews in the medieval era 750-1650*

– Rabbi Berel Wein

“Triumph of Survival” *The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1995*

– Rabbi Berel Wein

# CYCLE OF THE YEAR



# Introduction

The Jewish year is a rich tapestry of moods and emotions. From the solemnity of the *Neilah* service, to the singing of the *Purim* party.

In many respects it is a microcosm of life itself.

In our homes the agricultural seasons are replaced with the “festival seasons”. The progress of the year itself is measured in terms of proximity, to or from, *Pesach* or *Rosh Hashana*.

Study of the festivals dominates the educational life of our children as they come home from school and cheder clutching their home-made *Menorah* or mini-*Sukkah!*

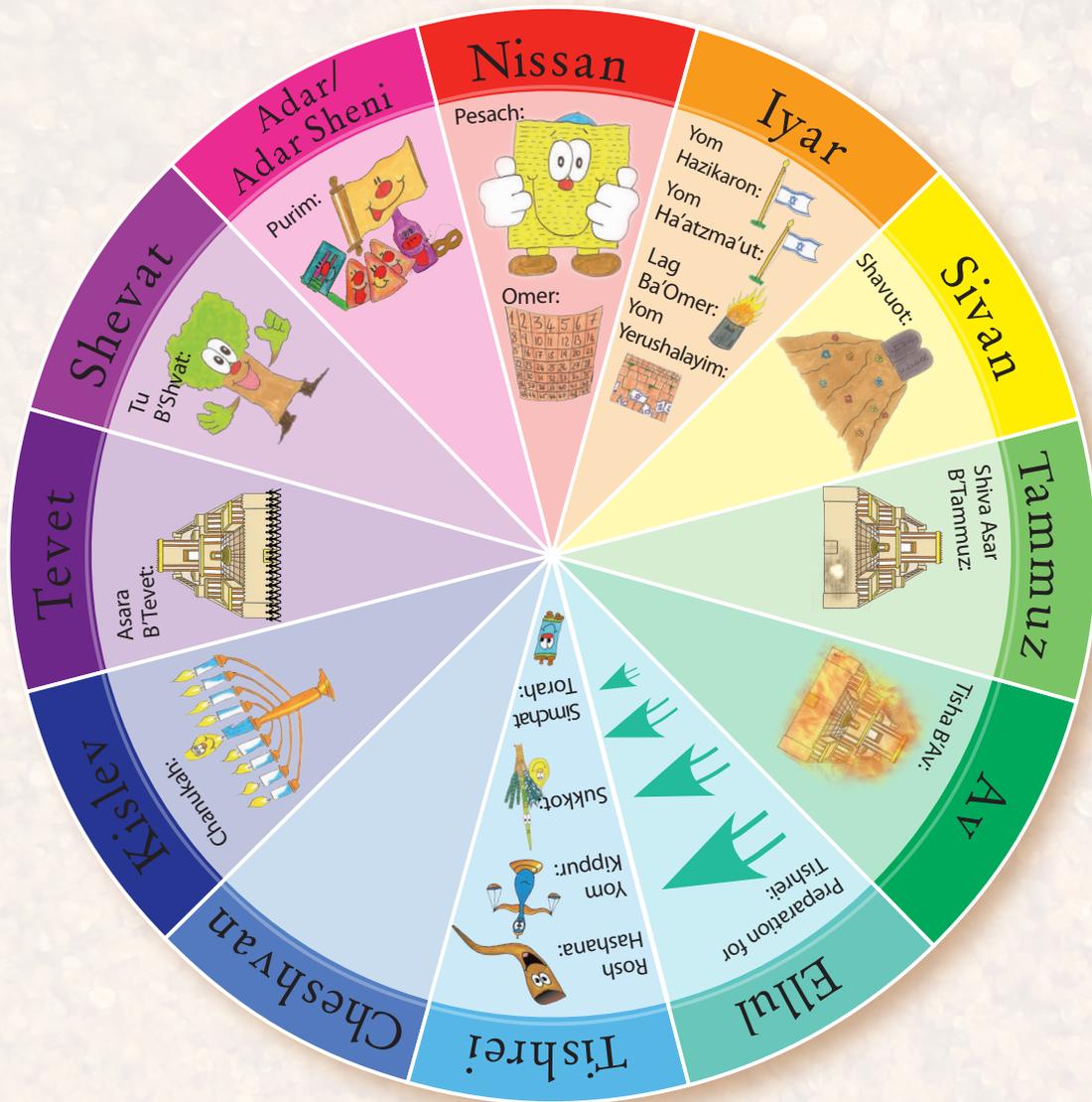
The highlight for many is *Seder* night - the songs span generations, linking old and young - the life-experienced and the excited newcomers.

In this session we take a broad brush approach, covering the year in one sitting. The materials have been designed as an easy reference to all the festivals' (*Chagim*) practices.

We will also touch on the deeper significance of these special days so often overlooked in the rush of life and we suggest practical ideas for the vibrant Jewish home.

It is our challenge as parents to transform the *Chagim* from a “cultural” experience to a definitive encounter. Around the *Yom Tov* table we give our children their Jewish identity.

# The Jewish Year



Month	Dates	Event	Theme
Nissan	Night of 14th	<b>Bedikat Chametz</b> (Search for Chametz)	Search for <i>Chametz</i> around the house with a candle and feather
	Day of 14th	<b>Ta'anit Bechorot</b> (Fast of Firstborn)	Firstborn males fast or participate in a <i>Siyum</i>
	15th-22nd	<b>Festival</b> - Pesach (Passover)	Freedom from Egyptian slavery <i>Seder</i> Nights and <i>Haggadah</i> story
	16th Nissan-6th Sivan	Sefirat Ha'Omer (Counting of the Omer)	Countdown to <i>Shavuot</i>
Iyar	4th	<b>Modern</b> - Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance)	Remembering fallen soldiers who died fighting for Israel
	5th	<b>Modern Holiday</b> - Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Independence Day)	Celebration of Israel's independence
	18th	Lag Ba'Omer	Celebrating the hidden spiritual depth contained in the <i>Torah</i>
Sivan	28th	<b>Modern Holiday</b> - Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day)	Celebrating the recapture of Jerusalem and the Western Wall during the Six Day War
	6th - 7th	<b>Festival</b> - Shavuot (Pentecost)	Giving of the <i>Torah</i> Custom to learn all night and to eat cheese-cake
Tammuz	17th	<b>Fast day</b> - Shiva Asar B'Tammuz	Commemoration of five tragedies including the breaching of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple walls This day also marks the commencement of "The Three Weeks" when we don't listen to music or cut hair etc.
Av	9th	<b>Fast Day</b> - Tisha B'Av	A day of national mourning - five tragedies occurred including the destruction of both Temples
Ellul			A time for introspection and preparation for <i>Tishrei</i>
Tishrei	1st - 2nd	<b>Festival</b> - Rosh Hashana (New Year)	Judgment day with the blowing of the <i>Shofar</i> Custom to eat apple and honey for a sweet new year
	3rd	<b>Fast day</b> - Tzom Gedalia (Fast of Gedalia)	Commemorating the assassination of the Governor of Israel during the days of Nebuchadnetzar As a result, thousands of Jews were slain; the remainder were driven into exile
	10th	<b>Festival</b> - Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	A joyous yet serious day with fasting, praying and repentance
	15th-21st	<b>Festival</b> - Sukkot (Tabernacles)	We sit in the <i>Sukkah</i> commemorating the Jews' dwelling in huts in the desert We shake the Four Species
Cheshvan	22nd	<b>Festival</b> - Shmini Atzeret	An additional day of <i>Yom Tov</i> reflecting the special relationship between G-d and the Jewish people
	23rd	<b>Festival</b> - Simchat Torah	Celebrating the completion of the cycle of reading the <i>Torah</i>
			Otherwise known as " <i>Mar</i> (bitter) <i>Cheshvan</i> " due to the absence of significant days in this month
Kislev	25th Kislev-3rd Tevet	<b>Rabbinic Festival</b> - Chanukah	We light the <i>Menorah</i> in celebration of the victory of the Hasmoneans against the Greeks
Tevet	10th	<b>Fast day</b> - Asara B'Tevet	The seige of Jerusalem began
Shevat	15th	Tu B'Shvat (New Year for trees)	Custom to eat 15 different fruits Some plant trees in Israel
	13th	<b>Fast day</b> - Ta'anit Esther (Fast of Esther)	Commemorating the three day fast observed by the Jews in the story of <i>Purim</i>
Adar/Adar Sheni	14th	<b>Rabbinic Festival</b> - Purim	Celebrating the victory over Haman who wished to wipe out the Jews In the evening and morning we read the <i>Megilla</i> We give charity to the poor, send food gifts and eat a festive meal Custom to wear fancy dress and eat <i>Hamentaschen</i>



## Rosh Chodesh (Head of the New Month)

### Jewish Meaning:

The Jewish nation is often compared to the moon. Just as the moon waxes and wanes, the Jewish people are never stagnant. We struggle to grow, and even after a down period, we manage to pick ourselves up again and become rejuvenated.

The moon is a source of comfort and hope. It reminds us that we will be revitalised in the future. It is no coincidence that the very first commandment given to the Jewish nation while still in Egypt was to establish a lunar calendar.

The first day of the lunar month, called *Rosh Chodesh*, was originally proclaimed by the *Sanhedrin* (Supreme Court in Jerusalem). In its time, the *Sanhedrin* accepted testimony from witnesses who observed the first sighting of the new moon and thereby determined when the new months should begin.

This system, called *Kiddush HaChodesh*, continued for many centuries. However, once the *Sanhedrin* could no longer operate in the Land of Israel, a new approach was needed. Along came the great scholar and astronomer, Hillel Katan (4 CE) who formulated a perpetual calendar that still operates today.

In a replaying of the ancient tradition of the court's proclamation of the New Moon, on the *Shabbat* prior to *Rosh Chodesh* the new month's arrival is now proclaimed during the synagogue service, replete with an announcement of the split second that *Rosh Chodesh* begins.

### In Practice:

There are 12 months in a regular Jewish year, and 13 months in a leap year.

A Jewish month has either 29 or 30 days.

**If the last month had 30 days:**

The NEXT month has two days *Rosh Chodesh*.

(The first of those two days is in fact day 30 of the previous month.)

### Sources:

“And G-d said to Moses... in the land of Egypt... This month is for you, the head of the months. First it is for you among the months of the year.”

(Exod. 12:1-2)

**If the last month had 29 days:**

The NEXT month has one day *Rosh Chodesh*.

On *Rosh Chodesh* we:

- Add a special prayer of blessing in the *Amida* and in *Bircat Hamazon* (Grace after Meals) called *Ya'aleh Veyavo*
- Recite *Hallel* which is a celebratory prayer of *Psalms*
- Add a special *Amida* called *Musaf* (lit. "Additional")

**Shabbat Mevarchim ("Shabbat on which we bless")**

The *Shabbat* before *Rosh Chodesh* is called *Shabbat Mevarchim*. On *Shabbat Mevarchim* we recite a special prayer called *Bircat HaChodesh* ("Blessing for the month").

In *Birchat HaChodesh* the new month is announced, as well as the day(s) on which *Rosh Chodesh* will occur during the week ahead. We also pray that the coming month should be filled with blessings for all of us.

**Kiddush Levana ("Sanctification of the moon")****Jewish Meaning:**

Once a month, there is a special blessing called *Kiddush Levana*.

The moon has the most obvious monthly cycle of all the stars and planets, so we take the occasion of its renewal to make a blessing for the entire masterpiece.

Blessing the moon on its reappearance is a way of renewing our trust that the light of G-d's presence will soon fill all the earth and our people will be redeemed from exile, very soon in our time. The blessing is therefore concluded with songs and dancing in celebration and joy.

**Sources:**

*Anyone who blesses the month in its time, is as if he is greeting the Divine Presence*

(Talmud Sanhedrin 42a)

**In Practice:**

*Kiddush Levana* is usually recited on the Saturday night after *Rosh Chodesh* as one leaves the synagogue, dressed in *Shabbat* clothes.

(Although it can be said up to 15 days after *Rosh Chodesh*)

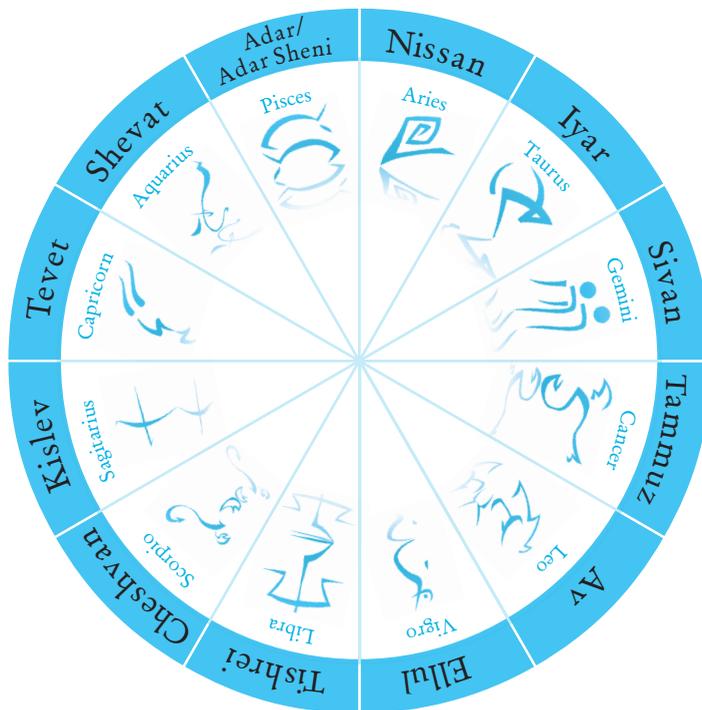
# FESTIVALS

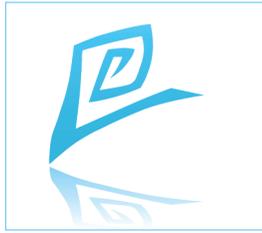
Parents' Assistant

- Aim:** To bring the Jewish year alive and create anticipation for festivals.
- Activity 1:** Create your own basic Jewish family calendar and mark off the days leading up to your "favourite" festivals. Each member can designate their "favourite" festival and write their name by it in their chosen colour!
- Activity 2:** For each festival, make a simple recipe of fun food with the children. E.g. Oily popcorn for *Chanukah*, *Matzah* pizza for *Pesach* etc.

## Key Facts:

- 1 In Judaism, a new day begins at night.  
(Just like *Shabbat* starts on Friday night)
- 2 The festivals of *Pesach* and *Sukkot* are each a blend of *Yom Tov* and *Chol Hamo'ed*. *Yom Tov* means a fully-fledged festival day. On *Pesach* and *Sukkot*, their days of fully-fledged *Yom Tov* are surrounded by days known as *Chol Hamo'ed* (lit. "Pseudo festival"). As the term suggests, they are festive days without all of the festival prohibitions.





# Nissan

## SHABBAT BEFORE PESACH

### Shabbat HaGadol (The Great Shabbat)

The community comes together to hear a special lecture, reviewing the *Pesach* laws.

## NIGHT OF 14TH

### Bedikat Chametz (Searching for Chametz)

We search the house for *Chametz* with a candle and a feather to clean it away.

## DAY OF 14TH

### Ta'anit Bechorot (The "Fast of Firstborn")

Firstborn males fast, as a reminder of the 10th plague where G-d killed the Egyptian male firstborns but saved the Jews. Alternatively, those who attend a *Siyum* (participation in a "Completion" of the study of a volume of Jewish text) are not required to fast. A *Siyum* is generally organised in *Shuls* straight after *Shacharit*.

## MID MORNING OF 14TH

### Bi'ur Chametz (Removal of Chametz)

From this point until the end of *Pesach*, *Chametz* cannot be owned, used or eaten. This includes food made from the following grains: wheat, rye, barley, oats, and spelt; this includes foods such as biscuits, cakes, cereals, pasta, crackers and bread. Liquids made from grain alcohols are also forbidden.

Any expensive *Chametz* that one does not want to destroy can be sold to a non Jew for the duration of *Pesach*. This is arranged by the local Rabbi.



15TH

## Pesach (Passover)

Duration:

**Outside Israel:** Lasts for 8 days

(2 days *Yom Tov*, 4 days Chol Hamo'ed, 2 days *Yom Tov*)

**Israel:** Lasts for 7 days

(1 day *Yom Tov*, 5 days Chol Hamo'ed, 1 day *Yom Tov*)

Names:

*Pesach* (Passover)

(The angel of G-d "passed over" the homes of the Jews while smiting the firstborn Egyptians.)

*Chag HaMatzot* (Festival of Unleavened Bread)

*Z'man Cheruteinu* (Time of Our Freedom)

*Chag Ha'Aviv* (Festival of Spring)

### Sources:

*'And on the fifteenth day of this month is the Festival of Matzot to Hashem; you shall eat Matzot for a seven-day period.'*

(Lev. 23:6)

Jewish Meaning:

*Pesach* is the first of the *Shalosh Regalim* (Three Pilgrim Festivals) when during the Temple era, Jews travelled from all over Israel to the Temple in Jerusalem.

*Pesach* commemorates the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt under the leadership of Moses over 3,300 years ago. During their hasty departure, the Jews did not have time to fully bake their bread and allow it to rise. The result was the creation of *Matzah* which we eat on *Pesach* as a reminder of that Egyptian slavery.

In Practice:

*Pesach* is marked by an elaborate *Seder* (lit. "order") on the first two nights. (In Israel, on the first night only). The *Seder* is designed to give each Jew the experience of "going from slavery into freedom." The text used during the *Seder* is called the *Haggadah* (lit. "The Narration") - it tells the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

On the *Shabbat* during *Pesach*, we read *Shir Hashirim* ("The Song of Songs") in *Shul*. This is a *Megilla* (book in scroll form) written by King Solomon. The book is a "love song" expressing the relationship between



G-d and the Jews. It is especially appropriate to read this on *Pesach*, because *Pesach* marked the beginning of the “courtship” between G-d and the Jews before they finally became “wedded” at Mount Sinai.

Seven days after the Exodus from Egypt, the Jews arrived at the Reed Sea with Pharaoh in pursuit. The sea miraculously split, allowing the Jews to walk through on dry land, and then the sea closed, drowning the Egyptian soldiers. The seventh and eighth days of *Pesach* are a *Yom Tov* with the incumbent restrictions on work (only the seventh day for those living in Israel).

## The Seder:

On the *Seder* plate there is a:

<b>Bone:</b>	A reminder of the <i>Pesach</i> sacrifice in Temple times.
<b>Egg:</b>	A reminder of the festival sacrifice.
<b>Marror</b> (Bitter herbs):	A reminder of the bitter times we had in slavery.
<b>Charoset</b> (Mixture of chopped nuts, apples, wine and cinnamon):	Resembling the cement used by the Jewish slaves to make bricks for the Egyptian pyramids.
<b>Karpas</b> (Vegetable):	Dipped into salt water, symbolising the tears of the Jewish slaves.
<b>Chazeret</b> (Extra <i>Marror</i> leaves):	To be used to make the <i>Marror/Matzah</i> sandwich
<b>Three Matzot:</b>	Sometimes put under the main plate.



Also during the *Seder* we drink 4 cups of wine to remind us of G-d’s four promises of salvation.

We put out a fifth cup of wine for Elijah the Prophet.

(*Pesach* is a time of redemption. We hope Elijah will come and announce the future redemption and building of the Temple.)

### Did you know?

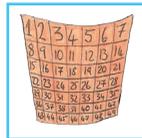
The Four Questions asked during the *Seder* are:

1. Why *Matzah*, not bread?
2. Why bitter herbs?
3. Why do we dip our food twice?
4. Why do we lean?

### Did you know?

The Oral law tells us that the Jews merited redemption from Egypt because they preserved their Jewish:

1. Names
2. Language
3. Dress



16TH

## Sefirat Ha'Omer (Counting of the Omer)

### Jewish Meaning:

**O**n the second night of *Pesach*, we begin counting the *Omer*.

In the days of the Holy Temple, the Jewish people would bring a barley offering on the second day of *Pesach*. This was called the *Omer* (lit. “sheaf”) and in practical terms would permit the consumption of recently-harvested grains.

The counting of the *Omer* is for 49 days from *Pesach* leading up to *Shavuot*. We were freed from Egypt only in order to receive the *Torah* and to fulfil it; thus we count from the second day of *Pesach* until the day that the *Torah* was given - to show how greatly we desire the *Torah*. This is also an important period of growth and introspection, in preparation for the holiday of *Shavuot*.

### In Practice:

**T**he *Omer* is counted every evening after nightfall. We count both the days and the weeks. For example, on day 31, we say “Today is the 31<sup>st</sup> day, which is 4 weeks and 3 days of the *Omer*.”

When the *Omer* is counted in the evening, it is said with a blessing. If you forget to count one evening, all is not lost! Count the following daytime, but without a blessing. Then continue the next evening with a blessing. If you miss an entire day, continue without a blessing.

#### THE BLESSING FOR THE OMER IS:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu  
b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al s'firat ha'omer.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His *Mitzvot*, and commanded us to count the *Omer*.

Today is 'X' days, which is X weeks and X days of the *Omer*.

### Sources:

‘You shall count for yourselves - from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving - seven weeks, they shall be complete. Until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count, fifty days...’

(Lev. 23:15-16)

### Did you know?

The *Talmud* tells us that the famous sage Rabbi Akiva (1st century) had 24,000 students who tragically died during the *Omer* period, because they did not treat each other with sufficient respect. Therefore, for 33 days from *Pesach* until *Lag Ba'Omer*, we observe the following signs of mourning:

1. No weddings
2. Not listening to instrumental music (vocal music is permitted)
3. No haircuts or shaving, unless for business purposes (Customs vary regarding the exact start and finish of the 33 days)



## Iyar



4TH

### Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance)

This day honours the memory of the Israeli soldiers who gave their lives in defence of the Jewish people. It is a day of sadness and poignancy. We, who enjoy the land, can only walk its streets because others sacrificed themselves for the Jewish People. Memorial and prayer ceremonies are held.



5TH

### Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Independence Day)



This day commemorates the creation of a Jewish sovereign government in the Land of Israel on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1948, after 2,000 years of exile. This was the climax of a long struggle to re-establish a Jewish state in "Palestine" beginning with the early pioneers in the 1880s. We give thanks to G-d for this modern day miracle. In Israel and throughout the Jewish World, there are parties and celebrations.



18TH

### Lag Ba'Omer (33rd Day of the Omer)



This marks the *Yabrtzeit* of one of the greatest *Talmudic* sages, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. It is a day of great celebration. According to our tradition, Rabbi Shimon revealed the secrets of the *Zohar*, the primary book of Jewish mysticism (*Kabbalah*) on his deathbed.

