

Judaism

Key Facts



By
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❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

With gratitude to *Hashem*, we present here the third and newly edited version of Judaism Key Facts. This small book was originally written to summarize the fundamentals of Judaism for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah boy/girl. It may also be used as a general introduction to Judaism for a beginner.

The first edition was printed in 2001 by Chabad House in Wimbledon — and we again thank all those who participated in the original print.

The second edition was published in 2003 by www.askmoses.com, and became a very popular teaching tool for many educators.

This third edition is being printed by Sichos In English, and has been fully revised and reset.

Thanks to Rabbi Yonah Avtzon and Yosef Yitzchok Turner of Sichos In English for all their tireless efforts in bringing this work to fruition.

Above all, many thanks to my wife Sarah, and all the family, for all their constant support and encouragement in our joint Shlichus.

This edition is dedicated in the merit of the Bar Mitzvah of our dear son Yitzchok — may we see from him and all our children and grandchildren much Yiddishe and Chassidishe Nachas!

It is my great hope that Judaism Key Facts will continue to be a useful resource, and will encourage its readers to lead a life dedicated to Torah and Mitzvot, and hasten the coming of Moshiach, speedily, Amen.

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Chapter 1

∞ THE JEWISH BELIEF ∞

- ∞ *Fundamental Jewish Beliefs*
- ∞ *The Torah*
- ∞ *613 Commandments*
- ∞ *Written Law & Oral Law*
- ∞ *The Ten Commandments*
- ∞ *Mount Sinai & Belief in G-d*
- ∞ *Love & Fear of G-d*
- ∞ *Reward for Mitzvot — The World to Come*
- ∞ *Moshiach*
- ∞ *The Seven Noachide Laws*

FUNDAMENTAL JEWISH BELIEFS

What do Jews believe in? The Rambam — a great Jewish rabbi and philosopher summarized the Jewish faith in 13 principles. He starts each of those principles of faith with the words “*Ani Maamin-* I believe”. The following is a summary of those principles.

- a) I believe in G-d. G-d is one. He was, is and will be.
- b) I believe that G-d is everywhere. He does not have a body. He creates everything and can see everything.
- c) I believe that G-d speaks to man. These men and women are called prophets. The greatest of all prophets was Moses. It was to Moses that G-d gave the Torah.

- d) I believe that the Torah is true. I also believe that G-d will reward those who keep the Torah.
- e) I believe that I was created to serve G-d as explained in the Torah.
- f) I believe that one day, a Jewish King called *Moshiach* will come and gather all the Jews to live in *Eretz Yisrael*. He will rule, and in his days there will be peace in the whole world. In his days, I believe that G-d will bring the dead back to life.

G-D

What is G-d? G-d is a super being that creates the world. The world as we see it is made of elements that when combined make gases liquids and solids. The basic building block of all elements is the atom. Each atom is made of sub-atomic particles. Science teaches us that mass and energy are related. The energy that can bring into being the tiniest mass — we call Divine creative energy. G-d is the source of that energy and He pumps that energy every single second into making each and every atom. In fact if G-d were to withdraw that source of energy then the creation would disappear!

So when we are looking at a piece of wood and a piece of plastic — the reason they look and feel different is because the molecular structure in both is different — however the energy source that creates their atomic particles, something from nothing, is the same. In this sense we can understand how G-d is everywhere, because He is the Creator of all existence. This is what the Bible means when it states that “there is nothing besides Him”.

This is also the meaning of the words “Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one.” This is not only saying that there is one G-d (in contrast to those who believe in many gods), but in addition it means that G-d the Creator is one single united Being that creates all. He is Omnipresent (at all times present), Omnipotent (all powerful) and Omniscient (knows all).

PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF G-D

There are three proofs of the existence of G-d:

1. The stand at Sinai — this shall be discussed soon.
2. The proof by Intelligent Design — which means that when we observe the immense brilliance and complexity of the creation we must conclude that this did not come about by itself but it must have had a Master Designer and Creator. To illustrate with a story: There was once a King who asked a rabbi to prove to him that G-d existed. The rabbi asked the King to step out of the room, and the rabbi sat at the King’s desk and took the royal quill dipped it into the ink well and wrote a magnificent poem. When he had finished, the rabbi called the King back into the room. The King read the poem and praised the rabbi for his extraordinary writing skills. The rabbi said, “I didn’t write the poem — I simply poured out the ink from the ink well onto the paper and the poem formed by itself!” “Impossible” said the King, “if you poured the ink from the ink well it is hardly likely to have even formed one letter never mind a word, or sentence and certainly not a poem that rhymes.” “So there is your proof” said the rabbi, “a poem needs a poet and the world needs a Creator.”

3. The fulfillment of Torah prophecies — when we take a look at the prophecies mentioned in the Torah we see that they have come true during the course of history. This proves that the prophecy came from G-d who guides the course of history.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Everything that happens in the world is with Divine Providence. Even if the wind turns a leaf in the street, it is with Divine Providence, meaning that it is part of the Divine plan. The explanation is because at that very moment G-d is creating the leaf, and the wind. Although it seems to us like a force of nature, in truth it is the hand of G-d.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The rabbis teach us that we are always to be aware of three things; an eye watching, an ear listening and a hand writing. This means that everything we think, say and do is recorded by G-d and we are held accountable for it. When we die our soul stands before a Heavenly court and has to give an account for all we have done.

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

Why did G-d create the world? The reason G-d created this physical world is so that we can make a dwelling for His presence in this world. Just as a person feels at home in his own home so too is G-d to feel at home in His creation. We create this dwelling by keeping the Torah and Mitzvot.

THE TORAH

The word “Torah” means “teaching”. It is G-d’s teaching to man. In the Hebrew year 2448, G-d came down on Mount Sinai and gave this “teaching”

to the entire Jewish people, through Moses, G-d's faithful servant. All Jewish beliefs come from the Torah. In general terms, we refer to the Five Books of Moses as "The Torah". The Five Books of Moses can also be referred to as the *Chumash*.

The Torah is our very life and existence. It is Divine wisdom and is a code how to live a good and moral life. Its ways are pleasant and it leads to peace. Throughout history, Jews have studied and cherished the Torah and lived their lives according to its teachings. Through the study of Torah and fulfillment of Mitzvot we fulfill the purpose of creation which is to make a dwelling for G-d in this world.

THE 613 COMMANDMENTS — MITZVOT

In the Torah there are 613 commandments.

~ 248 are Positive Commandments [do's].

~ 365 are Negative Commandments [don'ts].

In addition to the word mitzvah meaning a commandment, it also means a connection. This means that a Jew has 613 ways to connect with G-d. In every aspect of life a Jew connects with G-d through the Mitzvot. So for example we connect to G-d in our eating by keeping the laws of Kashrut.

THE WRITTEN LAW & THE ORAL LAW

When G-d came down on Mount Sinai to give the Torah, He gave it in two parts:

1) The Written Law — *Torah Shebichtav*

The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets of stone and later Moses wrote down the whole written law in a scroll which we call a *Sefer*

Torah [as we have today in the ark in the synagogue].

2) The Oral Law — *Torah Shebaal Peh*

G-d explained all the 613 Commandments to Moses orally. For example, it says in the written Torah that it is a mitzvah to have a *mezuzah* on the door. However, it does not explain what a *mezuzah* is. G-d gave the explanation to Moses and it is part of the Oral Law.

We believe that both the Written and Oral Laws are true.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

As stated above, there are 613 commandments in the Torah. All of them are important. However, when G-d came down on Mount Sinai to give the Torah, He actually spoke to the entire Jewish nation and gave them ten of these 613 commandments. The Ten Commandments are:

- 1) I am the L-rd your G-d. Believe in G-d.
- 2) You should have no other gods or idols.
- 3) Do not mention G-d's name in vain.
- 4) Keep the Shabbat.
- 5) Honor your father and mother.
- 6) Do not murder.
- 7) Do not commit adultery.
- 8) Do not steal [kidnap].
- 9) Do not witness falsely.
- 10) Do not covet [be jealous of] your friend's possessions.

[It is very interesting to note that in the Hebrew text, the total number of letters in the Ten Commandments is 620, to hint that all the

commandments (613 plus seven Rabbinical commandments) are included in the Ten Commandments.]

MOUNT SINAI AND BELIEF IN G-D

The very fact that G-d came and spoke to the entire Jewish people at Mount Sinai is the greatest proof of the existence of G-d. Never in human experience has G-d spoken to approximately three million people [600,000 men, plus women and children] as He spoke to the Jews at Mount Sinai.

If you are ever asked the question: "How do you know that there is a G-d?" The answer is: "my parents told me that all the Jews stood at Sinai and heard the Ten Commandments from G-d, and this fact my parents heard from their parents, and so on, going back all the generations right until the generation that stood at Sinai."

Once a year at the Passover Seder all Jews celebrate and recall the Exodus from Egypt and the stand at Sinai. Thus it stands as an undisputed historical fact. Witnesses are the most legal and scientific proof of any fact and, as mentioned, the Revelation at Sinai was witnessed by the entire Jewish people.

LOVE AND FEAR OF G-D

The love of G-d motivates us to do all His 248 positive commandments [do's].

Love of G-d is called *Ahavat Hashem*. The fear of G-d keeps us from transgressing any of the 365 negative commandments [don'ts]. Fear of G-d is called *Yirat Hashem*, (and is often referred to as *Yirat Shamayim*).

G-d is our Father and our King. We must love Him as a Father and fear Him as a King.

G-d's name is so holy, we do not read it as it is written. The name YHVH we read *Adonai*. In conversation, we call G-d *Hashem* — meaning “The Name”, referring to the Holy Name of G-d.

REWARD FOR MITZVOT— THE WORLD TO COME

For every good deed a person does he will be rewarded, and for every bad deed a person does he will be punished. The true reward for *mitzvot* is not in this world, but in the World to Come. The World to Come is the world to which our souls go after we die. It is there that the soul is truly rewarded. It is often called *Gan Eden* — The Garden of Eden.

Many people ask: “Why do we see good people suffer and bad people prosper?” One of the answers is that G-d may be punishing the good people for their small amount of bad deeds in this world only to give them a huge reward for all their good deeds in the World to Come. The opposite is true of bad people. In the end, justice is done.

MOSHIACH

The word *Moshiach* means “anointed”. In the olden days before a king assumed office, he was anointed with oil. So too, there will come a time in the future when a Jew who is both learned and a descendent of King David will be anointed as a king and will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and gather all the Jews to Israel. This King is called *Moshiach*.

In the days of *Moshiach*, there will be no wars or famine and everybody will have all they want. The Jews will be able to sit and study Torah in peace and

the whole world will be full of the knowledge of G-d. The generation we are living in is the generation just before the coming of *Moshiach* and we eagerly await his coming every day. We also do lots of *mitzvot* to speed up the coming of *Moshiach*.

THE SEVEN NOACHIDE LAWS

Not only does the Torah contain teachings for the Jew, but it also has teachings for the non-Jew. These are called the Seven Noachide Laws — seven universal laws given by G-d to Noah and subsequent generations. The Seven Noachide Laws are:

- 1) Believe in G-d. Do not serve idols.
- 2) Do not blaspheme.
- 3) Do not steal.
- 4) Do not kill.
- 5) Do not commit adultery.
- 6) Keep the laws of the land.
- 7) Do not eat a limb from a live animal or be cruel to animals.

The Rabbis explain that the seven laws are only general guidelines, but in truth non-Jews are required to pray, give charity, honor parents etc. It is the responsibility of a Jew to influence the non-Jewish world to keep the Seven Noachide Laws.



Chapter 2

~ *MIDDOT* — CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT ~

- ~ *Yetzer Tov* — *Yetzer Hora*
- ~ *Derech Eretz*
- ~ *Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem*
- ~ *Rachmanim B'nai Rachmanim* — *Merciful Sons of Merciful People*
- ~ *Gemilut Chassadim* — *Acts of Kindness*
- ~ *Tzedakah* — *Charity*
- ~ *Hachnasat Orchim* — *Welcoming Guests*
- ~ *Bikkur Cholim* — *Visiting the Sick*
- ~ *Halvayat Hamet* — *Accompanying the Dead*
- ~ *Hachnassat Kallah* — *Caring for a Bride*
- ~ *The Divine Example*
- ~ *Emunat Tzaddikim* — *Belief in Tzaddikim*
- ~ *Ahavat Yisrael* — *Love of a Fellow Jew*
- ~ *Halbanat Panim* — *Insulting or Embarrassing a Fellow Man*
- ~ *Lashon Hora and Rechilus* — *The Evil Tongue and Telling Tales*
- ~ *Nekamah and Netirah* — *Revenge & Bearing a Grudge*
- ~ *Onaah and Ganayvat Daat* — *Fraud*
- ~ *Netinat Michshol Lifnei I'Vair* — *Putting a Stumbling Block before the Blind*
- ~ *Geneivah and Gezeilah* — *Stealing & Robbery*

- ~ *Hashavat Aveidah* — *Returning Lost Property*
- ~ *Bal Tashchit* — *You Shall Not Destroy*
- ~ *Tza'ar L'Ba'alei Chayim* — *Cruelty to Living Creatures*
- ~ *Kibud Av Va-Eim* — *Honor your Father and Mother*
- ~ *Mipnei Seivah Takum* — *Stand before the Elderly*
- ~ *Kvod HaRav* — *Honoring Teachers*
- ~ *Emet* — *Truth*
- ~ *Shalom* — *Peace*
- ~ *Anava* — *Humility*
- ~ *Simchah* — *Joy*
- ~ *Teshuvah* — *Return/Repentance*
- ~ *Tzniut* — *Modesty*

The Torah puts great stress on character development — on becoming better people. This is called *Tikkun* [correcting] *Middot* [our character]. We must always strive to correct our faults and improve our character. The Torah also lays down a number of moral laws. The following is a shortlist of ways to better ourselves and a number of moral laws.

YETZER TOV — YETZER HORA

Inside us we all have a *Yetzer Tov* — a good inclination [voice] and a *Yetzer Hora* — a bad/evil inclination. The *Yetzer Tov* constantly advises us to do good and act in a proper manner. The *Yetzer Hora* constantly challenges the *Yetzer Tov* and tries to advise the person to sin. There is a constant battle between the two, but with G-d's help and our own will power, the *Yetzer Tov* can win.

DERECH ERETZ

We must conduct ourselves in a way that does not offend those around us. Judaism requires each of us to behave in a respectable fashion. This is called *Derech Eretz*. Included in *Derech Eretz* is respect for elders and teachers and respect for the laws of the land in which we live.

KIDDUSH HASHEM AND CHILLUL HASHEM

Kiddush Hashem — The sanctification of G-d's Name.

Chillul Hashem — The desecration of G-d's Name.

Since the Jews were chosen by G-d to receive the Torah — G-d's teaching to mankind, the Jews must behave positively, in an upright manner, and set an example to all mankind. Non-Jews will judge us by our actions, ["see how beautifully those whom G-d has chosen behave."] When a Jew behaves correctly, he makes a *Kiddush Hashem* — a sanctification of G-d's name.

The opposite is *Chillul Hashem*. When a Jew misbehaves, commits a crime, or offends against the laws of the land, not only does he disgrace himself, but also the entire Jewish people and the name of G-d Himself. There is no greater sin than *Chillul Hashem*.

RACHMANIM B'NAI RACHMANIM — MERCIFUL SONS OF MERCIFUL PEOPLE

The Jewish people are known to be very kind to each other and help each other as much as possible. According to the rabbis, the Jewish people have inherited this trait of mercy [i.e. pity for those less fortunate than themselves] from the patriarch Abraham. One of G-d's names is *Harachaman* [the

Merciful One]. In many of our prayers we ask G-d to have mercy upon us. The Sages tell us that G-d says: "If you behave like brothers and sisters to one another, then I shall behave like a father to you."

On *Yom Kippur*, we say in our prayers that in order to avert an evil decree, there are three things that we must do:

- 1) *Teshuvah* [repent]
- 2) *Tefillah* [pray]
- 3) *Tzedakah* [give charity]

In short, if we expect mercy, we must show mercy.

GEMILUT CHASSADIM — ACTS OF KINDNESS

The Hebrew word *Chessed* טוֹן means kindness. *Gemilut Chassadim* are acts of kindness.

The Rabbis say that all Jews possess three qualities;

- 1) *Rachamanim* [as explained above].
- 2) *Byeshanim* — being ashamed of their wrong deeds.
- 3) *Gomlei Chassadim* — being constantly engaged in doing acts of kindness.

TZEDAKAH — CHARITY

The word *Tzedakah* comes from the word *Tzedek* which means righteousness, or the right thing to do. Giving charity from our own money is the right thing to do.

Consider it as if G-d has given you money to give to the poor. The money does not really belong to you and you are obliged to give it away.

A person must give charity according to his means. In general, one should always give away 10%

of one's income. Even a poor person must give charity.

It is customary to have a *Tzedakah* box [*Pushka*] in every Jewish home, and the family is encouraged to give *Tzedakah* daily, especially before praying.

One should never refuse a request for *Tzedakah*. The *Tzedakah* should be given with a happy heart, a smiling face and an open hand.

G-d repays a person for every bit of *Tzedakah* he gives. The rabbis tell us that if you want to become rich, you should give a lot of *Tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* should preferably be given anonymously, i.e. without anybody knowing [unless you want to show an example to others].

Tzedakah brings the coming of *Moshiach* closer.

HACHNASAT ORCHIM

The Jewish home must always be hospitable. Guests must always be welcome at our table, particularly on *Shabbat* and festivals. The *mitzvah* of *Hachnasat Orchim* is so great that even when Abraham was being visited by G-d, he ran out to meet his guests and invite them in for a meal. From this we learn that welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence.

BIKKUR CHOLIM

We must visit friends who are sick, provide for them, cheer them up and pray for them. One must visit whether the person is rich, poor, young or old. G-d visited Abraham after his circumcision.

A special prayer may be said by the reading of the Torah for a sick person. This prayer is called *Me Shebayrach*. It is customary to give *Tzedakah* in merit

of the sick and wish them a *Refuah Sheleimah* — a complete recovery.

