

# Judaism and the Jewish Community

## Educational Resource

### Supplementary Information

<h4>WHAT DO JEWISH PEOPLE LOOK LIKE?</h4>  <p>There is no one Jewish look. Jews are people from all over the world, with many different backgrounds and appearances. Some are young, some are old. Some are men, some are women. Some are secular, some are religious. Some are from Israel, some are from other countries. The only thing that makes them Jewish is their faith and their connection to their people and their land.</p>	<h4>GROUPS WITHIN JUDAISM</h4> <p>There are many different groups within Judaism, each with its own beliefs and practices. Some are more traditional, some are more liberal. Some are more religious, some are more secular. The main groups are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist. Each group has its own rabbi and its own community.</p>	<h4>RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DRESS</h4> <p>There are many different ways to dress as a Jew. Some people wear traditional Jewish clothing, like kippot and tallitot. Some people wear more modern clothing. Some people wear both. It is up to each person to decide how they want to dress.</p>
<h4>THE JEWISH CALENDAR</h4> <p>The Jewish calendar has 12 months, based on the moon's cycle. Each month has a different name and a different holiday. The months are: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tamuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Cheshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, and Adar. Each month has a different number of days.</p>	<h4>ROSH HASHANAH</h4> <p>Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. It is celebrated on the first day of the month of Tishrei. It is a time of reflection and renewal. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>PESACH (PASSOVER)</h4> <p>Pesach is a week-long festival of freedom. It commemorates the Jewish people's escape from Egypt. It is a time of joy and celebration. People eat matzah and tell the story of their ancestors.</p>
<h4>SHAVUOT</h4> <p>Shavuot is the Jewish festival of harvest. It is celebrated on the sixth day after the start of the wheat harvest. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>CHANUKAH</h4> <p>Chanukah is the Jewish festival of lights. It is celebrated on the eighth day of the month of Kislev. It is a time of joy and celebration. People light candles and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>BABY TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH</h4> <p>Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the Jewish ceremony of coming of age. It is celebrated on the third day of the month of Nisan. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>
<h4>GETTING MARRIED</h4> <p>Getting married is a Jewish ceremony. It is celebrated on the first day of the month of Tishrei. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>THE END OF LIFE</h4> <p>The end of life is a Jewish ceremony. It is celebrated on the third day of the month of Nisan. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>TORAH AND SYNAGOGUE</h4> <p>The Torah is the Jewish holy book. It is the foundation of Jewish law and practice. The synagogue is the Jewish place of worship. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>
<h4>KEEPING KOSHER</h4> <p>Keeping kosher is a Jewish law. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>SHABBAT</h4> <p>Shabbat is the Jewish day of rest. It is celebrated on the seventh day of the week. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>	<h4>ISRAEL יִשְׂרָאֵל</h4> <p>Israel is the Jewish homeland. It is a time of joy and celebration. People pray, sing, and eat special foods. It is a time to think about the past and the future.</p>

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## Introduction

These notes supplement the [Judaism and the Jewish Community](#) resources developed by the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities from the Board of Deputies of British Jews' *Jewish Living Experience* exhibition. This gives an overview of Judaism and the Jewish Community, providing a wide range of information that reflects many aspects of Jewish community life in Scotland and the UK today.

These resources are suitable for schools, community groups, and in the workplace, and are available on the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities website as print quality pdf files that may be downloaded for display purposes, for example as classroom posters.

They are also available free-standing banners that form a travelling exhibition, which may be more convenient for larger groups. If you would like to borrow these, please contact us at [education@scojec.org](mailto:education@scojec.org) to arrange collection from our Glasgow Office – and let us know if you would like us to run an exhibition for your organisation. We're happy to help!

[This](#) supplementary material provides information to help teachers and others use the resources effectively and teach about Judaism in the classroom.

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## Top tips for teaching about Judaism

- 1) Assume **NO** prior knowledge. Pupils may not have any knowledge or understanding of Judaism, so start with the basics. They may never have even met a Jewish person previously, and some may have some strange preconceptions or stereotypical ideas.
- 2) Never say that “All Jews do ...” or “All Jews believe ...”, or even just “Jews do ...” or “Jews believe ...” as this is never the case! There are very many ideological and geographical differences of opinion and practice within the wider Jewish community. This fits in with the ‘Worldviews’ terminology.
- 3) What follows from that is that you should never assume that because one Jewish person had a certain request or answered a question yesterday, the person you’re speaking to today will have the same request or answer. For example, some Jewish people will simply avoid eating pork; others will not eat any non-*kosher* meat but are happy with vegetarian; still others insist that everything they eat, even if vegetarian, should have been certified as kosher by a rabbi, or prepared under rabbinic supervision; some will even only accept a particular supervision, or insist that packages are opened in their presence.
- 4) Suggested ways to phrase things:
  - “Some Jews believe ...”; “Some Jews do ...”; “In some synagogues ... in others ...”;
  - “Many Jews ...”; “It is common for lots of Jews ...”;
  - “The traditional belief is ...”; “Traditionally this is done ... But some people / communities believe / do ...”;
  - “In some communities ... whilst in others ...”.
- 5) Remember that not all Jews are white, European, or Ashkenazi. It is important to explain to learners that there are Jews in the UK and all over the world who look different, and have different languages, traditions, and life experiences.
- 6) You should not frame Jewish festivals or practice by comparing them to that of other faiths as that minimises their importance and distinctiveness. For example, Chanukah is NOT the Jewish equivalent of Christmas. A synagogue is NOT a Jewish Church, and the *Torah* is not ‘the Old Testament’, since that term presupposes that there is a Jewish “New Testament” too.
- 7) Beware of unconscious presuppositions based in a predominantly Christian society – for example that Judaism is a Christian heresy (the opposite is the case!), or is just like Unitarianism, or that Christianity “replaced” Judaism (the heresy known as supersessionism or replacement theology).
- 8) Terminology such as ‘Old Testament’ and ‘worship’ are Christian-based and are not used by Jewish people. Instead, these things would be referred to as

'the *Torah*' and 'praying' or 'services' (or '*davening*' in Yiddish, or '*tefillah*' in Hebrew).

- 9) Be aware that in some contexts even seemingly obvious things might be seen differently – for example an Orthodox Jewish child may describe a banana as a vegetable not a fruit, and olives as fruit, because of the *brachah* (short prayer of thanksgiving said before eating, literally “blessing”) said before eating them.
- 10) It's always good to teach WHY things are done, not just WHAT is done.
- 11) If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be embarrassed ... just say so!! RME teachers cannot know everything about every faith. Feel free to contact [education@scojec.org](mailto:education@scojec.org) if you can't find the answer, or refer to the SCoJeC website to find answers!
- 12) Don't assume that a learner, or indeed parent, knows anything about Judaism or observes religious laws or customs at home just because they are Jewish, and certainly do not ever ask a pupil to explain some belief or practice to the class. Many people who are born into a culturally Jewish family may not be practicing and may not know or do anything Jewish. It may embarrass them to ask what they know or do, and any information they do give may be completely inaccurate.

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## Note about language and spelling

### Spelling

In the text of the web resource and exhibition panels, you will notice that the word 'God' is spelt 'G-d'. The reason for this is that Judaism treats even references to G-d with respect, and therefore many Jewish people try to avoid writing the word in case the paper it is written on is destroyed or defaced. In Hebrew, when the name of G-d is not being used in prayer, it is often replaced by "*HaShem*" ("the Name"), and in English the word is avoided by using an abbreviation.

### Terminology

Terminology such as "Old Testament" and "worship" are Christian usages, and are not used by Jewish people. Instead, these would be referred to as the "*Torah*" or the Hebrew Bible, and "praying" or "services" (or, commonly, the Yiddish word "*davening*" or Hebrew word "*tefillah*")

The Hebrew Bible is not "the Old Testament" because for Judaism there is no "New Testament" to contrast it with. Any language that implies that Judaism has been replaced or superseded by Christianity is offensive and should be avoided.

It is easy to assume that because the Hebrew Bible is common to both religions they are understood in the same way. That is not so – for example, "original sin" is a purely Christian interpretation of the Creation story. Other concepts such as confession, absolution, and grace also have no relevance to Judaism.

At the 2023 General Assembly, the Church of Scotland and the Chief Rabbi launched a [Jewish-Christian Glossary](#) that explains the difference of understanding of many terms that are used by both faiths.

### Dates

For similar reasons, many Jewish people (and others) avoid the terms "BC" and "AD" as these count from a notional year 0, and are explicitly Christian terms ("Before Christ" and "Anno Domini", meaning "in the year of our Lord"). This resource therefore uses the abbreviations "BCE" and "CE", for "before the common era", and "common era".

### Using the word 'Jew'

Some people avoid using the word "Jew", treating the word as if it were derogatory, and say "Jewish people" instead. Many Jewish people would disagree, but it is better to avoid a term that even some people are offended by.

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## **A historical introduction – Who are the Jewish People?**

So, who are the Jewish people? Who was the ‘first Jew’ and why?

We need to go back about 4000 years in history to a place called ‘Ur’ (in modern day Iraq) where a man named Abram grew up. At that time, worshipping multiple gods, mostly in the form of physical idols, was common practice. He pioneered the idea that there was one G-d – an all-powerful creator of everything, who doesn’t have a physical form. We now call this idea *monotheism*. *The word ‘monotheism’ comes*” from the Greek words mono, which means “one”, theos meaning “G-d”, and ism, a system or belief.

### **The Story of Abraham**

According to the story in the *Torah* (the Jewish Bible) G-d appeared to Abram and told him to leave his home and head for the land of Cana’an (now called Israel). G-d also told Abram that he would be the father of a whole nation.

***Torah quote*** (Genesis 25): *G-d said to Abram, “Go from the land where you grew up, from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.”*

Abram and his wife Sarai did as G-d said, and their family grew in the land of Cana’an. This was the start of the strong link between Jewish people and the land now known as Israel.

Abram’s and Sarai’s names later had the Hebrew letter “ה” (“hey”, with an “H” sound) added into them, representing G-d in their lives, so they became known as Abraham and Sarah.

They were the first of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people – followed by Isaac and Rebecca, Isaac’s son Jacob and his wives Rachel and Leah, and their 12 sons who founded the 12 tribes of Israel.

Most of the history of the Jewish people that is related in the *Torah* relates to the 210 years that Jacob’s descendants were enslaved in Egypt and the 40 years they spent in the Sinai Desert after they were led out of Egypt by Moses (“the Exodus” – see the story of Pesach). Moses and his successor, Joshua, led the Jewish people back to Israel where the rest of the Bible story takes place.

The *Torah* is not only the early history of the Jewish people, but also includes many about all aspects of daily life including civil and criminal law as well as the observance of Shabbat and festivals and other religious obligations such as kashrut.

Some Jewish people believe that G-d dictated the *Torah* word for word directly to Moses on Mount Sinai, and therefore see every word as holy and relevant for all time. Others see the *Torah* as a history book that tells the story of the Jewish people, along with guidance that was important at the time but may need reinterpreting due to changes in society and technology.

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## The Jerusalem Temples

In 957 BCE, King Solomon built a very large temple in Jerusalem. This was the central point of Jewish life for 370 years but it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 576 BCE.

The Second Temple was built 70 years later in 515 BC and was later restored and extended by King Herod. That was the Temple referred to in the Christian New Testament, and it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

When the temples were destroyed, the Jewish people were exiled from their land and split up across the world, so their religious leaders needed to make changes to ensure that Jewish practice would continue.

One big change was that Jewish worship could no longer be based on animal sacrifices offered in the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact because it was forbidden to offer sacrifices anywhere else, or other than in accordance with the detailed rules in the *Torah*, a whole new kind of worship had to be developed, synagogues – places where Jewish people could meet, study, and pray. Another change was that rabbis – teachers – became the community leaders in place of the *cohanim* (priests).

The site of the Temple in Jerusalem was not completely destroyed, and the one remaining part – the “Western Wall” or *Kotel* – became a place of pilgrimage for Jewish people. Orthodox Jews do not visit the Temple Mount itself because the *Torah* requires special purification rituals before visiting the site of the Temple. Known to Muslims as *Haram a-Sharif* (“the noble enclosure”), the compound contains the Dome of the Rock, built as a Muslim shrine in 691 CE, and the Al Aqsa Mosque (around 705 CE).