Many visit the tomb of Rabbi Shimon in the Galilee town of Meiron. It is customary to light bonfires to commemorate the great mystical illuminations revealed by Rabbi Shimon.



28TH

## Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day)

This day commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem in the 1967 Six Day War. We celebrate by remembering the significance of our Holy City, which has stood as the capital of the Jewish nation for nearly 3,000 years.

### Did you know?

On *Lag Ba'Omer*, Rabbi Akiva's students stopped dying. There is no mourning on this day.





# Sivan



6TH

## Shavuot (Pentecost)

### Sources:

*‘Until the morrow of the seventh week, you shall count fifty days... You shall gather on this very day- there shall be a holy gathering for yourselves- you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for your generations.’*

*(Lev. 23:16,21)*

### Duration:

**Outside Israel:** Lasts for 2 days  
(2 days *Yom Tov*)

**Israel:** Lasts for 1 day  
(1 day *Yom Tov*)

### Names:

*Shavuot* (Weeks)

In recognition of the weeks of anticipation leading up to the Sinai experience.

*Z'man Matan* (Season of the Giving of the *Torah*)

*Torateinu*

*Chag HaBikkurim* (Festival of First Fruits)

*Chag HaKatzir* (Harvest Festival)

(Since *Shavuot* occurs 50 days after the first day of *Pesach*, it is known in English as “Pentecost”, a Greek word meaning “the holiday of 50 days”.)

### Jewish Meaning:

*Shavuot* is the second of the *Shalosh Regalim* (Three Pilgrim Festivals) when, during the Temple era, Jews travelled from all over Israel to the Temple in Jerusalem.

*Shavuot* is the culmination of the seven-week-long “counting of the *Omer*”. It commemorates the giving of the *Torah* at Mount Sinai, fifty days after the Exodus from Egypt.

## In Practice:

On *Shavuot*, it is customary to decorate the *Shul* with branches and flowers. The reason for this is because Mount Sinai blossomed with flowers on the day the *Torah* was given. *Shavuot* is also associated with the harvest of wheat and fruits. From *Shavuot* through to *Sukkot*, farmers from across the country would bring the *Bikkurim* (first fruits) of the season to the Temple as an expression of gratitude to G-d. Only fruits from the “seven select species” of Israel were brought.

There is a universal tradition of eating dairy foods on *Shavuot*. Many sources for this have been suggested, such as the verse in “Song of Songs” (4:11) which refers to *Torah* as: “It drips from your lips, like honey and milk under your tongue”. Others say that upon receiving the *Torah* at Mount Sinai, the Jews became obligated to keep the laws of *Kashrut*. Since it took time to prepare *Kosher* meat, they ate dairy temporarily.

There is a widespread custom to stay up the entire first night learning *Torah*.

On the second day of *Shavuot*, (first day in Israel) we read the story of Ruth in *Shul*. This is a *Megilla* (book in scroll form). Ruth was a non-Jew whose love for G-d and *Torah* led her to convert to Judaism and to accept the *Torah* as we did at Sinai. On a deeper level, the souls of eventual converts were also present at Sinai, as it says: “I am making (the covenant) both with those here today before the Lord our G-d, and also with those not here today”. (Deut. 29:13)

Ruth has a further connection to *Shavuot*, in that she was the ancestor of King David, who was born on *Shavuot*, and died on *Shavuot*.

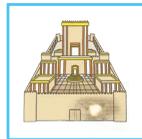


### Did you know?

Judaism does not actively encourage conversion. Righteous Gentiles have a place in the World to Come. In fact Naomi, (Ruth's mother-in-law) tried several times to dissuade Ruth from converting but Ruth was persistent. She stands as an example par excellence of sincerity and integrity.



# Tammuz



17TH

## Shiva Asar B'Tammuz (17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz)

### Jewish Meaning:

The 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tammuz* is a fast day inaugurating a three-week period of national mourning, culminating in *Tisha B'Av* (9<sup>th</sup> of *Av*). These are known as “The Three Weeks”.

The 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tammuz* is one of four fast days linked to the destruction of Jewish sovereignty.

(The others are 9<sup>th</sup> of *Av*, *Tzom Gedalia* [3<sup>rd</sup> of *Tishrei*] and 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tevet*)

The purpose of these fast days is to awaken our sense of loss over the destroyed Temple - and the subsequent Jewish journey into exile.

Five catastrophes occurred in Jewish history on the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tammuz* across the Millennia:

1. Moses broke the tablets at Mount Sinai - in response to the sin of the Golden Calf.
2. The daily offerings in the First Temple were suspended during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 423 BCE.
3. Jerusalem's walls were breached by the Romans in 70 CE, prior to the destruction of the Second Temple.
4. The Roman general Apostamos burned a *Torah* scroll - setting a precedent for the horrifying burning of Jewish books throughout the centuries.
5. An idolatrous image was placed in the Sanctuary of the Holy Temple - a brazen act of blasphemy and desecration.

## The Three Weeks

### Jewish Meaning:

“The Three Weeks” between the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tammuz* and the 9<sup>th</sup> of *Av* have historically been days of misfortune and calamity for the Jewish people. During these days, both the First and Second Temples were destroyed, as well as many other terrible tragedies.

### In Practice:

During “The Three Weeks”, various mourning practices are observed by the entire nation.

These include the following:

1. No weddings are held.  
(However, engagement ceremonies are permitted)
2. We do not listen to music.
3. No haircuts or shaving.

The final nine days of the three weeks have more restrictions.

*(See the month of Av)*



## Av

### The Nine Days

The period commencing with *Rosh Chodesh Av* is called the “The Nine Days”. During these days, a stricter level of mourning is observed, in accordance with the *Talmudic* dictum:

“When the month of *Av* begins, we reduce our joy.” (Ta’anit 26)

### In Practice:

In addition to the restrictions of “The Three Weeks” we also:

- Avoid purchasing luxury items.
- Suspend home improvements.
- Avoid scheduling a court action if at all possible.
- Abstain from eating meat (including poultry) and from drinking wine (excluding *Shabbat* or a *Seudat Mitzvah*).
- Observe restrictions on laundering and wearing fresh clothes (excluding underwear).
- Avoid bathing for pleasure.



9TH

### Tisha B’Av (The Ninth of Av)

### Jewish Meaning:

*Tisha B’Av* is a fast day. It is the saddest day of the Jewish year when the entire nation mourns the loss of the two Temples.

Five national calamities occurred in Jewish history on *Tisha B’Av*:

1. The generation of the Jewish people who left Egypt, accepted the slanderous report of the spies. Their punishment was to die during a 40-year wander in the desert and only the next generation

- were privileged to enter the land of Israel. (1312 BCE)
2. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar. 100,000 Jews were slaughtered and millions more exiled. (586 BCE)
  3. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans, led by Titus. Approximately two million Jews died, and another one million were exiled. (70 CE)
  4. The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed by Roman Emperor Hadrian. The city of Betar, the Jews' last stand against the Romans, was captured and liquidated. Over 100,000 Jews were slaughtered. (135 CE)
  5. The Temple area and its surroundings were ploughed under by the Roman general Turnus Rufus. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a pagan city- renamed Aelia Capitolina- and access was forbidden to Jews.

Other grave misfortunes throughout Jewish history occurred during these nine days, such as:

- The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 (18<sup>th</sup> July/2<sup>nd</sup> *Av*).
- The Spanish Inquisition culminated with the expulsion of Jews from Spain 1492 (1<sup>st</sup> August/9<sup>th</sup> *Av*).
- The First World War escalated into its “World War” status on the eve of *Tisha B’Av* in 1914 (1<sup>st</sup> August) when Germany declared war on Russia.
- On the eve of *Tisha B’Av* 1942 (23<sup>rd</sup> July), the mass deportation began of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, en route to Treblinka.

## In Practice:

**W**e act like mourners:

- No eating or drinking until nightfall the following evening.
- No bathing or washing.
- No marital relations.
- No leather shoes.
- We do not study *Torah* texts, other than those relevant to *Tisha B’Av* and mourning.



- We sit on low stools until midday.
- We refrain from greeting others, giving gifts, leisure activities and casual conversation.

We focus our minds on the theme of the day, avoiding domestic and professional distractions as much as possible.

The lights in the *Shul* are dimmed and the curtain is removed from the Ark. The *Chazan* leads the prayers in a low, mournful voice. The *Megilla* (book in scroll form) of *Eicha* (Lamentations) is read in *Shul* which is Jeremiah the Prophet's poetic lament over the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple. It is read at night (some communities also read it during the day).

### Did you know?

The *Talmud* says:  
 "Anyone who mourns  
 for Jerusalem will  
 merit and see her  
 happiness"

(*Talmud, Ta'anit 30b*)

Special *Kinot* (lit. "mournful prayers") are recited throughout the morning.

*Tallit* and *Tefillin* are not worn at *Shacharit*. They are worn instead at *Mincha*, once certain mourning restrictions have been lifted.

When *Tisha B'Av* falls on *Shabbat* the fast is postponed until Saturday night.



## Ellul

The Hebrew month preceding *Rosh Hashana* is an important prelude to the The High Holy Days. It is a time for reflection and an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with G-d. Another year has flown by and once again we prepare to stand before the Almighty, with life in the balance. No-one can assume that the blessings of last year are next year's rights. No-one should assume that the pain of last year has no resolution. It is a time of new beginnings and justifies introspection.

It is customary to blow the *Shofar* every morning after prayers during *Ellul*.

Historically, it was on the 1st of *Ellul* that Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive a new, second set of stone tablets, following the sin of the Golden Calf. Forty days later, Moses returned to the People with tablets in hand, signalling a repair of the breach between the Jewish people and G-d.

Several days before *Rosh Hashana*, preparations for The High Holy Days intensify. We recite *Selichot* (lit. "Forgiveness prayers") before *Shacharit*.





# Tishrei



1ST

## Rosh Hashana (New Year)

### Sources:

‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, “In the seventh month, on the first of the month, shall be for you a [day of] rest, a remembrance of the sounding [of the Shofar], a holy assembly”’

(Lev. 23:24)

### Duration:

**Outside Israel:** Lasts for 2 days  
(2 days *Yom Tov*)

**Israel:** Lasts for 2 days  
(2 days *Yom Tov*)

### Names:

<i>Rosh Hashana</i>	(Head of the Year)
<i>Yom Terua</i>	(Day of Blowing of the <i>Shofar</i> )
<i>Yom Hazikkaron</i>	(Day of Remembrance)
<i>Yom HaDin</i>	(Day of Judgment)

Together with *Yom Kippur*, this period is known as the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe). Some refer to these days as “The High Holy Days”.

### Did you know?

On the morning before *Rosh Hashana*, many have the practice to perform *Hatarat Nedarim* – a process which annuls vows. (This does not absolve one of promises made to individuals). We enter the New Year with a clean slate.

### Jewish Meaning:

**R***osh Hashana* is the Jewish New Year. It also commemorates the creation of mankind - Adam and Eve. On this day we are judged afresh. Each human being has his/her allotment of life and livelihood determined for the coming year. We stand before G-d and petition to be “created anew”- i.e. granted another year of life.

### In Practice:

**S**ince there are so many unique prayers on *Rosh Hashana*, we use a special prayer book called a *Machzor* (lit. “cycle” as in

“year cycle”). On *Rosh Hashana* the morning is spent praying in the *Shul*. During the Days of Awe, the curtain on the ark is replaced with a white one, to symbolise our hopes that “although your sins are as red as scarlet, they should become as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

The *Shofar* (ram’s horn) is sounded on *Rosh Hashana*. We blow a total of 100 notes. The *Shofar* is compared to a “spiritual alarm clock” that beckons us to change and become better human beings. The *Shofar* is also mindful of the biblical story of Abraham binding his son Isaac when a ram was caught in the thicket and sacrificed in Isaac’s stead. This event occurred on the 1st of *Tishrei*, the date of *Rosh Hashana*. (The *Shofar* is not blown when *Rosh Hashana* falls on *Shabbat*).

At the evening meals we dip the *Challa* into honey. Then, we dip apple into honey, symbolising our hopes for a sweet New Year. We continue to eat a number of foods that symbolise good tidings for the year ahead.

It is customary to greet others with the words: *Shana tova* - “May you have a good year” and many people send *Rosh Hashana* cards prior to the festival to family and friends.

The *Tashlich* prayer is said on the first afternoon of *Rosh Hashana*, near a pool of water. *Tashlich* means to “cast away”. The prayers request that G-d “discard” our transgressions into the depths.



### Did you know?

By dipping the apple in the honey we express our dreams for a “good year”. We also ask that “being good” should be sweet too! (i.e. we should ENJOY being good.)

## The Aseret Y’mei Teshuva (The Ten Days of Repentance)

The verdict for another year of life is “written” on *Rosh Hashana* but is not “sealed” until *Yom Kippur*. The 10 days from *Rosh Hashana* to *Yom Kippur* are a crucial period - judgment “hangs in the balance”. To tip the scales in our favour we engage in intense introspection. It is a time to be extra-careful with our speech, actions and *Mitzvah* observance.

### Did you know?

There is a three stage process to judgment:

On *Rosh Hashana* the judgment is *written*.

On *Yom Kippur* the judgment is *sealed*.

On *Hoshana Raba* (the 7th day of *Sukkot*) the judgment is *posted*.

**Sources:**

*“On the tenth day of this seventh month is a day of atonement. It shall be for you a (day of) holy assembly and you shall deprive yourselves”*

*(Lev. 23:27)*

**3RD****Tzom Gedalia (Fast of Gedalia)**

The day after *Rosh Hashana* marks the Fast of Gedalia, one of the “minor fast days”. This fast commemorates the tragic murder of Gedalia. He was an important leader of the Jewish people after the destruction of the First Temple, killed by his opponents. This led to the end of Jewish settlement in Israel for many years.

The fast begins in the early morning at dawn, and ends in the evening at nightfall.

**SHABBAT BEFORE YOM KIPPUR****Shabbat Shuva (Shabbat of Return)**

This is the *Shabbat* of “Returning” to G-d. The Rabbi of the *Shul* gives a special sermon, inspiring all to reconnect with G-d, in anticipation of *Yom Kippur*.

**10TH****Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)**

Duration:

**Outside Israel:** Lasts for 1 day  
(1 day *Yom Tov*)

**Israel:** Lasts for 1 day  
(1 day *Yom Tov*)

Jewish Meaning:

*Yom Kippur* is the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year. Historically, this is the day that Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the second set of Tablets, proving that G-d had forgiven the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf. From that day forward, every *Yom Kippur* has a metaphysical power to rectify our mistakes, both individually and collectively.

## In Practice:

On the afternoon before *Yom Kippur*, it is a special *Mitzvah* to eat a festive meal.

*Yom Kippur* has the same restrictions as *Shabbat*. The day is spent in prayer and reflection, and we disconnect from the distractions of physical routine.

There are five specific areas of abstention:

1. eating and drinking
2. washing
3. wearing leather shoes
4. applying oils or lotions to the skin
5. marital relations

The *Yom Kippur* fast begins at sundown, and extends 25 hours until the following nightfall. The primary purpose of *Yom Kippur* is to acknowledge our mistakes, express our regret, and resolve not to repeat them again.

There are FIVE services on *Yom Kippur* called:

- *Ma'ariv* - Evening service
- *Shacharit* - Morning service
- *Musaf* - Additional service
- *Mincha* - Afternoon service
- *Ne'ila* - Closing service

At *Mincha*, we read the story of “Jonah and the big fish” illustrating the potency of sincere repentance.

*Jonah was a prophet who was instructed by G-d to travel to the metropolis of Ninveh and to admonish them for their wicked ways. He did not want to go and attempted to “flee” G-d by sea. G-d sent a raging storm. Jonah admitted to the sailors that he was the cause of the storm and he was cast overboard. In the sea, Jonah was swallowed by a large fish. He realised his mistake and prayed to G-d. Eventually he was spewed out and completed his assignment. Upon hearing Jonah’s admonishment, the people of Ninveh were motivated to sincere repentance.*

As *Yom Kippur* ends, we break the fast with a sense of joy, confident that G-d has forgiven us. We approach the new year with a restored soul.

### Did you know?

Although *Yom Kippur* atones for transgressions against G-d, it is not effective for wrongs committed against our fellow human beings. It is therefore advisable, sometime before *Yom Kippur*, to request forgiveness from those whom we may have harmed over the past year.

### Did you know?

Usually when saying The *Shema* we whisper the line *Baruch Shem...* –“Blessed is His name...” This is a prayer uttered by angels, not really fitting for a human. However, on *Yom Kippur* we say it aloud; on this day we can attain, and even overtake, the spiritual level of angels!



15TH

## Sukkot (Tabernacles) ending with Shmini Atzeret

### Sources:

*‘Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: “On the 15th day of this seventh month is the Festival of Sukkot, a seven day period for G-d. You shall take for yourselves, on the first day, the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for a seven day period. You shall dwell in booths for a seven day period; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths”*

*(Lev. 23:34, 40, 42)*

Duration:

**Outside Israel:** Lasts for 9 days  
(2 days *Yom Tov*, 5 days *Chol Hamo’ed*, 2 days *Yom Tov*)

**Israel:** Lasts for 8 days  
(1 day *Yom Tov*, 6 days *Chol Hamo’ed*, 1 day *Yom Tov*)

Names:

<i>Sukkot</i>	(Booths)
<i>Chag HaAsif</i>	(Day of Ingathering)
<i>HeChag</i>	(The Holiday)
<i>Z'man Simchateinu</i>	(Day of Rejoicing)

Jewish Meaning:

**S**ukkot is the third of the *Shalosh Regalim* (Three Pilgrim Festivals) when during the Temple era, Jews travelled from all over Israel to the Temple in Jerusalem.

*Sukkot* is a festival of immense joy. We express our complete trust in G-d, and celebrate our confidence in a “good judgment” for the coming year.

The *Sukkah* (a booth with a roof made of branches) reminds us that the Israelites lived in huts during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. Further, the *Sukkah*'s flimsy construction reminds us that:

- Material possessions are transient
- G-d is our ultimate protection - just as He protected the Israelites in the desert with the “Clouds of Glory” (Miraculous clouds that travelled with the Israelites in the wilderness).

In Practice:

**T**he days immediately preceding *Sukkot* are filled with activity; building and decorating the *Sukkah* and purchasing the



## Four Species.

Throughout the week of *Sukkot* the *Sukkah* becomes our home. We eat and live in a *Sukkah*.

The Four Species comprise:

One *Lulav* (Palm leaf)

One *Etrog* (Citron)

Three *Hadassim* twigs (Myrtle)

Two *Aravot* twigs (Willow)

The Four Species are taken each day of *Sukkot* (except for *Shabbat*) and waved in a special way. An additional part of the prayer service called *Hoshanot* is recited and everyone circles the *Bimah*, holding their four species.

On the *Shabbat* during *Sukkot*, we read *Kobelet* (Ecclesiastes) in *Shul*. This is a *Megilla* (book in scroll form) written by King Solomon. It is a philosophical work contemplating the purpose of the Divine gift of life.

The seventh day of *Sukkot* is called *Hoshana Rabba* ("Great Salvation"). It is the last day of *Chol Hamo'ed Sukkot*. Special prayers are said. *Hoshana Rabba* is the final day of the judgment process which began on *Rosh Hashana*. It is our last chance to appeal for a good year and to ask G-d to save us from anything threatening. We walk around the *Bimah* seven times holding the Four Species.

### Did you know?

The *Kabbalists* say that the Four Species represent four different types of Jews:

1. *Etrog* = Taste & Fragrance = Jew with both wisdom (*Torah* learning) and good deeds.
2. *Hadas* = Inedible & Fragrant = Jew who has good deeds, but lacks wisdom.
3. *Lulav* = Taste & No smell = Jew with wisdom, but without good deeds.
4. *Aravah* = Inedible & No smell = Jew with neither good deeds nor *Torah* learning.

On *Sukkot* we all come together.

The "*Sefer Bahir*," a 2000 year old *Kabbalistic* work gives an alternative perspective. It describes the Four Species as four parts of the human being:

1. The *Etrog* represents the **heart**, the seat of our emotions.
2. The *Hadas* has leaves shaped like an **eye**.
3. The *Lulav* represents the **spine**, from where our actions emanate.
4. The *Aravah* represents the **lips**, our speech.

The Four Species must be taken together as a unit. So too, we serve G-d with all our faculties.



### Did you know?

We gather these Four Species, bind them, and wave them all together. The Four Species are only *Kosher* if taken together. If any one of the species is missing, the set is invalid.

This teaches that we must look at the Jewish people as an indivisible unit, working together.

Every Jew is important.

22ND

## Shmini Atzeret

**S***hmini Atzeret* is actually a separate festival at the end of *Sukkot*. In Israel it is one day (combined with *Simchat Torah*- see below). Outside Israel these are two separate days. *Shmini* means “eighth”, and *Atzeret* means “holding back”. After this month of heightened Divine connection, G-d is reluctant to let us go and “holds us back” to celebrate an additional day.



23RD

## Simchat Torah

**T**he second day of *Shmini Atzeret* is called *Simchat Torah*. (In Israel, *Simchat Torah* and *Shmini Atzeret* are both on the same day) *Simchat Torah* celebrates the completion and beginning of the annual *Torah* reading cycle.



Two men are chosen for special honours:

The *Chatan Torah* is the person “called up” to complete the reading of the *Torah*.

The *Chatan Bereshit* is the person “called up” to start the cycle again.

In the *Shul*, all the *Torah* scrolls are taken out of the Ark, and the congregation dances seven circuits with great joy and song.



## Cheshvan

This month is also known as “*Mar Cheshvan*”. The prefix *Mar* (which means bitter) is attached to the name of the month because it has no festivals or days of rejoicing.

*Mar* also means “drop” and refers to the first rains (the *Yoreh*), which fall in *Cheshvan*.

Also during this month, G-d brought the Flood and drowned the world (except for Noah and those with him on the ark.)

On a more positive note, we are taught that it is “reserved” for the time of *Mashiach*, who will inaugurate the third Temple in *Cheshvan*.



## Kislev



25TH  
Chanukah

Duration:

Outside Israel and Israel: Lasts for 8 days

Jewish Meaning:

*Chanukah* celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the mighty Greek army, and their rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

In the second century BCE, the Greek armies were intent on conquering not only the Jewish state but also the Jewish spirit. They destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and converted it into a house of idolatry. They also forbade the Jews from observing *Shabbat*, performing circumcision, and studying *Torah*, under penalty of death. Under such pressures, many Jews chose to abandon Judaism and adopt the Greek (Hellenistic) way of life.