HALVAYAT HAMET — ACCOMPANYING THE DEAD

It is a great *mitzvah* to attend a *Levaya* [funeral]. After the burial [*kevurah*], the mourners [*aveilim*] will sit *Shivah*, i.e. will mourn at home for seven days. [*Shivah* = Seven]. During the *Shivah*, prayers are held at the house of the mourner and people come and comfort the mourners on their loss. This is called *Nichum Aveilim*, or as is commonly said: “I am going to be *Menachem Ovel*” to comfort the mourner. It is customary to say the words, “*Hamakom Yenachem Etchem Btoch Shar Avelei Tzion Veyerusholayim* — May the A-mighty comfort you amongst the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

The first meal eaten by a mourner after the *Levaya* is a boiled egg and bread prepared by a friend or a neighbor. The mourners sit on a low stool. It is customary that a memorial candle is lit in the house of mourning.

HACHNASSAT KALLAH — CARING FOR A BRIDE

It is the duty of every Jew to give money and moral support to help a young couple set up a Jewish home. It is a great *mitzvah* to help pay for the wedding. This is called *Hachnassat Kallah*. A poor bride must not be disgraced through lack of dowry.

THE DIVINE EXAMPLE

From all the above, it is clear that we must follow G-d's example.

- ~ Just as G-d is merciful, so must we be merciful.
- ~ Just as G-d is generous, so must we be generous.
- ~ Just as G-d visits the sick, so must we visit the sick.
- ~ Just as G-d comforts the mourner, so must we comfort the mourner.
- ~ Just as G-d is kind, so must we be kind.

EMUNAT TZADDIKIM — BELIEF IN TZADDIKIM

G-d gave some men and women extraordinary powers. These righteous people are called *Tzaddikim*. It is a great *mitzvah* to attach oneself to a *Tzaddik* and learn from his/her ways. One should always have faith in the words of a *Tzaddik*.

G-d commands us in the Torah “to cleave to Him”. The Rabbis ask: How is it possible to cleave to G-d? They answer: One who attaches himself to a *Talmid Chacham* [a Torah scholar] is considered as if attached to G-d. It is a great *mitzvah* to support scholars and provide for their needs. If possible one should marry the daughter of a scholar and marry off one’s daughter to a scholar.

AHAVAT YISRAEL — LOVE OF A FELLOW JEW

Rabbi Akiva said: “Love your fellow Jew as yourself.” This is the general principle of the Torah.

We must always have a feeling of love and respect for our fellow Jew, for really we are brothers in the same family. This is a golden rule never to be forgotten, and, as Rabbi Akiva said, a great principle of the Torah. One should never hate another person.

HALBANAT PANIM — INSULTING OR EMBARRASSING A FELLOW MAN

If a person embarrasses another in public, the latter's face turns pale with shame. The rabbis regarded this as a terrible act to commit. The rabbis advise: "Better fall into a fiery furnace than embarrass someone in public." One who shames another in public, loses his share in the World to Come.

LASHON HORA AND RECHILUT — THE EVIL TONGUE AND TELLING TALES

One should not speak, write or even imply something evil against another, even if it is true. This is called *Lashon Hora*. Telling tales and gossiping is called *Rechilut*. King David in *Tehillim* [Psalms] advises:

"Who is the man who desires life ... guard your tongue from speaking evil."

NEKAMAH AND NETIRAH

Even if someone has wronged you, you should try to forgive them and certainly not take revenge. The Torah forbids not only revenge, but also bearing a grudge.

For example, A says to B: "Lend me your pencil." B replies: "No."

Next day, B says to A: "Lend me your pencil." A replies: "No, because you didn't lend me yours." That is *Nekamah*.

If A replies: "OK, I will lend you my pencil, I am not as mean as you are," that is *Netirah*, bearing a grudge.

A should lend the pencil to B, forgive and forget.

ONAAH AND GANAYVAT DAAT

We must not sell anything for more than its value or give a false description of an article. We must not steal the knowledge or belief of another or take advantage of another's ignorance. Another type of "stealing" is being noisy and disturbing a person's sleep. This is called *Gezzel Sheena*.

NETINAT MICHSHOL LIFNEI I'VAIR — PUTTING A STUMBLING BLOCK BEFORE THE BLIND

The Torah warns us, "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind." This verse is interpreted both in its literal meaning and also in a general meaning, i.e. one should not mislead the innocent by deliberately giving bad advice.

GENEIVAH AND GEZEILAH

It should be obvious that we must refrain from any action that involves us taking anything that is not ours — either stealthily or deceitfully as a thief [*ganav*] or openly and brutally as a robber [*gazlan*].

We must be careful not to use anything without the knowledge and permission of the owner. Respect for other people's property is a basic law of Judaism.

HASHAVAT AVEIDAH — RETURNING LOST PROPERTY

If a person finds any property whose owner could possibly be traced, he must not keep it. Otherwise he is guilty of theft. Great effort must be made to find the owner, such as placing an advert in a paper or reporting lost property at a police station.

BAL TASHCHIT — YOU SHALL NOT DESTROY

We must not willfully destroy anything just for the pleasure of destruction. Everything is put into this

world for a special purpose. Everything has its use. We must not waste what can be put to good use. This does not mean, of course, that we accumulate everything and never throw anything away. It simply means that we must make full use of what we own. For example, one should not throw away good food or good clothes. One should also recycle goods.

TZA'AR L'BA'ALEI CHAYIM— CRUELTY TO LIVING CREATURES

We are forbidden to inflict needless pain on any creatures. We should even feed our animals before we ourselves sit down to eat.

KIBUD AV VA-EIM — HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

In which ways should children honor their parents?

- ~ Not contradicting them.
- ~ Not speaking before them.
- ~ Not embarrassing them.
- ~ Not sitting in their place.
- ~ Bringing and fetching what their parents need.
- ~ Where applicable, feeding and clothing them.
- ~ Not waking them up when they are sleeping.

The Torah promises that one who honors his/her parents will merit long life.

MIPNEI SEIVAH TAKUM — STAND BEFORE THE ELDERLY

This is a special *mitzvah* and mark of respect which the young perform for the old. When an older person enters the room, the young must stand.

KVOD HARAV— HONORING TEACHERS

Due honor must be given to rabbis and teachers. Children should stand when they enter the room and always show *Derech Eretz* [see above].

EMET — TRUTH

Emet means truth. One must always tell the truth. *Emet* is made from three Hebrew letters א, מ and ת, the first, middle and last letters of the alphabet, to teach us that truth is from the beginning to the end, the whole truth. It is forbidden to lie [except when telling “white lies” to preserve the peace].

SHALOM — PEACE

“Great is peace — for the Torah was given to bring peace to the world.”

One must always search for a peaceful solution to any difficult matter. The Torah ascribes the greatness of Aharon [Moses’ brother] to the fact that he always made peace between his fellow men.

ANAVA — HUMILITY

Never be haughty — always be humble. Know your advantages and your disadvantages. Always try to look at other people’s good points. Never be arrogant.

SIMCHAH — JOY

“Serve G-d with joy.” Imagine if a great king asked you to do him a small favor. Wouldn’t you run with joy to do it? So too, G-d has asked us to keep *mitzvot* and we should be full of joy and happiness when keeping them. Joy is called *Simchah*.

TESHUVAH — RETURN/REPENTANCE

If a Jew does something wrong, G-d wants him to do *Teshuvah* — to repent. *Teshuvah* comprises of three stages;

- 1) Regret — to regret the misdeed.
- 2) *Vidui* — verbal expression ... to say out loud [to yourself, not in front of others] what you have done wrong.
- 3) Resolve never to do it again.

One should do *Teshuvah* a whole year for one's misdeeds, but particularly one should do *Teshuvah* on *Yom Kippur*.

TZNIUT— MODESTY

A person should always be modest both in dress and in character, whether in public or in private.

The Torah has a dress code for men and women. Parts of the body which are usually covered must be covered at all times. Men should cover their heads with a *kipah*, or *Yarmulka* [this is an Aramaic word meaning *Yarei* = fear, *Malka* = King. A *Yarmulka* reminds you that you stand before the King of Kings at all times]. Married women should cover their hair with a scarf, hat or wig (*shaitel*). A woman's skirt should cover her knees and shirt sleeves should cover the elbow.

A man may not wear women's clothing and *vice versa*. The Torah also teaches that boys and girls should not touch each other (*shomer negia*), nor act in an indecent manner.



Chapter 3

~ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ~

- ~ *The Aleph-Bet*
- ~ *Numerical Values*
- ~ *The Jewish Calendar*
- ~ *Dates*
- ~ *The Calendar*
- ~ *The Age of the World*
- ~ *The Tenach*
- ~ *The Torah*
- ~ *Neviim — The Prophets*
- ~ *Ketuvim — The Writings*

THE ALEPH-BET

1) The *Aleph-Bet* has 22 letters and five final letters.
The letters are:

Block Value	Script	Numerical	Name [Sephard]	Name [Ashkenaz]
א	א	1	Aleph	Aleph
ב	ב	2	Bet	Bais
בּ	בּ	2	Vet	Vais
ג	ג	3	Gimmel	Gimmel
ד	ד	4	Dalet	Daled
ה	ה	5	Hay	Hay
ו	ו	6	Vav	Vov
ז	ז	7	Zayin	Zayin
ח	ח	8	Chet	Ches
ט	ט	9	Tet	Tes

י	י	10	Yud	Yud
כ	כ	20	Kaf	Kof
כ	כ	20	Chaf	Chof
ך	ך	20	Final Chaf	Final Chof
ל	ל	30	Lamed	Lamed
מ	מ	40	Mem	Mem
ם	ם	40	Final Mem	Final Mem
נ	נ	50	Nun	Nun
ן	ן	50	Final Nun	Final Nun
ס	ס	60	Samech	Samech
ע	ע	70	Ayin	Ayin
פ	פ	80	Pay	Pay
ף	ף	80	Fay	Fay
ף	ף	80	Final Fay	Final Fay
צ	צ	90	Tzadik	Tzadik
ץ	ץ	90	Final Tzadik	Final Tzadik
ק	ק	100	Koof	Koof
ר	ר	200	Raish	Raish
ש	ש	300	Shin	Shin
ש	ש	300	Sin	Sin
ת	ת	400	Taf	Tof
ת	ת	400	Taf	Sof

2) The vowels are:

Name		Sephardic pronunciation		Ashkenazi pronunciation	
			as in		as in
Kamatz	ָ	a	cat	o	cot
Patach	ַ	a	cat	a	cat
Tzayray	ֵ	a	day	ay	day
Segol	ֶ	eh	pen	eh	pen
Sheva	ְ	uh	done	uh	done
Cholam	ֹ	oh	off	oy	toy

Chirik	·	ee	bee	ee	bee
Shuruk	··	oo	do	oo	do
[or Koobutz]					
Mlupam	·‡	oo	do	oo	do
[or Shuruk]					

NUMERICAL VALUES

Every letter of the *Aleph-Bet* has a numerical value. From Aleph to Yud the values of the letters increase by ones, from 1 to 10.

From Kaf to Koof, the values of the letters increase by tens, from 10 to 100.

From Koof to Taf the values of the letters increase by hundreds, from 100 to 400.

To write the numbers using letters, simply add letters of the correct values. For example, the numbers 10-20 are written as follows:

11 = א‡

12 = ב‡

13 = ג‡

14 = ד‡

15 = ה‡

16 = ו‡

17 = ז‡

18 = ח‡

19 = ט‡

20 = י‡

Note: The numbers 15 and 16 are not made up by adding a ה and a י, for this would spell the name of G-d, which we must not write unnecessarily as it may not be erased. Even in English, we hyphenate the word — G-d.

The numbers 21 to 30 are written as follows:

21 = כא

22 = כב

23 = כג

24 = כד

25 = כה

26 = כו

27 = כז

28 = כח

29 = כט

30 = ל

With numbers over 100, simply add units:

110 = קי

248 = רמח

365 = שסה

With numbers over 400, add hundreds:

571 = תקעא. $400 + 100 + 70 + 1$

With numbers over 1000, write a letter with a dash:

5751 = ה'יתשנא i.e. $5000 + 400 + 300 + 50 + 1$

It is also possible to convert words into numbers:

ואתחנן = 515 i.e. $6 + 1 + 400 + 8 + 50 + 50$

The study of numerology, i.e. the numerical equivalent of words, is called *Gematria*.

THE JEWISH CALENDAR

The Jewish Calendar takes into account both the solar year of 365 days and the lunar year of 354 days. The calendar works on a 19 year cycle, of which seven are leap years. This equals out the discrepancy

of 11 days between the solar and lunar years. Approximately, every three years there is a leap year. The Torah does this so that the festival of *Pesach* is always in the Spring. The regular year has 12 months; a leap year has 13 months.

The names of the months are:

ניסן	Nissan
אייר	Iyar
סיון	Sivan
תמוז	Tamuz
אב	Av
אלול	Elul
תשרי	Tishrei
חשוון	Cheshvan
כסלו	Kislev
טבת	Tevet
שבט	Shevat
אדר	Adar
אדר שני	Adar Sheni [the extra month in a leap year]

Each month has either 29 or 30 days. Although the New Year *Rosh Hashanah* — is in the month of Tishrei, the months are counted from Nissan as the Jews left Egypt in the month of Nissan.

The Hebrew calendar stretches back to the six days of creation. At the date of writing this book, the Hebrew year is 5773. The Torah was given to us in the Hebrew year 2448, exactly 3,325 years ago.

DATES

A Jewish date is written using the numerical values of the letters [as above], e.g.

15th Shevat = ט"ו שבט

19th Kislev = י"ט כסלו

11th Nissan = י"א ניסן

The first day of the month is called *Rosh Chodesh* — ראש חודש. This is abbreviated: ר"ח

The following is a list of common abbreviations:

Rosh Hashanah — ר"ה

Yomtov — יו"ט

Yom Kippur — יוה"כ

THE CALENDAR

We will now go through each month listing the days of note in each month. [See chapter on Festivals for more detail].

Nissan

14th Fast of the Firstborn. All firstborn males must fast. It is customary to attend a *Siyum* — a celebratory completion of a tractate of the *Talmud*. A firstborn who attends a *Siyum* in the synagogue need not fast. Fathers who have firstborn sons who cannot yet fast, are required to fast in their stead.

15th *Seder* night. First day *Pesach*.

16th Second *Seder*. Second day *Pesach*. Start counting the *Omer* — the 49 days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*.

17th-20th *Chol Hamoed Pesach*. *Chol* = weekday; *Moed* = festival. *Chol Hamoed* is the name

for the intermediate days of the festival.
They are partly weekday, partly festival.

21st & 22nd Seventh day and *Acharon* [last day] of Pesach.

Iyar

14th *Pesach Sheni*. The second *Pesach*. In Temple times, one who was unable to offer the Paschal Lamb on 14th Nissan, had a second chance on 14th Iyar. It's never too late!

18th *Lag B'Omer*. $\text{ב} = 30$; $\text{א} = 3$. 33rd day of the *Omer*. In Roman times, there lived a great Rabbi called Rabbi Akiva. He had 24,000 students. Unfortunately, a plague struck them during the *Omer* period and they died. However, their deaths stopped on *Lag B'Omer*. It is therefore a day of rejoicing. Furthermore, it is the *Yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, the author of the *Zohar* — a noted book on *Kabbalah*, the secrets of the Torah.

Sivan

6th & 7th Festival of *Shavuot*. The Jews received the Torah in the year 2448.

Tamuz

17th Fast of Tamuz [see chapter on fasts]

Av

9th Fast of Av

Elul

Month of preparation for the High Holy Days.

Tishrei

- 1st & 2nd *Rosh Hashanah*
3rd Fast of Gedaliah
10th *Yom Kippur*
15th First Day of *Sukkot*
16th Second Day of *Sukkot*
17th-20th *Chol Hamoed Sukkot*
21st *Hoshanah Rabbah*
22nd *Shemini Atzeret*
23rd *Simchat Torah*

Cheshvan

No days of note — often this month is referred to as *Mar-Cheshvan* — the “bitter” Cheshvan.

Kislev

- 25th *Chanukah*, for eight days.

Tevet

- 10th Fast of Tevet

Shevat

- 15th New Year for Trees [celebrated by eating fruits with which *Eretz Yisrael* is blessed].

Adar

- 13th Fast of Esther
14th *Purim*
15th *Shushan Purim*

THE TENACH

The Bible, as we know it, is split up into three sections:

תורה [*Torah*] Five Books of Moses

נביאים [*Neviim*] The Prophets

כתובים [*Ketuvim*] The Writings

The first letter of each of the words spell תנייך [*Tenach*].

THE TORAH

The Five Books of Moses are:

בראשית [*Bereishit*] — Genesis

The Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

שמות [*Shemot*] — Exodus

Ten Plagues, Exodus from Egypt, Splitting of Reed Sea, Giving of Torah, Laws, Construction of *Mishkan* [Tabernacle].

ויקרא [*Vayikra*] — Leviticus

Laws of the Temple, Sacrifices, Priests, Purity.

במדבר [*Bamidbar*] — Numbers

Details of wanderings in desert, twelve spies, Korach's rebellion, Bilam's blessing.

דברים [*Devarim*] — Deuteronomy

Moses' farewell address to the Jews, the *Shema*, Revision of all Torah Law.

NEVIIM — THE PROPHETS

יהושע	Joshua
שופטים	Judges
שמואל א-ב	Samuel I, II
מלכים א-ב	Kings I, II
ישעיהו	Isaiah
ירמיה	Jeremiah
יחזקאל	Ezekiel
הושע	Hoshea
יואל	Joel
עמוס	Amos
עובדיה	Ovadiah
יונה	Jonah

מיכה	Micah
נחום	Nachum
חבקוק	Chabakuk
צפניה	Tzefania
חגי	Chaggai
זכריה	Zachariah
מלאכי	Malachi

KETUVIM — THE WRITINGS

תהלים	<i>Tehillim</i>	Psalms written by King David.
משלי	Proverbs	Solomon's Wisdom. Last chapter — <i>Eishet Chayil</i> .
איוב	Job	
שיר השירים	Song of Songs	
רות	Ruth	Read on <i>Shavuot</i>
איכה	<i>Eichah</i>	Lamentations. Written by Jeremiah; A lament over the destruction of the Temple. [Read on 9th Av]
קהלת	<i>Kobelet</i>	Ecclesiastes
אסתר	Esther	Read on <i>Purim</i>
דניאל	Daniel	
אזרא	Ezra	
נחמיה	Nechemiah	
דברי הימים א-ב	Chronicles I & II	



Chapter 4

≈ TORAH ≈

- ≈ *The Mishnah*
- ≈ *The Talmud*
- ≈ *Rambam — Maimonides*
- ≈ *Shulchan Aruch*
- ≈ *Jewish Law Today*
- ≈ *The Golden Chain*
- ≈ *Law and Custom*
- ≈ *Order of Learning*
- ≈ *Importance of Learning*
- ≈ *The Jews — A People of the Torah*

THE MISHNAH

As explained in Chapter 1, G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people in two parts.