As Jewish life continued to evolve in different places around the world, many traditions, fashions, recipes, songs, and even languages (such as Yiddish and Ladino) developed, creating a beautiful diversity within one worldwide Jewish community.

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## The Basic Sources and Beliefs of Judaism

### The “Written *Torah*”

The source of all Jewish law (*halachah*) is the Hebrew Bible, but the biblical text itself requires interpretation in order to form the basis of a code of law. The Bible consists of three parts: the *Torah* (meaning “teaching, direction”), the Prophets; and other scriptures including the books of Psalms and Proverbs, collectively known as *TaNach*, an abbreviation for these three sections.

The *Torah* is made up of the “Five Books of Moses”:

- **Genesis** tells the creation narrative and the story of Noah’s Flood, which both emphasise the common origin of all humanity. The “Seven Laws of Noah” (Genesis 9) set the basic standards for civic society, including the establishment of a legal system.  
The rest of the book is primarily the story of Abraham, the founder of monotheism, and his descendants (the “twelve tribes”) until famine forces them to seek refuge in Egypt.
- **Exodus** tells the story of the enslavement of ‘the Children of Israel’ and their deliverance under the leadership of Moses, which marks the beginning of the Jewish people as a collective entity. The account of the revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 21) is preceded by Moses setting up a judicial system, and immediately followed by rules of ethical and equitable conduct.
- **Leviticus** consists primarily of rules for the Temple service, but also agricultural laws which include providing for the poor and disadvantaged. (Leviticus, 19; cf Deuteronomy 24)
- **Numbers** continues the narrative of the wanderings of the Jewish people in the wilderness of Sinai for forty years.
- **Deuteronomy** consists of a series of farewell addresses by Moses to the Jewish people, which reiterate and reinforce both ethical and ritual laws, before his death and their return to the Land of Israel.

### The “Oral *Torah*”

The “oral law” provides the interpretation of the written *Torah*, and was first codified in the *Mishnah* (which includes rabbinic disputes as to the correct interpretation of the *Torah*) around 200 CE.

The *Talmud* is then a record of further debate around the interpretation and practical implications of the *Mishnah*:

- the “Jerusalem *Talmud*” continues the discussion in the *Mishnah*, and was recorded in Galilee around 350 CE.

- the much longer Babylonian *Talmud* is the primary authoritative source of orthodox Jewish religious law, but is difficult to use as a source of practical rulings because its more than 5,400 pages often read like the minutes of a 300 year long debate!

The *Mishnah* and *Talmud* are divided into six 'Orders' which deal with:

- agricultural rules,
- Shabbat and festivals,
- marriage and divorce (much of which extends to contracts in general),
- civil and criminal law (including legal procedure and determination of damages),
- the Temple service, and
- spiritual purity and impurity.

Codifications developed in medieval times, such as the *Mishneh Torah* ("Review of the Torah", c.1170–80) of Maimonides (known as the "RaMBaM"), and Joseph Karo's *Shulchan Aruch* ("Arranged Table", 1563). Many subsequent commentaries and collections have followed till the present day.

The *Talmud* and subsequent Codes include legal and social legislation that is still applied in Jewish courts ("*Batei Din*", singular "*Bet Din*"), for example:

- Decisions are made by a simple majority, so there must be an odd number of judges to ensure a majority is possible.
- Monetary cases (civil claims, theft, personal injury, etc) are adjudicated by 3 judges. (In Talmudic times, capital cases were tried by a "small *Sanhedrin*" of 23 judges, and proceedings for communal wrongdoing required a "Great *Sanhedrin*" of 71 judges.)
- Judges must be impartial and not show favour on any grounds.
- Bribery "blinds the eye of the wise and perverts the words of the just" (Exodus 23).
- Evidence requires corroboration (Deuteronomy 17).
- Inadvertence, negligence, ignorance, duress are not deliberate wrongdoing (*mens rea*).
- The same law applies to the native and the foreigner (Exodus 12, Leviticus 24, Numbers 15).
- "The law of the land is the law" (so if parties wish, *Batei Din* can arbitrate on civil cases).

## Social Justice

Examples of biblical obligations that protect the needy and promote social justice:

- Not withholding wages or charging interest (Leviticus, 19)

- Returning pledged clothing and bedding overnight (Exodus 22)
- Leaving the corners of fields for the poor to glean (Leviticus 19)
- Not returning to collect dropped stalks or forgotten sheaves (Deuteronomy 24)
- Produce is ownerless, so available to all, every seventh year (Exodus 23; Leviticus 25)
- Land sales revert to original owner in Jubilee year (Leviticus 25)

Most of these rules are only applicable in the agricultural society of the Biblical era – e.g. gleaning in the story of Ruth – and are dependent on the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem, so do not apply today.

### **Non-Jewish People**

With the exception of the Seven Laws of Noah, Judaism does not regard Jewish law as obligatory for non-Jewish people, nor does it seek to convert others (in fact it discourages them). These seven rules are: the establishment of a legal system, and prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, murder, sexual immorality, theft, and eating flesh from live animals.

Judaism does not require or even expect non-Jewish people to live by our rules, to observe our Shabbat, to eat only kosher food, etc. Eating pork, like oppressing the poor, is wrong for Jewish people according to the rules of their own faith, but in a free world it is for other people to make their own judgements. Judaism provides a way of life for Jewish people to aspire to, as we strive to be "a light to the nations", and point the way to *Tikkun Olam* (making this a better world).

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Are good leaders always teachers in some way?
- What difference does it make if a religion is linked to one particular people or country?
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of people of a particular faith living together in the same area?
- Which other faiths also regard Abraham as an important historical figure?
- Why might people from the same or different religions interpret the same texts differently?
- The State of Israel provided a refuge for Jewish people fleeing persecution in Europe and the Middle East; does it matter who counts as Jewish?
- Judaism is one of the oldest religions, but Jewish people are still a tiny minority of the population. Why aren't there more Jews in the world?

- The Rabbinic era started around the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. Create a job advert for a rabbi of a community who were new refugees from Israel after the Temple was destroyed, and were now living abroad surrounded by people of other faiths. Think about what the rabbi's role should be within the community.
- How much do your religious or other belief define your individual identity? Rank the elements of your identity in order of importance to you (for example, gender, nationality, political views, family, sports, religious faith, hobbies, ethical views).
- Do you think our society in Scotland or the UK lives up to the standards of the *Torah* or the Seven Laws of Noah?
- What rules would you put in place in order to promote *Tikkun Olam*?

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# WHAT DO JEWISH PEOPLE LOOK LIKE?



Jewish people live all over the world, look very different and have slightly different local traditions and lifestyles.

## Jewish Communities around the World

**Ashkenazi Jews** originally came from Germany, but the term has come to refer more broadly to Jewish people from Central and Eastern Europe as the vast majority relocated to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Belarus. In the 20th century many of these people who had escaped Russian pogroms and Nazi persecution, as well as Holocaust survivors, found refuge in what became the State of Israel.

**Sephardi Jews** originally came from Spain and Portugal. Following the Spanish Inquisition, they were expelled (from Spain in 1492, and Portugal in 1536), and many fled to Amsterdam, North Africa, and the Middle East, and later to Israel.

**Mizrachi** (Eastern or Oriental) **Jews** originally come from Middle Eastern countries including Iraq (biblical Babylonia), Iran (Persia), and Yemen. After they were expelled in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the majority found refuge in the new State of Israel, some on rescue flights known as “Operation Magic Carpet” in 1949.

**Ethiopian Jews**, known as the ‘*Beta Israel*’ (House of Israel) Community were rescued from famine and civil war in Ethiopia in “Operation Moses” (1984) and “Operation Solomon (1991).

**Indian Jews**, originating from various parts of the world, and the ancient Bene Yisrael and Bene Menashe communities, mostly migrated to Israel in the 1950s.

Nowadays Jewish traditions vary not only because of geographical origin, but also because of ideological differences. The Jewish community in the UK today is ideologically diverse, and includes ‘Orthodox’, ‘Masorti’ (“traditional”), ‘Reform’, and ‘Liberal’ organised national communities, as well as people who are unaffiliated but identify as ‘cultural’ or ‘secular’ Jews. However, at the root of every Jewish community is not just a shared history, but also a baseline of shared values that includes respect for life, the importance of the family, charity (*tzedakah*), and doing good deeds (*mitzvot*), and “fixing the world” (*tikkun olam*), as well as a love of celebrating festivals and other joyous occasions with food!

## Jewish People in Britain Today

Based on the most recently available census figures, there are around 300,000 Jews in the UK, which makes it the second largest Jewish population in Europe. Of these, around 10 000 are in Scotland, 2,000 in Wales, and a few hundred in Northern Ireland. There is also a small community in Jersey (in the Channel Islands).

These numbers, however, must be treated with caution because the census can only count ticks, and because of experience of persecution, many Jewish people did not tick the box, especially because the religion question was voluntary. However that will not make a significant difference to the total, and Jews only make up about 0.04% of the British population.

### **Discussion questions and activities**

- Different Jewish Communities eat different traditional foods during festivals. Try to find out what traditional foods are eaten by Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardi Jews during different festivals such as Rosh Hashanah.
- Why do you think rescue operations such as Operation Moses and Operation Solomon were really important events?
- Discuss why it is important to have diversity in the different communities that live in the UK.
- Why do you think that giving tzedakah is an important part of being part of a Jewish person?

### **Additional Resources**

- [20 Jewish faces from around the world](#) (all ages)
- [Jewish Museum London: 'Inclusive Judaism' project](#) about diversity, including photos that are free for teachers to use (Primary and Secondary Pupils)
- [What Does a Jew Look Like?](#) by Keith Kahn-Harris – a book of portraits of British Jews showcasing what different Jewish people in UK look like. (S1–S6)

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# GROUPS WITHIN JUDAISM

## ORTHODOX (INCLUDING MODERN ORTHODOX)

Orthodox Jews are the largest group of Jews in the UK. They believe that the Torah and the accompanying oral law, which was told to Moses at the same time, are the direct word of G-d, and that Halachah (Jewish law) guides their daily lives. For this reason, education is highly valued, and everyone is encouraged to spend time studying and debating Jewish texts and tradition.

Modern Orthodox Jews actively and enthusiastically engage with the wider world, and Rabbis are frequently asked to provide guidance about how best to do so without detriment to Jewish life.

Traditions and traditional foods vary depending on background. The main ethnic groups are Ashkenazi (originating from Eastern Europe), Sephardi (originating from Spain and Portugal), and Mizrahi (originating from Arab countries), and there are also significant communities with Ethiopian, and Indian backgrounds.



## CHAREDI (INCLUDING CHASSIDIC)



Sometimes called 'Ultra' or 'Strictly' Orthodox, Charedi Jews embrace traditional values, and emphasise the importance of joy and spirituality in religious life. Because they believe that the Torah is given directly by G-d, and that Halachah (Jewish law) provides direction for everything they do, they devote a lot of time to understanding it better by studying the Torah and rabbinical texts.

Many men have beards and sidelocks and are recognisable by the black coats and hats they wear. Charedi women wear modest clothing, and married women cover their hair with a scarf, hat, or wig.

Charedi families are often large, with many children. While women take the lead in running the home, they often work outside the home too. Some Charedi Jews speak Yiddish as a first language.

Charedi Jews tend to be wary of television and other media because of the negative influence it may introduce into their lives, which are focused around celebration of Shabbat and festivals, and family occasions such as weddings.

## LIBERAL



Liberal Judaism affirms the dynamic, developing character of Jewish religious tradition, and is an authentic and modern form of Judaism, rooted in deep and meaningful engagement with Jewish texts, values, culture, and history. It believes in personal freedom and responsibility, and the shared and collective bonds that unite us as Jewish people and members of humanity.

Liberal Judaism is inclusive and egalitarian, giving equal status within Judaism to those who have traditionally been excluded.

It believes that tikkun olam (repairing the world) is a fundamental activity for Liberal Jews on personal, communal, Jewish, and global levels. It is welcoming, open and forward-looking, and engages with wider society, playing an active role in building collaboration across the Jewish community, and with other faiths and causes.