When the Greeks challenged the Jews to sacrifice a pig to a Greek god, a Jewish leader named Matityahu responded by organising a revolt. After many years battling unbelievable odds, he and his small army drove back the Greek enemies and recaptured the Temple. They found only one flask of oil for the Temple's *Menorah*. This small amount of oil miraculously burned for eight days.

Today, we light a *Chanukiah/Menorah* to commemorate the miracle of the oil that lasted eight days.

## In Practice:

To publicise the *Chanukah* miracle, Jews light a *Menorah* on the eight nights of *Chanukah*. One extra light is lit each night of *Chanukah*.

The *Menorah* should be lit immediately at nightfall, or as soon as the members of the household are present. The candles must burn for at least 30 minutes (different timings apply to the Friday night of *Chanukah*). In addition to the main eight lights, the *Menorah* has an extra “helper candle” called the *Shamash*. Since the *Shamash* does not count as one of the regular eight lights, it should be set apart in some way- either placed higher than the other candles, or notably to the side.

There is a preference for using olive oil since the miracle of the Maccabees occurred with olive oil.

On the first night, one candle is placed at the far right (as you face the *Menorah*). On the second night, two candles are placed in the two far-right positions- and the left one is lit first. Follow this same procedure each night of *Chanukah*.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Night: 

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Night: 

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Night: 

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Night: 

On the 5<sup>th</sup> Night: 

On the 6<sup>th</sup> Night: 

On the 7<sup>th</sup> Night: 

On the 8<sup>th</sup> Night: 

Another candle is placed for the *Shamash*, which is used to light the others.

**Did you know?**

There is no Jewish source for presents on *Chanukah*!!!

**Did you know?**

What is the origin of the *Dreidel*?

In times of persecution when *Torah* study was forbidden, Jewish children would study *Torah* anyway. When soldiers would investigate, the children would pull out a *Dreidel* and pretend to be playing.

The letters on the *Dreidel* are *Nun, Gimmel, Hey, Shin* - the first letters of *Nes Gadol Haya Sham* - "A Great Miracle Happened There".

(In Israel, the last letter is a *Pey* - "Here.")

**LIGHT THE SHAMASH THEN RECITE THE FOLLOWING BLESSINGS:****THE FIRST BLESSING IS:**

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Chanukah.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His *Mitzvot*, and commanded us to kindle the *Chanukah* lights.

**THE SECOND BLESSING IS:**

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, She'asa nisim la'avoteinu, bayamim ha'baim bazman ha'zeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who made miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season.

**ON THE FIRST NIGHT ONLY, AN EXTRA BLESSING IS INCLUDED:**

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, she'hecheyanu vi'kiyimanu vi'higiyanu lazman ha'zeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this occasion.

Now light the *Menorah*!

To publicise the miracle, ideally the *Menorah* should be lit outside the door of your house, on the left side when entering. If this is not feasible, the *Menorah* should be lit in a window facing the street. This is the common practice outside Israel.

It is customary to sing two songs celebrating the festival. (*Hanerot Halalu* and *Ma'oz Tzur*).

During *Chanukah*, we insert a special prayer called "*Al Hanisim*" (lit. "On the miracles") into the "*Amida*" and "Grace after meals". *Hallel* is added to our prayers in the morning.

A number of other customs have developed, including:

- Eating "oily" foods like fried potato latkes (pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (doughnuts), in commemoration of the miracle of the oil.

- Giving *Chanukah Gelt* (coins) to children.
- Spinning the *Dreidel*, a four-sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side (*Sevivon* in Hebrew).



**Parents/Assistant** How to play *Dreidel*?

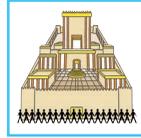
The classic game of *Dreidel* is where players use pennies, nuts, raisins, or chocolate coins as tokens or chips. Each player puts an equal share into the "pot". The first player takes a turn spinning the *Dreidel*. When the *Dreidel* stops, the letter facing up determines the result:

- *Nun* - nothing happens; the next player spins the *Dreidel*
- *Gimmel* - the spinner takes the pot and every player puts in another token.
- *Hey* - the spinner takes half the pot
- *Shin* - the spinner puts one into the pot

The game ends when one player has all the tokens.



# Tevet



10TH

## Asara B'Tevet (The 10th of Tevet)

### Jewish Meaning:

The 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tevet* is one of the four fast days mentioned in the Prophets commemorating dark times in Jewish history. The fast begins at dawn and ends at nightfall.

The 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tevet* marks the onset of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. This was the beginning of the battle that ultimately destroyed Jerusalem and the First Temple sending the Jews into the 70-year Babylonian Exile.

Other calamitous events happened in the month of *Tevet*.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of *Tevet*, King Ptolemy of Egypt forced 70 Jewish scholars to gather and translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. The *Talmud* records that when this translation became public “darkness descended on the world”.

This translation was called the Septuagint (lit. “70” as 70 Jewish scholars translated it).

- It eventually became the basis for the Old Testament section of the Christian bible a few centuries later.
- It further aided the advance of the agenda of the Hellenist Jews to bring Greek culture into Jewish life, and to attempt to reform Judaism in the image of Greek values and lifestyle.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of *Tevet* Ezra the Scribe died.

Since fasting on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> days of *Tevet* consecutively would be unreasonable, the events of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> were subsumed into the fast day of the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tevet*.



# Shevat



15TH

## Tu B'Shvat (New Year for Trees)

### Jewish Meaning:

**T***u B'Shvat* is the New Year for the Trees. It is technically the day when trees stop absorbing water from the ground, and instead draw nourishment from their sap. In Jewish law, tithes were given from the annual produce to the *Kobanim*, the poor and others. *Tu B'Shvat* represented the cut off point between one year and the next, rather like a tax year. Fruit that had blossomed prior to the 15th of *Shevat* could not be used as tithe for fruit that blossomed after that date.

### In Practice:

**T**he custom on *Tu B'Shvat* is to eat fifteen fruits, especially fruits from the seven species for which the Land of Israel is praised:

“...a land of wheat and barley and (grape) vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and (date) honey” (*Deut. 8:8*)

We eat fifteen fruits because of the date of *Tu B'Shvat* (15th *Shevat*).

On *Tu B'Shvat*, it is also customary to eat a “new fruit” (a seasonal fruit that you have not yet tasted this cycle), and to say the *She'hecheyanu* blessing.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, she'hecheyanu vi'kiymanu vi'higyanu lazman ha'zeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this occasion.

Some have the custom to plant trees in Israel.



# Adar

## Did you know?

The name *Megillat Esther* actually means “Revealing the hidden”. Unlike every other book in the Bible, *Megillat Esther* never mentions G-d’s name. The events of *Purim* spanned over several years. On the surface they are haphazard, with no apparent divine plan. Only with hindsight do we see the WHOLE picture, identifying the hand of G-d in every aspect of the *Purim* story. It is for this reason too that we dress up and wear masks, recognising that G-d too is hidden behind the mask of nature!

## SHABBAT BEFORE PURIM

### Shabbat Zachor (Shabbat of Remembrance)

On this *Shabbat* we read the *Torah* portion about Amalek. Amalek was the first nation to attack the Israelites when we came out of Egypt. Haman in the *Purim* story was an Amalekite.

## 13TH

### Ta’anit Esther (Fast of Esther)

The day before *Purim* is a fast day, recalling how the Jews fasted and prayed in preparation for their defence against Haman’s decree of annihilation.

The fast begins at dawn and ends at nightfall.



## 14TH

### Purim

### Jewish Meaning:

*Purim* commemorates the dramatic turn-around of events in Persia 2,300 years ago.



*Between the destruction of the First Temple and the building of the Second Temple, the Jews are almost destroyed.*

*In the capital city of Shushan, Vashti, the Queen of Persia, refused to obey the order of the King of Persia, Ahasuerus, to appear before his guests. The King then searched the country for a new queen. From among hundreds of applicants, Esther, cousin of Mordechai the Jew, is chosen.*

*The King’s Prime Minister was an evil man*

named Haman. Haman, (a descendant of the tribe of Amalek), hated the Jews and decided to kill them. He convinced King Ahasuerus to issue an edict ordering the total destruction of the Jews.

Mordechai pleads with Esther to save the Jewish people by talking to the King. At the risk of her own life, Esther appears before the King without being summoned. She reveals her own Jewish identity to the King and exposes Haman's evil plans.

The King is outraged at Haman. He turns the tables. Haman and his sons are killed, and the Jews are saved.

## In Practice:

There are four *Mitzvot* on *Purim*:

- Reading the *Megilla* evening & morning (Scroll of Esther)
- Festive meal (the *Seuda*)
- Sending 2 food items to a friend (*Mishloach Manot*)
- Giving charity to 2 poor people (*Matanot La'evyonim*)
- It is customary to wear fancy dress
- It is also customary to eat "*Hamantaschen*"



15TH

## Shushan Purim

The *Megilla* (Esther 9:20-22) says that the Jews conquered their enemies on the 13th of *Adar*, and on the 14th they feasted to celebrate the victory. But in *Shushan* the capital, the battle lasted another day and the festival was not celebrated until the 15th.

When the Sages instituted *Purim*, they made the following stipulation: While most cities celebrate *Purim* on the 14th of *Adar*, cities which were walled at the time of Joshua should celebrate a special *Purim* called *Shushan Purim* on the 15th of *Adar*.

The only city that was definitely walled at the time of Joshua is Jerusalem.

## Did you know?

It says in the *Talmud*  
"A person is obligated to become inebriated on *Purim* until he doesn't know the difference between "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai".

(*Talmud Megilla 7b*)

Why is this permitted, let alone encouraged - it seems to be such an unholy, un-Jewish practice?

Judaism's goal is to help us attain the greatest possible spiritual heights. *Purim* is not a "day off" from achieving that goal. The Mystics tell us that *Yom Kippur* is called *Yom KiPurim* - "A day only like *Purim*". In a sense, *Purim* has the potential to be **even** holier than *Yom Kippur*. On *Yom Kippur*, we distance ourselves from the physical. On *Purim* we submerge ourselves in physicality with the aim of achieving the utmost in spirituality. The theme of *Purim* is the revelation of that which is normally concealed. It is a fundamental belief of Judaism that each of us has an inner core of spirituality. Used correctly, alcohol reduces our inhibitions allowing us to "reveal" that inner self.



## Adar Sheni ("2nd Adar")



**IN A LEAP YEAR THIS EXTRA MONTH IS ADDED**

### Purim in a Leap Year

A leap year in the Jewish calendar is one in which a thirteen month is added to the usual twelve, in order to align the Jewish lunar year which has 354 days with the agricultural seasons of the solar year.

The Leap Year occurs seven times in every cycle of nineteen years, (in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> years).

In these years the month of *Adar* is doubled.

All the commandments and customs normally observed in the month of *Adar* are observed in a Leap Year in *Adar Sheni*. These include *Purim*, memorial days, *Bar Mitzvah*, etc.

In a Leap Year, the 14<sup>th</sup> of the "first" *Adar* is called *Purim Katan* (lit. "Minor *Purim*") - to differentiate it from the "real" *Purim* which is celebrated in *Adar Sheni*. Some measure of celebrations are observed on this day also, for example, eulogies and fasting are prohibited.

## Suggested reading:

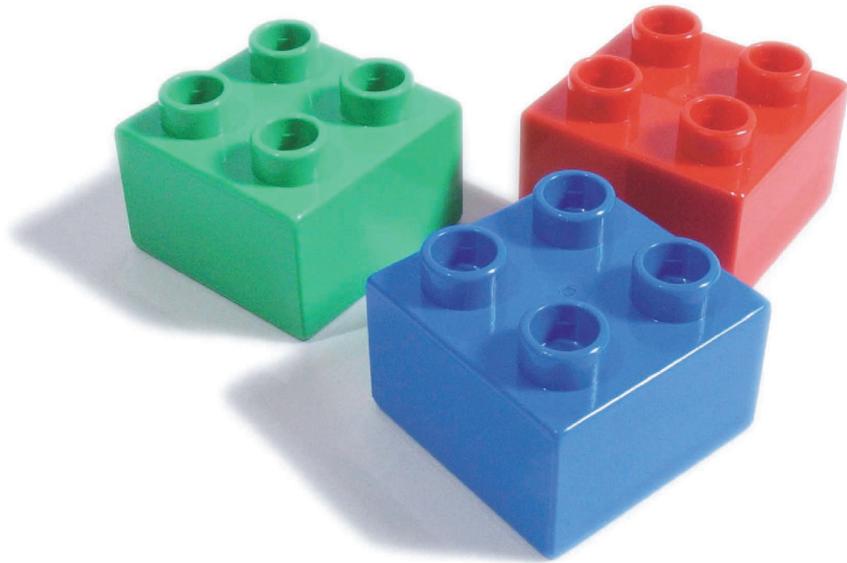
### **BASIC**

- "The Book of Our Heritage" – Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov
- "Guidelines" (*Available on: Pesach, Purim, The Three Weeks, Sukkot, Yamim Noraim, Chanukah and Yom Tov*) – Rabbi Elozor Barclay, Rabbi Yitzchok Jaeger
- "Pathway to Prayer: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur" – Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum
- "Pathway to Prayer: Shalosh Regalim" – Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum
- "A Chanukah Story" – Linda Davis \*Ideal for children
- "A Purim Story" – Linda Davis \*Ideal for children
- "Awesome Days" – Rabbi Simcha Groffman \*Ideal for children
- "You Left Mitzrayim" – Rabbi Simcha Groffman \*Ideal for children
- "Gateway to Judaism" – Rabbi Mordechai Becher
- [www.torahtots.com](http://www.torahtots.com) \*Ideal for children

### **ADVANCED**

- "Seasons in Halacha" – Rabbi Pinchos Yehoshua Ellis
- There are also individual Artscroll volumes on every festival, combining the "Whys Whats and Hows"

# LIFE CYCLE



# Introduction

The Jewish life cycle is punctuated with those “life-defining moments”. They force us to step off the world briefly and to evaluate.

The arrival of a newborn is accompanied by the *Brit* or *Kiddush*. Family and friends are there to shower blessings.

“I can’t believe that she’s walking already!”

“It seems like only yesterday that we were making the *Brit*”

They crowd around again for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

They reminisce at the wedding about “how the years have flown”.

And yes, they return for those more poignant occasions to pay respect, to share memories and to offer hope.

It is the eternal cycle of life. In Judaism it is also the cycle of eternal life.

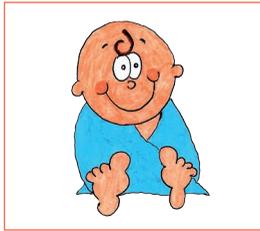
Birth ushers the arrival of a new soul. Death is the departure of the experienced soul – but not the demise. The soul lives on in worlds beyond our own. We perpetuate both the memory and the relationship through the practice of Jewish mourning.

Strictly speaking this session does not belong in a series dedicated to the school and *Cheder* syllabus. After some animated discussion we decided that it does have an appropriate place here. After all, the goal is to give parents the wherewithal to introduce meaningful Judaism into the home and to endow life’s occasions with depth and significance.

This is the goal of this session.

# Life Cycles

	Life Event	Jewish Significance	In Practice
1	 Birth	Soul brought down into physical world	We acknowledge that the miracle of a new life is G-d-given
2	 Boy's 1st <i>Shabbat</i>	Shalom Zachor (Welcome Male)	Friends and family come on Friday night to welcome the baby into the world
3	 Boy Circumcised and Named	Brit Milah / Brit / Bris (Covenant of Circumcision)	A healthy eight-day-old boy is circumcised thus entering him into a covenant with G-d as a member of the Jewish nation
4	 Naming a Girl	Kiddush / Simchat Bat / Zeved Bat (Celebration of a daughter)	The father of the baby names her in <i>Shul</i> after being called up to the <i>Torah</i>
5	 Boy "Redeemed"	Pidyon Haben (Redemption of the son)	A firstborn baby boy is redeemed from his obligation of priesthood Father gives 5 silver coins to a <i>Kohen</i>
6	 Girl/Boy Matures into Adulthood	Bat/Bar Mitzvah (Daughter/Son of Mitzvah)	As the young person becomes an adult, we celebrate this milestone and the additional obligations and responsibilities ( <i>Mitzvot</i> ) that it brings
7	 Engagement Party	Vort (Giving one's...word)	Family and friends are invited to celebrate the couple's verbal commitment to marry
8	 Groom called to the <i>Torah</i>	Aufruf (Call up...to the <i>Torah</i> )	The groom is 'called up' to the <i>Torah</i> on the <i>Shabbat</i> before his wedding
9	 Marriage	Kiddushin (Sanctification)	Bride and Groom are married under a <i>Chuppah</i> which symbolises the open home they hope to build together
10	 Death	Soul taken back into the spiritual world	The body is accorded great respect between death and burial
11	 Funeral	Levaya (accompanying ...to final resting place)	After eulogies, the body is escorted to its final resting place
12	 Saying the Mourner's Prayer	Saying Kaddish	This prayer acknowledges G-d's greatness and creates a heightened awareness of His Divine presence. This merit elevates the soul of the departed
13	 7 Days of Mourning	Shivah (Seven ...days of mourning)	These 7 days allow the mourner(s) to focus on their grief without distractions. Visitors come to comfort the mourners
14	 30 1st Month of Mourning	Sheloshim (Thirty...days of mourning)	A lower intensity of mourning extending to 30 days allows the mourner to gradually get used to life without the departed
15	 Stone Setting	Matzeivah (Monument)	Relatives and friends gather to pray to G-d at the grave
16	 1st Year of Mourning	Shana (Year)	Some aspects of mourning for a deceased parent are practised for twelve months - after this time, all signs of mourning end
17	 Annual Anniversary of Death	Yahrtzeit (Time of year)	The mourner lights a 24 hour candle and <i>Kaddish</i> is recited once again for the merit of the deceased



# 1. Birth

## Jewish Meaning:

It has often been said that with the arrival of new life, we come closest to witnessing a miracle and certainly life changes forever! At this moment we become “parents”, “custodians of a soul”, responsible for transmitting a heritage. We are partners with the Almighty Himself, ushering new life into an exciting world!



## In Practice:

It will come as no surprise that the occasion is marked with a blessing, once mother and baby are comfortable.

### UPON THE BIRTH OF A BABY BOY, SAY THE BLESSING:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם הטוב והמטיב:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, hatov v'ha'meitiv.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who is good and beneficent.

### UPON THE BIRTH OF A BABY GIRL, SAY THE BLESSING:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שֶׁהַחַיִּימוֹ וְקִיְימָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, she'hecheyanu vi'kiyimanu vi'higiyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this occasion.

### Sources:

*'G-d blessed them and G-d said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it..."*

(Gen. 1:28)



## 2. Shalom Zachor (Welcome to the male)

### Jewish Meaning:

#### Sources:

*‘It is customary to make a festive meal on the Shabbat eve after the birth of a baby boy. . . and this meal is a Mitzvah’*

*(Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh De’ah 265:12)*

**W**hen a baby is in the womb, he is taught the entire *Torah*. However, as soon as he enters the air of this world, an angel comes and strikes him on his mouth, causing him to forget everything he's learnt. At first sight, the reason for a *Shalom Zachor* does not sound like a reason to celebrate! The baby has lost all of this incredible knowledge and is akin to a mourner! We come and visit to “comfort” the child.

Of course, there is more.

What is the point of teaching the unborn child the entire *Torah* if he is going to forget it all at birth?

By learning *Torah* in the womb, *Torah* becomes rooted in our deeper consciousness and the effect remains. Life is therefore about retrieving that which is latent, rather than searching for the unknown.

The word “*Zachor*” also means “remember”. This is why we hold this ceremony on *Shabbat*. There is a special association between *Shabbat* and the capacity to remember. “Remember the day of *Shabbat* to sanctify it.” (Exod. 20:8)

This occasion is a statement of our belief that the Jewish baby has an intrinsic pre-birth connection with *Torah*. Life is a journey of re-discovery. Indeed it is the very effort that personalises the achievement. Now that’s a celebration!

### In Practice:

**I**t is customary for *Ashkenazim* to have the *Shalom Zachor* on the first Friday night after the birth of a boy.

Often it is done at the home of the newborn, after the Friday night meal.

Light refreshments are served, but not a full meal.

Guests drop by to convey their “*Mazel Tov*”, have a bite to eat, share words of *Torah* and sing songs; welcoming the newborn and thanking G-d for the birth.

*Sephardim* have a similar celebration called a *Brit Yitzchak* which takes place instead on the evening preceding the *Brit Milah*.



#### Did you know?

Chickpeas are customarily served because they are a round-shaped food eaten by mourners (as they symbolise the cyclical nature of life)



### 3. Brit Milah / Brit / Bris (Circumcision)

#### Jewish Meaning:

**A** *Brit* literally means a “covenant”. It refers to the everlasting covenant that bonds the Jewish people to G-d. Humans are comprised of body and soul; our life goal is for our soul to win the struggle for dominance over the body. *Brit Milah* is an act of harnessing the “sensual” for the “spiritual”: G-d’s “sign” is placed on the organ of the ultimate physical drive which is **also** the means for procreation and creativity.

G-d desired that this final “finishing touch” and perfection of our body should be a distinctly human act. Spiritual perfection must be completed by human effort.

#### In Practice:

**E**very healthy boy should be circumcised on his eighth day of life, counting the day of his birth as day one. We perform the *Brit* on the eighth day even if it is *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*. However, if a boy did not have his *Brit* on the eighth day (for any reason), he should be circumcised at the first possible opportunity, but not on a *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*.

Usually a *Brit* is done in the morning. This demonstrates our eagerness to fulfil this important *Mitzvah*. If necessary, it may be performed in the afternoon but not at night.

The baby is the “guest of honour” and is therefore not brought into the room until everything is ready. Usually, the baby is transported on a large royal-looking pillow. (In some circles the baby is passed from person to person to include others in the *Mitzvah*)

The baby is then placed on a special chair of Elijah the Prophet and from there he is passed to the lap of the pre-designated *Sandek*. The *Sandek* is the person who holds the baby during the circumcision. This great honour is often given to a grandfather or a person distinguished by their *Torah* knowledge.

The *Mitzvah* of performing the *Brit* is actually the responsibility of the father. Since most fathers are not trained, he appoints the *Mohel* as his emissary.

#### Sources:

‘G-d said to Abraham, “And as for you, you shall keep My Covenant - you and your offspring after you throughout their generations... Every male among you shall be circumcised - that shall be the sign of the Covenant between Me and you. At the age of eight days every male among you shall be circumcised - throughout the generations...”’

(Gen.17:9-14)

‘On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.’

(Lev. 12:3)



### Did you know?

Most babies start crying as soon as the nappy is removed before the circumcision. The actual procedure takes under 20 seconds.