- ≈ The Written Law — *Torah Shebichtav*.
- ≈ The Oral Law — the explanation of all 613 *mitzvot* in the Written Law — *Torah Shebaal Peh*.

Before Moses died, he passed the Oral Law on to Joshua. Joshua then passed it on to the leader of the generation after him and so on. The Oral Law was never written down — it was always memorized by each generation right up until Roman times.

Under Roman rule, the Jews were persecuted and the leader of the Jews, a man called Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi — Judah the Prince, saw that if he did not

write down the Oral Law, it would be forgotten. Subsequently, he wrote down the entire Oral Law and called this book the *Mishnah*. The *Mishnah* is divided into six sections or *Sedarim* [orders]. They are:

- 1) *Zeraim* Agricultural Laws
- 2) *Moed* Laws of Festivals
- 3) *Nashim* Laws concerning women
- 4) *Nezikin* Laws of business and damages
- 5) *Kadshim* Laws of the Temple and sacrifices
- 6) *Taharot* Laws of Purity

The *Mishnah* is popularly known as *Shas* — *Shisha Sedarim*.

THE TALMUD

Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi wrote the *Mishnah* in a very concise manner. In the few hundred years after his death, a tremendous amount of discussion took place, all based on the *Mishnah*. The discussion was written down in a book called the Talmud. In fact, two Talmuds were made:

- 1) The *Talmud Bavli* — Babylonian Talmud, edited in Babylon by two rabbis called Ravina and Rav Ashi.
- 2) The *Talmud Yerushalmi* — The Jerusalem Talmud, written in *Eretz Yisrael* and edited by Rabbi Yochanan.

The Talmud is huge and it contains exploration of the *Mishnah*, discussion, analysis, argument, stories, etc. Even today, all rabbis still study the Talmud. Learning the Talmud at the pace of one page a day, takes seven years to finish. This is called *Daf Yomi* — a page a day. Many great rabbis such as

Rashi [Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, France] wrote commentaries on the *Talmud*. Rashi's commentary on the *Chumash* is very famous and is based on the Talmud.

RAMBAM — MAIMONIDES

As you can imagine, learning through the entire Talmud is a major task. You have to learn it for many years with great diligence. About nine hundred years ago, a great Rabbi called Rambam [Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon — Moses Maimonides] wrote a summary of all the laws brought down in the Talmud and he called the book the *Mishneh Torah*. The Rambam left out much of the Talmudic discussion and only wrote the actual *halachot* — laws. Many Jews today throughout the world study Rambam every day. If one studies three chapters a day, one finishes the *Mishneh Torah* in just less than a year.

SHULCHAN ARUCH

Based on the Talmud and its commentaries, and the Rambam, a Rabbi in the 16th century called Rabbi Yosef Karo [who lived in Tzfat, Israel] wrote what probably is the most famous of all Jewish law books, called the *Shulchan Aruch*. The words *Shulchan Aruch* mean a "laid table". The *Shulchan Aruch* is a summary of all Jewish law applicable nowadays.

Everything on the table is in its correct place. Every law is easy to find in his book, which is divided into four sections;

- 1) *Orach Chayim* day-to-day laws, *Shabbat*,
Festivals
- 2) *Yoreh Deiah* dietary laws
- 3) *Even Hoezer* laws concerning women

4) *Choshen Mishpat* — business laws

JEWISH LAW TODAY

Until this very day, Jewish Law is decided by the *Shulchan Aruch*. When a Rabbi is asked a question, he will open a *Shulchan Aruch* to find the answer. If the law is not mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch*, he will search in the *Talmud* for an answer. Students who learn Jewish Law today, sit in a Talmudic College — a *Yeshivah*, and study the *Talmud* and *Shulchan Aruch*.

THE GOLDEN CHAIN

As illustrated above, the laws that we have today in *Shulchan Aruch* are based upon the laws in the Rambam, which are based on the Talmud, which is based on the *Mishnah*, which is based on what Moses received from G-d on Mount Sinai. The origin of all Jewish Law is from G-d on Sinai.

LAW AND CUSTOM

In addition to the numerous laws of the Torah, many customs have arisen that vary from community to community. The Hebrew word for law is *Halachah* or *Din*, and the word for custom is *Minhag*. Oriental Jews — *Sephardim*, have different customs than European Jews — *Ashkenazim*, although both adhere to the same laws.

ORDER OF LEARNING

As soon as a child starts to speak, his father should teach him the verse:

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב

“The Torah which Moses commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.”

This means that the Torah that Moses commanded us is the inheritance of every Jew. Then the child should learn the *Shema* — שמע ישראל. Every child should learn the *Aleph-Bet* and at the age of five, start to learn the *Chumash*. *Chumash* is usually learned with the explanation of Rashi. At a later age, a child will learn the *Mishnah*, and before *Bar Mitzvah*, every child should know of the basic laws brought in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING

It says in the *Shema*: “And you shall teach them [the laws] to your children.” Every father is obligated to teach his child Torah. A Jew without Torah learning is like a fish without water. A child should never be embarrassed to ask a question.

THE JEWS — A PEOPLE OF THE TORAH

It is true to say that what makes the Jewish people a nation is the Torah. Without the Torah, we have no identity. G-d promises us great rewards if we listen to the words of the Torah and keep the *mitzvot*.



Chapter 5

~ *TEFILLAH* — PRAYERS ~

- ~ *The Three Daily Prayers*
- ~ *The Texts of the Prayers*
- ~ *Kavanah*
- ~ *Request*
- ~ *Hebrew*
- ~ *Shacharit*
- ~ *Nussach*
- ~ *Minchah and Maariv*
- ~ *Minyan*
- ~ *The Synagogue*
- ~ *Mechitzah*
- ~ *Sefer Torah*
- ~ *Reading of the Torah*
- ~ *Aliyah*
- ~ *Maftir — Haftorah*
- ~ *Number of people called up to the Torah*
- ~ *Bar Mitzvah*
- ~ *Musaf — Additional Prayers for Shabbat*
- ~ *Yom Kippur*

THE THREE DAILY PRAYERS

A Jew prays three times daily.

Shacharit — the morning prayer

Minchah — the afternoon prayer

Maariv [or *Arvit*] — the evening prayer

Shacharit was instituted by Abraham, *Minchah* by Yitzchok and *Maariv* by Yaacov. Furthermore, *Shacharit* and *Minchah* correspond to the daily sacrifice in the Temple in the morning and the afternoon.

THE TEXT OF THE PRAYERS

THE SHEMA

The *Shema* is perhaps the most famous of our prayers. The first paragraph of the *Shema* is selected from the book of Deuteronomy [6:4-9] and it speaks of:

- ~ The belief in one G-d — *Hashem Echad* — G-d is One.
- ~ The love of G-d with all one's heart, soul and might.
- ~ The teaching of Torah to children.
- ~ The importance of learning Torah at all times even whilst travelling.
- ~ The command to recite the *Shema* twice daily, upon arising and before going to sleep.
- ~ The *mitzvah* of putting on *Tefillin*.
- ~ The *mitzvah* of having a *Mezuzah* on one's door.

The second paragraph is from Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and deals with reward and punishment, and the third paragraph, from Numbers 15:37-41, deals with the *mitzvah* of *Tzitzit* and a daily mention of the Exodus from Egypt.

The *Shema Yisrael* should be read twice a day, in the morning and evening. Reading the *Shema* has become part of the daily prayers. The *Shema* is also

read just before going to sleep. This is called "reading the *Shema* in bed".

It is customary to cover one's eyes with one's right hand when saying the first verse of the *Shema* in order to concentrate on the meaning of the verse.

The second verse of the *Shema* — *Baruch Shem* etc. — is said in a whisper [except on *Yom Kippur* when it is said aloud].

THE SHMONAH ESRAI

In days of old, every Jew spoke Hebrew and each individual composed their own prayers. When the Jews were exiled to Babylon after the destruction of the first Temple, not everybody was fluent in Hebrew. A group of 120 Rabbis [including such people as Mordechai, of *Purim* fame] called the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah*, the Men of the Great Assembly, composed a set prayer or *Tefillah* called the *Shmonah Esrai* which was to become the central part of each service. *Shmonah Esrai* means "eighteen", because in this prayer there are eighteen blessings [subsequently another blessing was added to make the total of 19 blessings]. Included in this prayer are requests for good health, income, success, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, *Moshiach*, peace etc. The *Shmonah Esrai* is also called the *Amidah* because *Amidah* means standing, and this prayer is said silently while standing with the feet together, facing Jerusalem.

On *Shabbat* and *Yomtov* variations were made to the *Amidah* to reflect the sanctity of the day. In fact, the first three and the last three blessings are a feature of every *Amidah*. The middle part varies

according to the occasion. The middle part of the weekday *Amidah* contains 13 blessings, making 19 in total. The *Amidah* of *Shabbat*, *Yomtov* and *Musaf* of *Rosh Chodesh* contain one central blessing dealing with the holiness of the day, making seven in total. On *Rosh Hashanah* there are three central blessings in the *Musaf* making nine in total.

Because certain people could not read Hebrew, the Rabbis instituted that by *Shacharit* and *Minchah*, the *Amidah* should be repeated by the *Chazzan* [the leader of the prayers, also known as the *Shliach Tzibur*] so that all could answer Amen to the blessings. The word "Amen" means "it is true and I believe in it."

The daily prayers are set out clearly in a book called the *Siddur*. *Siddur* comes from the word *seder*, meaning "order", because all the prayers are laid out in their correct order. One should always pray out of a *Siddur*.

KAVANAH — CONCENTRATION

The most important part of prayer is concentration. One should understand and think about the meaning of the words being said. "Know before whom you stand — before the Almighty King of Kings." Just as one would address a king with great respect and intense concentration, so too should this attitude be adopted in prayer standing before G-d. Clothes must be clean and neat, and neither talking nor idle chatter are permitted whilst praying. It is better to say a little with concentration than a lot without. Do not gabble. Each word should be weighed — sincerity is important.

REQUEST

G-d knows what we need, so why pray? We pray so that *we* may understand that everything we have comes from G-d. If we need something, we must automatically turn to G-d and request it. The *Siddur* is a Jew's best friend.

HEBREW

A person should preferably pray in Hebrew. If this is not possible, pray in a language which you understand.

SHACHARIT

Upon awakening in the morning, the head is bowed to say: *Modeh Ani Lefanecha Melech Chai Vekayam Shehechezarta Bee Nishmati B'chemla, Rabba Emunatecha.* "I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great."

The hands are then washed using a cup of water, three times alternately [right, left, right, left, right, left]. This is called *Netilat Yadayim* (or *Negel Vasser* in Yiddish), meaning, washing the hands.

After washing and dressing, a number of *Berachot* [blessings] are made to thank G-d for our essential faculties of speech, sight, hearing etc.

The *Shacharit* prayers are structured as follows:

- ~ A study of the daily sacrifices
- ~ *Baruch She'amar*
- ~ *P'sukei D'zimra* — Verses of praise [selected chapters of Psalms].
- ~ *Yishtabach and Barchu*
- ~ Two blessings before the *Shema*

- ~ *Shema* — When saying the first sentence, cover the eyes to concentrate. Kiss *Tzitzit* at appropriate places.
- ~ Blessing after the *Shema*
- ~ *Shmonah Esrei* — Said silently, standing, facing Jerusalem. Knees and head are bowed at opening two and closing two blessings.
- ~ *Tachanun* — A prayer of supplication. It is customary to lean ones head on one's arm
- ~ *Ashrei, Uvah L'tzion*
- ~ *Shir Shel Yom* — The song of the day.
- ~ *Ain Kelokaynu*
- ~ *Aleinu* — A beautiful summarizing prayer.

NUSSACH

It should be noted that there are slight variations in the text of the prayers as printed in different *Siddurim*. A text is called a *Nussach*. There are three main texts:

- a) *Nussach Ashkenaz* — the custom of Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe.
- b) *Nussach Sephard* — the custom of Spanish and Oriental Jews.
- c) *Nussach Arizal* — a text used by Chassidim following the kabbalistic text of Rabbi Yitzchok Luria (who was known as the Arizal)

MINCHAH AND MAARIV

Minchah, the afternoon prayer, should be said before sunset.

The structure of *Minchah* is:

- ~ *Ashrei* [Psalm 145]
- ~ *Amidah*
- ~ *Tachanun*

~ *Aleinu*

Maariv, the evening prayer, should be said at night after the appearance of three medium stars.

The structure of *Maariv* is:

~ *Barchu*

~ Two blessings before the *Shema*

~ The *Shema*

~ Two blessings after the *Shema*

~ *Amidah*

~ *Aleinu*

In some places, where it is difficult to call together a *minyan* [10 men] for both *Minchah* and *Maariv*, they can be recited one after another towards sunset.

MINYAN

If possible, a person should always pray with the congregation in a Synagogue. The minimum number of people required to form a congregation is ten men [over 13 years of age]. This is called a *minyan*. Saying prayers with a *minyan* is far more desirable than praying alone. Communal prayer is accepted immediately. If no *minyan* is available one must pray alone.

Certain parts of the service may only be said if a *minyan* is present. These include: *Kaddish*, *Barchu*, the Repetition of the *Amidah*, *Kedushah* and the reading of the Torah.

THE SYNAGOGUE

A Synagogue is a house of prayer. Inside a Synagogue you will find the following:

~ *Aron Hakodesh* — Holy Ark. The Ark is at the front of the Synagogue where the *Sifrei Torah*

[Holy Scrolls] are kept. The curtain in front of the Ark is called the *Parochet*. The Ark reminds us of the holiest part of the Tabernacle the Jewish people built in the desert, and later, of the Temple in Jerusalem.

- ~ *Bimah* — Platform. An elevated platform at the centre of the Synagogue from where the *Sefer Torah* is read to the congregation.
- ~ *Amud* — Lectern. On the right side of the *Aron Hakodesh*, is a lectern on which the *Chazzan* [prayer leader] places his *Siddur* and from where he prays [In many synagogues the *Chazzan* leads the prayers from the *Bimah*].
- ~ *Ner Tamid* — A continual light, usually suspended from the ceiling in front of the Ark. This constant flame symbolizes the *Menorah* in the Temple whose flame miraculously burned continually.

MECHITZAH

Men and women sit separately in a Synagogue. Some Synagogues have a ladies gallery upstairs. If the Synagogue is on one level, a partition called a *Mechitzah* divides the men and the women.

The Synagogue is a miniature Temple. It should be treated with great respect. The congregation is obligated to keep the Synagogue clean and to make it beautiful. It is always preferable to pray in a Synagogue even if no *minyan* is present.

SEFER TORAH

The *Sefer Torah*, Scroll of Law, is placed in the *Aron Hakodesh*. It is dressed with a mantle [a coat]; a *Choshen* [a breastplate]; a *Yad* [pointer] which the

Baal Koreh [Torah reader] uses to read; and a *Keter*, a crown placed on the *Atzei Chaim* [wooden poles around which the parchment is wound].

When the Torah is to be read, a man is honored with opening the Ark — *Petichah*. The *Sefer Torah* is removed from the Ark and handed to the *Shlich Tzibur* who then carries it to the *Bimah* from where it is read. It is customary to stand when the Ark is open and to kiss the *Sefer Torah* during this procession. When the *Sefer Torah* is placed on the *Bimah* it is always flanked by two men out of honor to the Torah.

READING OF THE TORAH

The Torah has 53 *Sidrot* [portions]. Every *Shabbat* we read the entire weekly *Sidra* in the Synagogue. Since there are only 52 weeks in the year, and also some festivals fall on *Shabbat*, there are certain *Shabbatot* on which we read two *Sidrot*.

From very early times, the Rabbis instituted that the first part of the weekly *Sidra* [i.e. up to *Sheni*] should be read on *Shabbat* afternoon during *Minchah*, and on Monday and Thursday mornings. In this way, there will never be three days without us hearing some words from the Torah.

ALIYAH

The weekly *Sidra* [portion] is split into seven sections. Although the *Sidra* is read by one man [usually the Rabbi or *Chazzan*], called the *Baal Koreh* [the reader], at each section a person is called up to the Torah. A call up to the Torah is called an *Aliyah*. One who has an *Aliyah* recites a special blessing

before and after the reading of the Torah, known as the Torah blessings.

When called up for an *Aliyah*, one should first kiss the part where the Torah is to be read with one's *Tallit* (or the Torah sash) and then recite the blessing whilst holding the *Atzei Chaim*. The person having the *Aliyah* should then say the words quietly along with the *Baal Koreh*. When the reading is finished, one kisses the end of the reading with one's *Tallit*, closes the Torah and recites the after blessing whilst holding the *Atzei Chaim*.

A *Kohen* [priest] is always called up to the Torah first, followed by a *Levi* [Levite], and then any Jewish male over *Bar Mitzvah* — 13 years of age.

After the Torah is read, a person is honored to lift the open *Sefer Torah* and show the text to the congregation. This is called *Hagbahah*. Another person is honored to close and dress the Torah. This is called *Gelilah*.

MAFTIR — HAFTORAH

In a particular period of Jewish history, the land of Israel was ruled by an oppressive non-Jewish government. The government did not allow the Jews to read the Torah. Instead of reading the *Sidra* from the Five Books of Moses, the Jews read every week a similar reading [in content] from the Prophets. After this harsh decree was abolished, the custom remained and nowadays on *Shabbat* after seven men have been called up to read the Torah, an additional person is called up to read first the *Maftir* [the last few verses of each *Sidra*], and then the portion from the Prophets which is called the *Haftorah*. On special

days such as *Rosh Chodesh*, *Yomtov* etc., a special *Haftorah* is read connected with the theme of that day.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE CALLED UP TO THE TORAH

As mentioned, on *Shabbat*, seven men are called for an *Aliyah*, and an additional one for *Maftir/Haftorah*.