## REFORM

Reform Judaism aims to help Jews to balance their Judaism and being a full national citizen in modern society.

In Reform Synagogues, prayers are said in English and Hebrew, men and women sit together for services and there are women Rabbis. The first women Rabbis were ordained in the 20th Century. In recent years, there has been a strong focus on equality, human rights and looking after the environment.

Reform Jews see the Torah as inspired by G-d but written down by people. Torah study and debate are considered very important and the Torah is read and discussed during Shabbat services.

Reform Judaism values both tradition and text as well as knowledge of the wider world. Both should help people create their own opinions and make informed choices about their Jewish practice. This allows Judaism to be relevant to each new generation.



## MASORTI



Masorti means 'traditional'. Masorti Jews are committed to Halachah (Jewish law) but believe that it should gradually evolve to meet the needs of a changing world. Jewish education is regarded as very important, and Masorti Jews believe that every Jewish person should have the opportunity to read and explore Jewish texts to deepen their knowledge of Jewish thought, history, and culture.

Masorti Judaism is inclusive, welcoming, questioning, and open-minded. Women are recognised as Rabbis, and synagogue services, which use traditional Hebrew prayers, are egalitarian, providing opportunities for both women and men to lead and take part, although some Masorti communities choose to have more traditional prayer services led by men.



### **Additional Information**

- Reform and Liberal Judaism are sometimes grouped together as 'Progressive Judaism'.
- Some Jewish people call themselves 'secular' or 'cultural' Jews as they may not believe in G-d or practice Jewish religious ritual. However they often still have a strong Jewish identity as part of a people with a shared culture, history, and ethnicity. Because of this, Judaism is sometimes called an 'ethno-religion'. Note that the most recent Scottish census invited people to identify as Jewish under Ethnicity as well as Religion.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Is there a common core that all Jewish groups agree on? What do they view and do differently, and what overlap in belief and practice is there between the groups?
- What are the different Jewish views about women's place in Judaism, for example, being rabbis, wearing ritual clothing and tefillin, and leading prayer services?
- What are the different Jewish views about how to observe Shabbat.
- What are the different Jewish views about whether someone is Jewish if only their mother or only their father is Jewish?

### **Additional Resources**

- [History of Jewish Movements: Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox](#) (S1–S6)
- [The United Synagogue \(modern Orthodox\)](#) (P1–S6)
- [The Federation of Synagogues \(modern Orthodox\)](#) (S4–S6)
- [Chabad Lubavitch UK \(Ultra–Orthodox\)](#) (S4–S6)
- [Liberal Judaism](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [The Movement for Reform Judaism](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [Masorti Judaism](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [Sephardi Judaism](#) (Primary and Secondary)

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# RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DRESS



A tallit is worn for prayer and other special occasions (like weddings). They are traditionally used by men (either from the age of Bar Mitzvah or from when they get married) and in some communities women wear them too.

In the four corners, there are carefully knotted strings. These are known as Tzitzit (fringes). These represent the number 613, which is the traditional number of commandments in the Torah. An arba kanfot, which means "four corners", has the same knotting as a tallit and is worn every day under clothes like a vest.



Tefillin are 2 small boxes, worn during morning prayers, with text from the Torah inside. These are worn by males over the age of Bar Mitzvah and in some communities they are also worn by women.

One is placed on the forehead (thinking), the other on the arm (actions).

Many Jews choose to wear a kippah. It is a sign of pride and identity, and respect to G-d above. Some wear a kippah all day, others just for prayer. There are many different styles of kippah and some men also wear a hat.



Many Orthodox Jewish men have beards and some grow payot (sidelocks). This is because of an instruction in the Torah: (Leviticus 19) 'You shall not cut the edge of your head, nor shall you not destroy the edge of your beard.'

In Orthodox communities, it is traditional for married women to wear a hat, headscarf or wig as a sign of modesty, so that her hair is only seen by her husband and close family.



The 'Magen David' (Shield / Star of David) is a six-pointed star chosen by King David about 3000 years ago to represent the Jewish people. Many Jews wear it as a symbol of pride and identity. This star was also chosen to be the symbol of the State of Israel's flag.

### **Additional information**

- The rules of modest dress that Orthodox Jewish people usually follow, and the tradition of wearing head coverings (including for married women) are not directly taken from the *Torah*. They are Rabbinically instituted from the *Talmud*.
- Different types of *kippah* (plural: *kippot*, head covering usually worn by men), is often an indication of which group within Judaism someone identifies with. Charedi men, for example, generally wear only plain black, often velvet, *kippot* (also known by the Yiddish terms *yarmulke* or *kappel*), while knitted or crocheted *kippot* are more frequently worn by Modern Orthodox men.
- The *Torah* forbids men from wearing women's clothes and vice versa (Deuteronomy 22:5). It does not specify which items of clothing are specific to either men or women, so it will depend on the prevailing norms in different societies. This is why Orthodox Jewish women in Europe and North America usually wear skirts rather than trousers. As you would expect, the kilt is differentiated from skirts and regarded as men's clothing.
- Modesty is important for both men and women. Skimpy and low-cut clothes that are designed to reveal parts of the body, or tight clothes that draw undue attention to body shape, are avoided. Orthodox Jewish women usually wear skirts that fall below the knees, and tops with long sleeves.
- The *Torah* prohibits mixing wool and linen in a single garment. (Other mixtures such as cotton and linen or wool and silk are permitted.)

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- How many occasions or places can you think of where a specific type of clothing is appropriate?
- Why do you think Orthodox Judaism prefers men and women to wear different types of clothing?
- What do you think about the idea that women are naturally more spiritual and closer to G-d, and therefore do not need a constant reminder of G-d's presence?
- Why do you think the *Torah* prohibits mixing different fabrics as well as 'mixing' different seeds, and different species of cattle?

### **Additional Resources**

- [The Meaning Behind Different Jewish Hats](#) (Primary & Secondary)
- [BBC: What's on your head? The \*kippah\*](#) (early years / P1–P3)
- [Tzitzit What are those fringes?](#) (S1–S3)
- [At What Ages do Jewish Boys Start Wearing Tzitzit and Tallit?](#) (Primary)
- [Why Do Orthodox Jewish Women Wear Wigs?](#) (S4–S5)

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# THE JEWISH CALENDAR

The Jewish calendar has lunar months (based on the moon's cycle), and solar years (based on the sun). This means that months are 29 or 30 days long, and leap years have an extra month so that festivals always fall in the correct season, as shown:



### **Additional information:**

- The Jewish calendar is based on lunar months of 29 or 30 days (like the Muslim calendar), but (unlike the Muslim calendar) it is adjusted to keep roughly in line with the solar year. That means that leap years don't just have one extra day (like February 29<sup>th</sup>) but a whole extra month every two or three years, to ensure that that Pesach/Passover, which is referred to in the *Torah* as "the Spring Festival", is always in the spring.
- The western calendar is a Christian calendar, as the year 0 marked the year Jesus was believed to have been born, whilst, according to tradition, the Jewish calendar dates back to the creation of the world.
- The Jewish New Year (see [Rosh Hashanah](#) below) falls in autumn, so Jewish years straddle two secular years (and vice versa!). For example, the year 2000 straddled the Jewish years 5760-61.
- Jewish days run evening to evening, not midnight to midnight. This originates from the *Torah's* description of the days of creation which describes each evening as coming first: "*And there was evening and there was morning, a first day*". This is why Shabbat and all Jewish festivals begin at sundown.
- There are many festivals that punctuate the Jewish year. Most are laid out in the *Torah* but there are also festivals that commemorate later events, such as Chanukah and Purim.
- The most recent additions to the Jewish calendar include two special days marking events in recent history – *Yom HaShoah*, remembering all those murdered by the Nazis during the second world war (not to be confused with the secular International Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January); and *Yom HaAtzma'ut*, Israeli Independence Day, marking the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state in May 1948 following a resolution of the United Nations the previous November.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Why do you think food features so heavily in the culture and ritual of many religions?
- What would be a good way of celebrating and appreciating 'harvest' today – i.e. showing our gratitude for the fact that we have food?
- Judaism has more festival and special days than many other religions. Do you think this this a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
- There are many other calendars such as the Chinese calendar, the Muslim calendar, and the Persian calendar. Find out what you can about what they are how they are celebrated.

- What is the formula for calculating leap years in the secular calendar? Find out about why the Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Why did that change cause riots throughout the world.

### **Additional Resources**

- [Months of the Jewish Year](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [A Look at the Jewish Year: The Jewish Calendar](#) (S4–S6)
- [The Story of Purim](#) (S1–S6)
- [Yom Hashoah: Holocaust Memorial Day](#) (P7–S6)

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# ROSH HASHANAH

**"In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest – a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts" (Leviticus 23:24)**



Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. We remember that G-d created the world and think about G-d's power.

It is customary to eat sweet food such as honey cake, and apples dipped in honey, to highlight the wishes for a good and sweet new year, as well as round Challah (bread) which has no beginning or end to symbolise the never-ending cycle of seasons.



It is believed that G-d judges every person at this time of year, weighing up their good and bad deeds.

The shofar (ram's horn) is blown in synagogues. Its loud, dramatic sound is an announcement that the new year has arrived, and also a call for us to stop and think about behaviour and choices.

# YOM KIPPUR

**"Then on the tenth day of the seventh month it is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you ... you shall do no work on that day." (Leviticus 23:27-28)**



From Rosh Hashanah there are the '10 Days of Repentance' which end with Yom Kippur. During this time we ask forgiveness from people we have wronged, and think about how we will try to improve our behaviour in the coming year.

Yom Kippur is a serious day of prayer and fasting (not eating or drinking). We pray to ask G-d to forgive our bad choices and promise to try and behave better in the future. Many people do not wear leather or expensive jewellery to show that it is good deeds rather than possessions that are important.

### **Additional information**

- The *shofar* is made from a ram's horn, and therefore reminds us of the ram that Abraham offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac – a story which showed his loyalty to G-d.
- The *shofar* sounds like the trumpet–blasts that traditionally announce the coronation of a king because on Rosh Hashanah we acknowledge the Sovereignty of G-d. Similarly, it is said that the coming of the Messiah will be announced by the sound of a *shofar*, so this is a symbol of looking forward to a messianic era when everyone will live in peace.
- The sound of the *shofar* can be piercing, stirring our conscience to confront any things we wish we hadn't done. According to tradition, the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai was accompanied by the sounding of a *shofar*. It is therefore a reminder to be a people of *Torah*, and to keep G-d's commandments.
- Many people give extra charity before Rosh HaShanah and during the Ten Days of Repentance to remind themselves to think of others, and to occupy themselves with good deeds at this special time of year.
- There are many local and family traditions to eat special foods on Rosh Hashanah. The commonest is dipping apples in honey to symbolise a sweet new year, and to eat round *challah* (rather than the usual plaited bread) because eternity is often represented as a circle, which never ends. It also symbolises the world, which is round, as Rosh Hashanah is traditionally the anniversary of Creation and is referred to as the birthday of the world.
- Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are together known as the Days of Awe, and the ten days from one to the other are known as the Ten Days of Repentance. Special prayers are added to synagogue services to give people an opportunity to reflect on the past year and resolve to do better in the year ahead.
- Yom Kippur starts in the evening with a service called *Kol Nidrei* ("All the promises") that recognises that we might not have done our duty or kept our promises, and asks for forgiveness. There are four services during the day, often without a break, and the final service, *Ne'ilah* ("Closing") is usually sung to very moving melodies to symbolise that this is our last chance to make up for last year's mistakes.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Do you think it's a good idea to have a day set aside each year for thinking about your behaviour and apologising to people and to G-d?



- Do you think fasting and prayer are good ways to show that you are sorry for doing something wrong? What else could people do to show they want to change and improve themselves?
- If you hurt someone else, in some religions, a priest can grant you forgiveness, whereas Judaism believes that only the person you hurt can forgive you, so you have to apologise directly to them and to make amends. Which do you think is more likely to stop you doing the same thing again?

