

JUDAISM

A Faith Resource Pack

compiled by

June Bell

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FAITH RESOURCE PACK

JUDAISM

Compiled by June Bell
for Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource

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This pack is one of a series giving a clear and straight forward insight into the Faiths of those who live in our community. You are welcome to download any or all of the packs for individual or classroom use.

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JUDAISM

ה' שִׁמְעַי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד : וְאֵין

Hebrew (read from right to left) Deuteronomy 6v4

"HEAR O ISRAEL, THE LORD IS GOD,
THE LORD IS ONE"

Jewish people have one God
to whom they speak direct

(Note: "*Israel*" in Jewish prayers, hymns and psalms means Jewish people all over the world and not a country in the Middle East.)

THE SHEMA

This is the most important Jewish **prayer**:

"Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Blessed is His name, whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might. These words that I command you today shall be upon your heart. Repeat them to your children, and talk about them when you sit in your home, and when you walk in the street; when you lie down, and when you rise up. Hold fast to them as a sign upon your hand, and let them be as reminders before your eyes. Write them on the doorposts of your home and at your gates."

This prayer is said by everybody in the Synagogue, and is often said at home as a night-time prayer (and is, of course, said standing up).

WHO IS JEWISH?

Anyone whose mother is Jewish is automatically Jewish whether or not that mother attends synagogue services or practices Judaism in the home (by lighting candles on the Sabbath, or by not eating pig or shellfish, and so on).

Also a person may become Jewish through "conversion" (learning about Judaism, the history of the Jewish people, the religious festivals, Hebrew, etc.) and being accepted into the Jewish faith by a "court" of Rabbis.

Due to the dispersal of the Jewish people from Palestine after the destruction of Jerusalem, Jews found sanctuary in various countries - and became a part of those lands.

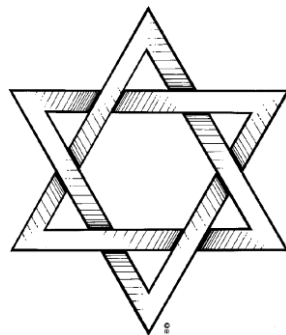
There are Jewish people in most countries of the world and, whilst keeping their own religious traditions (which may vary greatly not only between countries, but also between different sorts of Jews - *see below*), they will have adopted many of the manners and customs of the country to which they belong. If their family has been in that country for many generations, Jews will take on the appearance of the peoples of the host country through inter-marriage, (Indian Jews look Indian, Chinese Jews look Chinese, Ethiopian Jews look Ethiopian, and so on).

THERE ARE DIFFERENT SORTS OF JEWISH PEOPLE:

Chassidic, very easily recognisable by the men's large black hats, long side curls, and long black coats; Chassidic women always keep their heads covered (married women wear wigs over their own hair, and girls wear headscarves). *Chassidim* (this is the plural of Chassid) take the Torah literally and follow its teachings (which they believe to be the word of God) to the letter.

Orthodox Jews observe the teachings of the Torah but are rather less strict.

Reform and Liberal Jews (Progressive Jews) observe the festivals and teachings but put these into a more modern context - for example, whilst Chassidic and Orthodox Jews will not switch on a light during the Sabbath (it is considered to be work to kindle a fire and the light switch is the modern equivalent), Progressive Jews have adapted to modern living.



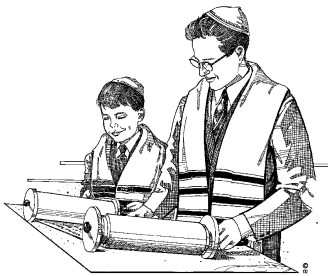
The Star of David
(Symbol of the Jewish People)