- ~ On *Yom Kippur*, six are called up.
- ~ On *Yomtov*, five are called up.
- ~ On *Rosh Chodesh* [the first day of the new month], four are called up.
- ~ On regular Mondays and Thursday and *Shabbat* afternoon, three are called up.

BAR MITZVAH

On a boy's thirteenth Hebrew birthday, he becomes obliged to keep all the *Mitzvot*. He may become part of a *minyán* and, amidst great celebration, is called up to the Torah on the occasion of the first Torah reading on or after his Hebrew birthday. Usually the *Bar Mitzvah* boy reads the *Maftir/Haftorah* [and sometimes the entire *Sidra*] on the *Shabbat* following his thirteenth birthday.

MUSAF — ADDITIONAL PRAYERS FOR SHABBAT

On *Shabbat*, after *Shacharit*, the entire weekly *Sidra* is read, followed by *Maftir* and *Haftorah*. An additional prayer is added on *Shabbat* called *Musaf*. *Musaf* means "addition" corresponding to the additional sacrifice in the Temple on *Shabbat*. An additional prayer — *Musaf* — is also added on *Rosh Chodesh* and *Yomtov*.

YOM KIPPUR

On *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day in the Jewish year, two additional prayers are said.

~ *Musaf* after *Shacharit*.

~ *Neilah* after *Minchah*. The word *Neilah* means closing — the gates of judgment are closing and the inscription for a good year is sealed.



Chapter 6

~ SHABBAT ~

- ~ *The Purpose of Shabbat*
- ~ *Kavod and Oneg Shabbat*
- ~ *Kiddush and Havdallah*
- ~ *Shabbat Candles*
- ~ *Meals*
- ~ *The Order of Shabbat*
- ~ *Forbidden Activities on Shabbat — 39 Melachot*
- ~ *Rabbinic Prohibitions*
- ~ *Attitude Towards Forbidden Activities*
- ~ *The Spirit of Shabbat*
- ~ *Special Shabbatot*

THE PURPOSE OF SHABBAT

The Fourth of the Ten Commandments is: “Remember [*Zachor*] the *Shabbat* day to keep it holy ... for G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh” [Exodus 20:8].

By resting on *Shabbat* we declare our belief in G-d as the Creator of the Universe.

Shabbat is the cornerstone of the Jewish religion. It is the one day in a week that we should divert our attention from weekday matters and concentrate on the spiritual purpose of life — to serve G-d through the Torah and *Mitzvot*. It recharges our spiritual batteries for the week.

In Deuteronomy 5:12 the Torah states: “Observe [*Shamor*] the *Shabbat* day to keep it holy.” This observance refers to the prohibition of working on *Shabbat*.

Shabbat has a calm and serene atmosphere all of its own. We don’t work, drive, surf the internet, answer the phone, open mail or write on *Shabbat*.

Shabbat is a time for the whole family to attend the Synagogue, eat the *Shabbat* meal together and absorb the holiness of the day. Parents spend time and learn with their children. Rabbis have always gathered their congregations and taught the Torah on *Shabbat*.

KAVOD AND ONEG SHABBAT

The Prophets tell us to honor *Shabbat* [*Kavod* means honor], and delight in *Shabbat* [*Oneg* means delight]. *Kavod Shabbat* is to wear special *Shabbat* clothing and *Oneg Shabbat* comes through having fine food and wine.

KIDDUSH AND HAVDALLAH

A special blessing is made to sanctify the arrival of *Shabbat*. This is called *Kiddush* and is recited to fulfill the *mitzvah* to Remember [*Zachor*] the *Shabbat* day to make it holy. The *Kiddush* is made before the meal on Friday night. The blessing is made holding a cup [*becher*] of wine. *Kiddush* is also said before the daytime meal.

Another blessing is made to signal the end of *Shabbat*. This ceremony is called *Havdallah*, which means separation or division as it separates *Shabbat* from the weekdays. The *Havdallah* is recited after

the appearance of three medium stars on Saturday night. It consists of four blessings:

- 1) *Borei Pri Hagafen* over the wine,
- 2) *Borei Minei Besamim* over fragrant spices called *Besamim*,
- 3) *Borei Meorei Haish* over the flame of a special plaited *Havdallah* candle,
- 4) *Hamavdil Bein Kodesh Lechol* — a blessing referring to the separation between *Shabbat* and the rest of the week.

SHABBAT CANDLES

To honor the *Shabbat*, women light *Shabbat* candles to usher in the *Shabbat*. The candles must be lit at least 18 minutes before sunset on Friday night. Married women light two candles and girls one. [Some women light an additional candle for each child]. The candles should be lit on the table where the Friday night meal is eaten. It is customary to give some money to charity before the candles are lit. Once the candles have been lit all the *Shabbat* laws apply.

MEALS

Three meals are eaten on *Shabbat*.

- 1) Friday night.
- 2) *Shabbat* day.
- 3) *Shabbat* afternoon — *Seudah Shlishit* [third meal].

At each meal the hands are washed [*Netilat Yadayim*], and *Hamotzee* [the blessing for bread] is said over two *Challot* called *Lechem* [bread] *Mishneh* [double]. *Challah* is special plaited bread made for *Shabbat*. Two *Challot* are used to symbolize the

double portion of manna which fell on Friday when the Jews were in the wilderness. The *Challot* are covered with a *Challah* cloth to symbolize the covering of the manna with dew.

It is customary for fish to be served at every meal. Foods which are delicacies should be served to honor the *Shabbat*. Grace after Meals [*Birkat Hamazon*] is recited after each meal. Special songs called *Zemirot* are sung during the *Shabbat* meals which create an atmosphere of holiness and joy at the *Shabbat* table. It is also customary for *Divrei Torah* [words of Torah — Torah thoughts] to be said by the table.

THE ORDER OF SHABBAT

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Preparation for *Shabbat*; bathing, cutting nails, dressing in special *Shabbat* clothing, cleaning house, cooking all food, setting table with a white tablecloth and finest tableware, making beds, preparing candles, setting time switches for heating and lighting. Light candles 18 minutes before sunset.

FRIDAY NIGHT

Minchah, *Kabalat Shabbat* [acceptance of *Shabbat*], *Maariv*. Come home. Some families have a custom for parents to bless their children before *Kiddush*. Sing *Shalom Aleichem*, *Aishet Chayil* [see *Siddur*], make *Kiddush*, wash hands, *Hamotzee*, meal, Grace.

SHABBAT MORNING IN SYNAGOGUE

Shacharit, reading of *Sidra*, *Maftir/Haftorah*, *Musaf*, come home, *Kiddush*, wash hands, *Hamotzee*, meal, *Zemirot*, Grace.

SHABBAT AFTERNOON

Minchah, *Pirkei Avot* [Ethics of the Fathers read during summer months, see *Siddur*], *Seudah Shlishit*, wash hands, *Hamotzee*, meal, Grace. [Some people just eat cake or fruit for the *Seudah Shlishit*].

MOTZEI SHABBAT [TERMINATION OF SHABBAT]

Maariv, *Havdallah*.

Melave Malka is a light meal eaten after the termination of *Shabbat* to accompany the *Shabbat Queen*.

FORBIDDEN ACTIVITIES ON SHABBAT— 39 MELACHOT

In order to preserve the *Shabbat*/Holy Day atmosphere, the Torah tells us that no work [*melachah*] may be done on *Shabbat*. The Rabbis detailed the type of forbidden work into 39 categories which correspond to the 39 types of work done in the construction of the Tabernacle. These are called the 39 *melachot*. The following list shows that not only is business forbidden on *Shabbat*, but many activities in the home are also forbidden. All these prohibitions are intended to allow a person to concentrate on the spiritual side of *Shabbat*.

- 1) CARRYING: It is forbidden to carry any object in a public domain, i.e. in the street. E.g., one may not carry a *Tallit* or *Siddur* to the Synagogue on *Shabbat* rather, the *Tallit* and *Siddur* should be left in a safe place in the Synagogue.

It should be noted that some cities have an *Eruv*, an enclosure which surrounds the city turning the whole city into a private domain in which one may carry. In a place where

there is a *kosher Eruv* under rabbinic supervision one may carry in the street.

- 2) BURNING: One may not light a fire on *Shabbat*. For example, smoking, turning on a gas flame to cook, or turning on lights, are all forbidden. Driving is included in this prohibition. Each time one accelerates new fire is created in the engine. On *Shabbat* it is forbidden to drive.
- 3) EXTINGUISHING: For example, turning OFF the lights is prohibited. Most *Shabbat* observant homes have a time switch which turns their lights on and off automatically on *Shabbat*.
- 4) FINISHING: e.g. all forms of repair.
- 5) WRITING: e.g. letter writing. One may also not send e-mail or text messages.
- 6) ERASING: e.g. erasing writing.
- 7) COOKING: All *Shabbat* food must be cooked before *Shabbat*. The food is kept hot by placing it on an electric hotplate. On a gas range an aluminum sheet called a Blech is used to cover the gas range to facilitate slow cooking. All flames on the stove must be lit before *Shabbat* and must not be adjusted on *Shabbat*.
- 8) WASHING: e.g. washing clothes.
- 9) SEWING: Needlework, etc
- 10) TEARING: Includes undoing any form of sewing.
- 11) KNOTTING: i.e. a permanent knot. A bow is permitted.
- 12) UNTYING: as above.

- 13) SHAPING: e.g. cutting up an object to shape.
- 14) PLOUGHING: Includes any activity that improves the ground, e.g. raking the lawn.
- 15) PLANTING: This includes gardening and watering flowers.
- 16) REAPING: e.g. cutting any growing things.
- 17) HARVESTING: Any harvesting operation such as binding bales, etc.
- 18) THRESHING: Any operation where food is separated from its natural container.
- 19) WINNOWERING: e.g. winnowing grain.
- 20) SELECTING: i.e. picking out the bad from the good. This is one reason we eat gefilte fish on *Shabbat*, so that we need not separate the bones from the fish.
- 21) SIFTING: Sifting flour, straining liquids.
- 22) GRINDING: Milling grain, grinding herbs for medicine.
- 23) KNEADING: Any combination of powder with liquid to form a dough.
- 24) COMBING: e.g. wool or cotton.
- 25) SPINNING
- 26) DYEING
- 27) CHAIN STITCHING e.g. knitting.
- 28) WARPING
- 29) WEAVING: Including needlework and embroidery.
- 30) UNRAVELLING
- 31) BUILDING
- 32) DEMOLISHING
- 33) TRAPPING

- 34) SHEARING: i.e. removing hair from any creature.
- 35) SLAUGHTERING
- 36) SKINNING
- 37) TANNING
- 38) SMOOTHING
- 39) MARKING

RABBINIC PROHIBITIONS

In addition to the 39 categories of forbidden work on *Shabbat* which are Biblically prohibited, the Rabbis added some prohibitions. To list them all is not within the scope of this book. However, two examples will be given.

- 1) *Muktzeh*: In order to preserve the spirit of the *Shabbat* day, one may not move certain objects which have no direct use on *Shabbat*, e.g. bricks or money. Furthermore, one may not move any object which may be used to do some forbidden activity, e.g. a pen.
- 2) Speech: The Rabbis instructed that on *Shabbat* we should not discuss certain subjects which have no relevance to *Shabbat*, e.g. prices in shops. We should try to direct our speech to Torah discussion.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS FORBIDDEN ACTIVITIES

After reading the whole list of forbidden activities, one may think that *Shabbat* must be very boring. On the contrary, only because you are not allowed to do certain activities does this give you an opportunity to enjoy the spiritual side of *Shabbat*, which would not be enjoyed otherwise.

THE SPIRIT OF SHABBAT

Throughout the week we look forward to *Shabbat*. *Shabbat* is called a “queen” — just as we would prepare for a royal visit, so too do we prepare for *Shabbat*. Choice foods are prepared, the finest clothes put on, and an atmosphere of rest and spiritual delight descends on the Jewish home.

SPECIAL SHABBATOT

There are certain *Shabbatot* which have special names because of the time in the year in which they fall, e.g.: *Shabbat HaGadol* — *Shabbat* before *Pesach*.

Shabbat Chazon — *Shabbat* before *Tisha B'Av*.
Shabbat Nachamu — *Shabbat* after *Tisha B'Av*.
Shabbat Shuvah — *Shabbat* before *Yom Kippur*.

The names of these *Shabbatot* are often the first words of that week's *Haftorah*.

Shabbat Mevarchim is the name of any *Shabbat* that is the *Shabbat* before *Rosh Chodesh* — the first day of the new month. On *Shabbat Mevarchim* a special prayer is recited in the synagogue blessing the forthcoming month.



Chapter 7

~ THE FESTIVALS ~

- ~ *Pesach*
- ~ *Shavuot*
- ~ *Rosh Hashanah*
- ~ *Yom Kippur*
- ~ *Sukkot*
- ~ *Chanukah*
- ~ *Purim*
- ~ *Rosh Chodesh*
- ~ *The Fast Days*

PESACH

The festival of *Pesach* [15th-22nd Nissan] celebrates the miraculous exodus of the Jews from Egypt. The word *Pesach* means “Passover” recalling the “passing over” of G-d over the Jewish houses during the tenth plague of the slaying of the firstborn. The festival is also called *Chag Hamatzot*, the festival of *matzot*, and *Zman Cheruteinoo*, the Festival of our Freedom.

During this festival no leavened bread — *Chametz*— may be eaten or found in the home of a Jew. *Chametz* includes cake, cereals, crackers, biscuits, yeast, pasta and whisky.

Preparations for the festival start early as the whole house is spring-cleaned and any *Chametz* removed. Finally, the kitchen is koshered for *Pesach*.

Separate sets of pots, pans, crockery and cutlery are used on *Pesach*.

The highlight of *Pesach* is the *Seder*— the meal on the first two nights of *Pesach* [N.B. in Israel there is only one *Seder* night]. Shop well in advance for all *Pesach* needs, such as wine, *matza*, meat/poultry, fish, eggs, lettuce, horseradish etc. All items should have “Kosher for Passover” labels.

The *Shabbat* before *Pesach* is called *Shabbat Hagadol*, and it is customary on this *Shabbat* for the Rabbi to teach the congregation the laws of *Pesach*.

BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

בדיקת = searching חמץ = *Chametz*

On the eve of 14th Nissan, the head of every household searches the whole house for any remaining *Chametz*. The search is made with a candle and a feather [to brush crumbs], a wooden spoon [to collect crumbs], and a bag in which to put the *Chametz*. It is customary that before he starts the search, ten pieces of bread are “hidden” by another member of the family, and the head of the family has to find these pieces whilst thoroughly searching the whole house. A special blessing is made before the search — *Baruch Ata...Al Biur Chametz*.

BURNING AND SELLING THE CHAMETZ

Any *Chametz* found during the search is collected in the bag, stored carefully and burned on the morning of 14th Nissan. Burning the *Chametz* is called *Serayfat Chametz*

After burning the *Chametz*, an announcement is made that all remaining *Chametz* which was not found during the search should be worthless like the

dust on the ground. This is called *Bittul Chametz* — annulling the *Chametz*. It is also customary to sell any remaining *Chametz* [e.g. Whisky etc.] to a non-Jew. This sale of *Chametz* should be done through a Rabbi. Any *Chametz* sold should be locked away in a safe place such as the garage. This sale is called *Mechirat Chametz*. After *Pesach*, the non-Jew sells back the *Chametz* to the owner.

EREV PESACH

Erev means eve. On 14th Nissan, all firstborn males must fast [unless they attend a *siyum*, a celebratory completion of a tractate of the Talmud, usually made by the rabbi in the synagogue]. All preparations for the *Seder* should be made, i.e. cooking food and preparing lettuce, horseradish, *charoset* etc.

During Temple times, the Paschal lamb would have been sacrificed on *Erev Pesach*, roasted and eaten at the *Seder*.

Before sunset, women light *Yomtov* candles to usher in the festival.

THE SEDER

The Torah commands us that on the night of the 15th of Nissan we must re-tell the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. We must also eat *matza* and *maror* [bitter herbs] and drink four cups of wine. The evening must take on a particular order. The word *Seder* means “order”.

MATZA — UNLEAVENED BREAD

The *matza* must be baked in less than 18 minutes from the time of contact of the flour with the water.

Special flour and water are used. The speed with which *matzot* are baked is incredible. It is preferable to use hand-baked "*Shmura*" *matza* for the *Seder*. *Shmura* means "guarded", i.e. the flour has been guarded so that it did not get wet before the baking process. This could have made the flour *Chametz*, for if flour is left in contact with water for 18 minutes, it leavens and becomes *Chametz*. If no hand-baked *matza* is available, square, machine *matza* may be used. Three *matzot* are placed one on top of the other and covered with a special *matza* cloth. The following items are placed on top of the *matza* cloth. (Some place these items on a special "Seder Plate".)

Egg — To symbolize the *Yomtov* sacrifice in the Temple.

Maror — Horseradish. Bitter herbs remind us of the bitter times in Egypt.

Chazeret — Lettuce, for use with the *Pesach* sandwich [see later].

Karpas — Parsley, potato or onion. A small piece of vegetable to be dipped in salt water.

Zeroah— Shank bone. Some use a roasted chicken neck, to symbolize the *Pesach* lamb which was eaten roasted.

Charoset— A mixture of apples, pears, nuts and wine.

The order of the *Seder* is as follows;

Kadesh: On return from the Synagogue, the table is already set with the finest cutlery and dishes. The *Seder* plate is arranged and *Kiddush* is made [see *Shabbat*]. Drink first cup of wine.

Urchatz: The hands are washed, three times on the right and three times on the left, without making a blessing.

Karpas: A small piece of vegetable is dipped into salt water and eaten.

Yachat: The middle *matza* is broken in two and the larger part is set aside for the *Afikoman* [dessert] to be eaten at the end of the meal.

Maggid: Children ask the “Four Questions” — *Mah Nishtana* — and the story of the Exodus is retold from a book called the *Haggadah*. Drink second cup of wine.