### JUST BEFORE PERFORMING THE CIRCUMCISION, THE MOHEL RECITES:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על המילה:  
*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al hamilah.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His *Mitzvot*, and commanded us regarding circumcision.

### AS THE MOHEL PERFORMS THE CIRCUMCISION, THE FATHER RECITES:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להכניסו בבְריתו של אברהם אבינו:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hachnito bivrito shel Avraham Avinu.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His *Mitzvot*, and commanded us to bring him into the Covenant of Abraham, our forefather.

### THE ASSEMBLED GUESTS THEN SAY:

ישם שונכנס לבריתו, פן יכנס לתורה ולחפה ולמעשים טובים:  
*K'shem she-nikhmas labrit, ken yikanes I'Torah, U'l'hupah u'l'maasim tovim.*

Just as he entered the Covenant, so may he be introduced to the study of *Torah*, to marriage and good deeds.

*Mazel Tov!*

Finally, the baby is held for a series of blessings which include the naming. This is followed by a festive meal.

## Terminology:

The following is a list of honours that may be given out at the *Brit*:

- Mohel** - performs the circumcision
- K'vatter** - couple that carry the baby in (Mother gives baby to female k'vatter who passes the baby to her husband)
- Kisei Shel Elijah** - (lit. Chair of Elijah) refers to the honouree who puts the baby on the Chair of Elijah
- M'HaKisei** - the honouree who takes the baby off the Chair of Elijah
- Sandek** - holds the baby on his lap during the actual circumcision; the highest honour
- M'HaSandek** - takes the baby from the *Sandek* after the circumcision
- Brachot** - (lit. blessing) refers to the honouree who recites the blessings and announces the baby's name
- Amidah L'Brachot** - holds the baby during the recitation of the blessings

### Did you know?

The *K'vatters* are often a married couple who do not have children of their own as the performance of this role is a good omen for having children.



## 4. Naming a Girl (Kiddush/Simchat Bat/ Zevud Habat)

### Jewish Meaning:

The term *Simchat Bat* means “celebration of a daughter”, *Zevud Habat* means “gift of a daughter”. Different communities celebrate the “arrival” of a daughter in different ways, following long held traditions. The essence of each is the concept of “sharing the rejoicing in the blessing with others” and always with food!

Often the timing of these ceremonies coincides with the “naming”. On a mystical level, the Hebrew name serves as the spiritual designation of the person - character, specialness, and path in life. In other words, a person’s name captures his or her essence.

### Sources:

*A person does not receive his full measure of soul until receiving a Hebrew name.*

*(Zohar, Lech Lecha 93a)*

### In Practice:

It is important to choose a name that is meaningful.

Most often, a child is named after a relative. The *Sephardi* custom is to name a child after a relative who is still alive, whereas the *Ashkenazi* custom is to name a child only after someone who is no longer alive. It is hoped that the child will benefit from the merit of the deceased and continue their good work.

It is customary not to reveal the name before the official naming ceremony.

In the *Ashkenazi* communities the naming ceremony is linked to the public reading of the *Torah*. The father of the baby gets “called up to the *Torah*” and a special *Mi Sheberach* blessing is said. The blessing begins with a prayer for the mother’s health and continues with the giving of the baby’s name and a prayer that this new Jewish daughter should grow to be a wise and understanding Jewish woman of goodness and greatness.

A *Kiddush* is traditionally held on a *Shabbat* shortly after the birth in honour of a baby girl. Friends and relatives gather to share good food, speak words of *Torah*, and share the family’s profound joy.

The *Sephardi* custom is to recite certain verses from the *Torah* in a ceremony called a *Simchat Bat* or a *Zevud Habat*.



### Did you know?

The *Talmud* tells us that parents receive one-sixtieth of prophecy when picking a name!

*(Talmud, Brachot 7b)*



## 5. Pidyon Haben (Redemption of the firstborn)

### Jewish Meaning:

#### Sources:

‘...but you shall surely redeem the firstborn of man... Those that are redeemed- from one month shall you redeem according to the valuation, five silver shekels by the sacred shekel...’

(Num. 18:15-16)

In Judaism we celebrate firsts. From firstborn sons to first fruits of the season. “Firsts” accentuate life’s gifts. And life’s gifts are G-d given.

Our first task is to recognise that we are the beneficiaries of G-d's generosity. Our right to receive the gift follows this acknowledgement. So we “redeem” the gift from G-d via His representative on earth – the *Kohen*.

In addition, in the plague of the “Killing of the Firstborn”, the firstborn Egyptian males perished. This was a dangerous time for all firstborn males. The Jewish firstborns were spared and they owed particular allegiance to G-d. G-d intended them to be the *Kohanim* (Priests) of the Jewish people. However, at the incident of the Golden Calf they became involved in that tragic transgression and henceforth they lost the *Kohen* status. It was handed instead to the *Levites*, a subset of whom became the *Kohanim*. Subsequently the firstborns lost the privilege of priesthood, but **not** the obligation. Thus a firstborn male has to be “redeemed” from his obligation through a *Kohen* taking his place. The *Kohen* is paid 5 silver coins. It is for this reason that the *Mitzvah* only applies to boys.

### In Practice:

The ceremony takes place on the 31<sup>st</sup> day following birth. However, if the 31<sup>st</sup> day falls on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*, the *Pidyon Haben* is postponed until the following day.



The redemption is performed with the equivalent value of five biblical silver shekels, which is estimated as 100 grams of silver. Sometimes people use five US silver dollars. After the ceremony, the *Kohen* has the right to keep or return the money.

The procedure for *Pidyon Haben* is as follows:

The *Pidyon Haben* takes place during a meal. The assembled guests are invited to wash for bread and then the proceedings begin.

To show one's love of the *Mitzvah*, the baby is usually brought in on a silver tray decorated with jewellery. The father places the baby before the *Kohen* and declares that this baby is his firstborn son. The *Kohen* ceremonially asks the father if he chooses to redeem the child. The father responds in the affirmative and then, whilst holding the five silver coins, he recites the two blessings:

#### FATHER SAYS DURING PIDYON HABEN:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל פְּדִיּוֹן הַבֵּן:

*Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al pidyon haben.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with his *Mitzvot* and commanded us with the *Mitzvah* of redemption of the firstborn son.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁהִחַיְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, she'hecheyanu vi'kiyimanu vi'bigiyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this occasion.

The *Kohen* accepts the money from the father, hands the baby back to the father, and then recites the blessing over wine. Then, everyone enjoys the festive meal.

#### Did you know?

**The following conditions must apply for a *Pidyon Haben* to take place:**

- The mother is Jewish, and she has never had a baby before, male or female.
  - The baby was delivered in the normal way, not via Caesarean.
  - The mother had no abortions or miscarriages prior to this birth.
  - Neither parent is a *Kohen* or *Levi*.
- These conditions make a *Pidyon Haben* quite uncommon!



## 6. Bar/Bat Mitzvah

### Sources:

*‘He (Yehudah ben Tema) used to say: A five year old begins Scripture; a ten year old begins Mishna; a thirteen year old becomes obligated to observe the commandments; a fifteen year old begins the study of Gemara; an eighteen year old goes to the marriage canopy; ... 20 livelihood, 30 strength, 40 understanding, 50 counsel, 60 seniority, 70 ripe old age, 80 shows strength, 90 stooped, 100 as if ceased from the world.’*

*(Mishna, Avot 5:25)*



### Jewish Meaning:

**B**ar/Bat Mitzvah literally translates as “son/daughter of obligation” - i.e. the person is now obligated to follow the *Mitzvot* of the *Torah* like any other adult. (In general, girls tend to mature earlier than boys. (*Talmud, Nida* 45b))

At this stage of teenage life as their bodies are growing and changing, so too their souls are growing and changing. The *Kabbalistic* tradition tells us that a person’s spiritual being has several levels of soul. A new level of soul (called *Neshama*) is awakened at the time of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. This level gives a person the ability to make conscious, rational decisions.

### In Practice:

**T**he best time to hold a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration is on the day of the Hebrew birthday. This calculation follows the Jewish calendar.

One of the great excitements of *Bar Mitzvah* is the purchase of *Tefillin*. (It is very important to buy these from a reputable source) From the age of 13, *Tefillin* become a daily, weekday obligation. They are the mark of Jewish manhood. The young man joins the rank of our people.

At the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration, the celebrant gives a speech which highlights his/her understanding of this occasion as they join the ranks of our People.

At the first opportunity after reaching 13 years of age, the *Bar Mitzvah* boy should be “called up” for an *Aliyah* to the *Torah*. He is now a fully fledged member of the community and can be counted for a *Minyan* (a quorum of ten men).

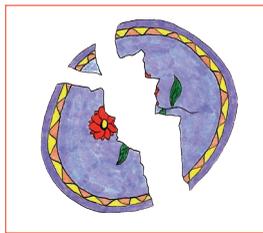
On the *Shabbat* following his 13th birthday, the *Bar Mitzvah* boy is called up to the *Torah* (even if he was called up to the *Torah* during the course of the week). In some communities, he reads from the *Torah* and/or the *Haftarah*. At the conclusion of his final blessing, the *Bar Mitzvah* boy is often pelted with sweets!

**Aim:** To encourage anticipation of future *Simchas*

**Activity:** Look up your children's Hebrew birthday on the website [hebc.com](http://hebc.com) and work out their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* dates! This way you can also celebrate two birthdays a year!  
(Check with a Rabbi before you book any halls!)

### Did you know?

Although we commonly refer to "having" a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, in truth, a Jewish boy automatically becomes *Bar Mitzvah* when he turns 13 years old, and a girl, *Bat Mitzvah* at age 12 whether or not there is a celebration.



## 7. Vort/Engagement Party

### Jewish Meaning:

When a couple decide to marry, the families often announce the occasion with a reception, known as a *Vort* (lit. a “word”), symbolising the verbal commitment to marry.

### In Practice:

There is a custom to break a plate at the *Vort*. This symbolises the seriousness of their commitment to each other: just as breaking the plate is final, so too the engagement is “final” and not easily terminated.



Breaking the plate also tempers the intense joy of the occasion, similar to the glass which is broken under the *Chuppah*. It reminds us that the Temple is not yet rebuilt.

Customarily, the couple’s mothers are the ones who break the plate. They hold the plate together and drop it onto a hard surface.

Some have the custom to do this instead on the wedding day at the reception.

### Did you know?

There is a custom to make a necklace for the bride from the broken pieces of the plate. Others give the broken pieces to eligible “singles” as if to say “may a plate soon be broken for you”.

### Did you know?

#### *Shidduchim*/Dating:

Contrary to popular belief, the term “arranged marriage” is not an accurate description of the term “*Shidduch*”. It is an “arranged date”. Close friends or relatives of the young man or woman, suggest that they meet. The purpose of the meeting is for the prospective bride and groom to determine if they are indeed compatible. The meetings usually focus on discussion of issues that underpin successful marriages, such as shared life goals and values. Many relationships start with shared interests. But interests are often short term. Only shared goals create life-long relationships. Once this basis has been established, the relationship has the “green light” to grow and the couple get to know each other, albeit without a physical relationship. The physical relationship begins on the other side of the *Chuppah*.



## 8. Aufruf (Call up to the Torah)

### In Practice:

It is customary for the groom to have an *Aufruf* (calling up) to the *Torah* on the *Shabbat* before the wedding. Traditionally the bride will share the *Shabbat* with her friends in a celebration called *Shabbat Kallah*.

It is customary that one week before the wedding, the bride and groom stop seeing each other, in order to enhance the anticipation of their wedding through their separation. Some *Sephardim* have the custom to have a *Shabbat Chattan* on the *Shabbat* after the wedding.



### Did you know?

In some *Sephardic* communities, the ladies throw raisins, almonds and sweets at the groom, to symbolise a sweet start to his married life.



## 9. Marriage

### Jewish Meaning:

The *Kabbalistic* sources reveal that the souls of a predestined husband and wife stem from the same source. Marriage is simply bringing them back to their natural state - two halves of a whole, like the original Adam and Eve.

The wedding day itself is considered a personal *Yom Kippur* for the *Kallah* (Bride) and *Chatan* (Groom). On this day all their past mistakes are forgiven as they merge into a new, complete soul.

In fact it is a long established custom (with exceptions) that the *Chatan* and *Kallah* fast from dawn until after the *Chuppah*.

### In Practice:

The wedding ceremony can be divided into 9 parts:

- *Kabbalat Panim* - (Reception)
- *Badeken* - (Veiling of the bride)
- *Chuppah* - (Wedding canopy)
- Giving of the ring
- *Ketubah* - (Marriage Contract)
- *Sheva Brachot* - (The Seven Blessings)
- Breaking the glass
- *Yichud* - (Seclusion)
- *Seudah* - (The Festive Meal)

### *Kabbalat Panim* (Reception)

It is customary for the *Chatan* and *Kallah* not to see each other for one week preceding the wedding. Therefore, prior to the wedding ceremony, the *Chatan* and *Kallah* greet guests separately. This is called *Kabbalat Panim* (some call the groom's reception

#### Sources:

*At the time of conception, a heavenly voice emerges and declares "the daughter of so-and-so is destined to marry this person"*

*(Talmud, Sotah 2a).*

“The *Tisch*” – lit. “the table”).

Jewish tradition likens the couple to a king and queen. The *Chatan* is surrounded by guests who sing and toast him, while the *Kallah* will be seated on a “throne” to receive her guests.

At this reception, the *Ketubah* (marriage document) is witnessed and signed.

### **Badeken (Veiling of the bride)**

Next comes the *Badeken*, the veiling of the *Kallah* by the *Chatan*. The veil symbolises the idea of modesty and conveys the concept that the inner person is more important than the external appearance - no matter how attractive.

The *Chatan* is accompanied by musicians and the male guests to the room where the bride is receiving her guests. She sits, like a queen, on a throne-like chair surrounded by her entourage. The groom, places the veil over her face. This is an ancient custom and illustrates the *Chatan*’s commitment to clothe and protect his wife. The first record of a *Badeken* was when Rebecca covered her face before marrying Isaac.

### **Chuppah (Wedding canopy)**

The wedding ceremony takes place under the *Chuppah* (canopy), a symbol of the home to be built and shared by the couple. It is open on all sides, just as Abraham and Sarah had their tent open at all sides to welcome friends and relatives in unconditional hospitality.

The *Chuppah* is often held outside, under the heavens, as a sign of the blessing given by G-d to the patriarch Abraham that his children shall be “as the stars of the heavens” (Gen. 15:9).

In some circles the groom is dressed in a long white robe known as a *Kittel*. Like the white wedding gown, this too, symbolises the spiritual purity of the event. Many have the custom to place some ash discreetly on the groom’s forehead, prior to the *Chuppah* in memory of the destruction of the

#### **Did you know?**

The prayers of a bride and groom under the *Chuppah* have special power as it is a particularly auspicious and moving time. They are praying for a home filled with love, *Torah*-study and blessings. It is not unusual to see bride and groom with fervent tears.



Temple in Jerusalem. The *Chatan* and *Kallah* wear no jewellery under the *Chuppah*. Their mutual commitment is based on who they are as people, not on any material possessions.

The groom is accompanied to the *Chuppah* either by his parents, or by his father and father-in-law. The bride is then escorted to the *Chuppah*, accompanied either by her parents, or by her mother and mother-in-law.



When the bride arrives at the *Chuppah* she circles the groom seven times. The world was built in seven days, and now the *Kallah* is figuratively building the walls of the couple's new world.

Under the *Chuppah*, two cups of wine are used. The first cup accompanies the blessings made for the *Kiddushin* (the betrothal).

The second cup accompanies the *Sheva Brachot* later in the ceremony.

### Did you know?

A marriage is called *Kiddushin* (same root as the word "*Kiddush*" that we make on Friday night) which translates as "Holy". In both *Kiddushin* and *Kiddush* we use wine. Wine is the most potent of drinks, yet we use it for acts of holiness. Judaism teaches that physicality and spirituality don't contradict – on the contrary; our challenge is to transform the physical world around us by imbuing it with spirituality. Marriage and intimacy becomes holy.

### Giving of the ring

The ring should be one piece without blemishes or ornamentation, symbolising a marriage of simple beauty. The *Chatan* takes the wedding ring and places it on the tip of the right forefinger of the *Kallah* in the view of two witnesses.

הָרִי אֶת מְקַדְּשֶׁת לִי, בְּטַבְעֶת זֶה, כְּדַת מֹשֶׁה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל:

#### AFTERWARDS HE SAYS:

*Haray at mekudesbet lee b'taba'at zu k'dat Moshe v'Yisrael.*

Behold, you are sanctified (betrothed) to me with this ring according to the laws of Moses and Israel.

They are now married! *Mazal Tov!*

### Ketubah (Marriage Contract)

Now comes the reading of the *Ketubah* (Marriage Contract).

This contract is ordained by *Mishnaic Law* (circa 170 CE) and according to some authorities dates back to Biblical times. The *Ketubah*, written in Aramaic, details the husband's duties to his wife: food, clothing and marital relations. It also includes his financial responsibilities in the result of a marriage breakdown,

or if he predeceases her. It is a legally binding agreement. The *Ketubah* is the property of the *Kallah* and she must have access to it throughout their marriage.

### ***Sheva Brachot (The Seven Blessings)***

The Seven Blessings are now recited over the second cup of wine. The blessings are recited by the Rabbi or other people that the families wish to honour. After the seventh blessing, the *Chatan* and *Kallah* drink some of the wine.

### ***Breaking the glass***

A glass is placed on the floor and the *Chatan* breaks it with his foot. This custom dates back to *Talmudic* times (circa 300-500 CE) and symbolises the sadness felt at the destruction of the Temple. Even at times of immense joy, one should always remember Jerusalem of old.

With the breaking of the glass, the band plays and the guests usually break out into dancing with cries of *Mazal Tov! Mazal Tov!* The *Chatan* and *Kallah* then proceed to the *Yichud* room.

### ***Yichud (Seclusion)***

Now that the couple are married they may now be alone in a closed room together, an intimacy reserved only for a married couple.

### ***Seudah (The Festive Meal)***

The bride and groom rejoin the celebration a bit later. Their entrance kick-starts the band and everyone joins in the dancing.

The meal ends with the *Bircat Hamazon* (Grace After Meals), and again the *Sheva Brachot* are recited over wine, shared afterwards by the bride and groom.

During the week following the wedding, it is customary for friends and relatives to host festive meals in honour of the *Chatan* and *Kallah*. This is called the week of *Sheva Brachot*, because of the blessings said at the conclusion of each of these festive meals.



## 10. Death

### Jewish Meaning:

**G**-d created man physical and spiritual - body and soul. He placed these two radically different components into one coherent unit in order to create free choice. Humanity has the ability to place the soul in charge of the body or vice versa.

Death is the start of a new process in which body is separate from the soul. After death, the body returns “home” and turns to dust, and the soul returns “home” to the World of Souls (*Olam HaNeshamot*).

The soul is now free from the limitations and challenges of physicality. For the person who has lived a fulfilled life, death is not a tragedy. His /her soul is entering a place of serenity basking in the radiance of the Almighty.

### In Practice:

**A** body is considered sacred even after death. It was after all the casing of a holy soul and must be treated with reverence. It is disrespectful to eat, pray or even study *Torah* in the presence of the corpse, but it is permissible to recite Psalms.

From the moment of death until the burial, the corpse may not be left alone. At least one Jewish adult must remain with the body at all times. This is out of respect to the departed, almost like a guard of honour. The body is then bathed and cleaned in a process known as *Tabara* (lit. purification).

From the time that a person passes away until burial, the immediate relatives (parents, children, siblings and spouse of the deceased) are in a state of *Aninut* (pre-burial mourning). During this time, they should devote all their time and energy to the proper and expeditious funeral and burial of the deceased.

**Parents' Assistant**

**Aim:** To teach the life concept

**Activity:** Buy and read “The Little Leaf” (published by Hechai) with your children, from 5 years old and upwards - a beautiful introduction to the concept of the “life cycle”.



## 11. Levaya (Funeral)

### Jewish Meaning:

“*Levaya*” - literally means “escorting procession”. It is an important *Mitzvah* to attend a funeral service. The living solemnly escort the body to its final resting place and the soul to the next world. It is a great comfort for the deceased to be escorted by family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and members of the community.

### In Practice:

The funeral must take place as soon as possible. Normally a eulogy is said unless the funeral is held on: Friday afternoon, *Erev Yom Tov*, the entire month of *Nissan* and other festive dates.

At the conclusion of the eulogies, the body is solemnly accompanied to its burial place.

Cremation is strictly forbidden.

Since the cemetery is sacred, it is forbidden to:

- eat or drink
- smoke
- walk or lean on a tombstone
- step on any graves
- greet someone within eight feet of a grave
- have *Tzitzit* exposed within a cemetery
- pray, study *Torah* or even hold a holy book within close proximity of a grave.

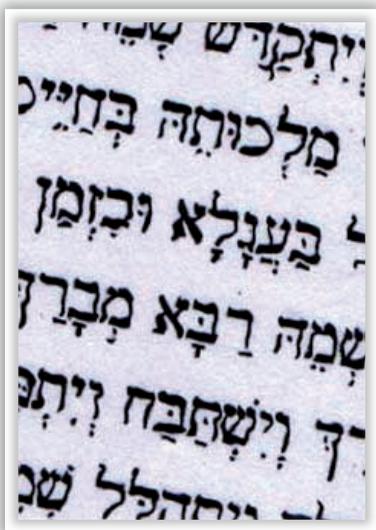
These latter two are inappropriate. We who are alive and can still do *Mitzvot* should not flaunt them before the dead who no longer have the chance.

Anyone who comes within eight feet of a grave must wash his hands with a cup (three times on each hand, no *Bracha* is recited) before returning home.



## 12. Kaddish (Mourner's prayer)

### Jewish Meaning:



The mystical impact of *Kaddish* for the departed soul is beyond measure in spiritual spheres and beyond the scope of these pages. Suffice to say, “existence” does not end with death. In many respects it just begins. There is an unseen world of the Divine and the recitation of *Kaddish* has a direct impact on the soul in these ethereal realms.

The theme of *Kaddish* is the proclamation that through all the changing conditions in the universe, the one thing that remains steadfast is G-d’s undiminished grandeur.

### In Practice:

Every male is obligated to say *Kaddish* in his parents' memory. If there are no sons to say *Kaddish*, a different male family member should take it upon himself. Otherwise, someone should be appointed to say *Kaddish*.

*Kaddish* is only recited with a *Minyan*. It is very important that the mourner makes every effort to recite *Kaddish*.

### Did you know?

Although the importance of reciting *Kaddish* is immeasurable, family and friends of the deceased can also elevate the spiritual level of a soul by studying *Torah* and performing *Mitzvot*. Their deeds testify that the deceased continues to be a source of inspiration to the living.