rites of passage

BIRTH

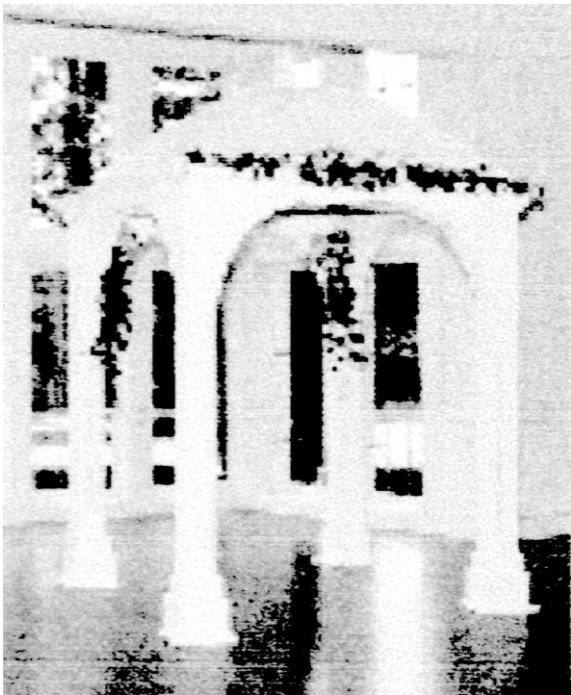
Jewish boys are **CIRCUMCISED** when they are eight days old. There are also ceremonies for naming and for a "baby blessing".

BAR MITZVAH



Bar Mitzvah for a boy or Bat Mitzvah for a girl is the official "coming of age" into the Jewish community at the age of 13.

MARRIAGE



A Jewish wedding can take place in a synagogue or anywhere else - as long as a Registrar is present to see that the Marriage Certificate is made out in keeping with the law of the land in which the marriage takes place. But wherever it takes place, the Rabbi conducting the service, the bride and groom and both

sets of parents (or others standing in for them) stand under the canopy (chuppah). During the ceremony a glass is

wrapped up and the bridegroom stamps on this - a tradition which has several meanings!

DEATH

When a Jewish person dies, his or her body is prepared for burial by other Jewish people who do this work voluntarily as a "Mitzvah" (a good deed) in addition to their regular work.

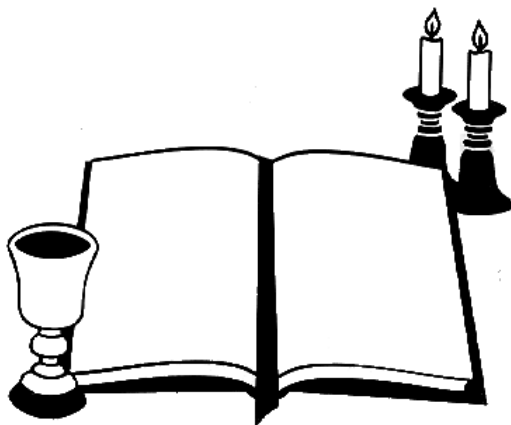
Jewish funerals must take place as soon as possible after death (usually within 48 hours of death).

Progressive Jews may choose cremation.

THE JEWISH HOME

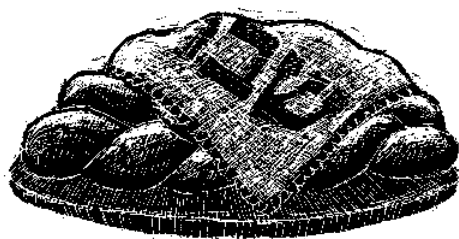
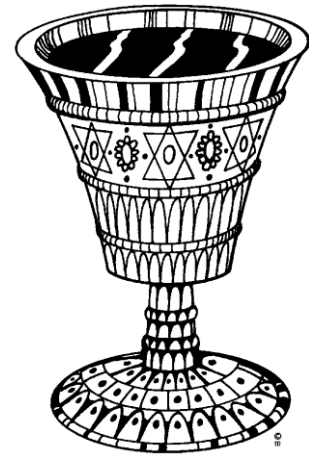


The focal point of Jewish life is in the home. Not only is the Passover celebrated around a dining table in Jewish homes, but the **Sabbath** (*Shabbat*) is celebrated as a festival every Friday evening before the family dinner is served. (The Sabbath actually lasts for about 24 hours, but it always starts as described below, whatever the family does on the Saturday - perhaps they go to a Synagogue service, or perhaps they just do the things that everyone does on a Saturday like playing or watching football or going shopping.)