Rachtzah: The hands are washed three times on the right, and three times on the left, this time with the blessing *Baruch Ata...Al Netilat Yadayim*.

Motzi Matza: The blessing is made over the *matza* and a piece of *matza* is eaten. One should eat at least 1 oz. or 27 grams of *matza* within four minutes.

Maror: Eat bitter herbs.

Korech: Make a sandwich of *matza* and bitter herbs.

Shulchan Orech: Eat a festive meal. *Hors d'oeuvres* is the boiled egg dipped in salt water. No roast meat is eaten at this meal.

Tzafun: Eat *Afikoman* for dessert. Nothing else should be eaten after the *Afikoman*.

Beirach: Say Grace after Meals. Drink third cup of wine.

Hallel: Sing praises to G-d. Drink fourth cup of wine.

Nirtzah: Next year in Jerusalem.

THE MATZA AND WINE

Both the *matza* and wine should be under strict Rabbinical supervision. If one cannot drink four cups of wine, it should be diluted with grape juice. Each cup of wine must contain at least 86 ml.

THE SEDER ATMOSPHERE

On the *Seder* night, a person should imagine that he himself went out of Egypt. We should conduct ourselves like free men — reclining on pillows to the left side. The first *Seder* should finish by midnight but at the second *Seder*, one should talk about the Exodus of Egypt until the early hours of the morning. Involve the children — questions and answers — the *Haggadah*.

THE EIGHT DAYS OF PESACH

Special *Yomtov* [festival] clothing are worn for the eight days of *Pesach*. Only *matza* and kosher for Passover foods may be eaten. The first and last two days of *Pesach* are *Yomtov*, i.e. restrictions similar to *Shabbat* apply with two exceptions;

- 1) One may cook on *Yomtov* [using a pre-existing flame, as striking a match is forbidden].
- 2) One may carry those items necessary for *Yomtov* in the street.

The intermediate days — *Chol Hamoed* — do not have the restrictions of a *Yomtov*, yet only work activity needed for the festival are permitted. The seventh day of *Pesach* is a *Yomtov* on which we celebrate the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea [*Yam Suf*]. It is called *Shvii shel Pesach*. The last day of *Pesach* is called *Acharon shel Pesach*.

In Israel, Pesach is only seven days. If travelling to Israel for *Pesach*, consult a Rabbi as to whether one should keep one or two days *Yomtov*.

SHAVUOT

49 days after the Jews came out of Egypt, they stood before Mount Sinai and G-d gave them the Torah. The Torah was given on the 6th of Sivan and on this day we have a festival of *Shavuot* to celebrate the giving of the Torah. The word *Shavuot* means "weeks". In great anticipation of *Shavuot*, we count the 49 days, seven weeks, from *Pesach* to *Shavuot*. This counting is called *Sefirat Ha'Omer*. We start counting [with a special blessing each day] on the second day of *Pesach*.

Just like you count down the days to a birthday, so too do we count down the days to *Shavuot*. With each day our excitement grows.

THE OMER

The period between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* is called the *Omer* period. During this period the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died, so we observe some rules of mourning. It is forbidden to have a haircut or get married during the *Omer*. This excludes *Lag B'Omer*, the 33rd day of the *Omer* [18th Iyar] which is a day of rejoicing.

EREV SHAVUOT — THE EVE OF SHAVUOT

On the eve of *Shavuot*, we wash, have a haircut, and put on *Yomtov* clothes. Food is cooked in preparation, especially milky dishes such as cheesecake. On *Shavuot* when the Torah was given, the Jews could only eat milky dishes since their meat

dishes had previously been used for non-kosher meat. [Since the laws were given at Mount Sinai, the dishes were not kosher]. To commemorate this, we eat dairy foods on *Shavuot*. Furthermore, just as a mother feeds her baby milk, so too when the Jewish nation was born at Sinai, it was fed with milk/Torah.

Candles are lit before sunset to usher in the *Yomtov*. *Shabbat* restrictions apply on *Yomtov* with the two exceptions mentioned above.

LE'IL SHAVUOT— THE NIGHT OF SHAVUOT

Kiddush is made and after the *Yomtov* meal, it is customary to stay up the entire night of *Shavuot* and engage in the study of Torah. In fact, one reads a special book called *Tikkun Le'il Shavuot*, which is a collection of excerpts from *Tenach*, *Mishnah* and *Zohar*, and an enumeration of all the 613 commandments.

ASERET HADIBROT— THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

In the morning in Synagogue, the Torah reading is the description of the Giving of the Torah on Sinai. When the Ten Commandments are read, it is customary to stand. In some places the Synagogue is decorated with flowers to recall the Sinai desert which miraculously blossomed at the time the Torah was given. Great effort must be made that the whole family, including small children and babies should be in Synagogue for the reading of the Ten Commandments. The Book of Ruth is also read on *Shavuot*.

After Synagogue a *Kiddush* with dairy foods such as cheesecake, yogurt, blintzes and sour cream is

served, We then wait one hour, and then eat a meaty *Yomtov* meal. In Israel, the *Yomtov* of *Shavuot* is one day only and outside Israel it is two days.

ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh Hashanah [1st & 2nd Tishrei] is the first day of the Jewish Year. Literally translated it means the head [*Rosh*] of the year [*Hashanah*] i.e. just as the head controls the body, so too one is judged by G-d on *Rosh Hashanah* and decisions are made in the Heavenly Court above for the whole year. For this reason, *Rosh Hashanah* is also called *Yom HaDin* — the Day of Judgment. On *Rosh Hashanah*, G-d looks at all human beings and decides what will happen to them in the coming year. His decision is based on our conduct in the previous year — G-d carefully weighs our good and bad deeds on Heavenly weighing scales and if the good deeds outweigh the bad, one is written down in the Book of Life.

Rosh Hashanah is also the day when we crown G-d as our King. It is like the coronation of a king when all his subjects vow to be loyal to the crown. The coronation is heralded with trumpets. The *Shofar* [ram's horn] that we blow on *Rosh Hashanah* is our trumpet and it reminds us to be fully devoted to G-d, His Torah and *Mitzvot*.

We describe G-d on *Rosh Hashanah* as *Avinu Malkeinu* — Our Father, Our King.

- ~ Our Father let Him act as a Father, have mercy on us and grant us a happy and sweet new year.
- ~ Our King — we reaffirm our loyalty and dedication to follow His command.

THE MONTH OF ELUL

The month of Elul is a month of preparation for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Just as in any business, where the director will assess the profits or losses of the business at the end of the year, at the end of the Jewish year in the month of Elul, we must make an account of our actions and deeds during the year. If we have offended anybody, we must ask them for forgiveness. In Elul, one's whole conduct should be more sober in view of the High Holy Days coming. It is a good time to check one's *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot* to make sure they are kosher.

In the week before *Rosh Hashanah*, we get up extra early and say *Selichot* — prayers asking for G-d's forgiveness.

On *Rosh Hashanah*, the King is in the Palace, during Elul the King [G-d] is in the field, i.e. G-d is easily approachable and accepts all with a smiling face.

EREV ROSH HASHANAH

As on *Erev Shabbat* you should bath, have a haircut and put on *Yomtov* clothes. The table should be set and a *Machzor* [special *Siddur* for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*] prepared.

In the Synagogue a white *Parochet* [curtain] is hung in front of the Ark.

Before Sunset, the women light the *Yomtov* candles. After *Maariv* it is customary to wish each other a *Ketiva V'Chatima Tova* — a good inscription for a sweet new year.

THE PRAYERS

The *Musaf Amidah* of *Rosh Hashanah* is very special in that we concentrate on three themes:

- ~ *Malchiot* — saying verses from the *Tenach* which proclaim G-d as our King.
- ~ *Zichronot* — verses which ask G-d to remember us for the good.
- ~ *Shofrot* — verses which talk about the *Shofar*.

In one of the main prayers, we proclaim: “And repentance and prayer and charity will remove any bad decree.”

THE SHOFAR

The special *mitzvah* of *Rosh Hashanah* is the *Shofar*. The *Shofar* is a ram’s horn. It is blown:

- 1) To herald the coronation of G-d as our King.
- 2) To arouse us to repent.

The *Shofar* is blown with three distinct notes:

- ~ *Tekiah* — a long uninterrupted blast
- ~ *Shevarim* — three short blasts
- ~ *Teruah* — nine bleeps

Altogether the *Shofar* is sounded 100 times on *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Shofar* is curved to remind us to bow ourselves before G-d.

THE MEALS

As on every *Yomtov*, two festive meals are eaten, one by night and one by day after attending the synagogue. On the first night of *Rosh Hashanah* it is customary to eat only sweet foods so that G-d should grant us a sweet year. So:

- 1) Sweet wine is used for *kiddush*.
- 2) The *Challah* is dipped into honey.

- 3) Sweet apple is dipped into honey and eaten at the beginning of the meal.
- 4) Sweet vegetables e.g. *Tzimas* [carrots with honey and raisins] are eaten at the meal with fatty meat indicating that the year should be fat [i.e. prosperous] and sweet.
- 5) Pomegranate — our merits should be as numerous as its seeds.

On the second night of *Rosh Hashanah* a new fruit should be placed on the table.

THE SPIRIT OF ROSH HASHANAH

The atmosphere of *Rosh Hashanah* should be festive yet serious and sincere in view of the fact that we are being judged on this day. Imagine how you would feel on the day of a big court case you were involved in. Refrain from idle chatter and wasting time. Concentrate on prayer, learning and good deeds. Many people recite *Tehillim* (Psalms).

TASHLICH

It is customary on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*, after *Minchah*, to go to a pool of water, river, sea etc. where there are fish, and to symbolically cast our sins into the water. This is called *Tashlich*.

THE TEN DAYS OF REPENTANCE

The ten days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are called the Ten Days of Repentance. During these days, we should make a special effort to make sure our conduct is as it should be. These are days in which our good conduct may tip the scales and secure us a good new year.

YOM KIPPUR

The 10th of Tishrei is *Yom Kippur* — the Day of Atonement. It is the holiest day in the Jewish year. With *Teshuvah* — repentance — G-d will forgive our misdeeds and seal us in the Book of Life.

On *Yom Kippur* one may not;

- 1) Eat. The fast commences before sunset on the 9th and finishes at nightfall on the 10th.
- 2) Drink
- 3) Wash — even when washing our hands in the morning, we only wash to our knuckles.
- 4) Wear leather shoes. Sneakers, slippers [not leather] etc are permitted.
- 5) Cohabit.

Boys from the age of *Bar Mitzvah* and girls from the age of *Bat Mitzvah* must fast all day. Children aged 11 and above should fast for part of the day.

EREV YOM KIPPUR

On the day before *Yom Kippur*, it is a *mitzvah* to eat a festive meal. One who eats and drinks on the 9th of Tishrei is considered as if he fasted for two days. One should give a lot of money to charity on this day.

Early in the morning, we do *kaparot*, i.e. wave a chicken round our heads and say — this chicken shall be my atonement, i.e. this chicken shall be given to the poor and the merit of this *mitzvah* of *Tzedakah* shall stand in my good stead. Some perform the *kaparot* service with fish or money.

Men immerse themselves in a *mikvah* [ritual pool of pure rain water] to purify themselves. *Yomtov*

clothes are worn. Married men wear a *kittel* [white coat] in Synagogue with a *Tallit*.

KOL NIDREI

The candles are lit and all go to Synagogue. All *Shabbat* restrictions are in force on *Yom Kippur*. The service starts with *Kol Nidrei* [an annulment of vows]. The Torah Scrolls are removed from the *Aron Hakodesh* and the *Chazzan* chants *Kol Nidrei*, followed by *Maariv*.

PRAYERS

At the end of each *Amidah* a special prayer called *Al Chait* is said. *Al Chait* is a list of all common sins, and when we read down the list we should repent for all our *aveirot* [sins]. It is customary to tap the heart with the right fist, as if to say — it is you, i.e. the *Yetzer Hora* [see chapter on *middot*] which has caused me to sin. This verbal expression of our sins is called *Vidui*. Doing *Teshuvah* is the special *mitzvah* of *Yom Kippur*.

During *Musaf*, we read of the special service of the *Kohen Gadol* — the High Priest in the Temple on *Yom Kippur*. When we read the section where the *Kohen Gadol* mentions G-d's Name, we bow and prostrate ourselves.

On *Yom Kippur* [as well as on other *Yamim Tovim*] a special memorial prayer called *Yizkor* is recited in which people remember their deceased relatives and pledge *Tzedakah* in their merit. In many places it is the custom that children who have both parents still alive go out of the Synagogue whilst *Yizkor* is recited.

MINCHAH

At *Minchah*, the *Torah* is read followed by a special *Maftir* called *Maftir Yonah*. This is the story of Jonah and the whale. The story teaches us of the repentance of the people of Nineveh.

NEILAH

The concluding service of *Yom Kippur* is called *Neilah* which means “closing”, i.e. G-d’s books are closing and being sealed and this is our last chance to be inscribed for a good year. Many sincere tears are shed at *Neilah*. After *Neilah*, the *Shofar* is sounded once to signal the termination of *Yom Kippur*.

SUKKOT

The festival of *Sukkot* starts on 15th Tishrei, five days after *Yom Kippur*. On *Sukkot* we:

- ~ Sit in a *Sukkah* — a temporary dwelling with a roof of sticks and leaves.
- ~ Shake the *Arbaah Minim*.

THE SUKKAH

When the Jews were in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d protected them from the blazing sun and heat of the desert with Divine clouds of protection. Furthermore, the Jews built *Sukkot* — temporary structures with thatched roofs which protected them from the sun. To symbolize this, we dwell in a *Sukkah* for seven days, from the 15th-22nd Tishrei. We must eat and drink [and some sleep] inside the *Sukkah*. The *Sukkah* reminds us:

- ~ of G-d’s constant protection of the Jewish nation.

~ That just as the *Sukkah* is a temporary dwelling, so too life is temporary and this world is only a corridor to the Palace of the World to Come.

The *Sukkah* must have at least three walls and the roof — the *Schach* — must be made from sticks, leaves, pine, laurel etc, i.e. things that grow from the ground. The *Schach* must be thick enough that the shade inside the *Sukkah* is greater than the sun, but not so thick as to be rainproof.

In short, during *Sukkot*, one should move out of the house and one's main dwelling place should be in the *Sukkah*. Eat, drink, sleep, learn and pray in the *Sukkah*. A special blessing [*LaysHAVE BaSukkah*] is made when sitting and eating in the *Sukkah*.

THE ARBAAH MINIM

Every day of *Sukkot* [except on *Shabbat*] we shake the *Arbaah Minim* — the four species:

- ~ *Lulav*— Palm branch [tall and thin]
- ~ *Eetrog*— Citrus Fruit
- ~ *Hadass*— Myrtle branch
- ~ *Aravot* — Willow branch

We take a *Lulav*, three *Hadassim* and two *Aravot*, bind them together and shake them, together with the *Eetrog*, in all directions.

The *Arbaah Minim* symbolize many things, for example:

- ~ *Lulav* — has taste [i.e. the date of the palm] but no smell — A Jew learned in Torah but lacking in *mitzvot*.
- ~ *Eetrog* — has taste and smell — A Jew learned in Torah but with many *mitzvot*.

~ *Hadass* — has smell but no taste — A Jew with many *mitzvot* but unlearned.

~ *Aravot* — has no taste and no smell — An unlearned Jew lacking in *mitzvot*.

The *Arbaah Minim* represent the four types of Jews, as above. We bind them all together to show Jewish unity and that all Israel must serve G-d. Also,

~ *Lulav* = spine

~ *Etrog* = heart

~ *Hadass* = eyes

~ *Aravot* = lips

Service of G-d must be with the whole body.

YOMTOV

The first two days of *Sukkot* are *Yomtov*, and *Shabbat* restrictions apply except for cooking [using a pre-existing flame] and carrying. Festive meals are eaten by night and day and candles are lit at night [in the *Sukkah*]. *Kiddush* is made before every meal. One should be happy and rejoice on *Yomtov*. The last two days of *Sukkot* are called *Shmini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*. The intermediate days of the festival are called *Chol Hamoed*.

SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEVA

In Temple times during *Sukkot*, great celebrations with singing and dancing took place, and these celebrations were called *Simchat* [the joy of] *Beit Hashoeva* [the water drawing]. Even today, each night of *Sukkot* we sing, dance and rejoice. The Talmud says that during *Sukkot*, there was so much rejoicing, people hardly slept a wink for seven days.

Every day of *Sukkot*, *Hallel* is recited and the Torah is read. After *Hallel*, it is customary to encircle

the *Bimah* with the *Arbaah Minim* in hand. This service is called *Hoshaanot*. [Some say *Hoshaanot* after *Musaf*]

HOSHANAH RABBAH

The last day of *Chol Hamoed* is called *Hoshanah Rabbah*. On this day, we encircle the *Bimah* seven times with the *Arbaah Minim*. At the end of the *Hoshaanot* service it is customary to take five willow branches and beat them on the ground five times. *Hoshanah Rabbah* is the last date of appeal to G-d to be granted a sweet new year.

SHEMINI ATZERET — SIMCHAT TORAH

Shemini Atzeret is the eighth day of *Sukkot*. We still sit in the *Sukkah* but we don't shake the *Arbaah Minim*. *Simchat Torah* is the day after *Shemini Atzeret*. [We no longer sit in the *Sukkah*]. *Simchat Torah* is the culmination of the whole month of *Tishrei* and its festivals and on *Simchat Torah* we finish the yearly cycle of reading the Torah and start again from the beginning.

The person chosen to be called up to the Torah for the last portion of the Torah is called the *Chattan Torah*. The person called up to read the beginning of the Torah is called the *Chattan Bereishit*. It is customary for the *Chattan Torah* and *Bereishit* to sponsor the *Kiddush* and festivities for the day.

Both on the night of *Shmini Atzeret* and the night and day of *Simchat Torah*, all the *Sifrei Torah* are removed from the *Aron Hakodesh* and we dance with them as we encircle the *Bimah*. Children carry flags and small *Sifrei Torah*. We kiss the Torah to show that we are truly happy that we are the chosen

people who have G-d's Torah. The joyous dancing around the *Bimah* is called *Hakafot*. During the reading of the Torah the custom is that everyone receives an *Aliyah*.