### **Additional Resources**

- [BBC: What is Rosh Hashanah?](#) (P4–P7)
- [What is Rosh Hashanah? The Jewish New Year](#) (P4–P7)
- [What is Yom Kippur?](#) (S1–S6)
- [Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Consider Forgiveness](#) (S4–S6)
- [Rabbi Joseph Telushkin: Forgiveness](#) (S4–S6)
- [Rabbi Abraham Twerski: Anger](#) (S1–S6)

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# PESACH

## (PASSOVER)

**"Remember this day in which you left Egypt, the place of slavery, from where G-d brought you with a show of strength. No leavened (risen) bread may be eaten."**

(Exodus 13:3)

זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים  
כי בחזק יד הוציא ה' אתכם מזה ולא יאכל חמץ



Pesach is a week-long festival of freedom. It celebrates the Exodus (the Jewish people leaving slavery in Egypt) – the first stage in their 40 year journey towards the Promised Land of Israel.

The Jewish people left Egypt in a hurry so their bread did not have time to rise. We remember this by not eating ordinary bread throughout the week of Pesach. Instead we only eat matzah – flat bread that has not had time to rise. We also avoid eating other chametz – foods made from grain that has risen, like cake.

Pesach begins with the Seder, which means 'order'. This is a festive meal at which the story of the Exodus is retold with songs, poems and symbolic foods. A special book is used for the service: the Haggadah, which means 'telling'.



The items on the Seder Plate remind us of the different parts of the Pesach story.

The egg symbolises the circle of life.

The bones symbolises the lambs that were offered to G-d on the night before the Jewish people left Egypt.

The vegetables symbolises new life and spring time.

The bitter herbs and salt water are a reminder of the bitterness and tears of slavery.

Charoset is a mixture of chopped fruit, nuts and wine. It looks like cement and is a reminder of the building work carried out by the slaves.



## Additional information

- Many people are very careful to avoid eating and even owning leavened food (*chametz*) and go to great lengths before and during Pesach to make sure they don't accidentally do so. Many people clean their home extra thoroughly to get rid of any *chametz*, even have separate pots and dishes only ever used on Pesach, and only buy and eat food that a rabbi has specially certified as "*kosher* for Pesach".
- *Matzah* is made with just flour and water – not even with added salt – and has to be mixed, kneaded, rolled, and fully baked within 18 minutes so the dough doesn't have any chance to ferment or 'leaven', to represent the haste with which the Jewish people fled from slavery in Egypt.
- *Chametz* is food made from grain that is 'leavened' or has risen, so it is symbolic of being 'puffed up' or haughty. Pesach therefore symbolises the opposite – humility, which is considered an important character trait in Judaism. By only eating simple and humble foods for a week, we remember that we were once slaves with no power, no spare time, no material possessions, and no luxuries, and that we shouldn't take luxury for granted or get too big for our boots.
- By tradition, Mount Sinai was chosen for the giving of the *Torah* because it was small and simple, not high and beautiful, as a reminder that humility not grandeur is important. This is also echoed by Moses who had a speech defect, and was a shepherd, but still became a great leader.
- Many people celebrate two *seder* nights. Orthodox Jewish communities outside Israel celebrate every festival for two days rather than the one mentioned in the *Torah*. This is a tradition dating back to when long distance communication was difficult and took a long time, so Jews living far from the Temple were not sure of the correct date, and therefore celebrated on both possible days to make sure they didn't get it wrong.
- The most important purpose of the *seder* is to pass on the story of the Exodus from Egypt – going from slavery to freedom – to the next generation so that it will never be forgotten. Because of this, much of the *seder* is designed to interest and engage children with songs and unusual foods and actions, with the highlight being the children singing the song *Ma Nishtanah* which asks four questions about why the *seder* night is different from all other nights.
- The word *seder* just means "order" because there is a prescribed order of service – like an agenda – for the meal, which includes:
  - Three sheets of *matzah* – two replacing the normal *challah* eaten on Shabbat and Festivals, and another for the special *mitzvah* (observance) of *matzah*. They also represent the three groups of Jewish people: *Cohanim* (priests), Levites, and 'Israelites' (everyone else). Near the beginning of the *seder*, the middle *matzah* is broken and one part is hidden so that the

children can find it and hold it to ransom when it is needed to be eaten at the end of the meal, so that it is the lasting taste of the *seder*.

- Four glasses of wine (or grape juice) are drunk at different points during the meal.
- The following items are arranged on the table (most people put them on a decorative platter) and are used or referred to during the meal:
  - Salt water to represent the tears of the Jewish people when they were slaves in Egypt, and a vegetable to dip into the salt water – for no other reason than so the children will ask why!
  - Bitter herbs to represent the bitter life of slaves, and *charoset*, a mixture of apples, nuts, and honey, to represent the clay the Jewish slaves had to make into bricks.
  - A bone and an egg (which are not eaten) to represent the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple in Biblical times.
- The final day of Pesach is by tradition the anniversary of the Jewish people finally escaping from Egypt by crossing the Red Sea into the Sinai Desert.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- What other things could people do to remember to be humble, and not haughty or arrogant? Write a poem, a song, or invent a new activity or annual tradition that would be universally relevant to remind people of the importance of humility.
- Look at the words of the *Mah Nishtanah*. Can you answer the four questions as to why Jewish people do these four things differently on *seder* night?
- Can you think of things that you do – or eat – in order to remember something of significance to you or your family?
- Investigate modern day slavery. How can this be prevented? What can you and you friends or classmates to help prevent people being treated in this way?
- What historical evidence is there in ancient Egyptian sources to support the story of the Jewish people's slavery in Egypt?
- Focus on Moses as a leader. Why was he not an obvious person for the job? What made him a good leader in the end?
- Before the tenth plague, G-d told the Jewish people to put a sign on the doorposts of their houses to show that this was a Jewish home. Nowadays Jewish people put a *mezuzah* on the doorposts of their houses. What message or life motto would you choose to put on your doorpost or wall to be reminded of every day?

## **Additional Resources**

- [BBC: Passover: Why is this Night Different?](#) (S1–S5)
- [The Passover Story](#) (P1–P3)
- [Passover: read all about it!](#) (P4–S3)
- [BBC: What is Passover?](#) (P4–P7)
- [20 Passover Traditions You've Never Heard Of](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [BBC: Judaism – What makes a good leader?](#) (P1–P7)
- [Charlie and Blue Celebrate Passover](#) (P1–P3)

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# SHAVUOT

"Count fifty days until the day after the seventh week, then you shall present the first of your harvest as an offering." (Leviticus 23:16)

עד ממחרת השבת השביעית תספרו חמשים יום (והקרבתם מנחה לחמה)



Shavuot means 'weeks'. This festival takes place on the fiftieth day (7 weeks) after Pesach (Passover). Tradition tells that on this day, the Jewish people were given the Ten Commandments and Moses received the Torah from G-d on Mount Sinai – a precious gift, containing everything G-d wishes us to know and to do.

Shavuot is one of the three pilgrimage and harvest festivals. The other two are Pesach and Sukkot. On those festivals in olden times, Jewish people would bring the first of their harvests to the Temple in Jerusalem.



# SUKKOT

"You shall live in temporary huts for seven days ... future generations shall know that I made the Israelites live in temporary huts when I brought them out of the Land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:42-43)

בסוכת תשבּוּ שבעת ימים ... לאנן ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכת השבתי את בני ישראל בחוצותיהם מארץ מצרים



Sukkot means 'huts'. This week long festival remembers the huts in which the Jewish people lived during their 40 year long journey from Egypt to the Promised Land of Israel. Many people build a sukkah in their garden.

Some eat their meals in their sukkah. Some even sleep in it, if the weather allows! It is decorated inside with fruit and vegetables to show that is a harvest festival. The sukkah also reminds us to help those who are homeless or living in poverty.



On Succot Jewish people collect together four symbolic plants, lulav (palm branch), haddassim (myrtle), aravot (willow) and etrog (citron), and wave them in all six directions – north, east, south, west, up and down to represent G-d being everywhere.

### **Additional information about Shavuot**

- The festival of Shavuot takes place seven weeks after Pesach. The festival celebrates the giving of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai, and to commemorate this, many Jewish people stay up all night to read and learn from the *Torah*. Many Jewish people also go to the synagogue on the morning of Shavuot to listen to the reading of the Ten Commandments. This is a very important festival for Jews as they believe that the giving of the *Torah* was the greatest moment of Jewish history.
- Many synagogues are decorated with flowers to recall the tradition that even the mountain itself rejoiced at the giving of the *Torah*.
- Many Jews read and study the book of Ruth during this time because it is the story of Ruth, a convert, accepting the *Torah*, just as the Jewish people did. There is also a tradition that King David, who was descended from Ruth, was born and died on Shavuot. Also Shavuot is also known as the “festival of the first fruits”, and the story of Ruth takes place at harvest time.
- It is traditional to eat dairy foods on Shavuot.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- At Mount Sinai, the Jewish people received the Ten Commandments, ten important rules to help them live together. What is a rule? Why are rules important? Why do you think the Jewish people needed rules after they left Egypt? Do you have family or class rules? What do you think life would be like if there were no rules? Why is it sometimes hard to stick to the rules?
- Discuss growing crops, and how bread is made. Have you ever seen wheat growing in a field? Can you describe it? In ancient times, Jewish people in Israel used to bring the very first sheaves of wheat to the Temple as a way of saying thank you for the good crops. What are some different ways to say “thank you”? Can you make up a special thank you to the farmer, the baker and the shopkeeper who all help so that we can eat bread and other food?
- Bake a cheesecake or make other dairy food recipes that are traditionally eaten at Shavuot.
- Decorate your school, classroom, or home with flowers in the same way synagogues and homes are traditionally decorated with flowers during Shavuot, or make a collage with flowers and fruit.
- Donate flowers to a local care home to help the residents celebrate this festival.
- Stay up late with a group of friends to tell stories to one another just as Jewish people stay up late on Shavuot to study the *Torah*.

- Camp out if weather permits, or have an indoor camp, to represent the time the Jewish people spent travelling in the desert between leaving Egypt and receiving the *Torah*.
- There is a custom of making beautiful papercuts for Shavuot, often with floral motifs, and these are used to decorate the synagogue. Design and make your own papercut.

### **Additional Resources**

- [What is Shavuot?](#) (P7–S6)
- [Shalom Sesame: Countdown to Shavuot](#) (P1–P7)
- [Shalom Sesame: Moses on Mount Sinai](#) (P1–P7)
- [Shalom Sesame – Harvesting wheat](#) (P1–P7)

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### **Additional information about Sukkot**

- The four plants that make up a *lulav* bundle symbolically represent parts of the body:
  - the tall, straight palm branch represents the spine that supports the whole body;
  - the *etrog* represents the heart that pumps blood around the body to keep everything working;
  - the willow leaves represent lips, which should only be used for polite and helpful speech;
  - the myrtle leaves represent eyes, which notice everything in the world around.
- *Sukkah* means “covering”, so the most important part of a *sukkah* is its roof, what must be made of natural materials such as branches or straw etc, and not metal or plastic. It must also give more shade than is open to the sky.
- There are many rules about how to build a *sukkah* that is *kosher* (fit for purpose). For example, it must have at least 3 walls, just over half a metre long and a metre high, and must be under the open sky, not inside a building or under a tree.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- How are the 5 senses engaged when someone spends time in a *sukkah*?



- Invent a new non-religious activity or ceremony for showing appreciation for crops that grow, that could be done at home or in a school assembly.
- The four species of plant are also said to represent different kinds of human character. Think how this might be.
- Build yourself a *sukkah* – either full size or a model.

### **Additional Resources**

- [BBC: Sukkot \(P1–P7\)](#)
- [The LEGO Sukkot Movie \(P4+\)](#)

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# CHANUKAH



The festival of Chanukah is celebrated for eight days in mid-winter. It remembers the story of Judah Maccabee and his followers, fighting the huge army of the Greek-Syrian King Antiochus, who would not allow the Jews to live a Jewish life.

After three years of war, the Maccabees surprisingly won the battle and took back the Jewish temple – a miracle. Before the temple could be used, it needed to be cleaned and repaired. The Jews wanted to relight the menorah – a large, eight-branched candlestick which was kept lit all the time, reminding the Jews of G-d being with them all the time.