The **mother** blesses the Sabbath candles after lighting them; then the **father** says a blessing over the special sweet wine whilst pouring it into a *kiddush cup*, takes a sip and then passes it to his wife to sip

before it is passed around all present for them to sip; finally, **father** says a blessing whilst he breaks the bread - traditionally a plaited loaf called a "*cholla*" - into small pieces (one for each person at the table) and sprinkles a little salt* over it before giving a piece to each person there. It is usual for everybody to kiss each other



and to say "*Shabbat Shalom*" - Hebrew for "*Sabbath Peace*" - or "*Gut Shabbas*" - Yiddish for "*Good Sabbath*".

*the salt has no religious significance, but rather is a tradition as salt used to be a great luxury and so is used to denote that the Jewish people celebrating the Sabbath are rich for that evening!

(Candles, bread and wine play a very special part in Jewish life and are blessed at the beginning of all Festivals - candles for light, bread as food of the earth and wine as fruit of the vine - and the blessings are really thanks to God for creating them.)

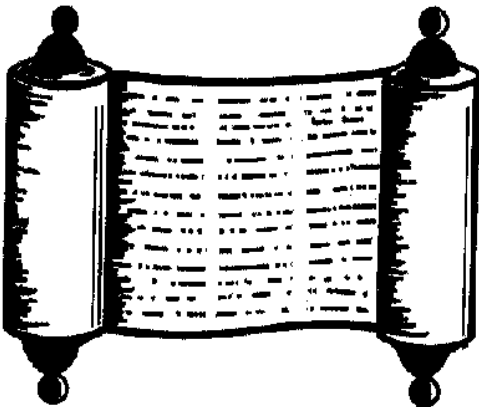
Then the meal is served (usually something like roast chicken or a fish dish and a nice pudding - Friday evening dinner is the best meal of the week in Jewish homes) and afterwards the family stays around the table until it's time for bed and chats or sometimes sing old Jewish songs. This is a special evening; it is a **FESTIVAL** every week.

THE SYNAGOGUE

Jewish people worship in a **SYNAGOGUE** - and this usually serves also as a place of learning and a community centre.

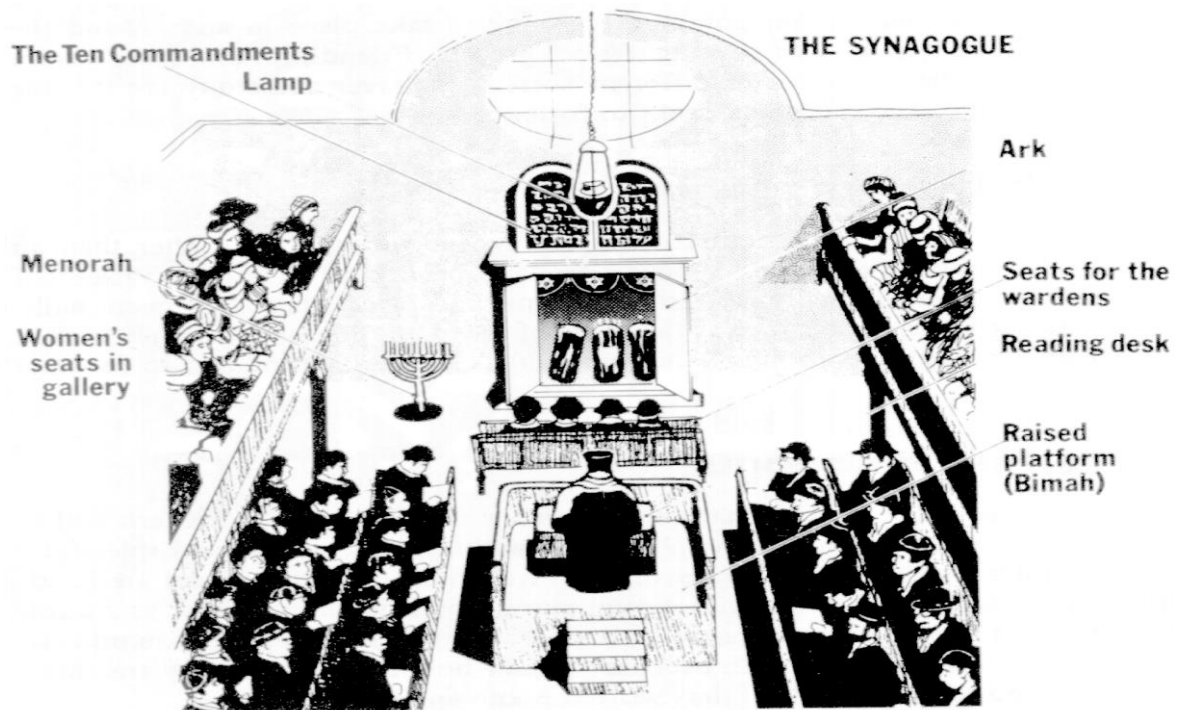
The languages used in prayer books are **HEBREW** and the day-to-day **language of the congregation** (i.e., English, French, German, Indian, etc.)