Both *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are *Yomtov* days and all *Shabbat* restrictions apply, except:

- 1) cooking [from a pre-existing flame]
- 2) carrying

In Israel, *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are combined into one day.

Simchat Torah is one of the happiest days in the Jewish calendar and the *mitzvah* of *Simchat Torah* is to dance and rejoice with the Torah.

Kiddush is made by night and day together with festive meals.

CHANUKAH

On the 25th of Kislev we celebrate *Chanukah*. In the days of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the Greeks governed Israel and they forced the Jews to worship their idols.

A Jew called Matityahu Maccabee organized a revolt against the Greeks and together with his sons and a small army, waged war against the Greeks and miraculously were victorious. When they entered the Holy Temple, they found that the Greeks had defiled all but one jar of pure olive oil, just enough to light the *Menorah* [candelabrum] for one day. Miraculously, this small jar of oil remained alight for eight days until more oil was made.

All Israel marveled at the victory in war and the miraculous burning of the oil for eight days and the Rabbis instituted the eight days starting from the

25th of Kislev as a festival called *Chanukah*. *Chanukah* means “dedication” — for in those days, the Temple was rededicated. The festival is to be celebrated by lighting candles.

THE MENORAH

On the night of the 25th Kislev, we light our *Chanukah Menorah*. The first night of *Chanukah*, we light one candle, the second night two candles and so on, until the eighth night when we light eight. The candles are placed in the *Menorah* from right to left and lit from left to right. Many people use olive oil instead of candles since the miracle in the Temple was with olive oil. The *Menorah* is lit either by the window or by the door opposite the *mezuzah*. Special blessings are made and songs sung when lighting the *Menorah* — see *Siddur*.

CHANUKAH CELEBRATIONS

It is customary on *Chanukah* to eat foods connected with the miracle of the oil, e.g. potato *latkes*, doughnuts [fried in oil].

Children play with a *dreidel* — a square spinning top with the letters: ψ , η , γ , ν written on the four sides. These letters stand for נס גדול היה שם — “A great miracle happened there.” It is customary to give children *Chanukah Gelt* — money as a gift.

The *Chanukah* lights teach us an everlasting lesson, that the Jewish flame shall burn forever.

PURIM

On the 14th Adar, we celebrate *Purim*. After the destruction of the First Temple, the Jews were exiled to Babylon where there arose a mighty ruler called

King Achashverosh. He had a wicked advisor called Haman who plotted to kill all the Jews. The plot was foiled by Queen Esther and Mordechai. The entire *Purim* story is fascinating and is unraveled in *Megillat Esther* — the Scroll of Esther. This *Megillah* is read twice on Purim — by night and by day. During the reading of the *Megillah*, one bangs upon hearing Haman's name. [Some children swing graggers.]

OTHER MITZVOT OF PURIM

In addition to reading the *Megillah* by night and day, there are three other *mitzvot* to be performed on *Purim*:

- 1) *Mishloach Manot* — “Sending of Gifts” — to send a gift of two items of food to a friend.
- 2) *Matanot L'Evyonim* — “Gifts to the poor” — to give charity to at least two poor people.
- 3) *Seudat Purim* — Festive meal — to eat on *Purim* day a festive meal. At this meal, it is a *mitzvah* to drink enough wine so that you don't know the difference between “blessed be Mordechai” and “cursed be Haman.”

On *Purim* we eat *Hamantashen* — Triangular pastries filled with poppy seeds. The reason given is that in the palace, all Queen Esther ate was seeds — it was the only kosher food available.

The rejoicing of *Purim* is great. Many children dress in costumes and masks. We greet each other with a “*Freilicher Purim / a Happy Purim / Purim Sameach!*”

ROSH CHODESH

The first day of each Hebrew month is called *Rosh Chodesh*. Special prayers are said, such as *Yaaleh*

Veyavo, Hallel [a beautiful praise of G-d], *Barchi Nafshi* and *Musaf* [see *Siddur*].

On *Rosh Chodesh*, women refrain from heavy housework and washing clothes.

The *Shabbat* before *Rosh Chodesh* is called *Shabbat Mevarchim* — the *Shabbat* that blesses the coming month. On *Shabbat Mevarchim*, the *Chazzan* holds a *Sefer Torah* and announces when *Rosh Chodesh* will be and blesses the coming month.

A Jewish month may consist of 29 or 30 days and therefore *Rosh Chodesh* may be either one or two days [one day if the previous month has 29 days, and two days if the previous month has 30 days, the 30th day being the first day of *Rosh Chodesh*].

THE FAST DAYS

Excluding *Yom Kippur* there are five national Jewish fast days.

~ *Tisha B'Av* — 9th Av. This is a 24 hour fast to commemorate the destruction of the two Temples on this day, and the destruction of Betar [a large populated town in Israel in post—Temple era]. Other tragedies in Jewish history took place on the ninth of Av such as the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. On *Tisha B'Av*, we read the book of *Eichah* — Lamentations — say *Kinot* [verses of lament], we sit on the floor and do not wash or wear shoes.

~ *Tzom Gedaliah* — 3rd Tishrei. To commemorate the murder of Gedaliah Ben Achikom, a great Jewish leader of the post-

Temple period. The fast is from dawn to nightfall.

- ~ 10th Tevet — To commemorate the siege of Jerusalem in Temple times. Dawn to nightfall.
- ~ 13th Adar — Fast of Esther. To commemorate Queen Esther's fast before she pleaded with Achashverosh to save her people. Dawn to nightfall.
- ~ 17th Tamuz — To commemorate the breach of Jerusalem's wall by the enemy in Temple times. Dawn to nightfall.

The three week period between the 17th Tamuz and the 9th Av is a period of national mourning for the destroyed Temples. During this period it is customary;

- 1) Not to take a haircut.
- 2) Not to get married.
- 3) From 1st—9th Av, not to eat meat or drink wine [except on *Shabbat*].
- 4) To learn about the Temples.

The three weeks are called the *Bein Hametzarim* [literally meaning “between the narrow straits” of the 17th Tamuz and the 9th Av] and the nine days between 1st-9th Av are popularly called, “The Nine Days.”

When the Temple will be rebuilt in the days of *Moshiach*, these fast days will be turned to days of rejoicing. Anyone who mourns over Jerusalem will merit to see it rebuilt.



Chapter 8

≈ *KASHRUT* ≈

- ≈ *Kosher Animals*
- ≈ *Animal Products*
- ≈ *Kosher — Treifa*
- ≈ *Birds*
- ≈ *Salting Meat*
- ≈ *Liver*
- ≈ *Fats*
- ≈ *The Kosher Butcher*
- ≈ *Fish*
- ≈ *Milk*
- ≈ *Cheese*
- ≈ *Fruits and Vegetables*
- ≈ *Eggs*
- ≈ *A Hechsher*
- ≈ *Meat and Milk*
- ≈ *The Kosher Kitchen*
- ≈ *Tevilat Kelim*
- ≈ *Parev*
- ≈ *Fish and Meat*
- ≈ *Wine*
- ≈ *Bread*
- ≈ *The Reason behind Kashrut*
- ≈ *Beware*

KOSHER ANIMALS

The Torah commands us only to eat animals which:

∞ have split hoofs.

∞ chew their cud.

These include the cow, sheep, deer. It excludes the pig, horse, rabbit. Furthermore, the animal must be slaughtered in a special way, called *Shechita*, which is described in the Torah. *Shechita* is the quickest and least painful method of slaughtering an animal. A qualified Jew called a *Shochet*, who knows all the laws of *Shechita*, must slaughter the animal.

ANIMAL PRODUCTS

Any meat, fat, oil etc that comes from an animal which is not slaughtered by a *Shochet* is NOT kosher. Confectionery, cakes, biscuits etc. which contain animal fats are NOT kosher. Any food with animal derivatives MUST be under Rabbinical supervision.

KOSHER — TREIFA

After slaughtering an animal, the *Shochet* checks the animal for any defects. If a defect is found, the animal is declared *Treifa* [lit. torn, i.e. will not live because of the defect] and it is not kosher. Often defects are found on the lungs of an animal. If the lung is smooth and healthy it is called *Glatt* — hence the term *Glatt Kosher*.

It is common usage to say that anything that is not kosher is *Treifa*.

BIRDS

The Torah lists 24 species of forbidden birds. These include all birds of prey. Permitted birds include domestic fowl such as chicken, duck, goose and turkey.

SALTING MEAT

In addition to the fact that animals and poultry must be slaughtered by a *Shochet*, the Torah commands us to remove all the blood from the dead animal. This is done through salting. The meat is first washed and then soaked in water for half an hour. It is then placed on a slanting board and sprinkled all over with medium coarse salt which causes the blood to be drawn out of the meat. It is important that the salt is sprinkled on all sides paying particular attention to any folds and cuts. The meat is left on the slanting board for one hour allowing the blood to drain away. Finally it is rinsed under running water to ensure all the blood is washed away. Only after salting is the meat fit for consumption.

From all the above, one may understand why one may not buy poultry or meat from a non-kosher butcher or supermarket because:

- a) although it is a kosher type of fowl/animal, it has not been slaughtered by a *Shochet*, and
- b) it has not been salted.

However, one may buy pre-packed meat and fowl such as frozen chicken provided it is sealed and has a *Hechsher*.

LIVER

Certain parts of the meat such as liver have much blood in them, and salting is not enough to remove all the blood. The liver must be roasted over an open flame to remove the blood.

FATS

Certain fats and veins must be removed from an animal before consumption. The process of removing the fats is called *Nikkur*.

THE KOSHER BUTCHER

From the above, it is clear that the kosher butcher must do the following:

- ∞ Only slaughter kosher animals that have split hoofs and chew their cud or kosher poultry.
- ∞ A qualified *Shochet* must slaughter the animal.
- ∞ Check the animal for defects.
- ∞ Remove fats and veins.
- ∞ Salt the meat or roast the liver.

The *Shochet* and the butcher must be G-d fearing Jews. Nowadays, one may only buy meat from a butcher who displays a certificate of *kasbrut* from a competent *Beth Din* [Jewish Court of Law].

FISH

Kosher fish must have fins and scales. A fish that does not have fins *and* scales is not kosher. If there is any doubt, a Rabbi must be consulted. Prawns, shellfish, crab, eels etc. are NOT kosher.

MILK

Milk is only kosher if it comes from a kosher animal. Therefore, milk from cows and goats is kosher, but milk from pigs or horses is not kosher.

Nowadays, with government inspection at dairies, we can usually trust the farmers not to add any non-kosher milk to the cows' milk. Nevertheless, many orthodox Jews will only drink supervised milk, i.e. a *mashgiach* [supervisor] is

present at the dairy to make sure that only kosher milk is bottled with no non-kosher milks added. Such milk is called *Cholov Yisrael*.

CHEESE

Cheese must be made with milk from a kosher animal. Furthermore, many rennets [used in the preparation of cheese] are from a non-kosher animal. Therefore, only cheese under Rabbinical supervision may be used.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

In general, most fruits and vegetables are kosher. However, fruits grown in the first three years of a tree are called *Orlah* and are forbidden. Fruits from Israel need to be tithed. This is called *Hafrashat Terumah Umaaser*. A special text is recited when tithing [see *Siddur*]. Every seven years in Israel there is a Sabbatical year called *Shmittah*, and special laws apply to Israeli fruits and vegetables during that year — ask a rabbi for details.

Many fruits and vegetables are infested with insects. The Torah explicitly forbids us to eat any insects, and therefore a close inspection must be made to remove any insects from foods that are commonly infested, e.g. lettuce, dates etc. This inspection is called *Bedikat Tolaim*.

EGGS

Only eggs that come from kosher birds and poultry are kosher. Usually, kosher eggs are round at one end and pointed at the other [whereas non-kosher eggs are totally round]. Eggs must be checked for

blood spots. If a blood spot is found, the egg must be thrown away.

A *HECHSHER* [KOSHER SYMBOL]

In general, it is always better to buy foods with a *Hechsher*, i.e. a stamp of Rabbinical supervision. This means that a group of rabbis have checked the ingredients and have certified that all the ingredients are kosher. Often the *Hechsher* will state *Kosher Lemehadrin*, which means kosher even for the most scrupulous.

MEAT AND MILK

The Torah commands us:

- a) Not to eat meat and milk together.
- b) Not to cook them together.
- c) Not to derive any benefit from a mixture of milk and meat.

Therefore, after eating meat, one must wait six hours before eating any milk products.

Conversely, after eating hard cheese, one must wait six hours [some wait three hours] before eating meat. However, after eating milk, yogurt, soft cheese etc, one need only wait one hour [some wait half an hour] before eating meat.

THE KOSHER KITCHEN

In a kosher kitchen, the utensils used for milk and meat are kept totally separate; two separate sets of pots, pans, plates and cutlery. If possible, there should be two separate sinks. [If you have one sink, use two washing up bowls, one for milk and one for meat, and separate drying racks]. Meat and milk utensils are often color coded so as not to mix them

up (e.g. meat red, milk blue). The oven is to be used either for milk or meat, or used only for *Parev* [see below] foods. Two separate tablecloths are used for milk and meat. If meat and milk utensils are accidentally mixed up, a Rabbi should be consulted.

TEVILAT KELIM

Utensils made of metal and glass [or glazed earthenware] must be immersed in a *Mikvah* before use. This is called *Tevilat* [immersion] *Kelim* [of vessels]. A special blessing is made before the immersion: *Baruch ata...Al Tevilat Kelim*. Many hardware shops and Synagogues have small *Kelim Mikvaot* specifically for this purpose.

PAREV

Parev means neither milk nor meat. Vegetables are *parev*, and may be eaten with meat or milk. Every person should keep a mental check if they are milky [*milchig*], meaty [*fleishig*], or *Parev*. E.g. If at 6pm you ate a steak for supper, you may not have a cup of tea with milk at 8pm.

FISH AND MILK

It is customary not to cook fish with milk, although they may be eaten one after the other. The same applies with meat and fish.

WINE

Wine must be under Rabbinical supervision and have a *Hechsher*.

BREAD

Many breads either contain animal fat or are baked on trays smeared with animal fat. Therefore, a

bakery needs to be checked to make sure that the bread contains only kosher ingredients. Many Jews will only eat bread baked by a Jew. This is called *Pas* [bread] *Yisrael*.

A Jew who bakes his own bread or *Challah* must separate a piece of dough — called the separation of *Challah* — before the bread is baked. In Temple times this piece was given to a *kohen*, but today it is burned and disposed of respectfully. A special blessing is made when separating the *Challah*: *Baruch Ata...Asher Kidshanu Bmitzvotav Vetzeevanu Lehafrish Challah*. The separation of *Challah* is one of the commandments specially performed by women.

THE REASON BEHIND *KASHRUT*

The Torah commands us to keep the Laws of *Kashrut* and gives no explanation why. We can therefore approach *Kashrut* in one of three ways:

- 1) G-d made man. Just as a mechanic knows a car, G-d knows man. He sees that for a Jew, eating non-kosher food is not good for his physical or spiritual health. When you go to a doctor, you don't ask the doctor to explain to you the biochemistry of the pills he is giving you. You trust that he knows better — so too with G-d.
- 2) We may suggest reasons for *Kashrut*, for example, we are what we eat, and therefore we only eat domesticated animals so that we have good character traits from the food. Eating wild animals would give us wild character traits. Kosher animals are cleaner.

- 3) These laws enable us to attain the ideal of holiness. They distinguish us from other nations.

BEWARE

Beware of what you eat. Just as a person should only eat healthy food since non-healthy food is likely to give a person health problems, so too with *Kashrut*. Check all foods for kashrut and keep a kosher home. *Kashrut* lists are available from rabbis.

One should only eat out at a kosher restaurant which has reliable rabbinic supervision.



Chapter 9

~ SEFER TORAH, TEFILLIN, MEZUZAH, TZITZIT ~

- ~ *Sefer Torah*
- ~ *Tefillin*
- ~ *Mezuzah*
- ~ *Tzitzit*

SEFER TORAH

A *Sefer Torah* [the scroll containing the Five Books of Moses] is written by a qualified scribe called a *Sofer*. He writes the Torah on scrolls of parchment using a feather and kosher ink. The *Sefer Torah* is written in Hebrew with *Ketav Ashurit* [Assyrian writing], in paragraphs, but with no full stops or punctuation marks. The *Sofer* is extremely careful to copy every word from an existing *Sefer Torah* so that every *Sefer Torah* is the same. Even if a single letter is missing the entire scroll is invalid [*passul*]. It takes between six months and a year to write a *Sefer Torah*.

THE PARCHMENT [KLAF]

Parchment is skin from a *kosher* animal that has been processed and prepared for writing. The *Sofer* makes lines on the parchment with a blunt awl and writes the Hebrew underneath the line. He writes the text in columns, and fits four to five columns on one piece of parchment. Each piece is then sewn together

with sinew [strong thread made from kosher animal sinews]. The ink is made from special nuts, oils and gums, all kosher in origin. The feather is specially shaped as a quill.

HONOR

The *Sefer Torah* is the most holy object we have. Whenever the *Sefer Torah* is removed from the Ark, we kiss it and follow it to the *Bimah*. We must dress it and adorn it with the finest velvet and silver. We must always stand up if a *Sefer Torah* is removed from the Ark.

The *Sefer Torah* is the holiest treasure in our possession. Every single word in the Torah is Divine and is an exact copy of the very first *Sefer Torah* written by Moses.

HACHNASSAT SEFER TORAH

It is a big *mitzvah* to write a *Sefer Torah*. Since most of us are not scribes, we can help write a *Sefer Torah* by paying a scribe to write one for us. Since a *Sefer Torah* is incomplete even if one letter is missing, therefore if one writes [or buys] one letter in a *Sefer Torah*, it is considered as if one wrote the entire scroll. When a scribe has finished writing a *Sefer Torah*, there is a ceremony called a *Hachnassat* [bringing in] *Sefer Torah*. In this ceremony, a few people are honored to write the last few letters of the Torah [with the help of the scribe] and then the Torah is dressed with a velvet mantle and a crown and then placed under a *chuppah* [canopy, as in a wedding] and led through the streets to the Synagogue amidst dancing and music. Great honor is given to the Torah and everybody kisses the

Torah to show our love and appreciation for this most wonderful gift.