## 13. Shiva (7 days of mourning)

### Jewish Meaning:

Judaism provides a sensitive, structured approach to mourning. This structure guides mourners through the tragic loss and pain and gradually eases them back into the world. The loss is forever, but the psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing that takes place at every stage is necessary and healthy.

From the time of death until the conclusion of the funeral, the primary focus is on the appropriate care of the deceased. However, once the *Shiva* begins, the focus shifts to the mourners. The mourners experience a week of intense grief, and the community's job is to comfort them and provide for their needs.

After the burial, the immediate relatives (parents, children, siblings and spouse) return to a home called the “*Shiva house*,” to begin a seven day period of intense mourning. *Shiva* comes from the word *Sheva*, which means seven. This week is called “*sitting Shiva*”, mourners are comforted by friends and family with short visits referred to as “*Shiva calls*.”

### In Practice:

The *Shiva* period begins immediately after the burial and continues until the morning of the seventh day.

Although one may sit *Shiva* wherever convenient, it is preferable to do so in the place where the departed lived or died. The mourner should not leave the home in which he is sitting *Shiva*, unless absolutely necessary. Others should take care of any errands that need to be done.

A candle should be lit for the entire *Shiva* period.

The first meal eaten by the mourners after the burial should be provided by others. It should include bread (sustenance of life) and hard boiled egg or lentils (both rounded, like the cycle of life). All other meals during the *Shiva* should be prepared by others.

There are many laws that appertain to the mourning process which are well documented. The theme throughout is a focus on bereavement and loss.



When *Shabbat* falls during the *Shiva*, it is counted as one of the seven days of mourning, but one does not mourn publicly. This means that the outer signs of mourning (covering mirrors, sitting low, wearing no make-up, wearing mourner's garments, etc.) are suspended, because the joy of *Shabbat* overrides public mourning. These signs of mourning are suspended before the beginning of *Shabbat* so that a person has time to properly prepare (shower, dress, etc.). On *Shabbat*, people sitting *Shiva* mourn in their hearts. On Saturday night, the *Shiva* resumes.

All of the laws of *Shiva* terminate on *Erev Yom Tov* if a *Yom Tov* occurs during the *Shiva*.

The purpose of a “*Shiva call*” is to give the mourner the cathartic opportunity to focus on their grief. Contrary to popular belief it is not to “distract” the mourner.

One does not greet the mourner by saying “Hello”, “Good morning” or any other salutation. In fact, it is best to come in silently and sit down close to them. Take your cue from the mourners as to whether they want to talk. It is best to speak about the one who has passed away, and if you have any stories or memories to share with the mourner, this is the time to do so.

Weekday Prayer services are held in the *Shiva* house, not in the synagogue. If possible, a *Torah* scroll should be brought to the home and left in a safe, respectable place.

**BEFORE LEAVING THE HOME OF THE MOURNER, IT IS CUSTOMARY TO SAY THE FOLLOWING PHRASE TO THOSE SITTING *SHIVA* IN EITHER ENGLISH OR HEBREW:**

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר אֲבְלֵי צִיּוֹן וְיִרְוּשָׁלַיִם:

*HaMakom y'nacheim et'chem bi'toch sh'ar avay'lay Tzioon vee'Yerushalayim.*

May the Omnipresent console you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

The seventh and final day of *Shiva* is observed only briefly. After the last *Shacharit* service, the mourners sit low again for a short time. Then those who have come to comfort the mourners say to them, “Arise”.

**THE COMFORTERS THEN SAY:**

No more will your sun set, nor your moon be darkened, for G-d will be an eternal light for you, and your days of mourning shall end. (Isaiah 60:20)

Like a man whose mother consoles him, so shall I console you, and you shall be consoled in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 66:13)

The mourners acknowledge that the *Shiva* is over by leaving the *Shiva* house publicly for the first time.

# 30

## 14. Sheloshim (Month of mourning)

### Jewish Meaning:

**A**s the time period from the death passes, there is a gradually lessened intensity of mourning. This period consists of the thirty days (including the seven days of *Shiva*) following burial. The mourner is encouraged to leave the house after *Shiva* and to slowly rejoin society, always recognising that enough time has not yet elapsed to assume full, normal social relations.

### In Practice:

**D**uring *Sheloshim*, the laws of mourning are less intense but there is still an emphasis on loss and a reduction on the standard “creature comforts” of life - as detailed in the comprehensive guides available.

At the conclusion of *Sheloshim*, all of the customs of mourning end. The exception is someone mourning the loss of a parent.



## 15. Matzeivah (Stone Setting)

### Jewish Meaning:



It is an ancient Jewish practice to mark a burial place. When Jacob buried Rachel, G-d commanded him to mark the tomb with a monument.

### Did you know?

A fundamental principle of Judaism is that we may not pray to anyone other than G-d. Thus when offering a prayer at a gravesite, it is important to remember that we do not pray to the deceased. Rather, it is proper to ask G-d to allow the merit of the departed to benefit the living.

### In Practice:

The tombstone should contain the Hebrew name of the deceased.

There are different customs as to when to erect the tombstone. In some communities, it is done as soon as possible. Others wait until the end of the first year.

When the tombstone is erected, it is proper for relatives and friends of the deceased to gather and recite Psalms, say *Kaddish* (if there is a *Minyan* present), eulogise the departed, and recite the memorial prayer.



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## 16. Shana (1st year of mourning)

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### Jewish Meaning:

**W**hen one loses a parent, the loss is greatest. Even if the child did not share a close relationship with the deceased parent, the obligations of mourning apply. The parents gave the child life.

### In Practice:

**I**n remembrance of a departed parent, some elements of mourning continue for 12 months. (Even during a leap year when an extra month is added to the calendar, the mourning lasts for 12 months and not a year.) This includes restrictions on attending any festive occasion or social gathering including a wedding, *Bar Mitzvah* dinner, etc.

At the conclusion of the 12 months, all of the customs of mourning cease.



## 17. Yahrzeit (Annual Anniversary of death)

### In Practice:

The *Yahrzeit* (lit. time (of) year) is observed on the Jewish anniversary of the day of death.

Starting from the preceding evening, a candle should remain alight for the duration of the day. It should be allowed to burn itself out. (A candle may never be lit on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*) If possible, one should visit the burial place on the *Yahrzeit*. It is customary for visitors to leave a pebble or some grass at the grave, to mark the visit.

### Did you know?

A person's soul is compared to a flame, since each person brings light into the world. And just as one can take from a flame to light more candles without diminishing the original flame, so too a person can give of him/herself, touching many lives, without ever being diminished.

The wick and the flame are also compared to the body and soul, and the strong bond between them.

## Yizkor (Remembrance)

### Jewish Meaning:

*Yizkor* means “remembrance” and on the following occasions, a special prayer is recited in *Shul*:

- *Yom Kippur*
- The last day of *Pesach*
- The second day of *Shavuot*
- The eighth day of *Sukkot* (*Shmini Atzeret*)

On these occasions, the Jewish nation celebrates together. We understand that we are here as Jews because of the commitment of previous generations. It is fitting to acknowledge earlier generations on *Yom Tov* with *Yizkor*.

### In Practice:

On the eve of *Yom Kippur*, just before the *Yom Tov* candles are lit, light a memorial candle at home.

In some *Shuls*, before the private *Yizkor* prayer is said, *Yizkor* is recited for those who perished in the Holocaust and for the soldiers who died fighting for the State of Israel.

*Yizkor* is recited halfway through the *Shul* service (those who have never been mourners leave the *Shul*). After the *Yom Tov*, one should give *Tzedakah* - charity in memory of the deceased.

## Suggested reading:

### **LIFE CYCLES:**

- “Living Jewish” – Rabbi Berel Wein
- “Gateway to Judaism” – Rabbi Mordechai Becher
- “The Simchah Handbook” – Rabbi David Weinberger

### **BRIT MILAH:**

- “Bris Milah/Circumcision” – Rabbi Paysach Krohn

### **BAR MITZVAH:**

- “The Bar Mitzvah Treasury” – Rabbi Yonah Weinrib/Rabbi Yaakov Salomon

### **MARRIAGE:**

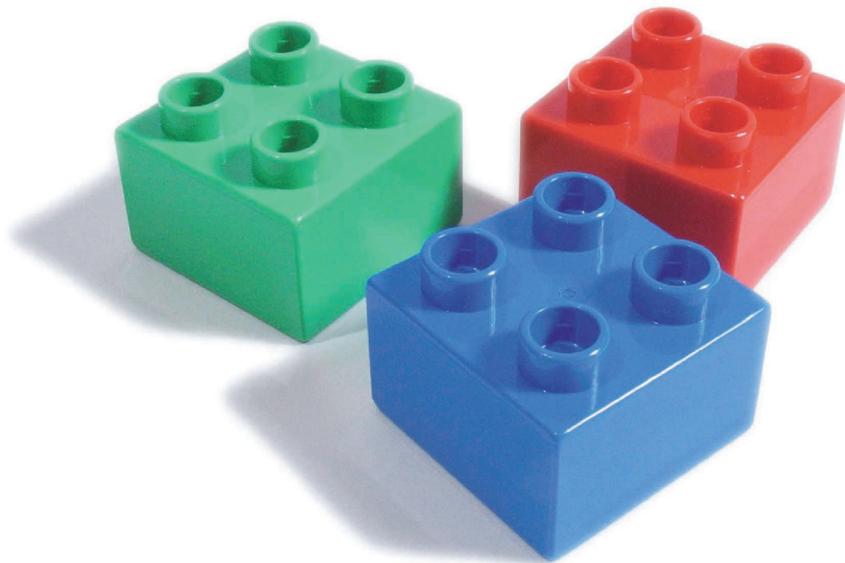
- “Made in Heaven” – Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan
- “Sheva Berachos” – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

### **DEATH:**

- “Mourning in Halachah” – Rabbi Chaim Binyomin Goldberg
- “The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning” – Maurice Lamm
- “Kaddish” – Rabbi Nosson Scherman
- “The Immortality of the Soul”\* – Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

(\*This is not recommended for those who have recently suffered a bereavement as it discusses death in a philosophical and clinical manner)

# THE SYNAGOGUE AND SYNAGOGUE SERVICE



# Introduction

Prayer is described in classic Judaism as:

“Standing at the pinnacle of the Universe, yet belittled by humanity”.

It is difficult to imagine that we as finite beings can “change the mind” of an Infinite G-d. It is challenging to think that our personal success depends on the process of prayer.

Besides, does G-d need our prayers? Isn't it somewhat arrogant to “trouble” the Creator of the universe with my own personal, maybe petty, needs?

For many, synagogue becomes a ritual. There are pages to cover in unfamiliar language. Do we stand or sit? Bow, bend, straighten or step?

Prayer, true prayer, real prayer, meaningful prayer, is a forgotten art. Yes, we can transform worlds but first we must transform ourselves.

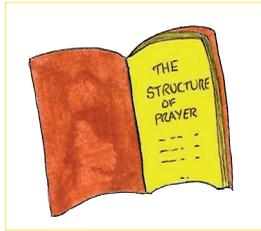
In this session we grapple with these critical issues and much more. As with all the sessions to date, this is a taster, an invitation to learn more.

There are few scenes more touching than the prayers of children. In their innocence they know that they can speak to G-d. Their lives have not yet been complicated with adult cynicism.

In this session, perhaps we can learn from our children. They understand that they are dependents, needing others more capable than themselves for their basic requirements. It is we adults who forget, and have to re-learn.

# Structure of the Prayer Services

Weekday Shacharit Sun, Tues, Wed & Fri	 Morning Blessings	 Introductory Psalms	 Borchu	 Shema	 Amida	 Repetition	 Tachanun					 Concluding Prayers		 Aleinu	 Song of the Day	
Weekday Shacharit Mon & Thurs	 Morning Blessings	 Introductory Psalms	 Borchu	 Shema	 Amida	 Repetition	 Tachanun	 Torah Reading				 Concluding Prayers		 Aleinu	 Song of the Day	
Weekday Mincha		 Introductory Psalms			 Amida	 Repetition	 Tachanun							 Aleinu		
Weekday Maariv			 Borchu	 Shema	 Amida									 Aleinu		
Friday Night	Mincha	 Introductory Psalms			 Amida	 Repetition								 Aleinu		
	Kabbalat Shabbat							 Psalms	 Song	 Psalms						
	Maariv			 Borchu	 Shema	 Amida								 Aleinu		 Yigdal
Shabbat Morning	 Morning Blessings	 Introductory Psalms	 Borchu	 Shema	 Amida	 Repetition		 Torah Reading	 (Sermon)	 Musaf Amida	 Repetition	 Concluding Prayers	 Anim Zemirot	 Aleinu	 Song of the Day	 Adon Olam



# Structure of Prayer

This is a vast topic and the goal of this session is to provide a key for understanding the broad structure of prayer.

## Jewish Meaning:

There are three primary prayer services each day:

- *Shacharit* the morning prayer
- *Mincha* the afternoon prayer
- *Ma'ariv* the evening prayer

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob instituted the practice of daily prayer.

Abraham prayed in the morning, Isaac in the afternoon and Jacob in the evening.

The three daily prayers also correspond to the three main daily services in the Holy Temple:

- Regular morning sacrifice
- Regular afternoon sacrifice
- The sacrificial parts that burned on the altar every evening

On *Shabbat*, *Rosh Chodesh*, and all biblical festivals, additional sacrifices were offered.

They were called the *Musaf* offerings (“Additional offerings”).

Corresponding to those offerings, on these days we add an extra prayer service called *Musaf*.

During the first one thousand years after Sinai, there was no set format for prayer; although there was a *Mitzvah* to pray on a daily basis, it was spontaneous - people would pray whenever they had something on their mind.

After the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE),

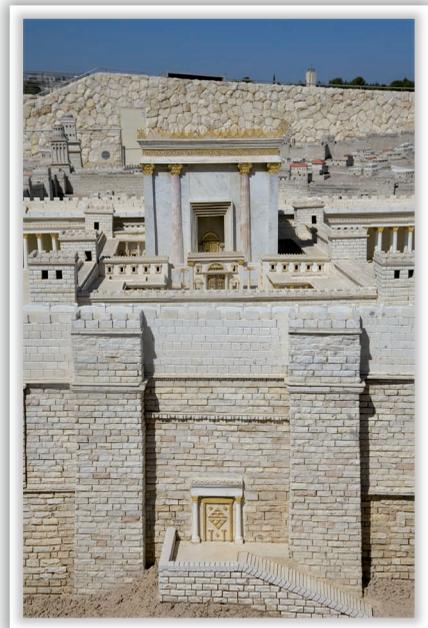
### Sources:

*Prayer is a daily obligation for every Jew, as it says: “You shall serve the Lord your G-d with all your heart.”*

(Deut. 11:13)

*The Talmud explains: “What is service of the heart? That is prayer.”*

(Taanit 2a)



the Jewish People were exiled for a period of 70 years. Cut off from the spiritual epicentre and now preoccupied with survival, it was more difficult for the layperson to formulate appropriate prayers. Ezra, the leader at the time, brought together a one-off body known as “The Men of the Great Assembly”. This included *Torah*-scholars, teachers and Prophets (120 in all). One of the many critical tasks that they undertook, was formatting the prayers and incorporating depth and mysticism. Many of the prayers are based on biblical verses, including the words of the earlier Prophets and the book of Psalms. Of course it remained for the individual to give these words personalised meaning, rather like the musician who brings the score alive, recognising that the notes are simply the starting point. It is the individualised personality that turns notes into music...or words into prayer.

This process was brought to completion over the next 800 years.

### Did you know?

In the first book of Samuel is the story of Hanna (Samuel’s mother).

Hanna had no children. She stood in the Temple, her lips moving, inaudibly praying to G-d for the blessing of children. Eli the High Priest mistook her for a drunkard. She explained that she felt embittered and that she was pouring her heart out to G-d. Eli told her that G-d would answer her prayer. A year later she gave birth to Samuel.

From Hanna, the *Talmud* (Berachot 31a-b) learns certain laws pertaining to the *Amida* (the “Standing prayer”):

- One must pray with the heart not just with the lips. (“Hanna spoke in her heart”)
- One who prays must form the words with his lips. (“Only her lips moved”)
- One may not raise his voice in prayer. (“And her voice was not heard”)
- One who is drunk may not pray. (“And Eli said to her, how long will you be drunk?”)

### Parents/ Assistant

- Aim:** To illustrate that in addition to formalised prayer, there is room for spontaneous prayer.
- Activity 1:** When your children wake up in the morning, teach them to sing *Modeh Ani* to the tune of “You are my sunshine”.
- Activity 2:** Say *Shema* with your children every night!
- Activity 3:** Encourage your children to say a short thank you prayer at night-time after *Shema*. They can choose one thing each night for which to thank G-d.



# The Siddur

## Jewish Meaning:

Prayers are read from a *Siddur*. *Siddur* means “order” as it lays out the prayers in a fixed orderly manner.

There are some variations in the text of the prayers, based on community custom.

All share identical key components and overall structure.

Actually, there is an ancient tradition of variety. According to mystical sources, there are in fact 12 heavenly “windows” through which each of the 12 Tribes submitted their entreaties. Thus, the Sages originally composed 12 editions of prayer, corresponding to the differing spiritual makeup of the different segments of the Jewish nation.

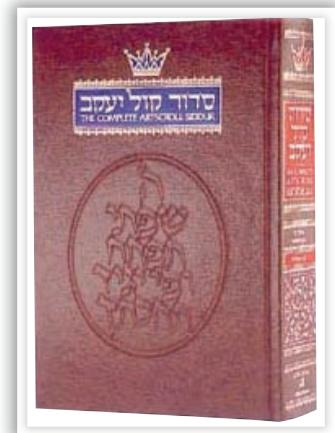
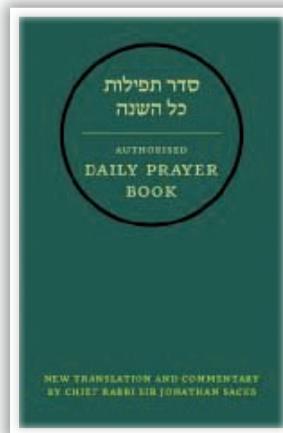
## In Practice:

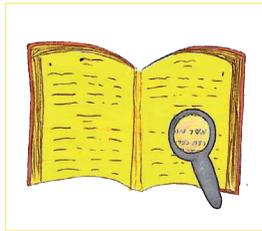
At present, there are two main *Siddurim* with English translation on the market:

The Artscroll *Siddur* and

The Chief Rabbi’s newly revised edition of the Singers *Siddur*.

Both *Siddurim* are written in “easy to understand English” and annotated and elucidated.





# The Prayer Service in Detail

(Refer to the pull-out chart, and read the appropriate elaboration on each section)

## Jewish Meaning:

The prayer experience is best seen as a spiritual ladder. The longer the service, the more rungs there are. The lowest rung of the ladder is simply the recognition of “life’s gifts”. The highest rung is the yearning for spirituality and Divine connection. Therefore the climax is always where we stand before G-d as individuals. In this skeletal structure of the service we move from section to section guided by the pull-out chart. As we introduce each section we have suggested an appropriate thought that captures the essence.



## Shacharit (The morning service)

For the weekday morning service, men wear a *Tallit* and *Tefillin*.  
For the morning service of *Shabbat* and Festivals, men wear only a *Tallit*.



## MORNING BLESSINGS

Thought: “Thank you for the gifts of life”

Morning prayers begin with the recitation of a series of blessings. In essence the theme of these blessings is recognition that the gifts of life that come with a new day are G-d given. Therefore these include blessings for:

- Using the toilet - Healthy functioning of the body
- *Torah* study - The spiritual legacy of our people
- Restoration of one’s soul rejuvenated after sleeping

These are followed by a series of 15 blessings, thanking G-d for giving us life's specific necessities throughout the day, for example:

- Energy and strength
- Wisdom and understanding
- Clothes and shoes to wear



## PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH (INTRODUCTORY PSALMS)

**Thought:** "I acknowledge G-d through the miracle and the majesty of creation"

Sacharit continues with *Pesukei D'Zimrah* (lit. Verses of song).

This is a collection of prayers, mostly from Psalms. The prayers focus on G-d's glory in creation.

*Pesukei D'Zimrah* begins with a prayer that is read standing called:

*Baruch She'amar*

("Blessed is G-d who spoke and the world came into being")

This highlights the fact that G-d created the world with ten statements e.g. "And G-d said 'let there be light and there was light'" (*Bereishit* 1:3).

The central section of *Pesukei D'Zimrah* includes:

*Ashrei* (Psalm 145)

("Happy are those who dwell in the house of G-d")

This particular Psalm has two unusual aspects. Firstly, each line begins with a letter of the alphabet in sequence. This formula expresses the idea of using all of one's faculties in recognition of G-d. The second aspect of the Psalm that captures our attention is the verse:

"You open your hand and satisfy the will of every living thing".

This expresses a recognition that all of our basic needs are G-d dependent. It is not the sighting of a miracle that links us to G-d, but the simple appreciation that G-d is the source of all blessing.

*Pesukei D'Zimrah* concludes with the paragraph called:

*Yish'tabach*

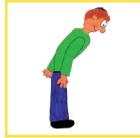
("May His great name be praised")

This is a summation of the whole section. We have spent time



contemplating the power of creation. This leads us to recognition that behind the creation is a Creator. This paragraph is said standing up.

On *Shabbat* this whole section of *Pesukei D'Zimrah* is longer presupposing that we have more time. There is an insertion of nine extra Psalms plus an extra prayer that highlights the unique historical connection between the Jewish People and G-d called *Nishmat* (“the soul of every living being....”).



### BORCHU – “BLESS”

**Thought:** “Bless G-d, the source of all blessing”

Until now the goal of the service was for individuals to connect to G-d. In the *Shema* section that follows, the focus changes to the relationship between G-d and the Jewish People. As an introduction to this section the *Chazan* calls the community to pray together publicly. All present bow...



### SHEMA SECTION

**Thought:** “G-d is the G-d of Israel. I acknowledge my role as part of the Jewish people.”

## Jewish Meaning:

The central feature of this section is the three paragraphs of the *Shema*.

In *Shacharit*, there are two blessings before the *Shema* relating to:

- Creation
- G-d’s love of the Jewish people

A further blessing is said after the *Shema*, on the theme of redemption.

On *Shabbat*, the first blessing changes to a more passionate declaration of G-d’s supremacy.

The *Shema* has been called “the Jewish pledge of allegiance”, as it proclaims G-d’s unity:

“Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One.”

The full *Shema* actually consists of three paragraphs:

### Did you know?

One of the 613 *Mitzvot* is to recite the *Shema* twice daily. Once in the morning and once in the evening.