PRAYERS are said standing up, and the congregation remains sitting for the rest of the service. It is usual for men and boys to have their heads covered in Synagogue and they usually wear a skullcap (called a "kippur" or a "kapel" or sometimes a "yamulka"). **PRAYER SHAWLS** are worn for major services by males who have been **BAR MITZVAH** (received into the congregation at the age of 13).



At the east end of a synagogue is the **ARK OF THE COVENANT** which houses the **Scrolls of the TORAH** (the first five books of the Old Testament) and other holy scrolls which are clothed in beautiful velvet coverings

with gold and silver embroideries and silver heads. At certain points in the service, these Scrolls are taken from the Ark, they are paraded around the Synagogue for all to see, and then "undressed" (the coverings removed) before being read by the Rabbi or a member of the congregation to all present. After the reading, they are "dressed" and again paraded around the Synagogue.



SERVICES are usually conducted by a **RABBI** who is a teacher rather than a priest - although he/she will probably have a theological degree - assisted by Wardens and members of the congregation. He (or she) takes the service from a **BIMAH** (a platform with a reading desk and usually a light) from which the Torah scrolls are also read.

In Orthodox synagogues, there is a Cantor who sings the prayers and other items in the service, but in Progressive (Reform and Liberal) synagogues there are choirs and often an organ.

In accordance with the **TEN COMMANDMENTS**, stained glass windows in Synagogues contain patterns and flowers but no images of God or of human beings.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments, together with instructions in Leviticus (the third book of the Torah), form the very basis of Jewish life:

I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the camp of slavery.

YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BUT ME. You shall not make yourself an idol in the likeness of anything which is in the sky above or on the earth below or in the deeps under the earth. You shall not worship them nor serve them, for I the Lord your God am a demanding God, burdening the children down to the third and fourth generations with their fathers' guilt if they hate Me, but showing kindness to thousands of generations if they should love Me, and keep my commands.

YOU SHALL NOT USE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD FALSELY.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY AND KEEP IT HOLY. You have six days to labour and do all your work, but the seventh shall be a Sabbath for the Lord your God. That day you shall do no work, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, man or woman, nor your cattle, nor the stranger who lives in your home. *For in*

six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the seas and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, He blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

RESPECT YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER so that the days of your life be fulfilled on the land which the Lord your God gives you.

YOU SHALL NOT MURDER.

YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

YOU SHALL NOT GIVE FALSE EVIDENCE AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

YOU SHALL NOT COVET (be jealous of) your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his servant, man or woman, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

FESTIVALS



ROSH HASHANAH - New Year

(In September) Major festival with special service in synagogue in the morning. (The Christian year 2000 is 5760/5761 in the Jewish calendar and dates from the believed beginning of the Old Testament of the bible!)

YOM KIPPUR - Day of Atonement

(In September or October) The most important Fast lasting 25 hours (*no food or water to pass the lips for that time*). Synagogue service lasts from morning to evening.

SUCCOT



(In October) Celebration of the **harvest** when it is traditional to build a succah (a bower) outside the home and the synagogue decorated with fruit and vegetables and leaves, and to take meals in their succah for one week.

SIMCHOT TORAH

(In October) **Celebration of the Torah** (Jewish holy books/scrolls) - traditional to have lots of children at the synagogue service where they are allowed to carry the Torah scrolls around the congregation, and also to have fun and sing and have sweets.