TEFILLIN

The Torah commands us to put on *Tefillin* every weekday. The *Tefillin* should preferably be put on in the morning in synagogue, but it is permitted to put them on all day until sunset.

WHAT ARE TEFILLIN?

Tefillin are leather boxes with straps, which contain the four sections of the Torah that mention the *mitzvah* of *Tefillin*. One of the sections is the *Shema Yisrael*. In the *Tefillin Shel Yad* [*Tefillin* put on the arm next to the heart] the four sections are written on one scroll; in the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* [*Tefillin* put on the head] the sections are written on four different scrolls placed in four different sections.

The obvious difference between the two is that the box of the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* has four distinctive sections, and has the letter *Shin* drawn on either side of the box. [On the left side, the *Shin* has four heads, representing the four mothers — Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, Leah — on the right side the *Shin* has three heads representing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. The *Tefillin* are made by a competent G-d-fearing *Sofer*.

WHY TEFILLIN?

We think with our brain. We feel with our heart. For a few moments each day we should direct our thoughts and feelings to G-d. This is achieved through *Tefillin*. The *Tefillin Shel Yad* directs our emotions [love, fear] to G-d, and the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* directs and concentrates our thoughts to G-d.

Furthermore, the *Tefillin* is strapped to the arm indicating that our actions should follow the will of G-d.

WHERE ARE *TEFILLIN* PLACED?

The *Tefillin Shel Yad* is bound round the left arm [on the right arm if one is left-handed] on the biceps upper muscle — so that if the arm is put down, the *Tefillin* will face the heart. The straps are then wound round the arm seven times, and then round the hand. The *Tefillin Shel Rosh* is placed on the forehead, not lower than where the hair starts to grow.

WHO MUST WEAR *TEFILLIN*?

Every *Bar Mitzvah* boy must start putting on *Tefillin* two months before his *Bar Mitzvah*, in order to practice. Every male aged 13 upwards must put on *Tefillin* every weekday. *Tefillin* are not put on on *Shabbat* or *Yomtov*, since *Tefillin* are signs that direct our thoughts and feelings to G-d, and on *Shabbat*, the day itself is the sign, and does not require an additional sign.

WHAT DO YOU SAY WITH *TEFILLIN* ON?

Before putting on *Tefillin* one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata...Lehoniach Tefillin*. Usually, *Tefillin* are worn for *Shacharit* and the entire *Shacharit* is recited with *Tefillin*. If this is not possible, one should at least put on the *Tefillin* for a few moments, say the *Shema Yisrael*, and say a short prayer.

HONOR

The *Tefillin* must be kept in a special *Tefillin* bag and treated with great respect. They should not be kept in a dirty place, nor brought into the bathroom or

toilet. It is customary to kiss the *Tefillin* when they are taken out of the protective boxes.

REWARD

The Torah promises that one who wears *Tefillin* every day will merit long life. The *Tefillin* should be regularly checked by a *Sofer* to make sure that they are *kosher*.

MEZUZAH

The Torah commands us to affix a *mezuzah* on every door of our home except the bathroom and toilet. A *mezuzah* is a scroll of parchment with the first two paragraphs of the *Shema* written on it. The scroll is usually placed in a protective case to protect the *mezuzah* from rain and damp. The *mezuzah* is fixed on the right doorpost as you enter, two-thirds of the way up the door with the top of the *mezuzah* slanting towards the left. When affixing a *mezuzah* one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata...Likboa Mezuzah*. *Mezuzot* must be checked twice in seven years to ascertain their *kashrut*.

PROTECTIVE POWER

On the reverse side of the *mezuzah* scroll is written the name of G-d — *Shin, Daled, Yud*. These letters are an acronym for the words: *Shomer Daltot Yisrael* — the Guardian of the Doors of Israel. The *mezuzah* protects the home physically and spiritually. It is customary to kiss the *mezuzah* when going in and out of a room. The *mezuzah* must be fixed in every room of the house except the bathroom and toilet. One should always kiss the *mezuzah* of the bedroom before going to sleep at night.

TZITZIT

A Jew who wears a four-cornered garment is required by Torah to fix *Tzitzit*, threads, to the four corners. A large four-cornered garment is called a *Tallit Gadol*. A small garment is called a *Tallit Katan*. Eight threads with five knots are attached to each corner

THE MEANING OF TZITZIT

Tying a knot has always been a good way of remembering things. The knots and threads in your *Tzitzit* remind you of the 613 *mitzvot*. The numerical value of *Tzitzit* is 600.

צ = 90 י = 10 צ = 90 י = 10 ת = 400...

... added together equals 600.

Add on 5 knots and 8 threads, makes a total of 613. Looking at the *Tzitzit* reminds you of all the *Mitzvot*.

WHEN DO YOU WEAR TZITZIT?

Every morning, one prays with *Tallit* and *Tefillin*. Many people wear a *Tallit Katan* all day.

Upon wearing a *Tallit Gadol* one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata...Lehitatef btzitzit*.

Upon wearing a *Tallit Katan* one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata...Al Mitzvat Tzitzit*.

(N.B. one who wears a *Tallit Gadol* need not recite a separate blessing on the *Tallit Katan*).



Chapter 10

~ THE PASSAGES OF LIFE ~

- ~ *Mikvah and Taharat Hamishpachah*
- ~ *Circumcision — Brit Milah*
- ~ *Pidyon Haben*
- ~ *Chinuch — Education*
- ~ *Opsher — The Age of Three*
- ~ *Bar and Bat Mitzvah*
- ~ *Marriage*
- ~ *Chanukat Habayit — Consecration of New Home*
- ~ *Death*
- ~ *The Resurrection of the Dead*

MIKVAH AND TAHARAT HAMISHPACHAH

The family is the foundation of a Jewish home. Of particular importance is the *Shalom Bayit* — peace in the home. Husband and wife are to live together peacefully and happily, in accordance with the directives of the Torah.

The holiness of the family comes through observing a set of laws called the laws of *Taharat Hamishpachah* — family purity.

Included in these laws is *mikvah* attendance. A *mikvah* is a pool of water constructed according to Jewish law. Married women attend a *mikvah* on a regular basis. Every community must have a *mikvah*.

CIRCUMCISION — BRIT MILAH

Eight days after a male child is born, [even if the eighth day is *Shabbat*], he is circumcised by a *Mohel* [a qualified Jewish surgeon]. At the *Brit* [circumcision], the child is given his Hebrew name. The order of a *Brit* is as follows:

- 1) The baby is brought in by a married couple called *Kvatters*. The *Mohel* announces “*Baruch Haba*” — blessed is he who has entered.
- 2) Two chairs are arranged side by side. One chair is designated for *Eliyahu Hanavi* [Elijah the Prophet] and the other for the *Sandek* [the man who holds the baby at the time of the circumcision]. The baby is brought in and placed first on Elijah’s chair, and then on the knees of the *Sandek*.
- 3) The *Brit* is performed. The father makes a special blessing during the *Brit*.
- 4) The baby is then placed in the hands of a *Sandek* [who stands] and the Rabbi makes a blessing over wine and announces the Hebrew name of the child.
- 5) After the baby is taken out by the *Kvatter*, a festive meal is served with challah, fish and meat. Special inserts are made at Grace after Meals.

A girl is given her Jewish name at the Reading of the Torah and a special celebratory *Kiddush* is made on the *Shabbat* after her birth.

PIDYON HABEN — REDEEMING [FIRST-BORN] SONS

Before G-d took the Jewish people out of Egypt, he struck the Egyptians with ten plagues. The tenth

plague was the killing of every first-born child. During this plague, G-d “passed over” the Jewish homes — thus the name of the festival *Passover*.

From that time on, the firstborn child was to be consecrated to G-d. They were “His” children since He saved them from the plague. The Torah states that on the 31st day after the birth of a *Bchor* — a firstborn male — the father must redeem the child from a *Kohen* who acts as a representative of G-d. It is as if the father is buying back his son from G-d. In this service called *Pidyon Haben* the father gives a *Kohen* 102 grams of silver [usually in silver coins or block] and redeems his son from the *Kohen*. A festive meal is served. A *Pidyon Haben* may not take place on *Shabbat* or a festival. *Kohanim* and Levites are exempt from *Pidyon Haben*, (and this includes the firstborn son of a daughter of a *Kohen* or *Levi* even if his father is an Israelite) and so is a boy born by Caesarean section.

CHINUCH — EDUCATION

Every father is obliged to teach his children the Torah as soon as they can speak. The first verse a child should know is “*Torah Tzeeva*” and then *Shema Yisrael*, [see chapter 15]. Although children are not obliged to keep the *mitzvot* until they are 13 [boys], and 12 [girls], they should be trained to keep them. This is called *Chinuch* which means education. “Educate a child young so that when he or she grows up they will keep to the path.”

Children should be well rewarded for learning.

OPSHER — THE AGE OF THREE

Many parents do not cut a boy's hair until he is three years old and at three they cut his hair leaving the *peyot* — sidelocks. This is called an *opsheer*. From the age of three, parents must educate a boy to cover his head with a *Yarmulka*, wash his hands in the morning and before meals and wear *Tzitzit*. From the age of three, girls should start to light *Shabbat* candles and be trained to be modest in dress. Both boys and girls should be trained to make blessings over their food.

BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

A boy on his 13th birthday, and a girl on her 12th birthday become of age that they are obliged to keep all the *mitzvot*.

On the boy's 13th Hebrew birthday, a festive meal is held, at which it is customary for the boy to say a *Dvar Torah* — a Torah thought. Friends and relatives gather to bless the boy and give him their best wishes that he should grow to be a fine Jew. It is customary to give the boy a present.

On the first occasion the Torah is read after his 13th birthday, the boy receives an *Aliyah*. On the *Shabbat* after his 13th Hebrew birthday, it is customary for the boy to read *Maftir* and *Haftorah*.

Two months before his *Bar Mitzvah*, a boy should start to put on *Tefillin* every weekday, and on his birthday, he may officially be counted in a *minyan* and have an *aliyah*.

A girl will celebrate her *Bat Mitzvah* with a festive meal at which she delivers a *Dvar Torah*. It is customary to give the girl a present.

MARRIAGE

When a Jewish man and women decide to marry, they will first become engaged. After the engagement, preparations will be made for the wedding. A Rabbi should be consulted as to the date of the wedding.

On the *Shabbat* before the wedding, the *Chattan* [groom] is called up to the Reading of the Torah. This is called the *Aufruf*.

The wedding should take place under a *Chuppah* — a bridal canopy. Under the *Chuppah*, the *Chattan* places a golden ring on the *Kallah's* [bride] right index finger and says: "With this ring shall you be married to me according to the Law of Moses and Israel." The marriage is witnessed by two witnesses and the Rabbi will recite the blessings for marriage over a cup of wine.

The *Ketubah* [marriage contract] is read and the ceremony is concluded by the *Chattan* smashing a glass under his heel, after which the congregation shouts *Mazal-Tov* [congratulations]. The smashing of the glass is to remember the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. After the *Chuppah*, a wedding feast is held with a band and dancing.

At the end of the meal, Grace after Meals [*Birkat Hamazon*] is recited followed by *Sheva Berachot*, seven marital blessings, made over wine. These *Sheva Berachot* are repeated for seven consecutive days after the wedding at each festive meal made in honor of the newly weds. [A *minyan* must be present to recite the *Sheva Brachot*].

CHANUKAT HABAYIT —

CONSECRATION OF A NEW HOME

After moving into a new home, it is customary to “consecrate” the new home with a house warming party. If the *mezuzot* have not yet been fixed, they are affixed at the *Chanukat Habayit*, and the house is dedicated to be a home of Torah, *Mitzvot* and good deeds.

DEATH

It is a *mitzvah* to visit the sick and dying. One should always pray for the sick even if the situation is bad. Once a person passes away, the *Chevra Kadisha* [lit. Holy Society] Burial Society should be contacted. They will prepare the body for burial. Before the body is interred, it is washed and clothed in *Tachrichim* — shrouds, and a *Tallit*, and then placed in a wooden coffin. It is a great *mitzvah* to belong to the *Chevra Kadisha*.

It is a great *mitzvah* to accompany a dead person to his or her final resting place. Accompanying the dead is called *Levaya*. Burial is called *Kevurah*. The Torah tells us that if a person loses a father, mother, brother, sister, wife, son or daughter, they must observe the laws of mourning. Before the funeral, the mourner should make a small tear in their clothes to indicate their grief. This is called “tearing *kriah*”. At a *Levaya*, the family and friends usually assemble in a prayer hall where a eulogy [*Hesped*] is delivered. The coffin is then taken out and lowered into the grave. Those present then take turns to fill the grave with earth.

For seven days, the mourner then sits at home and people come to the home to comfort him or her on their great loss. This is called "sitting *Shiva*". The mood at a *Shiva* house should be somber, and one should take into mind the broken heart of the mourner.

It is customary that prayers [*Shacharit*, *Minchah*, *Maariv*] are held at the home of the mourner and remembrance prayers are recited [see *Siddur*]. Candles are lit and all mirrors in the house are covered. *Kaddish* is recited by the mourner. *Kaddish* is a beautiful praise of G-d [it does not mention the dead] which is said by the mourner at certain parts of the daily service [with a *minyán*] for 11 months after the death.

The mourner should not wear leather shoes, only slippers etc [like *Yom Kippur*] and not shave or have a haircut. The first meal a mourner eats after the *Levaya* is bread and a boiled egg prepared by a neighbor.

The first three days of the *Shivah* are for "crying", i.e. the mourner is grief-stricken, and visitors should not open a conversation with the mourner unless the mourner speaks first. Some have the custom not to eat in the house of a mourner, and one should definitely refrain from laughter and joking.

One usually comforts the mourner with the following words: "May the Almighty comfort you together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem".

Jews believe that after the soul departs from this world, it enters the World to Come and the best way of helping the soul up there is to do a *mitzvah* down

here in memory of that person. It is customary to learn *Mishnah* [which has the same letters as the word *Neshamah* [soul] in memory of the deceased. One should also give *Tzedakah* in their merit.

The period of mourning for a parent is 12 months [although *Kaddish* is only recited for 11 months]. The anniversary of the death is called the *Yahrtzeit*. On a *Yahrtzeit* one recites *Kaddish* and lights a candle.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

In the Messianic Era, the dead will again return to life in this world. The body will be reconstructed from the Luz bone [the coccyx], which is nourished by eating the *Melave Malka* meal on *Motzei Shabbat* [Saturday night]. Burial is essential, and Jewish Law forbids cremation.



Chapter 11

~ *BERACHOT* — BLESSINGS ~

- ~ *Introduction to Berachot*
- ~ *Birkat Hamazon — Grace after Meals*
- ~ *100 Blessings a Day*
- ~ *Netilat Yadayim — Washing the Hands*
- ~ *Birchot Hashachar — The Morning Blessings*
- ~ *Birchot HaTorah — The Torah Blessings*
- ~ *Tefillah*
- ~ *Phenomena*
- ~ *Blessings over Food*
- ~ *Eating Bread*

INTRODUCTION TO *BERACHOT*

G-d created the world. Everything in the world is His. He created man who benefits from the earth's resources. The Jew shows his gratitude to G-d by making *Berachot* — blessings.

BIRKAT HAMAZON — GRACE AFTER MEALS

The only *Berachah* mentioned in the *Chumash* is *Birkat Hamazon*, the *Bentching* or Grace after Meals. This blessing is recited after eating bread. The *Berachah* contains a number of paragraphs which talk about: how G-d feeds humanity; the special nature of *Eretz Yisrael* [Land of Israel] and Jerusalem.

Although this is the only *Berachah* mentioned in the *Chumash*, however, the Rabbis said that if G-d wants us to thank Him *after* we have eaten, how

much more so should we thank Him and say a *Berachah* before we eat. They therefore instituted *Berachot* before eating food. Furthermore, they said we should make a *Berachah* before we do a *mitzvah*.

100 BLESSINGS A DAY

King David instituted that every Jew should say 100 blessings every single day. If you take a *Siddur* and count up all the blessings you say from the minute you wake until you go to sleep, there are 100. [To start with, you have 19 x 3 blessings for the *Amidah* of *Shacharit*, *Minchah* and *Maariv*]. We shall now take a closer look at some of those blessings.

NETILAT YADAYIM — WASHING THE HANDS

Upon waking up in the morning, the first thing to do is to say *Modeh Ani* ... [see *Siddur*]. This proclaims your thanks and great faith in G-d in returning and refreshing your soul. Following this, the hands are washed using a cup, three times alternatively, right, left, etc. The *Berachah: Baruch ... al netilat yadayim*, is recited.

N.B. The washing of the hands for a meal is different from the washing of hands upon awakening:

Upon awakening, wash: right, left, right, left, right, left.

Before eating bread, wash: right, right, right, left, left, left.

After washing one's hands before a meal of bread, it is customary not to speak until one has made the *Berachah* on the bread.

BIRCHOT HASHACHAR — THE MORNING BLESSINGS

A number of blessings are recited each morning to thank G-d; for our hearing, eyesight, straight posture, ability to walk, our clothing, and in general for being Jewish. [See *Siddur*.]

BIRCHOT HATORAH — THE TORAH BLESSINGS

A special blessing is made each morning over the portion of the Torah which we learn on that day. The Torah is a beautiful gift from G-d, and every day we thank G-d for this gift.

Note that the same blessing is said when one has an *aliyah*.

TEFILLAH

Many blessings are said during the prayers, particularly in the *Amidah* [silent prayer] when 18 [actually 19, as one was added later] blessings are said which bless G-d for a variety of things including our livelihood, income, health, justice, peace etc.

BLESSINGS OVER FOOD

A blessing is said before eating any food or drink. Below is a list of foods with the *Berachot* we say over them.

Fruit of a tree — *Baruch Ata...Borei Pri Ha-eitz*

Vegetables— *Baruch Ata...Borei Pri Ha-adamah*

Meat, Milk, Cheese, Fish, Water, Juices —

Baruch Ata...Shehakol Nihyoh Bidvaro

Cake— *Baruch Ata...Borei Minei Mezonot*

Bread — *Baruch Ata...Hamotzee Lechem Min Ha-aretz*

Wine— *Baruch Ata...Borei Pri Hagafen*

Note that a *Berachah* is said no matter how small the quantity of food.