They searched for the special oil to light the menorah but only one tiny jug was found. However, that oil burning kept burning for eight days – enough time for the Jews to bring more to the temple. A second miracle!

On Chanukah Jewish people light an eight-branched chanukiah to remember this story. A ninth candle is used to light the others, which is called the shamash (servant).

On the first night, one candle (or oil) is lit, on the second night two are lit, etc. The chanukiah is often displayed proudly in a window for all to see. In many families everyone lights their own chanukiah.



Traditional Chanukah food is anything that is cooked in oil ... Most popular are latkes (fried potato cakes) and doughnuts.

Traditionally Chanukah was a time of giving to charity, so parents gave their children a few coins as a festive gift, teaching them to give a little of that money to charity. Over time this has changed into gifts and eating chocolate money!

Many people also play the game of 'dreidel' – a four-sided spinning top with the Hebrew letters standing for the words 'nes gadol hayah sham' – a great miracle happened there. You win or lose sweets or chocolate coins, depending on which letter it lands on!



### **Additional information**

- The main purpose of lighting the *Chanukiah* (often called the Chanukah *Menorah*) is “to publicise the miracle”, so it is traditional to light it in a window or doorway.
- The word *menorah* just means “candlestick”, and can refer to either the six–branch candelabrum that was kept constantly lit in the Temple, or the *Chanukiah* which has eight branches for the eight days of the festival. There is no preferred design for a *Chanukiah* – the only rule is that the lamps should all be in a straight line, and many are very artistic. Note that the six–branch *menorah* beloved of tourist shops is symbolic of the *menorah* in the Temple, and is the official emblem of the State of Israel, but is not used in Jewish worship today.
- The Chanukah lights should not be used for any other purpose, which is why an extra candle, the *shamash* (assistant), is lit first so that notionally it is providing the light for any other purpose.
- The game of *dreidel* is linked to Chanukah because when King Antiochus banned learning *Torah*, some Jewish people studied the *Torah* in secret, sometimes hiding in caves. They would keep *dreidels* (a popular gambling game at the time) on their tables so that if they heard soldiers approaching, they would hide their books and pretend they were playing games.
- One explanation of the custom of giving “Chanukah gelt” to children was for them to play *dreidel* with the coins. Another is that parents gave children money to give to their teachers and the custom developed of giving to the children too.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Play a game of *dreidel*.
- Look up a recipe for and cook potato latkes (there’s one [here](#))
- Make candles.
- Design a *chanukiah*.

### **Additional Resources**

- [BBC: The Story of Chanukah](#) (P1–P3)
- [BBC: Chanukah](#) (P4–P7)
- [Five Minute Judaism: Chanukah](#) (P1–P7)
- [BBC: Chanukah](#) (P4+)
- [Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Eight Thoughts for Eight Nights](#) (P5+)

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# BABY TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH

"And G-d said to them, be fruitful and multiply  
and fill the earth." (Genesis 9:1)

Brit Milah is the Jewish celebration for welcoming and naming baby boys. It usually takes place when a baby boy is 8 days old. Brit Milah is mentioned in the Torah: "the promise between G-d and Abraham." (Genesis 17:11-12).



Simchat Bat is the Jewish ceremony for welcoming and naming baby girls. There are various customs for the celebration. Some girls are named when their parent is called up to say a blessing over the Torah in the synagogue.

Some families do not cut their son's hair until they turn 3. This is a custom, not a law and there many different reasons why it became a tradition. The haircutting ceremony is called an *Upsherin* or *Chalakah*.



Boys celebrate their *Bar Mitzvah* at the age of 13. To demonstrate that he accepts religious responsibility, the boy is invited to read from the Torah.

Girls celebrate their *Bat Mitzvah* aged 12 or 13. They may be invited to give a talk in synagogue, which is usually on a topic relating to the weekly portion of the Torah. In some synagogues, the *Bat Mitzvah* girl is invited to read from the Torah.



Some people do fundraising or volunteering for a charity to mark their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. There is often a party or meal to celebrate these milestones! From this age, girls and boys are responsible for their religious decisions, including doing *mitzvot* (commandments).

## **Teachers' guidelines for discussing circumcision**

*Primary-age pupils will often ask their teachers or other adults questions pertaining to sex or sexuality which go beyond what is set out for Relationships Education. The school's policy should cover how the school handles such questions. Given ease of access to the internet, children whose questions go unanswered may turn to inappropriate sources of information ... Schools should consider what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole class setting, as teachers may require support and training in answering questions that are better not dealt with in front of a whole class.*

*Relationships and Sex Education Policy (Department for Education, 2019, p.23)*

### **P1–P3**

It is probably not sensible to explain exactly what a circumcision is to P1–P3 children. As written on the banner, *brit milah* is a naming ceremony, and we suggest using this terminology for young children.

### **P4–P7(+)**

For children who request more information or with whom their teacher deems it appropriate to discuss the details, we suggest the following explanation:

*Circumcision is a very small operation (or medical procedure) performed when a baby boy is 8 days old (provided the baby is healthy). It involves removing the small flap of excess skin (called the foreskin) from the top of the penis. This is always done by someone specially trained to do this, called a "mohel", who is often also a doctor. It is totally safe and does not cause the baby much pain at that young age.*

*Many people think that circumcision has health benefits – for example it can prevent infections. Muslim boys are also circumcised, and it is common in the British Royal Family, and in the USA.*

*The traditional Jewish belief is that G-d created some parts of the world unfinished so that humans could be partners with G-d in completing and perfecting the world. One of the things left incomplete is this part of a baby boy's body, and by removing this tiny piece of skin, his body is 'completed'. By having a brit milah ceremony, Jewish parents are continuing G-d's covenant with Abraham, and showing that they want their son to be part of the Jewish people.'*

### **Additional Information**

- *Brit milah* translates as the "covenant of circumcision", which originated as an agreement, described in the *Torah*, between G-d and Abraham 4000 years ago. Only boy babies are circumcised, and they are named during the ceremony. It is the *mitzvah* (commandment) most widely kept by Jews across the world.

- Girls are usually given their name as part of a public ceremony during the Shabbat service in the synagogue.
- Jewish children are often given both a Hebrew name and an 'everyday' name. In most communities the custom is to name a child in memory of a deceased relative, but in some (mainly Sephardi) communities the custom is to name a child in honour of a living relative.
- In some Orthodox communities, the custom of giving a boy his first haircut on his third birthday, called *upsherin* (Yiddish) or *chalachah* (Hebrew), marks the age at which Jewish education officially starts, and indicates that the child is now old enough to be aware of what is going on around him. In some communities, three is also the age at which girls start to light Shabbat and festival candles with their mothers.
- *Bar/Bat mitzvah* translate as "subject to the commandments", and is the age at which a young person is deemed responsible for his or her own actions. According to tradition, Abraham was 13 when he rejected idolatry and became a believer in one G-d.
- Traditionally boys celebrate their Bar Mitzvah when they turn 13, and girls their Bat Mitzvah at age 12, but some Progressive communities celebrate both at 13. This often marked by a ceremony in the synagogue and a party, but note that whether or not someone "*has a bat/bar mitzvah*", they *become* bat or bar mitzvah as soon as they reach this age.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Judaism regards life as sacred, and teaches that "one who saves a single life is regarded as if he had saved the whole world", so almost all other religious obligations must (not "may") be set aside in order to do so. Find out which other faith or belief systems allow you to break their laws in order to save a life.
- Many common names, such as Joshua and Hannah, come from the Jewish Bible or are derived from the Hebrew language. Find out what language your name comes from and what it means.
- Were you named after anyone? Do you know why?
- How important is your name as part of your identity?
- Do you think someone of 12 or 13 is mature enough for someone to make their own decisions? Which decisions do you think you can and can't make at 13?
- At what age do you think you should be held legally responsible for your actions? Until that age, do you think your parents or carers should be held responsible?

## **Additional Resources**

- [Bar and Bat Mitzvah \(P4–S3\)](#)
- [BBC: 12-year-old Ethan is preparing for his bar mitzvah - Being Jewish \(P4–S3\)](#)
- [BBC: What is a Bat Mitzvah? \(P4–S3\)](#)
- [Bat mitzvah girl reading from the Torah \(P1+\)](#)

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# GETTING MARRIED

**"Behold you are betrothed to me by this ring  
according to the Law of Moses and of Israel"**

(Marriage ceremony)

הרי את מקודשת לי בטבעת זו כדת משה וישראל



The marriage ceremony takes place under a wedding canopy, called a Chuppah. It symbolises the home that the couple will build together.

The marriage contract, or Ketubah, describes how the couple should treat each other and look after each other. It is signed by two witnesses.



A Jewish wedding includes seven special blessings, wishing good things for the couple. A short prayer of thanksgiving is said over two cups of wine that are drunk during the ceremony.

The marriage becomes official when the ring is placed on the index finger.



A glass is broken because even at a celebration, we remember that the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.

The wedding ceremony is followed by a celebratory meal and dancing.





### **Additional information**

- At the start of the marriage ceremony, many communities have the tradition that the bride walks round the groom either three or seven times under the *chuppah*.
- The ceremony is in two parts, both recited over a goblet of wine. The first is the betrothal, and is almost always immediately succeeded by the full marriage. The main part of the latter is seven blessings that are often recited by family members and friends to wish the couple well, and the bride and groom then drink from the goblet.
- During the ceremony, the *ketubah* (marriage contract) is read aloud and given by the groom to the bride. In it the husband promises to look after his new wife, reflecting its origins in a time when women were often unable to support themselves financially. It is signed by two witnesses who attest to the fact that she freely accepted it, as otherwise the marriage is not valid. Many couples have a beautiful illustrated *ketubah* which they put in a frame on the wall.
- During the ceremony, the wedding ring is traditionally placed on the index finger of the left hand (although generally later moved to the more usual fourth finger).
- The ceremony ends with the breaking of a glass as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple, and that even though it the wedding is a happy occasion, the world is still not yet a perfect place.
- The Masorti, Reform, and Liberal Jewish communities have recently begun to hold same sex weddings, but the Orthodox Jewish community does not do this.
- Jewish weddings do not have to take place in a synagogue, and in fact many Orthodox and other communities prefer to have the *chuppah* out of doors.
- Divorce is allowed within Judaism, and like marriage it must be mutually agreed by the parties. A religious divorce (*get*) is required as well as a civil divorce so that the bond between the parties is completely dissolved.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- What do you think the reasons are for the ring being placed on the index finger?
- Do you think getting married is useful or important for a couple? Is it outdated?

### **Additional Resources**

- [Liturgy, Rituals and Customs of Jewish Weddings](#) (P6+)
- [Breaking the Glass at a Jewish Wedding](#) (P6+)
- [The Deep Meaning Behind An Orthodox Jewish Wedding](#) (P5+)

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# THE END OF LIFE

"May G-d comfort you among the  
mourners of Zion and Jerusalem" (Talmud)

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



In Judaism, respect for the dead is very important.

Burial takes place as soon as possible after death, if possible within a day.



For seven days after the funeral, the closest relatives sit shiva at home. Shiva means 'seven'. Family and friends visit to comfort the mourners, bring them meals and join in with prayer services which are held in the home.

During the first year, close family attend services to say Kaddish, a prayer recognising the divine will, in memory of the deceased.



Within the first year after the funeral, a tombstone is set on the grave.

Every year, on the anniversary of the death (Yahrzeit) the close family members light a memorial candle to remember them and recite the mourner's Kaddish prayer.



### **Additional information**

- The Torah tells that G-d “*formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*” (Genesis 2:7). When a person dies, their soul (true self) has left the body, and the body should be respected by being returned back to nature as soon as possible.
- The name Adam comes from the Hebrew word *adamah* which means “earth” or “soil”.
- Funerals are generally held as soon as possible after death – often on the same day. The body is not embalmed and post-mortems are avoided if possible.
- Mourners traditionally tear an item of clothing that they are wearing either when they hear the news or before the start of the funeral in order publicly to show their grief, and continue to wear it during the week of mourning (*shiva*).
- Most people keep a candle lit throughout the *shiva* week, and sit on low chairs at home to receive condolence visits. Other traditions include covering mirrors in order to focus on feelings rather than appearances, and not listening to music.
- Traditionally mourners do not buy new clothes, go to the theatre or concerts, or attend parties for the whole year after a close relative’s death.
- It is traditional for people to visit family graves on the anniversary of their death (*Yahrzeit*) and before Rosh haShanah, and to leave small pebbles on a grave when they visit. Memorial candles are also lit on the anniversary of the death.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- What family or cultural traditions do you have that are similar to or different from these Jewish traditions for marking lifecycle events?
- Why do you think a funeral is described as a *levayah* which literally means “accompanying” the body? Accompanying it from where to where?
- Why do you think Jews leave a stone on a grave to show they have visited, rather than flowers?
- What do you think is the best way to celebrate and honour someone’s life after they have passed away?