CHANUKAH

(In December) **Festival of Lights**: Chanukah candles lit at home (one on first night, two on second, and so on until all eight are lit) and little presents given to the children on each night. This festival celebrates a 'miracle' which is believed to have occurred in the days when oil lamps were used and it was thought that there was enough oil for only one night and it lasted for eight nights!

PURIM

(In February or March) Commemorating the saving of Jewish people from the evil Haman by **Queen Esther**. Synagogue service and fancy dress parties for children - the only time that Jewish people are allowed to get a little drunk - "drunk enough to be unable to distinguish between Haman (evil) and Mordechai (good)!"

PESACH (Passover)

(In March or April) Remembering the Exodus from Egypt - and celebrating freedom from slavery - big family meal and service at the table. No leaven (anything which 'rises' either

through the addition of yeast - such as bread or cake - or which ferment naturally, like some cereals) may be eaten for eight days. **Matzos** (*unleavened bread*) are eaten throughout the eight days of the festival.

SHEVUOT



(In May or June) Celebration of Moses receiving the **Ten Commandments** from God on Mount Sinai. Synagogue service.

SHABBAT - the Sabbath (God's day of rest)

Jewish people treat the Sabbath (from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown) as a festival which they celebrate each week. (*see under "The Jewish Home"*).

Some festivals have traditional foods associated with them, such as:



Rosh Ha'Shonah (New Year): apple dipped in honey and honey cake for a sweet year

Chanukah: 'latkes' (fried grated potato and onion cakes), and nowadays donuts

Purim: 'hamantaschen' - these are pastry 'pockets' containing honey, poppy -seeds and raisins - literally, Haman's Pockets

Passover: cinnamon balls, apple and almond pudding, coconut kisses - all made without flour.

Shevuot: cheese cake

DIETARY LAWS

Jewish dietary laws (found in Leviticus) were originally given to a primitive people to keep them alive and healthy in a very warm country. These laws have been handed down through the generations and are still observed in Judaism. (Kashrut = clean, hence “kosher”)

The eating of PIG and SHELLFISH and BLOOD is strictly forbidden, in accordance with the TORAH. (Animals which may be eaten have to have cloven hooves and must chew the cud. Fish must have scales and fins.)

MEAT must be killed in such a way that all blood is drained from it to make it KOSHER, and preparation with salt (later washed off) is used before cooking to ensure that it is in accordance with the Jewish laws of Kashrut. Eggs must be cracked open before cooking and if there is a spot of blood in the egg, it must be thrown away because it is not kosher.

Also forbidden is the eating or drinking of dairy products - MILK or BUTTER or CREAM or CHEESE - within four hours after eating meat. Utensils used for dairy products must be kept separate from those used for meat and these include the plates on which they are served, the knives and forks and spoons used at the meal and the bowls in which these plates and cutlery are washed after the meal, as well as dishcloths and tea towels.

Very Orthodox Jews will eat only in their own homes, the homes of friends who they know observe strictly the laws of Kashrut, or in restaurants which are licensed by the Beth Din (a 'court' of rabbis).

Judaism does not encourage belief in a wonderful life after death - rather, Jewish people are encouraged to **make the most of this life** but not to hurt others in doing that.

The toast known to Jewish people all over the world for hundreds of years is in keeping with this thinking:



L'CHAIM!" - "TO LIFE!"

(Le chayeem)

QUESTIONS ON JEWISH PEOPLE & THEIR RELIGION

1. What is the symbol of the Jewish people?

2. In which language are most Jewish prayers said?

3. On which day is the Jewish Sabbath?

4. Which three **special** things would you find on the table in a Jewish home on Friday evening?

5. What do Jewish men and boys wear on their heads - usually when they are saying prayers?

6. Where do Jewish people go to worship God?

7. What is the name of the special Jewish book which is read in synagogue?

8. What shape is it?

9. When is the Jewish New Year?

10. What is the festival in December during which Jewish people light little candles?

ANSWERS TO THE TEN QUESTIONS ON JEWISH PEOPLE AND THEIR RELIGION

1. Star of David

2. Hebrew

3. Friday evening and Saturday

4. Candles, wine and cholla, i.e., plaited loaf of bread

5. Kapel - sometimes known as kippur, yalmulka,
skullcap

6. Synagogue

7. Torah

8. A scroll

9. September/October

10. Chanukah