1. **The 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph** (Deut. 6:4-9)  
Focuses on the concepts of loving G-d, learning *Torah*, and passing on of Jewish tradition to our children. These verses also refer to the *Mitzvot* of *Tefillin* and *Mezuzah*.
2. **The 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph** (Deut. 11:13-21)  
Speaks about the positive consequences of fulfilling the *Mitzvot*, and the negative consequences of not doing so.
3. **The 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph** (Num. 15:37-41)  
Speaks about the Exodus from Egypt and the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzit*.

## In Practice:

When saying the first line of *Shema* (in the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph), we close our eyes, covering them with the right hand. This is done in order to aid concentration.

At *Shacharit*, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of the *Shema*, it is customary to kiss the *Tzitzit* at each mention of the word *Tzitzit*.



WHEN PRAYING WITHOUT A MINYAN, WE ADD THE FOLLOWING WORDS BEFORE SAYING THE SHEMA:

*Eil Melech Ne'eman* ("G-d, faithful King")



**AMIDA** (THE STANDING [SILENT] PRAYER)

**Thought:** "I stand before you G-d the creator, as an individual"

## Jewish Meaning:

The central part of the morning service is the *Amida*, which means "standing".

This comprises three sections divided as follows:

- **Praises** (3 blessings)
- **Requests** (13 blessings)  
On *Shabbat* and most Festivals (1 blessing only)
- **Thanks** (3 blessings)

## In Practice:

### Direction:

When saying the *Amida*, stand with feet together facing the direction of Israel.



In Israel, we face the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

### Concentration:

It is forbidden to interrupt the *Amida*, to speak or signal to anyone.

The *Amida* is said in an undertone.

### Steps:

Before beginning the *Amida*, we take three steps backward, and then three steps forward to symbolise “stepping into the presence of G-d”.

After completing the *Amida*, take three steps backward to symbolise “leaving G-d’s presence” bowing first to the left, then right, and then forward.

The practice is then to pause for a moment before taking three steps forward.

### Bowing:

Bowing is a form of submission. It demonstrates humility.

There are four instances in the *Amida* when we bow:

- In the first two blessings of “Praises”
- In the first two blessings of “Thanks”

The first, second and fourth bows are at the start of a blessing and we bow in the following way:

- Bend the knees when saying *Baruch* (“blessed”)
- Bow when saying *Ata* (“are You”)
- Upon saying the name of G-d - stand straight

The third bow, we simply bend the body without bending the knees. This is when we thank G-d directly for the gifts of life, both general and personal.

### Additional inserts:

There are various seasonal additions to the *Amida*.

- On *Rosh Chodesh* and festivals: *Ya’aleh V’Yavo* is added -

This is a prayer requesting that our historical association with G-d “rise” (*Ya’aleh*) before Him.

- On *Chanukah* and *Purim*, the paragraph *Al HaNisim* – (lit. “For the miracles”) is added.
- During the Ten Days of Repentance between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, extra phrases are added to the *Amida* in four places, and the text of two blessings is changed.
- There are also seasonal adjustments to pray for rain and dew, as appropriate for the land of Israel.
- One may add a personal prayer into the *Amida* in the blessing of *Shema Koleinu* (Acceptance of Prayer) and *Elokai Netzor*, (said after the 19th blessing), where one may ask for any needs.

Also in the blessing of *Refa’enu* (Health and Healing), one may specifically ask that someone be healed from their illness.

### Did you know?

The *Amida* is also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei* which means 18, as it used to contain 18 blessings. Later on another blessing was added, so it now contains 19 blessings but we still refer to it as the *Shemoneh Esrei*.



## REPETITION OF THE AMIDA

When a *Minyan* is present, the *Chazan* (*Shaliach Tzibur*) recites a repetition of the *Amida*. This repetition was originally introduced for those within the community who could not read it for themselves. It has now become part of the format of service.

The *Chazan’s* repetition includes two prayers that are said out loud: They are *Kedusha* (lit. “Holiness”), which is responsive and *Modim D’Rabanan* (“We thank you”).



## TACHANUN

Following the *Amida*, we say *Tachanun*, a prayer of supplication.

This is an impassioned prayer asking for G-d’s forgiveness and mercy.

*Tachanun* consists of three parts, each said in a different pose:

1. Sitting, with one’s forehead resting on the forearm
2. Sitting up

### 3. Standing

We appeal to G-d in all ways.

A longer version of *Tachanun* is said on Mondays and Thursdays.



## TORAH READING / LEINING (Yiddish for “reading”)

### Jewish Meaning:



Moses instituted a public *Torah* reading for every Monday, Thursday and *Shabbat* so that no individual will be without *Torah* for three consecutive days. He also instituted that the *Torah* should be read on all the festivals, publicly addressing the theme of the day.

### In Practice:

On *Shabbat* morning the full *Sedra* is read.

On *Shabbat* afternoon and Monday and Thursday morning: the first extract from the next week is read as a “trailer” for the next *Shabbat*.

On <i>Shabbat</i> afternoon, Monday & Thursday:	3 people are “called up” to the <i>Torah</i>
On <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> & <i>Chol Hamo'ed</i> :	4 people are “called up” to the <i>Torah</i>
On <i>Yom Tov</i> :	5 people are “called up” to the <i>Torah</i>
On <i>Yom Kippur</i> :	6 people are “called up” to the <i>Torah</i>
On <i>Shabbat morning</i> :	7 people are “called up” to the <i>Torah</i> .

Once the reading has been completed, one person is “called up” to raise the *Sefer Torah* (*Hagba*) and a second person is called up to roll and wrap it (*Gelila*).



## CONCLUDING PRAYERS

On weekdays, *Shacharit* continues with concluding prayers that touch on a variety of themes to accompany us throughout the day. These include:

- The longed-for redemption
- The study of *Torah*
- The need to live meaningful lives



## ALEINU (lit. "It is for us" to praise G-d)

All prayer services draw to a close with *Aleinu*.

*Aleinu* is a declaration of faith with profound significance. It declares that one day all of humanity will recognise G-d's authority and accept His commandments. This is a reference to the Messianic era.



## SONG OF THE DAY

*Shacharit* ends off with the "Song of the Day". In the Temple each day, the *Levites* would sing a different "Psalm of the day" that corresponded to the significance of the particular day of the week.



## Mincha (The afternoon service)

*Mincha* begins with the recitation of *Ashrei* (Psalm 145). (*Ashrei* is also said twice during *Shacharit*)

Next, there is a silent *Amida*, followed by the *Chazan's* repetition.

*Mincha* ends with the short version of *Tachanun* and *Aleinu*.



## Ma'ariv (The evening service)

In the presence of a *Minyan*, *Ma'ariv* begins with *Borchu* - the call to prayer.

From the time *Borchu* is said until the completion of the service, we may not talk.

In *Ma'ariv*, the *Shema* is preceded by two blessings. These focus on:

- 1) The theme of creation
- 2) G-d's love of *Torah* and the Jewish People

Two more blessings are said after the *Shema*, focusing on:

- 1) The theme of redemption
- 2) G-d's night-time protection

Then there is the silent *Amida*. There is no *Chazan's* repetition.

*Ma'ariv* concludes with "*Aleinu*".



## Shabbat services

*Shabbat* services are both similar and different. They are similar in that the overall structure of the services is the same as that of the weekday. Yet within those structures there are important variations, not least of which is that each service has its own *Amida* that reflects the themes of *Shabbat*. There is also an additional service on *Shabbat* called *Musaf*.

## Friday Night & Kabbalat Shabbat

On Friday night, the prayers in the *Shul* begin with *Mincha*. *Tachanun* is omitted as it is a sombre prayer, incongruous with the joy of *Shabbat*.

*Mincha* is followed by *Kabbalat Shabbat* (lit. "The receiving of *Shabbat*"). This is really a "pre-service" to *Ma'ariv*. It comprises six Psalms which represent the days of the week. This is followed by a beautiful song called *Lecha Dodi* that personifies *Shabbat* as a bride and we address G-d inviting Him "to come and greet the bride of *Shabbat*".

This pre-service originates in 16th century Tzfat in Northern Israel. In those days Tzfat was the centre of Jewish mysticism and those who lived there would go out into the fields to “greet the *Shabbat*” and to sing in exalted celebration. Although we don’t go out into the fields, this beautiful “pre-service” has been adopted by communities all over the world.

After *Lecha Dodi* we recite the “Psalm of *Shabbat*” which is followed by *Ma'ariv*.

## Shabbat Morning

On a *Shabbat* morning there are two services for the price of one! First there is *Shacharit*. In overall structure it parallels a weekday *Shacharit*, although it differs in its details.

So, for example, the climax is also an *Amida* but the central theme is about *Shabbat* and is only one blessing.

*Shacharit* includes the reading of a “full *Sedra*” (weekly portion of the *Torah*) plus a “*Haftarah*” (see below).

Then there is the “2nd service” - *Musaf* (lit. “Additional”)



## HAFTARAH (lit. “Parting”)

### Jewish Meaning:

When the Jewish nation was subjugated by the Greek Empire, many decrees were issued to severely limit Jewish religious freedom. Among these edicts was a prohibition against public *Torah* reading. During this era, instead of reading from the *Torah* portion, the Jews temporarily adopted the practice of reading from a passage in the Book of Prophets which was on a related theme.

After the edict was no longer in effect, it became Jewish tradition to continue this reading, following the regular *Torah* reading. This is known as the *Haftarah* (lit. “Parting”)

## In Practice:

The times when the *Haftarah* is read are:

- *Shabbat* mornings
- *Yom Tov* mornings
- *Yom Kippur* morning and afternoon
- The afternoons of fast days

The person “called up” for the *Haftarah* is first given an *Aliya* from the *Torah* itself called *Maftir* (lit. “To part with”...the *Sedra*).

After the *Haftarah*, two prayers are usually said:

- A prayer for the health and welfare of the Royal Family
- A prayer for the security of those living in Israel

The *Torah* is returned to the Ark and in many *Shuls*, the Rabbi delivers a sermon at this point.

## Musaf (The additional service)

The *Musaf* service corresponds to the extra sacrifice brought in Temple times on special days; namely *Shabbat*, *Yom Tov* and *Rosh Chodesh*.

*Musaf* is an *Amida* with a repetition. The central theme is the Temple and restoration of Temple service.

The service ends off with *Aleinu*, and the Song of the Day. Many communities also sing *Anim Zemirot* – a song about the glory of G-d, often sung by a child.



# The Synagogue / Shul

## Jewish Meaning:

In biblical times, the centre of worship was the Temple in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish people were dispersed all over the world. Communities built *Shuls* as a centralised location to pray and modelled them somewhat on the Temple.

Today, every community has the responsibility to build and maintain a proper *Shul*. The *Shul* is a sacred place that must be treated with proper respect.

## In Practice:

The layout of the *Shul* is as follows:

At the front of the *Shul* is the *Aron Hakodesh* (lit. “The Holy Ark”) which contains the *Torah* Scrolls.

(Just as the Holy of Holies stood at the front of the Temple and contained the Golden Ark and the Tablets of Stone)

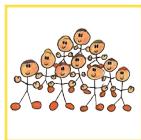
The Ark is situated in the direction of Jerusalem.

Above the Ark is the *Ner Tamid* (permanent light).

(Reminding us of the lights that were lit every day in the Temple on the seven branch *Menorah*)

In the middle of the *Shul* is the *Bimah* (platform).

(When the *Torah* is brought to the *Bimah* we are reminded of Mount Sinai on which the *Torah* was given with all the people assembled round about.)



## THE MINYAN

A *Minyan* consists of at least 10 adult, Jewish males, praying together. Once a boy is 13 years old, he qualifies as an adult. Of course, the number 10 is just a minimum. A larger congregation is preferable, as it gives greater honour to G-d.

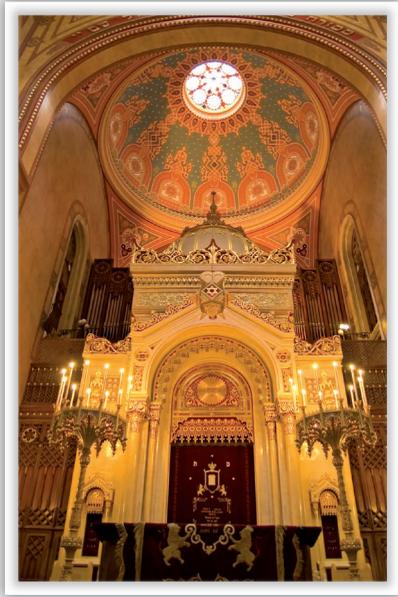
## Sources:

G-d declared:  
“Although I have dispersed [the Jewish people] among the nations and scattered them amongst the lands, I shall remain with them in a small sanctuary in the lands to which they have come.”

(Ezekiel 11:16)

## Did you know?

Archaeologists have uncovered remnants of ancient synagogues in Egypt dating back at least to the 3rd Century BCE.



The Sages teach that whenever 10 Jewish men gather to pray together, the Divine Presence descends to join them. Hence the particular importance attached to praying with a *Minyan*.

Certain prayers may only be recited in the presence of a *Minyan*. They include:

- *Kaddish*
- *Borchu*
- Repetition of the *Amida*
- Priestly Blessing
- *Torah* reading
- Reading of the *Haftarah*

## Suggested reading:

### **SIDDURIM**

The "Artscroll Siddur"

The "Artscroll Interlinear Siddur"

The "Artscroll Women's Siddur"

The "Artscroll Children's Siddur"

– Shmuel Blitz

The "Hebrew Daily Prayer Book" Siddur

– The Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks

### **BASIC COMMENTARIES ON PRAYER:**

"Pathway to Prayer"

- Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum

"Touched by a Prayer"

- Rabbi Yechiel Spero

"Praying With Fire"

- Rabbi Heshy Kleinman

"Siddur Companion"

- Rabbi Harvey Belovski

"To Pray as a Jew"

- Hayim Halevy Donin

"Hidden Beauty of the Shema"

- Lisa Aiken

### **ADVANCED COMMENTARIES ON PRAYER:**

"Making the Most of Prayer"

- Rabbi Mordechai Potash

"Twerski on Prayer"

- Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski

"Shemoneh Esrei/The Amidah"

- Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer

"Shema Yisrael"

- Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz

"Praise My Soul"

- Rabbi Avigdor Miller

"The World of Prayer"

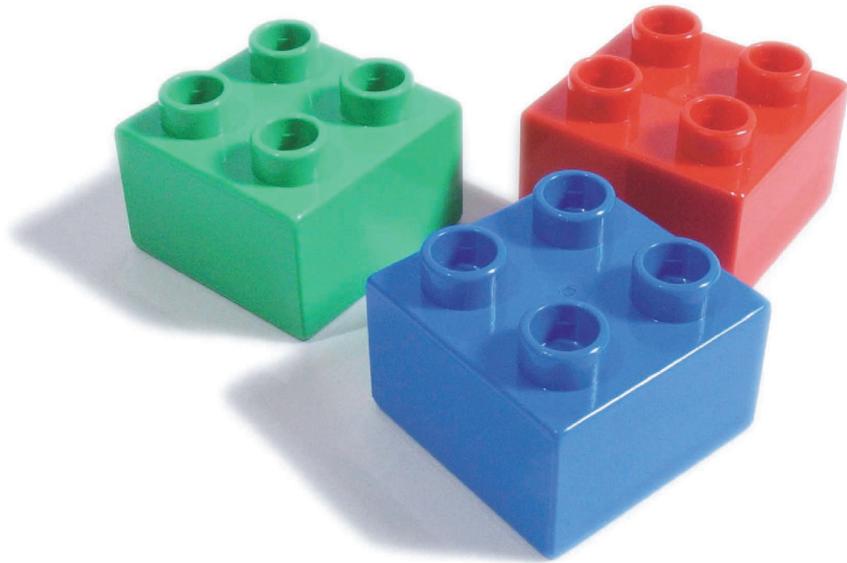
- Rabbi Dr. Elie Munk

# Terminology

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<i>Aron Hakodesh</i>	The Ark at the front of the Synagogue where the <i>Torah</i> Scrolls are kept	"Holy Ark"
<i>Al HaNisim</i>	Prayer inserted into the <i>Amida</i> and <i>Bircat Hamazon</i> on <i>Chanukah</i> and <i>Purim</i>	"For the miracles"
<i>Aleinu</i>	The culminating prayer at all services	"(It is) Upon us"
<i>Aliya</i>	Getting "called up" to the <i>Torah</i>	"Going up"
<i>Amida/Shemoneh Esrei</i>	The silent prayer said at all prayer services	"Standing"/"18 (Blessings)"
<i>Anim Zemirot</i>	The responsive song sung on <i>Shabbat</i> mornings, often led by a child	"I will compose songs"
<i>Ashrei</i>	A Psalm included twice in the <i>Shacharit</i> service and once in the <i>Mincha</i> service	"Praiseworthy"
<i>Ba'al Koreh</i>	The person who reads from the <i>Torah</i>	"Master reader"
<i>Baruch She'amar</i>	The blessing at the beginning of <i>Pesukei D'Zimrah</i>	"Blessed is He who spoke"
<i>Bimah</i>	Place in the Synagogue where one reads from the <i>Torah</i>	"Platform"
<i>Borchu</i>	Chanted during the <i>Shacharit</i> service and at the beginning of the <i>Ma'ariv</i> service	"Bless"
<i>Bracha/Brachot</i>	Blessing	"Source of goodness"
<i>Chanukah</i>	Festival (when we light candles) commemorating the Jews' victory over the Greeks	"Dedication"
<i>Chazan/Shaliach Tzibur</i>	Leader of the prayer services at the Synagogue	"Cantor"
<i>Chol Hamo'ed</i>	Pseudo <i>Yom Tov</i> without the same restrictions	-
<i>Gelila</i>	The rolling and wrapping of the <i>Torah</i> Scroll	"Rolling"
<i>Haftarah</i>	Section from Prophets read after <i>Torah</i> reading	"Taking leave"
<i>Hagba</i>	The raising of the <i>Torah</i> Scroll for all to see	"Raising"
<i>Hallel</i>	Additional prayer recited on <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> and Festivals, made up of various Psalms	"Praise"
<i>Hashem</i>	G-d	"The Name"
<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i>	A composition of Psalms said on Friday night before <i>Ma'ariv</i>	"Receiving/Welcoming the <i>Shabbat</i> "
<i>Kaddish</i>	Prayer said by mourner	"Sanctification"
<i>Kedusha</i>	The responsive prayer said in the repetition of the <i>Amida</i>	"Holiness"
<i>Kriyat HaTorah</i>	The public <i>Torah</i> reading	"Reading of the <i>Torah</i> "
<i>Lecha Dodi</i>	The song recited responsively in <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i>	"Come my beloved"
<i>Levites</i>	From the tribe of <i>Levi</i>	"Levite/Levites"

<b>Ma'ariv/Aravit</b>	Evening prayer service	"To the west"
<b>Maftir</b>	The final "call up" to the <i>Torah</i>	"Parting"
<b>Menorah</b>	The candelabra used in the Temple and on <i>Chanukah</i>	"Candleabra"
<b>Mezuzah</b>	The mini parchment placed on the right-hand side of doorposts	"Doorpost"
<b>Mincha</b>	The afternoon service	-
<b>Mitzvah/ Mitzvot</b>	Commandment/Commandments	-
<b>Modeh Ani</b>	The first words that we utter every day upon waking	"I thank You"
<b>Modim D'Rabanan</b>	The <i>Modim</i> blessing recited by all during the repetition of the <i>Amida</i>	" <i>Modim</i> of the Rabbis"
<b>Musaf</b>	Additional <i>Amida</i> recited on <i>Shabbat</i> , <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> and festivals	"Additional"
<b>Pesukei D'Zimrah</b>	The prayers positioned at the beginning of the <i>Shacharit</i> service	"Verses of song"
<b>Peticha</b>	When the <i>Aron Hakodesh</i> is opened to take out the <i>Torah</i> Scroll	"The opening"
<b>Purim</b>	Festival celebrating the salvation of the Jews from the evil Haman	"Lots"
<b>Rosh Chodesh</b>	Beginning of the new month	"Head of the month"
<b>Rosh Hashana</b>	The Jewish new year	"New Year"
<b>Sedra</b>	Weekly portion of <i>Torah</i> reading	"Order"
<b>Sefer Torah</b>	<i>Torah</i> Scroll	-
<b>Shacharit</b>	The morning service	-
<b>Shaliach Tzibur</b>	The person who leads a prayer service	"Emissary of the congregation"
<b>Shema</b>	The prayer in which we declare the Oneness of G-d	"Hear"
<b>Shul</b>	Synagogue	"House of prayer"
<b>Siddur/Siddurim</b>	The daily prayer book	"Order"
<b>Tachanun</b>	A prayer of supplication recited in the <i>Shacharit</i> and <i>Mincha</i> prayer services	"Supplication"
<b>Tallit</b>	Prayer shawl	-
<b>Talmud</b>	The central text of the Oral Law, made up of the <i>Mishna</i> and <i>Gemara</i>	"Learning"
<b>Tefila</b>	Prayer	-
<b>Tefillin</b>	Phylacteries	-
<b>Torah</b>	The Pentateuch	"Instruction"
<b>Yad</b>	The pointer used by the person reading from the <i>Torah</i> Scroll	"Hand"
<b>Yishtabach</b>	The blessing at the end of <i>Pesukei D'Zimrah</i>	"May (Your Name) be blessed"
<b>Yom Kippur</b>	The holiest day in the Jewish year	"Day of Atonement"
<b>Yom Tov</b>	Festival mentioned in the <i>Torah</i>	"Good Day"

# VALUES



# Introduction

This session is very different from sessions one to four. In many respects, it brings all the strands together. Until now, we have been discussing the “what” of Judaism. In this session, we discuss the “why” – the purpose of it all.

As parents, we aim to give our children “values”. It isn’t always easy in a world that often “devalues” anything that appears strident, for fear of offending those with whom we disagree. The result, it seems, is that the only thing we can state with certainty is that nothing is certain!

As Jewish parents we aim to give our children “Jewish values”.

But what are Jewish values? Asked to list them, most people would cite examples such as “charity”, “responsibility”, “integrity” etc. These are all values that Judaism salutes but so does the rest of the civilised world! So we come back to the question “what are Jewish values?”

In Judaism, values do not stand alone. They are steps in pursuit of a mission.

So first we must start with the most basic of questions:

What is life’s mission?

Why did G-d create us?

Once we have a clearer picture of the framework, we will see that our “values” embody that overall perspective.

They are the living reality of Judaism.



## Structure of Jewish Values

As parents we want what is best for our children, so too G-d, our “Heavenly Parent”, wants what is best for us.