### **Additional Resources**

- [Jewish Funeral and Burial Traditions \(P7+\)](#)
- [Why do Jews put stones on graves \(P7+\)](#)

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# TORAH AND SYNAGOGUE



The Jewish Bible is called the TeNaKh, which stands for Torah, Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings).

The Torah is the most important section. It is also known as the 'Five Books of Moses'. When it is read, a pointer called a yad (hand) is used, to show respect for the Torah scroll and keep it clean.

The Torah contains many mitzvot (commandments) that guide a Jewish life. It also describes the creation of the world and the early history of the Jewish people.

Torah scrolls are handwritten in Hebrew on parchment. The sofer (scribe) uses a feather pen (quill) and ink. It takes about a year to write a Torah.



Mezuzah scrolls are put on doorposts on Jewish buildings, and are usually contained in protective, often ornamental cases. They contain the shema prayer (which comes from the Torah) and are written in the same way.

Torah scrolls are usually kept in synagogue in a special cupboard called the Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark). In front of the Ark is a lamp called the Ner Tamid (Everlasting Light). It is like the lamp that always burned in the Temple, showing that G-d is always there. A section of the Torah is read in synagogue each week.



The Hebrew for synagogue is Beit Knesset (House of meeting) as it may also include classrooms, a kitchen, a community centre, and rooms for social events. Many people also use the Yiddish word Shul.

In some synagogues, men and women sit separately. In some men and women may sit together. Most prayers are said or sung in Hebrew and can be read from a siddur (prayerbook). The spiritual leader of a community is called a rabbi (teacher).



## Additional information

- Hebrew is written from right to left.
- The word *Torah* is usually translated as ‘teaching’, i.e., wisdom to be passed from generation to generation. It comes from a root meaning “direction”, so also has the sense of “law”. The word is used both for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (“Five Books of Moses”), for the parchment scrolls on which they are written, and also more generally for the entire body of Jewish study.
- The Orthodox tradition is that Moses wrote down the exact word of G-d as it was revealed to him on Mount Sinai in the year 1312 BCE. Alongside this, Moses was given further explanation of the written *Torah*, known as the ‘oral law’, which was initially passed down orally, but was written down during the exile following the destruction of the Temple, when the rabbis feared that the tradition might otherwise be lost. (See [“The Basic Sources and Beliefs of Judaism”](#) above)
- Jewish people do not use the Christian term “Old Testament” as there is no Jewish “New Testament” from which to distinguish it. The correct way to refer to what Christians call the “Old Testament” in English is the “Jewish Bible” or “Hebrew Bible”.
- The *Torah* contains the history of the Jewish people, starting with a description of the creation of the world, up to the time the Jews returned to live in Israel as a large nation following the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the *Torah*.
- According to tradition, there are 613 laws in the *Torah* (not just the famous ten!) but Judaism does not expect non-Jewish people to observe these, with the exception of the “Seven Noachide Laws” – setting up a legal system, and prohibitions of idolatry, blasphemy, murder, sexual immorality, theft, and eating flesh from live animals.
- Judaism is not simply a set of beliefs and practices, but a way of life. (The general term for Jewish law is “*halachah*”, which literally means “moving” or “proceeding”) Some of these rules concern our relationship with G-d, while others, concern our relationships with other people, including obligations to community and wider society, social cohesion, relations with other groups, environment, etc.
- There is no essential distinction between “ritual” and “ethical” obligations so far as the nature of the obligation is concerned. The *halachah* about, for example, how to treat others, what it is permissible to eat, Shabbat and festival observance, agricultural law, and what to do if people get hurt or property gets damaged are binding because they are mandated by the Torah, not because ethics is “rational”.
- Portions of the *Torah* are read out loud to the community on Shabbat and festivals in synagogue in a weekly cycle over a full year. Orthodox and Masorti

Jewish communities also have public *Torah* readings on Monday and Thursday mornings as well.

- The most fundamental declaration of faith in Judaism is the *Shema*, a passage of the *Torah* that declares the uniqueness of G-d and our obligation to serve Him “with all our heart, all our soul, and all our physical being” (*Deuteronomy 6*). It is recited in morning and evening prayers, and traditionally by (or with) people on their deathbed.
- Jewish people traditionally fix a *mezuzah* on the doorpost of all rooms in their home in fulfilment of the commandment in the *Shema*, “*You shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*” This is a small parchment on which the *Shema* has been handwritten and is often contained in a decorative case.
- The *Shema* is also contained in *tefillin*, small leather boxes that are strapped around the head and arm for morning prayer (traditionally by men but also by women in some communities) in fulfilment of the commandment in the *Shema*, “*You shall bind them on your hand and ... between your eyes ...*”.
- *Torah* text (including *mezuzot* and *tefillin*) is so important that when it becomes too old or damaged to be used, the parchment is buried as a sign of respect, rather than just being thrown away.
- A *Torah* scroll is written entirely by hand, so it takes about a year for a scribe to write. Each of the 304,805 letters is inscribed with a quill pen on one of 43 panels of parchment using specially prepared ink. If you unroll a *Torah* scroll it’s about the same length as a football pitch.
- To avoid touching the scroll, the person reading from the *Torah* uses a pointer called a *yad* (meaning “hand”), as it shaped like a small hand pointing.
- Jewish people can pray anywhere clean, not just in a synagogue.
- There are traditionally three Jewish prayer times each day: *Shacharit* (morning), *Minchah* (afternoon), and *Ma’ariv* (sometimes called *Aravit*) (evening). There is an extra prayer service between *Shacharit* and *Minchah* on Shabbat (Sabbath). The exact timing for the prayer services varies according to season as they are scheduled according to daylight hours.
- Prayers are traditionally in Hebrew but all prayers in all languages are acceptable!

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Many rabbis throughout Jewish history have disagreed about how to interpret Jewish law. However, they always argued ‘for the sake of heaven’, meaning that they really cared what G-d wanted, not what they personally wanted. One famous argument was about how a *mezuzah* should be fixed onto a doorpost –

Rabbi Rashi said it should be attached vertically and Rabbi Tam said it should go horizontally. The compromise is that most Jews fix their *mezuzahs* on a diagonal slant. What personal disagreements have you had that could be solved by compromise? Which world problems could be solved by compromise?

- Do you think it's possible to disagree totally with someone (as the Rabbis writing the *gemara* did) and still maintain a friendship and mutual respect?
- How do people who do not follow a faith and have a divinely inspired text to guide them know what is right and wrong?
- Can there be an absolute answer to any moral question – an answer that is true for all times and all places?
- The *mezuzah* on the doorposts of Jewish homes reminds people passing in and out to have faith in the one, all powerful, G-d. What message would you put on your wall at home that you think is worth remembering every day?
- If you wrote a list of ten commandments for everyone to follow today, what would they be?
- Do you think it is easier for Jews to keep *Torah* laws that seem logical and fair, or should faith mean that all *Torah* laws are seen as equally important?

### **Additional Resources**

- [The Synagogue](#) (P4–S3)
- [The Most Instagrammable Synagogues in the World](#) (P1+)
- [Where Do Jewish Laws Come From? Intro to \*Torah\*, \*Talmud\*, \*Halacha\*](#) (P4+)
- [What is the Shema? Intro to the Most Important Jewish Prayer](#) (S4–S6)
- [Why does the \*mezuzah\* go on a diagonal?](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [BBC: What is the Torah?](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [The Making of a \*Sefer Torah\*](#) (Primary and Secondary)
- [Shalom Sesame: Moses on Mount Sinai](#) (P1–P7)
- [The \*Mishnah\* – Writing Down Jewish Law](#) (S3+)
- [The Scholarly Debates of the \*Talmud\*](#) (S3+)
- [Library of Jewish texts in Hebrew and English](#) (S3+)

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# KEEPING KOSHER

"Of all the animals in the world, these are the ones that you may eat..." (Leviticus 11:2)

זאת החיה אשר תאכלו מכל הבהמה אשר על הארץ



In Judaism, there are many rules about food, called the laws of *Kashrut*. One of these laws forbids mixing meat and dairy products. Many people have separate plates and utensils for meat and dairy.

The laws of *Kashrut* say that only mammals which have both a split hoof and chew the cud, such as cows and sheep, may be eaten.



Only fish that have both fins and scales, such as salmon and cod, are allowed. Other seafood, such as shellfish and squid, are not kosher.

Most domestic (farm) birds are kosher, such as chicken, ducks and geese. Birds of prey, such as owls and hawks, are not allowed.



Animals are killed in a careful way called *shechitah*. It is carried out by specially trained and qualified people in a way that avoids causing the animals unnecessary pain.

Some kosher packaged foods have special labels. This shows that they have been carefully checked by a rabbi to make sure that the laws of *Kashrut* are kept.





## Additional information

- The adjective *kasher* or *kosher* means ‘fit for purpose according to Jewish law’. The noun from *kosher* is *kashrut*, which usually refers to the Jewish dietary laws, but these terms are also used in other contexts too, such as about religious artefacts. For example, a *Torah* scroll or *mezuzah* with even one damaged letter would not be *kosher*.
- The main rules of *kashrut* are:
  - Animals are only *kosher* to eat if they have the characteristics listed in the *Torah* – cloven hooves and chew the cud – so for example beef and lamb, but not pork, horse, or camels.
  - Bird species that are *kosher* are listed in the *Torah* but it is difficult to identify them in modern terms, so only those recognised by tradition are eaten. Generally birds of prey are not *kosher*, and domestic fowl such as chicken, duck, and turkey are *kosher*.
  - Fish are only *kosher* to eat if they have fins and scales, so for example salmon, haddock, and herring, but not eels.
  - Shellfish and insects are never *kosher*.
  - Milk, eggs, and other animal products are only *kosher* if they come from a *kosher* animal.
- The laws of *kashrut* teach compassion, and concern for animal welfare. These include *shechitah* – using an extremely sharp knife to kill an animal as quickly as possible in order not to cause it pain. People who carry out *shechitah* have to undergo a lot of training and follow very strict regulations.
- *Kosher* butchers, bakers, and restaurants have prominently displayed certificates confirming that their businesses follow all the laws of *kashrut*, and many ordinary commercial food products have symbols on their packaging to indicate that the manufacturing process has been inspected and found to comply with *kosher* standards.
- Some food products do not have a symbol on their packaging, but are listed in special guidebooks, apps, and websites, so that Jewish people can check which products are *kosher*. One example is the [kosher search](#) app provided by the *kashrut* department of the London *Bet Din* (Rabbinical Court).
- People who are very careful to observe *kashrut* only eat and drink products that have been checked by a *kashrut* authority. Sometimes non-*kosher* foods can contain surprising ingredients – for example, cheese is often made using rennet that comes from the stomach of a calf, and animal products are also sometimes used in wine-making.
- People who observe *kashrut* do not eat or cook meat and dairy foods together, and even use different cooking utensils and crockery. This is derived from the

instruction “*Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk*” which is written three times in the *Torah*.

- Orthodox Jewish people wait a prescribed amount of time between eating meat and subsequently eating dairy, in order to separate the foods in their digestive system. There are different traditions ranging from half an hour to six hours.
- *Parev* foods are 'neutral', i.e. neither meat nor dairy, and can be eaten with any meal. These include fruit, vegetables, cereal, eggs, and grains.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Some people believe the laws of eating *kosher* food were linked to health in ancient times before refrigeration etc. What benefits could there be of sticking to the laws of eating *kosher* today?
- Some people campaign against *shechitah* on the grounds that they believe that pre-stunning the animal is kinder. This is an ongoing debate. Research the arguments and write up or debate both sides. What is your conclusion?
- Does keeping the same laws as other Jewish people across the world create a sense of global community?
- Does being vegetarian or vegan automatically mean that you are keeping *kosher*?
- Plan a three-course meal for a Jewish person who keeps *kosher*. First you need to decide if it will contain meat OR dairy.
- Sort a word or picture list of different animal or food types into two groups, *kosher* and not *kosher*
- In your home or a supermarket, find five types of food that have a *kashrut* symbol on the packaging.

### **Additional Resources**

- [What is Kosher?](#) (P1+)
- [What is Kosher?](#) (P4–P7)
- [Five Minute Judaism: Kashrut](#) (P4–S1)
- [Kosher explained](#) (S1–S5)
- [Come on a Tour of my Orthodox Sephardic Kosher Kitchen](#) (S1–S6)
- [How to decode the different kosher labels](#) (S3–S6)
- [Shechitah UK](#) is the organisation that protects *shechitah* – humane, *kosher* slaughter of animals for meat (S3–S6)

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# SHABBAT

**"Guard/keep the Sabbath to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)**  
**"Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." (Deuteronomy 5:12)**

שמור את יום השבת לקדשו ... זכור את יום השבת לקדשו



The Torah teaches that G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. This day is called Shabbat (which means "rest") and it is a day of rest.

Shabbat begins at sunset on Friday evening and ends at nightfall on Saturday night, when three stars can be seen in the sky.



Shabbat is welcomed by the lighting of two candles to symbolise the extra light and joy of the day. The two candles are also a reminder that Shabbat should be both 'remembered' and 'kept' as special.

The Friday evening meal starts with a blessing (*Kiddush*) over a glass of wine. This is followed by blessing two loaves of special bread called *challah* which are a symbol of the two portions of manna (special food that the Jewish people ate in the desert) that were collected on Fridays to last over Shabbat so that they wouldn't have to work during Shabbat. The wine and *challah* (plural) are shared by everyone.



Shabbat is a special time for families and friends to spend together, in the home or at synagogue, not distracted by work and usual, busy weekday routines.

We say goodbye to Shabbat on Saturday night with a ceremony called *Havdalah*, meaning 'separation'. Blessings are made over the light of a multi-wicked candle, a glass of wine and sweet spices. *Havdalah* separates the holy Shabbat from the rest of the week.



## Additional information

- The *Torah* gives instructions about Shabbat in two places:
  - “*And G-d blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, having ceased from all the work of creation that G-d had done.*” (Genesis 2)
  - “*Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in ploughing time and in harvest time you shall rest.*” (Exodus 34)
- Shabbat starts on Friday evening and ends on Saturday night, because the *Torah* describes creation in that order: “*and there was evening and there was morning*” (Genesis 1)
- Shabbat (and festivals) last for approximately 25 hours because we are not sure exactly when the evening starts – at sundown or when it is fully dark. The rabbis therefore erred on the side of caution, and included twilight at both ends, so that Shabbat and festivals start at sundown but finish when it is fully dark – more than 24 hours.
- Different Jewish communities interpret ‘rest’ in different ways. Orthodox Judaism defines ‘rest’ to mean refraining from the 39 kinds of creative activities listed in the oral law. Masorti Judaism is also guided by these rules, while Reform and Liberal Judaism allow individuals much more flexibility in defining for themselves how they prefer to make Shabbat restful. What all groups will agree on is that Shabbat is a time for family, friends, reflecting on the week and good food!
- On Friday evening (and at the start of festivals) two candles are lit to represent the two slightly different versions of the fourth of the Ten Commandments in the *Torah*: to observe (or guard) Shabbat, and to remember Shabbat, and the meal begins with *kiddush*, recited over a glass of wine (or grape juice) to give thanks for Shabbat, and two *challot* to represent the double portion of food the Jewish people received each week before Shabbat after they left Egypt.
- In some families, parents bless their children on Friday nights with an ancient biblical blessing that G-d should protect them and bring them peace.
- During the Synagogue service on Shabbat mornings, the *Torah* is taken out from the Ark and read in public followed by a related reading called the *Haftarah* from a related book of the Prophets.
- At the end of Shabbat, *Havdalah* (meaning “separation”) is recited over a glass of wine (or grape juice), herbs or spices, and a candle, to mark the end of the day of rest and pray for a good working week ahead.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Why do you think two slightly different versions of the commandment to keep Shabbat were included in the *Torah*? What do you think is the difference between 'guarding' and 'remembering' *Shabbat*?
- Can you think of the benefits of spending a whole day a week without using a phone, laptop, TV, or computer game?
- Why do you think there is so much focus on food in the culture and ritual of many religions?
- Hold a debate on whether shops should be allowed to open 7 days a week. Think of the pros and cons of everyone having a day a week without shopping.
- Plait and bake *challah*.
- Make a kit for the *Havdalah* ceremony.

### **Additional Resources**

- [BBC: What is Shabbat?](#) (P4–S5)
- [In honour of ShabbatUK 2015](#) (S1–S5)
- [Five Minute Judaism: Shabbat](#) (P1–S1)
- [What is Shabbat? Intro to the Jewish Sabbath](#) (P4+)
- [Shabbat / Sabbath](#) (P7+)
- [Shalom Sesame: Shabbat Shalom, Grover](#) (P1–P3)
- [Why Candles Are a Must for the Ultimate Shabbat Experience](#) (P4+)
- [How to Braid Challah for Shabbat, Holidays or Anytime](#) (P1+)
- [How to Say the Jewish Blessing over Children](#) (P4+)
- [How We Celebrate Havdalah Ceremony](#) (S1+)

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# ISRAEL ישראל



Israel is a small country in the Middle East (smaller than the size of Wales!). It is the only Jewish country in the world and its capital is Jerusalem which is holy to Muslims and Christians as well as Jews.

The land has had different names over thousands of years starting with Canaan which in the Torah is promised to Abraham and his descendants by G-d. Jewish people have lived in the land of Israel for nearly 4,000 years and have always called it their homeland. The word Israel means "struggle with G-d" and it was a name given to Jacob in the Torah.



The land has been ruled by different people over time, including the Romans and the Ottomans. The British Government was in charge from 1917 to 1948 when it was called British Mandate Palestine.

Israel became an independent state in 1948 shortly after the Second World War. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe and the Middle East went to live there.

Israel's population is about 75% Jewish and about 21% Muslim and Christian Arab.

Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Israel have equal rights. They can vote in elections, and have the same right to schools and healthcare. Non-Jewish citizens can serve in the Israeli Army. There are Arab parties in the Israeli Parliament, and Muslim and Christian judges in the Supreme Court.



The idea that the State of Israel should be a homeland for the Jewish people, where they can rule themselves is called 'Zionism'. The people who believe in this, and support Israel are called Zionists. This idea started in the 19th Century.

Israel today has been transformed into a green and fertile land and a place of innovation and invention. Israel has solved the serious problems arising from lack of water by working out how to take the salt out of seawater, as well as inventing many amazing products and technology (including medical equipment, microchips, and smart phone apps) that are used all over the world. It is also a very popular holiday destination.



## **Additional information**

- Israel (then known as Canaan) is the setting of most of *Genesis*, the first book of the *Torah*, covering the lives of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Later, after being liberated from slavery in Egypt, and 40 years in the desert, the *Torah* ends with the Jewish people crossing the river Jordan to return to the land of Israel.
- The books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings* then take the story forward through the kingdoms of Judea and Israel, and the building and subsequent destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem.
- After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, most of the Jewish population were dispersed around the Roman Empire, and the area was renamed “Palestina” to obliterate the memory of the Jewish kingdoms, but small communities always remained in Yavneh, Safad, Tiberias, Hebron, and other places, as well as returning to Jerusalem when it was gradually rebuilt.
- Many of the laws in the *Torah* relate to agriculture in the land of Israel. Jewish prayer has always spoken of return to Zion and Jerusalem, and pious people from around the Diaspora always yearned to visit, to settle, or to be buried there.
- At the end of the 19th century, as transport became easier, mainly religious groups like *Chovevei Zion* (“Lovers of Zion”) formed in Tzarist Russia aiming to escape the pogroms by emigrating to Israel to farm the land. Around the same time, Zionism developed as a movement for Jewish self-determination, with Theodor Herzl holding the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897.
- From the Middle Ages, the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean had been part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, and when that was dissolved after the end of the First World War, the newly-formed League of Nations awarded Britain a mandate over “Palestine” (including both what is now Israel and Jordan. Later, in what became known as the “Balfour Declaration”, in 1918 Britain promised to create a “Jewish national home in Palestine”, and gave independence to “Transjordan” (the part of Palestine to the east of the river Jordan) in 1922.
- Refugees expelled from Arab countries, and survivors of the Holocaust sought sanctuary in Israel, which became an independent country in 1948 after the United Nations voted to in favour of partitioning the country into two states, one Jewish and one Arab.
- The borders of Israel have changed a number of times as a result of repeated invasions and wars, and when Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip.
- The Israeli parliament, the *Knesset* (literally “Assembly”), has 120 members who are elected using proportional representation, and reflect the diversity of Israeli society. There are men and women MKs (Members of the *Knesset*), religious

and secular Jewish MKs, Muslim and Christian Arab MKs, LGBTQ+ MKs, and MKs from a wide range of other backgrounds.

### **Suggested discussion questions and activities**

- Trace the dispersion of Jewish people from the land of Israel to other parts of the world and consider how that relates to the different communities described above in “[What do Jewish People Look Like?](#)”
- Find out about the British Mandate, the Balfour Declaration, and the McMahon proposal. What do you think the British Government at the time should have done?
- Find out about *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day), the anniversary of the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948.
- Find out how the population of what is now Israel grew through the 20th century. Where did immigrants come from, and why? How do you think the development of the country was affected by migrants from neighbouring countries?
- Members of the *Knesset* are elected by a form of proportional representation. Find out how this differs from the form used to elect members of the Scottish Parliament. What are the pros and cons of each system?
- Find out about how Israel and Jordan have collaborated to address the problem of water shortage. What other examples of cooperation can you find out about?

### **Additional Resources**

- [National Geographic: Israel](#) (P5+)
- [Digital Israel Portal](#) (S1+)
- [73 Fun Facts about Israel](#) (P5+)
- [BBC: What does Jerusalem mean to Jewish people?](#) (P5+)
- [What is Yom Ha'atzmaut: Israel Independence Day](#) (S1+)
- [The Origins of Modern Zionism](#) (S4–S6)
- [Solutions Not Sides: A critical approach to education on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) (S3–S6)
- [Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine \(resources to support Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the UK to talk about the conflict which so often divides us\)](#) (S5+)

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## **Cross–Curricular Activity Ideas for teaching about Judaism**

### **Design & Technology/Graphic Communication/Engineering Science**

- Design and make a *tzedakah* (charity) box / *mezuzah* case / *challah* cloth, or *chanukiah*.
- Learn about the architecture and decoration of synagogues around the world.

### **Science – Primary**

- Look at how the five senses are all used during *Havdalah* (the ceremony at the end of Shabbat).
- Create a feely box with Jewish artefacts made from different materials (wood, metal, fabric, etc). Describe their properties. Look at one Jewish artefact (for example, candlesticks). Which materials would be suitable for making this item? and which materials would not be suitable?

### **Science – Secondary**

- Discuss whether the creation story in the *Torah* is compatible with Big Bang theory. (For background information see the work of Nathan Aviezer and Gerald Schroder, physicists who write about the links between *Torah* and science, and believe that it is.)

### **Geography**

- Find out about diversity within the Jewish community in terms of geographical groups, and practice and traditions around the world, and different strands of Judaism.
- Research where Jewish communities are around the world. What names do those communities have (for example, Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, and Beta Israel)?
- Where did the families of Jewish people in the UK come from previously? Why did they move away from these other countries?
- Find out about the immigration experiences of Jewish people living in the UK. Why and how did they come to the UK?
- Look at where Israel is on a map and compare its size to other countries (it is smaller than Wales!)
- Look at maps of the areas where biblical stories took place – for example, the Pesach story of the Jews being enslaved in Egypt, followed by the Exodus across the Red Sea, and journey into Israel, or where Abraham lived in Ur and what that country is called now, and his journey to Israel.