To quote a contemporary writer, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan:

“To the best of our understanding, G-d created the universe as an act of love. It was an act of love so immense that the human mind cannot even begin to fathom it. G-d created the world basically as a vehicle upon which He could bestow His good.

But G-d’s love is so great that any good He bestows must be the greatest good possible. Anything less would simply not be enough.

But what is the greatest good? What is the ultimate good that G-d can bestow on His creation?

If you think for a moment, the answer should be obvious. The ultimate good is G-d Himself. The greatest good that He can bestow is Himself. There is no greater good than achieving a degree of unity with the Creator Himself. It is for this reason that G-d gave man the ability to resemble Himself.” (excerpt from the book “If you were G-d”)

Yet how is it possible for a finite being to “connect” to G-d who is beyond our imagination and comprehension?

We can better understand this by making a comparison with human relationships. The more one shares the same values and convictions with another person, the closer that relationship.

Therefore, the more our values resemble G-d’s, the closer we are to Him.

But how do we know what values are “G-d-like” and which ones are not?

When you read a book, you learn about the author. Through his style, he subconsciously reveals his aspirations, ideals and values. G-d’s book is the *Torah*. When we study G-d’s “book” – the *Torah*, we absorb G-d’s values. It becomes part of who we are.

The Sages teach us that every one of the 613 *Mitzvot* (commandments) found in His *Torah* is a “window” through which we can glimpse a “G-d-like” quality. When we “live” the *Mitzvot*, we emulate G-d and the link strengthens.

Now that we have identified the “mission” we can define “Jewish values”.

Jewish values are “the spiritual steps in pursuit of the mission to connect with G-d”.

So how do we go about it?

### Firstly:

We have to recognise our own intrinsic worth: we have been created with a soul – a Divine spark.

### Secondly:

We have to recognise that the *Mitzvot* create a “commonality” with G-d.

There are two types of *Mitzvot*:

1. Those that focus on relationships between people.
2. Those that focus on the relationship between a person and G-d.

Let’s now analyse these two types of *Mitzvot* individually...

### Sources:

“Rav said, ‘The *Mitzvot* were given to refine humanity.’”

(*Bereishit Rabba* 44)



## Our own intrinsic worth

(The soul within)

### Sources:

*‘So G-d created Man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them.’*

(Gen. 1:27)

*‘And Hashem, G-d formed man of dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being.’*

(Gen. 2:7)

*His body from the “physical” material and his soul from the “spiritual”*

(Rashi)

### Jewish Meaning:

Every human being has a *Neshama* (lit. a soul) – a spark of the Divine, within. It is this Divine spark which gives us intrinsic worth and our potential for greatness. The foundation of a strong sense of self-esteem is based on knowing this fact about ourselves.

The stronger our inner self, the greater will be our ability to relate to others and to G-d. Thus the appreciation of one’s worth is of crucial importance. We have to believe in ourselves before we can build a true relationship with others!

It follows that within Judaism there is a great emphasis on “self-development”.

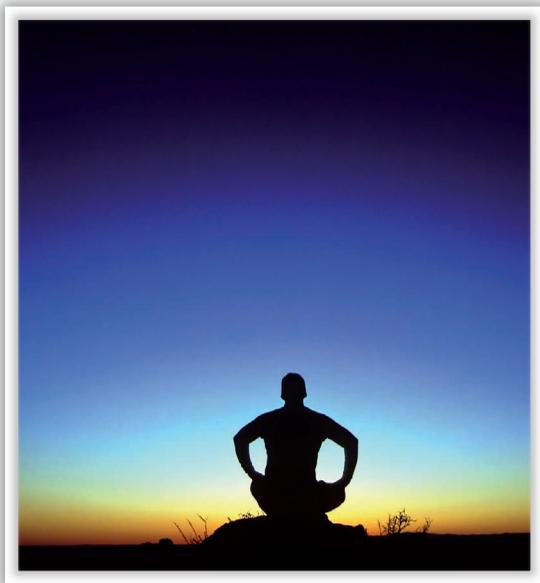
There is no greater gift that we can give our children than the understanding that they are special and unique in the eyes of G-d.

He will never compare them to others.

Each individual has G-d given strengths and weaknesses. As parents our task is encourage our children to acknowledge this with a healthy sense of self. Each characteristic is a tool handed to them by G-d to utilise in life. Our self worth *should* be based on the way we use the tools that we have been given.

### Did you know?

The *Torah* instructs us to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). This means it’s not realistic to love your neighbour unless you can first love yourself! If you are unhappy about yourself, it becomes very difficult to love others. For the love to be real, it has to flow from within you - outward.



- Aim:** To build self confidence in our children.
- Activity 1:** Occasionally, when our children wake up, encourage them to look in the mirror and say something positive about themselves - taking pleasure in their strengths.
- Activity 2:** Discuss ways in which their more challenging characteristics can be used productively! Encourage them to see all characteristics as tools.

### Sources:

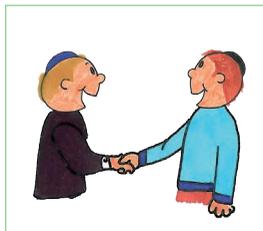
*“When a person evaluates his uniqueness, he should begin to shudder! Behold, from all people living in the world presently, there is no one that is specifically the same as him. Among all the people who have lived from Adam until today, there is no one that is specifically the same as him; no one with exactly the same talents, energies, abilities, qualities and weaknesses. This is why man was created as an individual, (and not as part of a herd, like animals) for he must say to himself, ‘It is for me that the world was created! (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)’ ”*

*(Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe 1914-2005)*

### Sources:

*“It is tragic when a person does not recognize his weaknesses. But it is horrific when he doesn’t know his strengths!”*

*(Rabbi Yeruchem of Mir 1873-1936).*



## Mitzvot between people

(Bein Adam Le'Chaveiro)

### Did you know?

The *Talmud* tells of a non-Jew who came to the great sage, Hillel, and offered to convert to Judaism if Hillel would teach him the entire *Torah* while he stood on one foot. Hillel replied to this strange request by saying: "Do not do to others that which is hateful to you. That is the entire *Torah*; the rest is commentary. Now go and study."

(Shabbat 31a)

### Jewish Meaning:

Some may mistakenly think that Judaism is only concerned with *Mitzvot* between "Man and G-d", e.g. prayer, *Kashrut*, *Shabbat*. While those are indeed vital, a person's behaviour vis-à-vis others is of parallel importance.

The Ten Commandments themselves are divided into two parts. Five relate to "Man and G-d" and five relate to "Man and Man" – society and humanity.

There is a *Mitzvah* to "Walk in G-d's ways" (Deut. 28:9). The *Talmud* questions, how is this possible? It explains that we should emulate the ways of G-d.

"Just as He is merciful, so you too should be merciful. Just as He gives to others, so you too should give to others. Just as He is slow to anger, so you too should be slow to anger." (Sota 14a)

Great weight is placed upon the importance of honesty. The *Talmud* explains that on the day of judgment, the very first question that will be put to each individual is:

"Have you dealt honestly in business?" (*Shabbat* 31a)

A religious person who is honest in business and speaks pleasantly to people, generates an awareness of G-d (*Kiddush Hashem*). By contrast, when a "religious" person behaves dishonourably, he desecrates the Divine Name (*Chillul Hashem*). This is a transgression of the severest spiritual magnitude, discouraging others from connecting with G-d.



We will now look at two examples of *Mitzvot* between people, namely *Tzedaka* (Charity) and *Hachnasat Orchim* (Inviting Guests).

### Did you know?

Even our enemies have recognised the part played by Judaism in providing a universal ethical code. As Adolf Hitler wrote in Mein Kampf:

*"It is true we Germans are barbarians; that is an honoured title to us. I free humanity from the shackles of the soul; from the degrading suffering caused by the false vision called conscience and ethics. The Jews have inflicted two wounds on mankind: circumcision on its body and conscience on its soul. They are Jewish inventions. The war for the domination of the world is waged only between these two camps alone, the Germans and the Jews. Everything else is but deception."*

### Did you know?

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato (1707-1746) in his book *"Derech Hashem"* ("The Way of G-d") teaches that every relationship that we have is simultaneously a metaphor for how we can connect to G-d.

For example:

- The parent-child relationship is a metaphor for the human relationship to G-d. It serves as a paradigm for how to relate to our Creator – the "Heavenly Parent".
- In our prayers and variously in Jewish thought, G-d is often referred to as "Our Father, our King".
- A husband/wife relationship is a powerful metaphor of intimacy between Israel and G-d. G-d is the husband, the Jewish people are the spouse. We have a duty of devotion and fidelity.



## TZEDAKAH

(Charity)

### Jewish Meaning:

#### Sources:

*“If there be amongst you a needy man from amongst your brethren within any of your gates in your land which the Eternal, your G-d gives you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand nor close your hand from your needy brother. You must definitely open your hand to him, and must definitely lend him sufficient for the need in which he is lacking”*

*(Deut. 15:7,8).*

#### Did you know?

*“It is not the poor who need the rich, it is the rich who need the poor.”*

(Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888)  
Commentary on *Torah*,  
Exod.)



The word *Tzedakah* is derived from the Hebrew word *Tzedek*, “justice”.

Although it is often translated as charity, the nature of *Tzedakah* is very different. The word “charity” suggests benevolence and generosity, a magnanimous act by the wealthy and powerful for the benefit of the poor and needy. The word *Tzedakah* – “justice” implies that giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous, magnanimous act - it is simply an act of justice and righteousness, the performance of a duty, giving the poor their due.

Giving *Tzedakah* fulfills one of G-d’s commandments. Giving is not an extraordinary act, but a common one expected of every Jew.

### In Practice:

According to Jewish law, we are encouraged to give one-tenth of our income to the poor. This is generally interpreted as one-tenth of our net income after payment of taxes. Those who are dependent on public assistance or living on the edge of subsistence may give less, but must still give to the extent they are able; however, no person should give so much that he would become a public burden himself.

Maimonides (1135-1204) lists eight Levels of *Tzedakah* starting with the most desirable:

1. Giving a poor person: work/a loan/a present which alleviates his poverty.
2. Giving where neither the giver nor the recipient know each other.
3. Giving where the giver knows the recipient, but the recipient does not know the giver.
4. Giving where the recipient knows the giver, but the giver does not know the recipient.
5. Giving before being asked.

6. Giving after being asked.
7. Giving with a smile, yet less than is needed.
8. Giving only because you feel forced to do it.  
(If a person gives begrudgingly, he has not performed the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah*! [Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Deah 249:3])

Jewish Law prioritises to whom one should give *Tzedakah*, beginning with the most vital. Although there are many details, these are the broad categories within the Jewish community:

1. Relatives
2. Close friends
3. Neighbours
4. People from the same city
5. People living in Israel
6. People living elsewhere

### Did you know?

The general population of the UK give on average 0.8% of their income to charity. "The Chief Executive of the Charities Aid Foundation, the Institute of Philanthropy and The Giving Campaign has suggested giving 1.5% of one's income to charity."



## HACHNASAT ORCHIM

### (Inviting Guests)

#### Jewish Meaning:

Inviting guests is included in the *Mitzvah* of ‘love your neighbour as yourself’.

It is also a fulfilment of the *Mitzvah* to ‘walk in the ways of G-d’, which teaches us that we should strive to emulate G-d’s actions.

Just as G-d is constantly “hosting” the entire world, offering us a place to sleep and food to eat, so too must we be hospitable to others.

#### Did you know?

In some respects, inviting guests is even greater than communicating directly with G-d. The Rabbis teach this based on the extraordinary hospitality of our patriarch, Abraham. Abraham was in great pain following his circumcision. G-d “visited” Abraham. Abraham interrupted this prophetic experience to welcome three guests to his home!

(Gen. 18: 1-8)

#### In Practice:

- *Hachnasat Orchim* applies to those who are wealthy and to those who are not. Nevertheless, when inviting a destitute person we additionally fulfil the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah*.
- The *Mitzvah* includes feeding the visitor and providing accommodation if required.
- Even if one has household help one should tend to the guest themselves.
- The host should strive to meet all the needs of the guest, including a place to wash and rest if necessary.
- Even a poor person should strive to host others if possible, however he must put himself and his family, first and foremost.
- If the guest is travelling afterwards, the host should prepare him food for the way.
- One should accompany one’s guest beyond the front door - this honours the guest appropriately.



Many communities have organisations or individuals that take it upon themselves to ensure visitors have accommodation.



# Relationship between a person and G-d

(Bein Adam Le'Makom)

## Jewish Meaning:

**G**-d wants us to connect with Him.

A person who is kind and helpful to everyone around, yet is disrespectful, or even rude, to his parents - is clearly deficient in behaviour. In a similar vein a “good Jew” who is kind and helpful to others yet ignores his relationship with his “Heavenly Parent” is also off the mark.

As we mentioned in the introduction to this session, it is obvious that the greatest gift that He can offer us, is a connection with Himself.

Like all real relationships it is the details that determine the quality of the bond. The day-to-day and the hour-by-hour. Not just the summer holiday.

We will now look at two examples of *Mitzvot* between a person and G-d, namely *Mezuzah* and *Kashrut*.

### Did you know?

In Judaism, greatness lies in the details as it does in nature or technology. A computer missing one tiny microchip won't work at all. Try tuning into a radio station close but not exactly on the station. The result is an awful lot of noise. Spirituality is the same. Harmonising ourselves with spirituality requires that we tune in exactly to the right station. It requires a focus on details. The devil is in the details, but as they say, so is the spirituality.





## MEZUZAH

### Jewish Meaning:

Fixing *Mezuzot* onto our doors is an easy *Mitzvah* to perform.

In addition to its role as a declaration and reminder of our trust in G-d, the *Mezuzah* is also a symbol of G-d's watchful care over the home and its inhabitants.

On the reverse side of the *Mezuzah* scroll is the Hebrew name of G-d, *Shad-dai*. This name is an acronym for "Guardian of the Doors of Israel". (*Shin*, the first letter of this Name, often appears on the *Mezuzah* case.)

The *Mezuzah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt, when the lamb's blood smeared on the doorpost "identified" the Jewish homes that G-d passed over during the plague of the firstborn. From that day forward, the *Mezuzah* has always identified a home as being Jewish.

The purpose of a *Mezuzah* is to remind us every time we pass through a doorway that G-d is present. Every room in the home has the potential for sanctity.

Some have the custom to lightly kiss the *Mezuzah* with one's hand when passing through the doorway, demonstrating a love for this important *Mitzvah*.

### In Practice:

The *Mezuzah* itself is a small scroll on which the first two paragraphs of the *Shema* have been written. These contain the themes of unity of G-d, our love for G-d, and the reward for *Mitzvot*.

A *Kosher Mezuzah* is hand-written on genuine parchment, prepared from the skin of a *Kosher* animal. A specially trained scribe, known as a *Sofer*, carefully writes the words using special black ink and a quill pen. If there are any mistakes or letters missing, this invalidates the entire parchment.

Since the laws of writing a *Mezuzah* are complex, it is vital to purchase a *Mezuzah* from a very trustworthy source.

## Where to Place a Mezuzah

Every home or office needs a *Mezuzah* regardless of whether you are owning or renting. However, if you expect to live in a place for less than 30 days, you do not need to fix a *Mezuzah*.

As well as a *Mezuzah* on one's front door, every doorway of the home should have its own *Mezuzah*. However, a *Mezuzah* should not be put on the door to a bathroom or toilet.

The *Mezuzah* should be placed at shoulder height. On a typical doorway, it would be at the lower end of the top third. The *Mezuzah* is always fixed to the doorpost that is on the right side when you are entering the house/room.

*Sephardim* affix the *Mezuzah* so that it is vertical. The *Ashkenazi* custom is to put it on a diagonal, with the top of the *Mezuzah* facing inward.



## How to Put Up a Mezuzah

When placing the *Mezuzah* in the case and on the wall, be sure that the Hebrew word *Shad-dai*, which is written on the back of the parchment, is facing outwards. Also, make sure that the *Mezuzah* itself is not upside down!

The *Mezuzah* should be permanently affixed with glue, silicon, nails or screws. Tape that falls off if knocked is too temporary to be considered “fixed”.

ONCE THE MEZUZAH IS IN POSITION, BUT BEFORE FIXING IT TO THE DOOR, SAY THE FOLLOWING BLESSING:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצננו לקבע מזוזה:

*Baruch Ata Adonoy, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu likbo'a Mezuzah.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His *Mitzvot*, and commanded us to fix a *Mezuzah*.

## In the Long Run

When moisture, dust or paint penetrates a *Mezuzah*, it can sometimes ruin it. Thus it is important to have your *Mezuzah* inspected by an expert scribe twice in seven years.



**KOSHER**

## Jewish Meaning:

The Hebrew word *kosher* literally means “fit”. Foods that are permitted by the *Torah* and prepared according to Jewish law are *Kosher* - “fit” for eating.

The observance of *Kashrut* makes a Jewish home “Jewish”.

Ultimately, we cannot fathom the full depth of “Why keep Kosher”. For, as the saying goes, there is more to keeping *Kosher* than meets the palate...

The reason for keeping *Kosher* is not related to health (though we imagine that if G-d told us to eat some things and not others, this would also be good for our health). Keeping *Kosher* is a part of the group of commandments called *Chukim*, (*Mitzvot* with reasons beyond human comprehension) which have to do with our sensitivity to the physical environment, starting with our own bodies.

The prohibition for not eating meat and milk is considered by some commentators as an act of sensitivity. Meat is the part of the animal used for its own self-sustenance and therefore represents the more self-centred aspects of the animal. Milk, on the other hand, is used for nurturing, reflecting the giving, outer-directed part of the animal. By not mixing the two, we show our sensitivity to these differences in nature. This ultimately has an impact on our own natures.



## In Practice:

The following is a broad overview of what makes food *Kosher*. **This is not a comprehensive manual.**

## Kosher Species

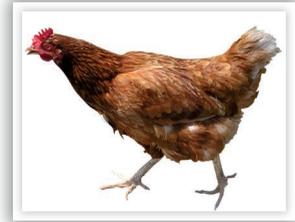
### 1. Animals

The *Torah* says that two signs identify an animal as a *Kosher* species: fully split hooves and chewing the cud (rumination). *Kosher* animals are always mammals and herbivores.



### 2. Birds

The *Torah* enumerates 24 forbidden species of birds which includes, among others, all birds of prey (e.g. vulture, hawk, eagle). In practice today, we eat only those birds for which there is an established *Kosher* tradition e.g. chicken, turkey, duck and goose.



### 3. Fish

The *Torah* teaches that a *Kosher* fish must possess both fins and scales.

Crustaceans (such as lobster and crab) and other shellfish (such as clams) are not *Kosher*, because they lack scales. Further, all aquatic mammals (e.g. whales and dolphins) are not *Kosher*.



### 4. Insects

Four species of grasshoppers are actually *Kosher*, however nowadays we cannot ascertain which ones they are and therefore we do not eat any. All other insects are not *Kosher*. This means that one must inspect all leafy vegetables and certain fruits (e.g. raspberries and strawberries) to make sure that they are “bug free”.



## Kosher Slaughtering

Even a *Kosher* species must be slaughtered in the manner prescribed by the *Torah* (*Shechita*). Otherwise the meat is not *Kosher* (Fish do not require *Shechita*). In this procedure, a trained slaughterer (*Shochet*) severs the trachea and esophagus of the animal with a special razor-sharp knife. This also severs the jugular vein, causing near-instantaneous death with minimal pain to the animal.

The animal still requires checking, removing of forbidden parts, and salting to draw out the blood, before it can be eaten.



## Additional Prohibitions

### 1. Meat and Milk

The *Torah* forbids eating meat and milk in combination, and even forbids the act of cooking them together (as well as deriving benefit from such a mixture).

Therefore, a *Kosher* kitchen must have two separate sets of pots, pans, plates and silverware - one for meat/poultry and the other for dairy foods.

The Hebrew terms for meat and milk are *Basar* (meat) and *Chalav* (milk). In Yiddish, the terms are *Fleishig* (meaty) and *Milchig* (milky).

It is necessary to wait after a meat meal before eating milky products. The common practice in Anglo Jewry is three hours. However, we may eat meat following dairy products as long as we have eaten other food and drink in between.

Food that contains neither meat nor milk is called *Parev*. *Parev* foods may be eaten with either dairy or meat products. *Parev* foods include: fish, eggs, and everything grown from the soil (vegetables, fruits, grains). (Actually, fish and meat may not be eaten together for reasons aside from *Kashrut*.)

### 2. Supervised milk

Rabbinic law requires supervision during the milking process, to ensure that the milk comes from a *Kosher* animal without adulteration. In the UK, many people rely on the Department of Agriculture regulations. Some people, however, elect to eat dairy products that have been supervised and certified as *Kosher*.

#### Did you know?

Honey from bees is *Kosher*, although the bees themselves are not. Bees produce honey from the nectar of flowers. Even though bees bring the honey into their bodies, it is only stored, and not produced there.

### 3. Derivatives of a Non-Kosher Species

Products which come from non-*Kosher* creatures are also not *Kosher*. In other words, *Kosher* eggs must come from a *Kosher* bird; *Kosher* milk from a *Kosher* animal and *Kosher* fish oil from a *Kosher* fish.

### 4. Non-Kosher Vessels

Cooking utensils etc. that come into contact with non-*Kosher* food can become non-*Kosher* through the absorption of taste-particles. These laws are quite complex and will vary depending on many factors.

## Kosher Supervision

When shopping for *Kosher* food, it is not enough to simply “read the ingredients”. Food processing has become highly sophisticated and labelling practices may be misleading to the *Kosher* consumer. For example, certain emulsifiers may be manufactured with non-*Kosher* animal fats.

To know which products are *Kosher* and which ones are not one should buy “The Really Jewish Food Guide” or go to their website [www.kosher.org.uk](http://www.kosher.org.uk)

Alternatively, certain products have a “symbol” indicating that the product is *Kosher*.

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## Conclusion:

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Jewish values are the spiritual steps in pursuit of our connection to G-d. It is a way in which we carry out our daily activities and thought processes that builds our spiritual personality – the *Neshama*.

When we give charity and eat *Kosher*, for example, these are not just “rituals”: we change as people. We connect with G-d. This is the goal of Judaism.