- What countries do Jewish people live in? And which countries don't many Jewish people live in? What are the reasons that some communities have virtually disappeared? (For example, Ethiopia due to famine, war, and hostility, and Egypt, Syria, and Afghanistan because Jewish people fled from persecution there.)

### **Art & Design**

- Recreate stained glass windows from a synagogue using a black card frame and coloured cellophane.
- Make a greetings card for Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah, or a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
- Make detailed drawings of artefacts or parts of artefacts.
- Look at decorated *Ketubot* (marriage contracts).

### **Food Technology**

- Learn about *kosher* food and how a *kosher* kitchen is different from a standard one.
- Plan a *kosher* three course meal. Will it be dairy or meat based?
- Explore why different Jewish communities have different traditional foods.
- Bake *challah*, *hamantaschen* (eaten on Purim), or *matzah* (the matzah should be baked as quickly as possible!)
- Try apple dipped in honey (eaten on Rosh Hashanah)
- Make *charoset* (eaten on Pesach).

### **ICT/Computing Science**

- Countless areas of possible research into any aspect of Judaism using websites, YouTube etc.

### **Citizenship**

- Research the dual identity that Jewish and many other people have with their faith and their nationality.
- Find out about Maimonides' different levels of charity. Debate whether or not learners agree with it, and why.

### **Literacy/English**

- Find out about different alphabets, and the relationships between different ancient alphabets (A, B, C, aleph, bet (Hebrew), Alpha, Beta (Greek)) Even the word "alphabet" is derived from those first two letters.

- Hebrew is written from right to left. Are any other languages written this way?
- Practice writing some Hebrew letters, and work out how to write each pupil's name.
- Write a newspaper article reporting something from Jewish history or the *Torah* as if you had been there (for example, one of the ten plagues, or part of the Chanukah story).

### Languages

- Investigate Yiddish and Ladino. Which other languages are they related to, and how did they come about?
- What other local Jewish languages can you find out about?

### Drama / Speaking and listening.

- Interpretation/acting out of biblical and festival stories, and hot-seating characters from the stories.
- Have a formal debate about whether it is a good idea to switch off from all gadgets and devices for 24 hours every week.

### Music

- Listen to some Jewish children's / festival songs.
- Listen to some traditional tunes used in synagogue services, such as *Kol Nidre* by composer Max Bruch. What can you tell about what kind of prayer it is by the tone of the music?
- Listen to a Klezmer band. Where / when / why did Klezmer music start?
- Many, many musicals were written by Jewish composers – George and Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein, Irving Berlin, Leonard Bernstein, Jule Styne, Alen Menken, Lorenz Hart, Kurt Weill, Marvin Hamlisch, Jerome Kern, Steven Sondheim, Steven Schwartz. Why do you think so many Jewish people were, and still are, involved with the musical theatre industry?

### History

- Find out when Jewish people first lived in the UK. What was life like for them?
- Compare stories of Jewish immigration waves to the UK with other immigrant stories. Are they similar? Many Jews moved into Glasgow's Gorbals between 1890 and 1920. What other immigrant groups have lived there before and after? are there similarities in their stories?

- Find out about other parts of Scotland that Jewish people came to. Where did they come from? Why? Which of these communities no longer exist? Why not?

## **Mathematics**

- Find out about the concept of *gematria* – each letter having a numerical value that spiritually connects to other words and concepts.
- Use all 4 digits of the (Jewish) Calendar year (2024 straddles the years 5784 and 5785), and the '4 rules' and signs found on a calculator, to make as many of the numbers 1–100 as you can. It's a great 'form time' activity at S1–S4, can be done individually or as a class.

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## **Glossary**

*Note: because there is no standard transliteration from Hebrew, many of the terms listed have alternative spellings in English.*

*“ch” is pronounced gutterally as in the Scottish word “loch”.*

**Aggadah:** the narrative or homiletic part of the *Talmud* and other rabbinic texts.

**Amidah:** prayer recited standing and in silence as the central part of each of the three daily prayer services.

**Bar Mitzvah:** Jewish males are responsible for religious duties from 13 years. This is usually marked by being called to the reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue.

**Bat Mitzvah:** Jewish females are responsible for religious duties from the age of 12 years. This may be celebrated at a ceremony in the synagogue.

**Berachah:** (literally: blessing) any of a number of short prayers said on various occasions, such as thanksgiving before and after eating or drinking, or on witnessing natural phenomena such as lightning or volcanic eruptions.

**Beit HaKnesset:** literally, house of assembly. A synagogue.

**Beit HaMidrash:** religious study and prayer house or room, often in a larger synagogue.

**Bet Din:** Jewish law court. It usually deals with matters of kashrut or personal status, eg religious divorces (*Gittin*).

**Birkat HaMazon** or (Yiddish) **bentsching:** grace after meals.

**Brit Milah:** the circumcision of baby boys at eight days old.

**Challah** (plural: *challot*): plaited bread eaten on Shabbat and festivals. On Rosh HaShanah, the *challah* is round rather than plaited.

**Chag:** a Jewish festival. The autumn festivals of Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot are sometimes collectively called the **Chaggim**.

**Chametz:** food made from grain that is ‘leavened’ or has risen – not allowed to be eaten or even owned on Pesach.

**Chanukah:** eight–day festival in mid–winter celebrating victory over the Greek–Syrian King Antiochus who would not allow Jewish people to follow their religion.

**Chanukiah:** eight–branched (plus one) candelabrum used on Chanukah.

**Chazan:** cantor or leader of the synagogue services.

**Cheder:** "Hebrew school". Religious elementary education classes.

**Chesed shel Emes** or **Chevrah Kadishah:** Jewish burial society. (Literally "true kindness" or "holy society", as the care of the dead is done without thought of reward.)

**Chuppah:** wedding canopy: Jewish wedding ceremonies are conducted under the Chuppah either in the synagogue or in the open air.

**Cohen** (plural: *cohanim*): a Jew of priestly descent.

**Daven:** to pray (Yiddish)

**Dayan:** a Jewish judge, a member of a ***Bet Din***.

**Dreidel:** a small four-sided spinning top with a Hebrew letter on each side, used in a children's game traditionally played at Chanukah

**Etrog:** Etrog is the yellow citron used during the week-long holiday of Sukkot as one of the four species.

**Gemara:** the debates amongst rabbis, from 3rd to 6th centuries, recorded in the ***Talmud***.

**Get:** Jewish religious (bill of) divorce. (plural: ***Gittin***)

**Halachah:** Jewish religious law in general, or a legal ruling.

**Havdalah:** the ceremony at the end of Shabbat, recited over wine, spices, and a candle.

**Hechsher:** a certificate from a recognised authority, usually that food is kosher.

**Kaddish:** prayer of praise of God recited during synagogue services, and by mourners during the year after the death of a parent and on their ***Yahrzeit***.

**Ketubah:** Jewish religious marriage contract.

**Kiddush:** the ceremony at the beginning of Shabbat and festivals, recited over wine.

**Kippah:** skullcap worn by men at prayer and by the orthodox at all times. (also ***Yarmulke*** or ***Kappel***)

**Kollel:** college of advanced rabbinic studies (c.f. ***Yeshivah***).

**Kosher:** prepared in accordance with Jewish religious laws, especially of ***shechitah*** and the separation of milk and meat products. Kosher products often have a ***hechsher*** from a kashrut authority on the packaging.

**Levayah:** (literally “accompanying”) funeral

**Lulav:** A palm frond **that is held together with** two willow branches, three myrtle branches, **and an etrog, and** ceremonially **shaken** during the celebration of Sukkot.

**Ma'ariv** or **Aravit:** the evening prayer service.

**Matzah:** unleavened bread eaten on *Pesach*.

**Mezuzah:** small parchment with the text of the ***Shema*** fixed to the doorpost of every room except the bathroom in a Jewish house.

**Mikvah:** pool of spring or rain water used monthly by married women, by converts to Judaism on their acceptance into the faith, and by some Orthodox men before Shabbat and Festivals.

**Minchah:** the afternoon prayer service.

**Minyan:** prayer quorum of 10 males over **bar mitzvah** age.

**Mitzvah:** a commandment, or good deed.

**Mishnah:** the central text of Rabbinic Judaism compiled by Rabbi Yehudah the Prince in the 2nd century CE. See **Talmud**.

**Mohel:** skilled religious official who performs **brit milah**.

**Mussaf:** the additional morning service on Shabbat and festivals.

**Pesach:** week-long festival in the spring celebrating the Jewish people's Exodus from slavery in Egypt.

**Pikuach nefesh:** literally saving of life. Because life is so precious, all religious observances, except the prohibitions against murder, apostasy, and immorality, must be set aside when life is threatened.

**Rabbi:** teacher and spiritual leader of the community. The rabbi answers questions on Jewish law, gives sermons, and performs the duties of a minister of religion. "**Rav**" is the preferred title of Orthodox rabbis, with religious rather than pastoral connotations.

**Rosh HaShanah:** New Year festival in early autumn.

**Seder:** the ceremonial meal eaten on the first nights of *Pesach*.

**Sefer Torah:** scroll containing the *Torah*, hand written by a scribe, and read in weekly portions on an annual cycle on Shabbat, as well as on Mondays, Thursdays, Festivals, and Fast Days.

**Shabbat:** weekly day of rest from Friday evening to nightfall on Saturday.

**Shacharit:** the morning prayer service.

**Shavuot:** festival in early summer celebrating the giving of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai.

**Shechitah:** Jewish method for the rapid and painless killing of animals for food, carried out by a highly skilled ordained **shochet**.

**Shema:** declaration of faith. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is your God, the Lord in One" (Deuteronomy, Ch. 5) recited during the morning and evening prayers, on retiring at night, and on one's deathbed.

**Shiva:** (literally: "seven") the week of intense mourning and prayer at home after the death of a close relative. Family and friends visit to comfort the mourners.

**Shochet:** highly skilled ordained religious official who carries out **shechitah**.

**Shofar:** ram's horn blown during the morning service on Rosh Hashanah.

**Shul** (Yiddish), **synagogue**; a building used primarily for Jewish prayers, often also housing other communal facilities.

**Shulchan Arukh**: one of the most definitive codes of Jewish law, governing every aspect of Jewish life. Compiled in Safed, Israel in the 16th century.

**Sukkot**: week-long harvest festival in early autumn remembering the Jewish people's wanderings in the desert after the Exodus from slavery in Egypt.

**Tallit**: shawl with fringes (**tsitsit**) worn by men during prayers; the **tallit katan** (small tallit) is worn as an undergarment during the day.

**Talmud**: the main authoritative source of Rabbinic Judaism, compiled in 6th century CE, based on oral traditions, some dating back to Moses. Consists of the **Mishnah** and its commentary, the **Gemara**.

**Tanach**: abbreviation for **Torah** (Five Books of Moses), **Nevi'im** (the Prophets), and **Ketuvim** ("Writings", including Proverbs and Psalms), which together make up the Hebrew Bible.

**Tefillah**: A prayer

**Tefillin**: small leather boxes containing the **Shema** and other biblical passages, worn by men above the forehead and on the arm during morning prayers.

**Tikkun Olam**: literally "fixing" or "repairing" the world, making the world a better place.

**Torah**: the Five Books of Moses ("Pentateuch"), and by extension the entire body of Jewish religious tradition.

**Tzitzit**: the fringes on a **tallit**.

**Tzedakah**: charity.

**Yahrzeit** (Yiddish): the anniversary of a death, when close relatives say *kaddish*.

**Yarmulke** (Yiddish): skullcap. See **Kippah**.

**Yeshivah**: religious school, often full-time for boys beyond the age of bar mitzvah. Those who qualify as rabbis often continue postgraduate study in a **Kollel**.

**Yom Ha'atzmaut**: Israel Independence Day.

**Yom Hashoah**: Holocaust Memorial Day.

**Yom Kippur**: "Day of Atonement", a day of fasting and prayer ten days after Rosh HaShanah, when Jewish people ask forgiveness for the bad choices of the previous year, and resolve to behave better in future.

**Yom Tov** or **Chag**: a Jewish festival.

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# If in doubt, ask!

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