(The symbols shown are merely a selection of the many *Kosher* certification logos that are around)

## Suggested reading:

### **BASIC:**

- “**Masterplan**” – Judaism – It’s Program  
Meaning & Goals – Rabbi Aryeh Carmell
- “**The Committed Life**” – Principles for  
Good Living from Our Timeless Past – Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis
- “**Pirkei Avos**” – Illustrated Youth Edition – Rabbi Avie Gold
- “**Kosher for the Clueless but Curious**” – Shimon Apisdorf

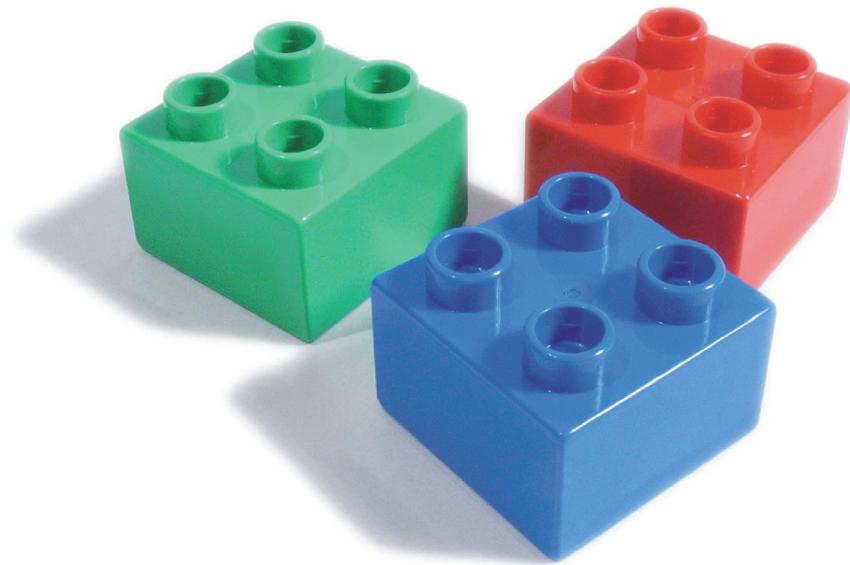
### **ADVANCED:**

- “**The Informed Soul**” – Introductory  
encounters with Jewish thought – Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb
- “**The Pirkei Avos Treasury**” – The Sage’s  
Guide to Living – Rabbi Moshe Lieber
- “**The Tzedakah Treasury**” – To Instruct  
and Inspire – Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer

# Terminology

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<i>Ashkenazim</i>	Jews of Germanic/Eastern European lineage	"Of German lineage"
<i>Basar</i>	Meat	-
<i>Chalav</i>	Milk	-
<i>Chillul Hashem</i>	Behaving in a way that causes others to reflect negatively upon G-d	"Desecrating G-d"
<i>Fleishig</i>	Foods or crockery that contain meat or are used for meat	-
<i>Hachnasat Orchim</i>	Inviting Guests	-
<i>Hashem</i>	G-d	"The Name"
<i>Kiddush Hashem</i>	Behaving in a way that causes others to reflect positively upon G-d	"Sanctifying G-d"
<i>Kosher/Kashrut</i>	Food that the <i>Torah</i> permits a Jew to eat	"Fit"
<i>Mezuzah/Mezuzot</i>	The mini parchment placed on the right-hand side of doorposts	"Doorpost"
<i>Milchig</i>	Foods or crockery that contain milk or are used for milk	-
<i>Mitzvah/Mitzvot</i>	Commandment/Commandments	-
<i>Neshama</i>	Soul	-
<i>Parev</i>	Foods or crockery that neither contain nor are used for meat or milk	-
<i>Sefardim</i>	Jews of Spanish/North African lineage	"Of Spanish lineage"
<i>Shabbat</i>	Saturday	"Rest"
<i>Shechita</i>	The <i>Torah</i> -prescribed way of slaughtering animals	-
<i>Shema</i>	The prayer in which we declare the Oneness of G-d	"Hear"
<i>Shochet</i>	Professional ritual slaughterer	-
<i>Sofer</i>	Professional scribe	"Writer"
<i>Talmud</i>	The central text of the Oral Law, made up of the <i>Mishna</i> and <i>Gemara</i>	"Learning"
<i>Torah</i>	The Pentateuch	"Instruction"
<i>Tzedakah</i>	Charity	"Righteousness"

# TERMINOLOGY



# Terminology

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>ADAR</b>	The twelfth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>ADAR SHENI</b>	The thirteenth month of the Jewish year (Only exists in a leap year)	2 <sup>nd</sup> <i>Adar</i>
<b>AKEIDAH</b>	The event when Abraham was told to sacrifice his son, Isaac	Binding
<b>AL HANISIM</b>	Prayer insert to the <i>Amida</i> and <i>Bircat Hamazon</i> on <i>Chanukah</i> and <i>Purim</i>	For the miracles
<b>ALEINU</b>	The culminating prayer at all services	(It is) Upon us
<b>ALIYA</b>	Getting “called up” to the <i>Torah</i>	Going up
<b>AMIDA/SHEMONE ESREI</b>	The silent prayer said at all prayer services	Standing / 18 (Blessings)
<b>ANIM ZEMIROT</b>	The responsive song sung on <i>Shabbat</i> mornings, often led by a child	I will compose songs
<b>ANINUT</b>	Mourner’s status between death and burial	Intense mourning
<b>ARAVOT</b>	Two willow branches that are shaken on <i>Sukkot</i> together with the three other species	Willow branches
<b>ARON HAKODESH</b>	The ark at the front of the synagogue where the <i>Torah</i> Scrolls are kept	Holy Ark
<b>ASARA B’TEVET</b>	One of the Fast days	10 <sup>th</sup> of <i>Tevet</i>
<b>ASHKENAZIM</b>	Jews of Germanic/Eastern European lineage	Of German lineage
<b>ASHREI</b>	A Psalm included twice in the <i>Shacharit</i> service and once in the <i>Mincha</i> service	Praiseworthy
<b>AUFRUF</b>	Groom’s “call up” to the <i>Torah</i> before getting married	Call up
<b>AV</b>	The fifth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>BA’AL KOREH</b>	The person who reads from the <i>Torah</i>	Master reader
<b>BADEKEN</b>	The groom places the veil over the bride’s face	Veiling
<b>BAR/BAT MITZVAH</b>	Celebration when boys/girls turn 13/12 years of age	Son/Daughter of <i>Mitzvah</i>
<b>BARUCH SHE’AMAR</b>	The blessing at the beginning of <i>Pesukei D’Zimrah</i>	Blessed is He who spoke
<b>BASAR</b>	Meat	-
<b>BIMA</b>	Place in the synagogue where one reads from the <i>Torah</i>	Platform
<b>BIRCAT HAMAZON/ BENTCHING</b>	Grace After Meals	Blessing on the bread
<b>BORCHU</b>	Chanted by the <i>Chazzan</i> during the <i>Shacharit</i> service and at the beginning of the <i>Ma’ariv</i> service	Bless

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>BRACHA/ BRACHOT</b>	Blessing	Source of goodness
<b>BRIT MILAH/BRIS</b>	Circumcision	Covenant of circumcision
<b>BRIT YITZCHAK</b>	Evening before a boy's <i>Brit</i> ( <i>Sephardic</i> custom)	Covenant of Isaac
<b>CHAG/ CHAGIM</b>	Festival/Festivals	-
<b>CHALAV</b>	Milk	-
<b>CHAMETZ</b>	Leavened products that cannot be eaten on Passover	Leavened bread
<b>CHANUKAH</b>	Festival (when we light candles) commemorating the Jews' victory over the Greeks	Dedication
<b>CHANUKIAH/ MENORAH</b>	Candelabra used on <i>Chanukah</i>	-
<b>CHAROSET</b>	One of the dishes of the <i>Seder</i> plate (a mixture of chopped nuts, apples, wine and cinnamon)	-
<b>CHATAN</b>	Groom	-
<b>CHATAN BERESHIT</b>	One of the honours granted at <i>Simchat Torah</i>	The Groom of <i>Bereshit</i>
<b>CHATAN TORAH</b>	One of the honours granted at <i>Simchat Torah</i>	The Groom of the <i>Torah</i>
<b>CHAVA</b>	The first woman	Life giver
<b>CHAZZAN/ SHALIACH TZIBUR</b>	Leader of the prayer services at the synagogue	Cantor
<b>CHAZERET</b>	One of the dishes of the <i>Seder</i> plate (extra <i>Marror</i> leaves)	-
<b>CHESHVAN</b>	The eighth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>CHILLUL HASHEM</b>	Behaving in a way that causes others to reflect negatively upon G-d	Desecrating G-d
<b>CHOL HAMO'ED</b>	Pseudo <i>Yom Tov</i> without the same restrictions	The profane of the festival
<b>CHUPPAH</b>	Canopy under which bride and groom get married	Canopy
<b>DREIDEL</b>	A game played on <i>Chanukah</i>	Spinner
<b>ELLUL</b>	The sixth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>ETROG</b>	One of the four species used on <i>Sukkot</i>	Citron
<b>FLEISHIG</b>	Foods or crockery that contain meat or are used for meat	-
<b>GELILA</b>	The rolling and wrapping of the <i>Torah</i> Scroll	Rolling
<b>HA'IVRI</b>	Refers to Abraham who was ideologically "on the other side" from the rest of the world	The Hebrew / The one on the other side
<b>HACHNASAT ORCHIM</b>	Inviting guests	-
<b>HADASSIM</b>	One of the four species used on <i>Sukkot</i>	-
<b>HAFTARAH</b>	Section from Prophets read after <i>Torah</i> reading	
<b>HAGBA</b>	The raising of the <i>Torah</i> Scroll for all to see	Raising
<b>HAGGADAH</b>	The text used at the <i>Seder</i> on <i>Pesach</i>	Narrative

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>HALLEL</b>	A prayer said on <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> and many festivals, made up of various Psalms	Praise
<b>HAMANTASHEN</b>	A triangular pastry eaten on <i>Purim</i>	Haman's ears
<b>HASHEM</b>	G-d	The Name
<b>HATARAT NEDARIM</b>	A short declaration made after <i>Shacharit</i> on the morning before <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Annulment of vows
<b>IYAR</b>	The second month of the Jewish year	-
<b>KABBALAH</b>	Jewish mysticism	To receive
<b>KABBALAT PANIM</b>	Reception before wedding	Receiving faces
<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT</b>	A composition of Psalms said on Friday night before <i>Ma'ariv</i>	Receiving/Welcoming the <i>Shabbat</i>
<b>KADDISH</b>	Prayer said by mourner	Sanctification
<b>KALLAH</b>	Bride	-
<b>KARPAS</b>	One of the dishes of the <i>Seder Plate</i> (vegetable)	-
<b>KEDUSHA</b>	The responsive prayer said in the repetition of the <i>Amida</i>	Holiness
<b>KETUBAH</b>	Marriage contract	Written document
<b>KIDDUSH</b>	Blessing made over wine to sanctify <i>Shabbat/Yom Tov</i>	Sanctification
<b>KIDDUSH HASHEM</b>	Doing an act or behaving in a way that causes others to reflect positively upon G-d	Sanctifying G-d
<b>KIDDUSHIN</b>	Betrothal	Sanctification of marriage
<b>KINOT</b>	Mournful prayers traditionally recited on <i>Tisha B'Av</i>	Dirges
<b>KISLEV</b>	The ninth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>KITTEL</b>	White garment worn by some on High Holy Days	-
<b>COHEN/KOHANIM</b>	"Priest/Priests"	-
<b>KOL NIDREI</b>	Prayer service at the beginning of <i>Yom Kippur</i>	All vows
<b>KOSHER/KASHRUT</b>	Food that the <i>Torah</i> permits a Jew to eat	To prepare
<b>KRIYAT HATORAH</b>	The public <i>Torah</i> reading	Reading of the <i>Torah</i>
<b>LAG BA'OMER</b>	33 <sup>rd</sup> Day of the <i>Omer</i>	-
<b>LECHA DODI</b>	The song recited responsively in <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i>	Come my beloved
<b>LEVAYA</b>	Funeral	Escorting
<b>LEVI/LEVI'IM</b>	From the tribe of <i>Levi</i>	Levite/Levites
<b>LULAV</b>	One of the four species used on <i>Sukkot</i>	Palm branch
<b>MA'ARIV/ARAVIT</b>	Evening prayer service	To the west
<b>MACHZOR</b>	Prayer book used on a festival	Cycle
<b>MAFTIR</b>	The final "call up" to the <i>Torah</i>	Parting
<b>MARROR</b>	One of the dishes of the <i>Seder Plate</i> (bitter herbs)	-
<b>MASHIACH</b>	Messiah	-
<b>MATANOT LA'EYONIM</b>	The <i>Mitzvah</i> on <i>Purim</i> of giving charity to the poor	Gifts to the poor

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>MATZAH/MATZOT</b>	Unleavened bread eaten on <i>Pesach</i>	Unleavened bread
<b>MATZEIVAH</b>	Stone Setting	-
<b>MAZAL TOV</b>	Congratulations	Good luck
<b>MEGILLA</b>	Scroll	-
<b>MENORAH</b>	The candelabra used in the Temple and on <i>Chanukah</i>	Candelabra
<b>MEZUZAH/ MEZUZOT</b>	The mini parchment placed on the right-hand side of doorposts	Doorpost
<b>MILCHIG</b>	Foods or crockery that contain milk or are used for milk	-
<b>MINCHA</b>	The afternoon service	-
<b>MINYAN</b>	A quorum of ten men	Number
<b>MISHKAN</b>	The portable mini-Temple that travelled with the Jews in the wilderness	Tabernacle
<b>MISHLOACH MANOT</b>	The <i>Mitzvah</i> on <i>Purim</i> of sending gifts to friends	Sending gifts
<b>MITZVAH/ MITZVOT</b>	Commandment/Commandments	-
<b>MODEH ANI</b>	The first words that we utter every day upon waking	I thank You
<b>MODIM D'RABANAN</b>	The <i>Modim</i> blessing recited by all during the repetition of the <i>Amida</i>	<i>Modim</i> of the Rabbis
<b>MOHEL</b>	Person who performs the <i>Brit</i> (circumcision)	-
<b>MUSAF</b>	Additional service recited on <i>Shabbat</i> , <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> and festivals	Additional
<b>NESHAMA</b>	Soul	-
<b>NINE DAYS</b>	A period of intense mourning from the first until the ninth of <i>Av</i>	-
<b>NISSAN</b>	The first month of the Jewish year	-
<b>OLAM HENESHAMOT</b>	The place that souls go to after this world	The World of Souls
<b>OMER</b>	The period between <i>Pesach</i> and <i>Shavuot</i>	Name of a measurement of barley
<b>PAREV</b>	Foods or crockery that neither contain nor are used for meat or milk	-
<b>PESACH</b>	Passover	-
<b>PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH</b>	The prayers positioned at the beginning of the <i>Shacharit</i> service	Verses of song
<b>PETICHA</b>	When the <i>Aron Hakodesh</i> is opened to take out the <i>Torah</i> Scroll	The opening
<b>PIDYON HABEN</b>	Redemption of the firstborn son	Redemption of the son
<b>PURIM</b>	Festival celebrating the salvation of the Jews from the evil Haman	Lots

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>ROSH CHODESH</b>	Beginning of the new month	Head of the month
<b>ROSH HASHANAH</b>	The Jewish new year	New Year
<b>SANDEK</b>	The person who holds the baby during circumcision	Companion (of child)
<b>SEDER</b>	The night when we verbally transmit the story of the Exodus, parent to child	Order
<b>SEDER PLATE</b>	The plate at the <i>Seder</i> containing foods of significance	-
<b>SEDRA</b>	Weekly portion of <i>Torah</i> reading	Order
<b>SEPHARDIM</b>	Jews of Spanish/North African lineage	Of Spanish lineage
<b>SEFER TORAH</b>	<i>Torah</i> Scroll	-
<b>SEFIRAT HA'OMER</b>	The counting of days between <i>Pesach</i> and <i>Shavuot</i>	Counting of the <i>Omer</i>
<b>SEUDAH</b>	A festive meal	Meal
<b>SEUDAT MITZVAH</b>	A meal that accompanies certain <i>Mitzvot</i>	A meal of a <i>Mitzvah</i>
<b>SEVEN NOAHIDE LAWS</b>	Seven universal laws given to the children of Noah	-
<b>SHABBAT</b>	Saturday	Rest
<b>SHABBAT CHATTAN</b>	Groom's celebration on <i>Shabbat</i> after wedding ( <i>Sephardic</i> custom)	<i>Shabbat</i> (of the) groom
<b>SHABBAT KALLAH</b>	Bride's celebration on <i>Shabbat</i> before wedding	<i>Shabbat</i> of the bride
<b>SHABBAT ZACHOR</b>	The <i>Shabbat</i> before <i>Purim</i>	<i>Shabbat</i> Remember
<b>SHACHARIT</b>	The morning service	-
<b>SHALIACH TZIBUR</b>	The person who leads a prayer service	Emissary of the congregation
<b>SHALOM ZACHOR</b>	Celebration on Friday night after birth of a boy	Welcome (to the) male
<b>SHALOSH REGALIM</b>	<i>Pesach</i> , <i>Shavuot</i> and <i>Sukkot</i>	The three Pilgrim Festivals
<b>SHAMASH</b>	The candles used to light the <i>Menorah</i>	The servicing candle
<b>SHANA</b>	First year of mourning	Year
<b>SHAVUOT</b>	Pentecost	-
<b>SHECHITA</b>	The <i>Torah</i> -prescribed way of slaughtering animals	-
<b>SHELOSHIM</b>	Month of mourning	Thirty (days)
<b>SHEMA</b>	The prayer in which we declare the Oneness of G-d	Hear
<b>SHEVA BRACHOT</b>	The seven marriage blessings/Celebratory meals during first week of marriage	The seven blessings
<b>SHEVAT</b>	The eleventh month of the Jewish year	-
<b>SHIDDUCH/IM</b>	Religious process of courting before marriage	Match/Matchmaking
<b>SHIVA</b>	Seven days of mourning	Seven
<b>SHIVA ASAR B'TAMMUZ</b>	The fast day commemorating the breaching of Jerusalem's walls	The seventeenth of <i>Tammuz</i>
<b>SHMINI ATZERET</b>	The festival immediately at the culmination of <i>Sukkot</i>	The eighth day of staying
<b>SHOCHET</b>	Professional ritual slaughterer	-

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>SHOFAR</b>	Blown on <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Ram's horn
<b>SHUL</b>	Synagogue	House of prayer
<b>SHUSHAN PURIM</b>	The 15 <sup>th</sup> of <i>Adar</i> - the day on which <i>Purim</i> is celebrated in Jerusalem	-
<b>SIDDUR/ SIDDURIM</b>	The daily prayer book	Order
<b>SIMCHAT BAT/ ZEVED HABAT</b>	Celebration for birth of a daughter ( <i>Sephardic</i> custom)	The joy of a daughter
<b>SIMCHAT TORAH</b>	The day marking the completion of the weekly cycle of reading the <i>Torah</i>	The Joy of the <i>Torah</i>
<b>SIVAN</b>	The third month of the Jewish year	-
<b>SIYUM</b>	A festive meal marking the completion of a volume of Jewish text	Completion
<b>SLICHOT</b>	Additional prayers said around the time of the High Holy Days	Forgiveness (prayers)
<b>SOFER</b>	Professional scribe	Writer
<b>SUKKAH</b>	The temporary booth that we dwell in during the festival of <i>Sukkot</i>	Booth
<b>SUKKOT</b>	Tabernacles	-
<b>TA'ANIT ESTHER</b>	The fast on the day preceding <i>Purim</i>	Fast of Esther
<b>TA'ANIT BECHOROT</b>	The fast (for firstborn sons) on the day preceding <i>Pesach</i>	Fast of the firstborns
<b>TACHANUN</b>	A prayer of supplication recited in the <i>Shacharit</i> and <i>Mincha</i> prayer services	Supplication
<b>TAHARA</b>	Preparation of a Jewish corpse for burial	Purification
<b>TALLIT</b>	Prayer shawl	-
<b>TALMUD</b>	The central text of the Oral Law, made up of the <i>Mishna</i> and <i>Gemara</i>	Learning
<b>TAMMUZ</b>	The fourth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>TASHLICH</b>	A short prayer of repentance said near a body of water on <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Throwing away (sins)
<b>TEFILA</b>	Prayer	-
<b>TEFILLIN</b>	Phylacteries	-
<b>TEVET</b>	The tenth month of the Jewish year	-
<b>THE ASERET Y'MEI TESHUVA</b>	The ten days between (and including) <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> and <i>Yom Kippur</i>	The Ten Days of Repentance
<b>THE THREE WEEKS</b>	The period of national mourning between the 17 <sup>th</sup> of <i>Tammuz</i> and 9 <sup>th</sup> of <i>Av</i>	-
<b>TISCH</b>	Reception table at which groom sits before the <i>Chuppah</i>	Table
<b>TISHA B'AV</b>	The saddest day of the Jewish year, commemorating the destruction of two Temples	The Ninth of <i>Av</i>

Jewish word	Usage	Literal meaning
<b>TISHREI</b>	The seventh month of the Jewish year	-
<b>TORAH</b>	The Five Books of Moses	Teaching
<b>TORAH SHEBICHTAV</b>	The Bible	The Oral <i>Torah</i>
<b>TORAH SHEB'AL PEH</b>	The Oral explanation of the Written Law, given by G-d to Moses at Mount Sinai	The Written <i>Torah</i>
<b>TU B'SHVAT</b>	New Year for Trees	The fifteenth of <i>Shevat</i>
<b>TZEDAKAH</b>	Charity	Righteousness
<b>TZITZIT</b>	Four-cornered garment with fringes on each corner	Fringes
<b>TZOM GEDALIA</b>	The fast day commemorating the assassination of Gedalia, the Jewish governor	Fast of Gedalia
<b>VORT</b>	Engagement celebration	Word
<b>YAD</b>	The pointer used by the person reading from the <i>Torah</i> Scroll	Hand
<b>YAHRTZEIT</b>	Anniversary (Hebrew date) of deceased relative	Time of year
<b>YAMIM NORAIM</b>	The High Holy Days - <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> and <i>Yom Kippur</i>	Days of Awe
<b>YICHUD</b>	Bride and groom spend time alone as part of wedding	Seclusion
<b>YISHTABACH</b>	The blessing at the end of <i>Pesukei D'Zimrah</i>	May (Your Name) be blessed
<b>YIZKOR</b>	Prayer recited by those who have lost a close relative	Remembrance
<b>YOM HA'ATZMA'UT</b>	Israel Independence Day	-
<b>YOM HAZIKARON</b>	Day of Remembrance for fallen soldiers	-
<b>YOM KIPPUR</b>	Holiest day in the Jewish year	Day of Atonement
<b>YOM TOV</b>	Festival mentioned in the <i>Torah</i>	Good Day
<b>YOM YERUSHALAYIM</b>	Jerusalem Day - marking the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967	-
<b>ZOHAR</b>	The primary <i>Kabbalistic</i> text	-