EATING BREAD

If your meal contains bread, the procedure should be:

- 1) Wash hands three times [right three times, left three times] with a cup.
- 2) Say *Berachah* — *Al netilat yadayim* — Don't speak.
- 3) Hold bread, say *Berachah* — *Hamotzee lechem min ha-aretz*. Dip bread in salt three times and eat.
- 4) After finishing eating, wash hands [fingertips] [*Mayim Acharonim*] and recite Grace after Meals.

Note that grace is only recited if 27 grams/1 oz bread was eaten. If *Hamotzee* is said, it is not necessary to say any other blessings for food eaten during the meal. However, a blessing must be said over dessert [or wine drunk during the meal].

AFTER EATING CAKE OR SPECIAL FRUITS

After eating cake, or any cooked or baked food from the five species of grain [wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt] or after wine, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives or dates [all foods which the Land of Israel is blessed with], a special blessing called *Al Hamichyah* is said. In essence, it is a shortened form of Grace after Meals [Over grain one says *Al Hamichyah*, over wine *Al Hagefen*, and over fruit *Al Hapeirot*].

Note that one must eat at least 27 grams/1 oz. to say this blessing.

AFTER EATING ANY OTHER FOOD

After eating any other food, a short blessing called *Borei Nefashot* is recited:

Baruch Ata...Borei Nefashot Rabot Vechesronan Al Kol Ma Shebarata Lehachayot Bahem Nefesh Kol Chai Baruch Chai Haolamim.

BLESSINGS OVER MITZVOT

Blessings are made when putting on a *Tallit*, *Tefillin*; fixing a *Mezuzah*; sitting in a *Sukkah*; *Baruch Ata...Leishave Basukkah*; shaking the *Arbaah Minim*; *Baruch Ata...Al Netillat Lulav* separating *Challah* from dough; blowing the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*; *Baruch Ata...Lishmoa Kol Shofar*, and on many more occasions.

SHEHECHIYANU

Upon wearing a new garment, eating a new fruit, and on lighting the candles and making *Kiddush* on *Yomtov*, the *Berachah Shehechyanu* is recited; *Baruch Ata...Shehechyanu Vekeymanu Vehigianu Lizman Haze*.

PHENOMENA

Blessings are said over certain natural phenomena e.g. thunder and lightening, shooting stars, rainbows, etc. A special blessing called *Asher Yatzar* is recited by a person each time he visits the lavatory. This blessing thanks G-d for the wondrous ways in which the body absorbs the food it needs and excretes the waste.

GRATITUDE

Saying blessings is part of the Jewish people's attitude. We make a blessing on hearing bad news as

well as good news for we truly believe that everything G-d does is for the best [even if we can't fully understand why]. The words *Baruch Hashem* — Blessed be G-d, are constantly on our lips. This emphasizes the total dependency of the Jewish people on our Father in Heaven.

A full list of *Berachot* may be found in a *Siddur*. It is praiseworthy always to use a *Siddur* when saying long *Berachot*.



Chapter 12

~ KOHANIM AND LEVIIM ~

- ~ *Kohen, Levi, Yisrael*
- ~ *Shevet Levi — The Tribe of Levi*
- ~ *The Kohanim [Priests]*
- ~ *Special Privileges Nowadays*
- ~ *Special Responsibilities*

KOHEN, LEVI, YISRAEL

Our Patriarch Jacob had twelve sons whose families grew into the twelve tribes of Israel. The Land of Israel was divided amongst these twelve tribes when Joshua conquered the land. After the death of King Solomon, the Land of Israel was divided into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Even before the destruction of the First Temple, ten of the twelve tribes were exiled from the land and they are known as the ten lost tribes.

The remaining Jews in the kingdom of Judah became known as “Jews” indicating they come from the tribe or area of Judah. In truth, many Jews from the other tribes also lived in Judah but the separate identity of the tribes ceased.

However, one tribe — the tribe of Levi — continued to retain its separate identity. Within the tribe of Levi were the descendants of Aharon the High Priest, known as *Kohanim*.

Thus today, all Jews identify as being a *Kohen* [a descendant of Aharon], or Levi [from the tribe of Levi], or simply an Israelite, a Jew with no particular tribal identity.

SHEVET LEVI — THE TRIBE OF LEVI

Levi was the third son of Jacob. The Tribe of Levi always remained loyal to *Hashem*, both in Egypt and also by not worshipping the golden calf. They were rewarded with special privileges that would otherwise have belonged to the firstborn of Israel.

These special privileges involved carrying the *Mishkan* [the Tabernacle] and all its furniture when travelling in the desert and serving in the Temples in Jerusalem. The *Leviim* were musicians and singers who accompanied the *Kohanim* as they offered the sacrifices in the Temple. In addition, the *Leviim* served as teachers of Torah, touring the country and instructing the people in the ways of the Torah. Because of their special duties, they were not given a portion in the land to cultivate as were the other tribes, rather they lived in cities dotted around the country. The Torah commands that they were to receive *Maaser* a tenth of the produce of the land, which was paid to them as a kind of wage for performing their work on behalf of the people. Nowadays, the special privileges of the *Levi* is that he is called up second [after the *Kohen*] by the reading of the Torah and he also assists the *Kohanim* with the washing of their hands before they recite the Priestly Blessing.

THE KOHANIM [PRIESTS]

Hashem chose Aharon, Moshe's brother to be the High Priest — *Kohen Gadol*. All Aharon's descendants became *Kohanim* — priests. [It must be noted that all *Kohanim* belong to the tribe of Levi — they are just a select group within the tribe of Levi].

The *Kohanim* had special privileges in the Temple that included; bringing the sacrifices, offering incense, lighting the *Menorah*. The first part of the book of *Vayikra* describes in detail the laws of the sacrifices performed by the *Kohanim* and for this reason it is called *Torat Kohanim* — the Laws of Priests.

Kohanim wore special garments in the Temple and had to be particular in the laws of purity — not allowing themselves to become *Tameh* — impure — by being in contact with something impure, for example, a dead body. A man who has touched a dead body must be sprinkled with the waters of the Red Heifer before he enters the Temple].

THE KOHEN GADOL

Amongst the *Kohanim*, one *Kohen* was chosen to be the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. He wore eight special garments and was considered to be the holiest person in Israel. One of the garments was a breastplate with twelve stones with the name of one tribe inscribed on each stone. Within this breastplate were the *Urim VeTumim* — a piece of parchment on which was written the Divine Name of *Hashem*. The *Urim VeTumim* guided the *Kohen Gadol* in his decisions. On *Yom Kippur*, we read of

the special service of the *Kohen Gadol* inside the Temple.

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES NOWADAYS

BIRKAT KOHANIM

One of the great privileges given by *Hashem* to the *Kohanim* is to bless the Jewish people using the special priestly blessing as stated in the Torah [Numbers 6:24-28]. In Israel, during *Shacharit*, the *Kohanim* bless the people every single day. Outside Israel, the custom is only to perform this ceremony during *Musaf* on festivals. The ceremony is called *Nesiat Kappayim* which means “Raising of the hands” because the *Kohanim* raise their hands to shoulder height [spreading their fingers in a certain position] when they give the blessing. The blessing is given whilst the *Kohanim* stand next to the Ark on the platform. The platform is called a *Duchan* and sometimes the ceremony is called *Duchaning*. Both the *Kohanim* and the people receiving the blessing cover their heads with a *Tallit* whilst the blessing is said, the *Kohanim* face the people with their backs to the Ark and the people face the *Kohanim*. In preparation for *Duchaning*, the *Kohen* has his hands washed by a *Levi* and he also removes his shoes. Before the *Kohanim* start to bless, they make a special *Berachah*, “Blessed are You ... who has commanded us to bless His people in love.”

ALIYAH

Another privilege belonging to the *Kohanim* is the honor of being called first to the Torah. If a *Kohen* is

present but there is no *Levi*, then the *Kohen* says the blessings a second time in place of the absent *Levi*.

If no *Kohen* is present then either a *Levi* or *Yisrael* may be called up.

PRECEDENCE

A *Kohen* is always honored first in a group. For example, if three or more males over age 13 ate a meal of bread, then it is customary for one to invite the others to say Grace. This is called *Zimun*. A *Kohen* must first be offered this privilege.

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As has already been explained, all *Kohanim* must be directly descended from the family of Aharon. Just as there are special privileges associated with the Priesthood, so there are also special responsibilities which are necessary to enable the *Kohanim* to reach a higher spiritual level than the rest of Israel.

- ∞ A *Kohen* is forbidden to marry a divorcee.
- ∞ A *Kohen* is forbidden to enter a building if he knows that there is a dead body there. This does not apply to his own close family: i.e. parents, child, brother, wife or unmarried sister.
- ∞ If a *Kohen* attends a funeral, he should enter a special room in the cemetery, separated from the main hall where the coffin lies before burial.
- ∞ A *Kohen* is forbidden to come nearer than four cubits (six feet) to a grave.



Chapter 13

~ JEWISH HISTORY ~

- ~ *Creation*
- ~ *Abraham — Moses*
- ~ *Moses*
- ~ *Joshua — King David*
- ~ *The First Temple*
- ~ *The Division of the Kingdom*
- ~ *The Kings of Israel and Judah*
- ~ *Exile and the Second Temple*
- ~ *Exile — Present Day*
- ~ *Modern History*
- ~ *The Holocaust*
- ~ *Israel*

CREATION

The world was created 5773 years ago [at the time of this publication]. G-d created the world in six days and on the seventh day He rested. Adam was created on Friday, the sixth day of creation. From Adam to Noah there were ten generations. From Noah to Abraham, ten generations.

CREATION

Day 1 — heavens and earth, light and dark.

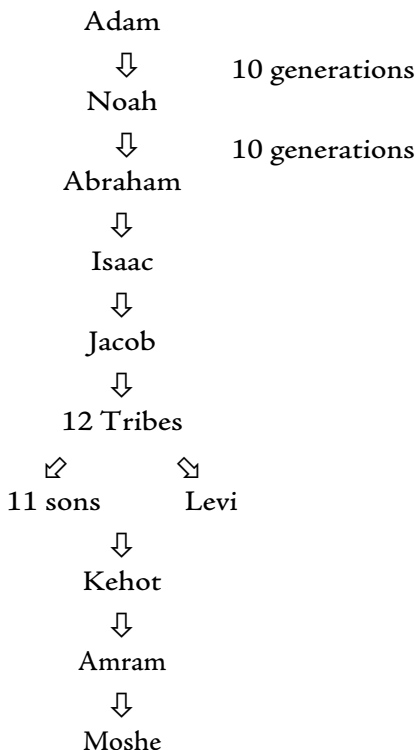
Day 2 — sky and water.

Day 3 — land and seas, vegetation, trees.

Day 4 — sun, moon, stars.

Day 5 — living creatures.

Day 6 — man.



The history of the Jewish people began with Abraham. In his times, all the people in the world were idol worshippers. They used to bow down to the sun, moon and stars. It was Abraham who, even at an early age, proclaimed that there is only one G-d in the world and that He alone is the Creator, and all forms of worship and prayer must be to Him.

Abraham persuaded thousands of people to believe in one G-d. G-d spoke to Abraham and made a covenant with him, that his children would be the “chosen people” and they were destined to inherit the Land of Israel.

G-d tested Abraham ten times to see if Abraham believed fully in G-d. The tenth test is the most famous. G-d commanded Abraham to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham listened to G-d’s command without delay and travelled to Mount Moriah and built an altar. Just before Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, an angel from heaven stopped him. Abraham offered a ram instead. This episode is called the *Akeida* which means “tied up” because Isaac was bound on the altar. We read this episode on *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Shofar* is a reminder of the ram’s horn in the story.

G-d gave Abraham a very special *Mitzvah*, the *Mitzvah* of circumcision — *Brit Milah*. Abraham circumcised himself when he was 99 years old. Abraham’s wife was called Sarah. She was well known for her piety. It was Sarah who was the first Jewess to light candles before *Shabbat*.

ABRAHAM — MOSES

Isaac, the son and heir of Abraham and Sarah, followed in the path of his parents and thus brought up his son Jacob [later named by G-d Israel] who in turn taught the family tradition to his twelve sons. Later, Jacob and his family, 70 people in all, went to live in Egypt. It was G-d’s will that the Jewish people should in its infancy be prepared through suffering

and bondage to become a spiritually and morally strong people.

MOSES

Moses was 80 years old when G-d commanded him to take the Jews out of Egypt. The Exodus was in the year 2448. 49 days after the Exodus, the Jews received the Torah on Mount Sinai and became the Jewish Nation. The Israelites journeyed through the wilderness for 40 years, after which they entered the Land of Israel with Joshua.

JOSHUA — KING DAVID

Joshua divided the lands between the 12 tribes. After Joshua, a number of prophets and judges ruled over Israel, with such leaders as Deborah, Gideon, Samson and Eli until the prophet Samuel anointed King Saul as the first king of Israel. After King Saul came King David, perhaps the most famous of all kings. King David slew Goliath in combat, beat the *Plishtim* [a nation at war with Israel] and returned the Holy Ark to Jerusalem. He also composed the book of *Tehillim* — Psalms.

THE FIRST TEMPLE

King David's son, King Solomon, built the first Temple in Jerusalem in the year 2935. The Temple was a beautiful building which housed the Holy Ark. Inside the Ark were the tablets of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were written. The first Temple stood for 410 years.

∞ Moshe — led Jews out of Egypt in 2448 and received the Torah on Mount Sinai.

- ∞ Joshua — entered the Land of Israel in 2488. Joshua died in 2516 at age 110.
- ∞ Deborah— 2650-2676
- ∞ Gideon — 2716
- ∞ Samson — 2830
- ∞ Eli — 2830
- ∞ Saul — Samuel anoints Saul in 2880.
- ∞ David — 2854-2924. Died on *Shavuot*. Lived 70 years.
- ∞ Solomon — commences building of Temple in 2928

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

After King Solomon's death, the Kingdom was split into two, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. Initially, the King of Judah was Solomon's son Rechavam, and the Northern Kingdom was ruled by Jereboam. Thereafter, each kingdom had its own king until the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians on the 9th Av, 3338.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

King Solomon

Judah	Israel
Rechavam 2964-2981	Jereboam ben Nevat 2964-2985
Aviyah 2981-2983	Nadav 2985-2986
Asa 2983-3024	Baasha 2986-3009

Yehoshafat 3024-3047	Elah 3009-3010
Yehoram 3047-3055	Zimri 3010
Ahaziah 3055-3056	
Athaliah 3056-3061	Omri 3010-3021
Yoash 3061-3101	Ahab 3021-3041
Amaziah 3101-3129	Ahaziah 3041-3043
Uzziah 3129-3167	Yehoram 3043-3056
Yotham 3167-3183	Yehu 3056-3083
Achaz 3183-3199	Yehoachaz 3083-3098
Hezekiah 3199-3228	Yehoash 3098-3114
Menasheh 3228-3283	Jereboam II 3114-3153
Amon 3283-3285	Zechariah 3153-3154
Yoshiah 3285-3316	Menachem 3154-3164
Yehoahaz 3316	Pekahiah 3164-3166

Yehoakim
3316-3327

Pekah ben Remaliah
3166-3187

Yehoachin
3327

Hoshea ben Elah
3187-3205

Zedekiah
3327-3338

3338 Destruction of First Temple

EXILE AND THE SECOND TEMPLE

After the destruction of the first Temple, the Jews were exiled to Babylon for 70 years. Towards the end of this period, the great miracle of *Purim* occurred [14th Adar 3405] when the Jews in the vast Persian Empire were miraculously saved from the wicked Haman.

At the end of the 70 years exile, G-d took pity upon His people and returned them to the Land of Israel under the leadership of Ezra the Scribe. The second Temple was rebuilt and the people re-settled on their land.

A wave of religious persecution by Antiochus, King of Syria, led to the brave Hasmonean revolt which defeated the Syrian armies and freed the Land of Israel from foreign domination. A great miracle occurred in the Temple — a small jar of oil enough only to last for one day, lasted for eight — the miracle of *Chanukah*. [25th Kislev 3622].

Finally, the land fell under Roman domination and on the 9th Av in the year 3828, the Roman army, under the leadership of Vespasian and his son Titus, destroyed the Temple. Nothing but the *Kotel Maaravi* — the Western Wall, remained.

EXILE — PRESENT DAY

After the destruction of the second Temple, the Jews were dispersed all around the world. Initially, Jewish communities sprang up in Babylon and then in Spain and North Africa but after great persecution, the Jews were expelled from one country to another with a gradual eastward movement; Spain — France — Germany — Poland — Russia. Jews would live wherever they were tolerated, although even in the dark hours of the exile some magnificent Jewish communities were built.

MODERN HISTORY

In the late 19th century, most of the world's Jewish population lived in Eastern Europe. However, there was a great deal of anti-semitism [Jew hatred] and many Jews sought a land of their own. The obvious choice was *Eretz Yisrael*, but in those days it was in Turkish hands. Nevertheless, many Jews emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* and a small *Yishuv*— settlement, was established.

During the First World War, the British took control of Palestine [then the name for Israel] and in 1917, the British Government issued a statement called the Balfour Declaration viewing with favor the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

THE HOLOCAUST

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Jewish History was the Holocaust. This was the systematic murder of six million Jews by Hitler during the Second World War. Hitler and his men brutally murdered millions, either by shooting, hanging or gassing in a gas

chamber. The horrors of the Holocaust are well known to all.

ISRAEL

It was only in 1948, after the tragedy of the Holocaust during World War Two, that a Jewish State was finally declared. Since its independence, Israel has had to fight four wars against its Arab neighbors:

1948 — the War of Independence,

1956 — Sinai Campaign,

1967 — Six Day War, and

1973 — *Yom Kippur War*

In recent years thousands of Jews have returned to Israel. Jews the world over are now awaiting the coming of *Moshiach* who will bring all Jews back to *Eretz Yisrael*.



Chapter 14

≈ ERETZ YISRAEL ≈

- ≈ *The Promised Land*
- ≈ *What is so special about Eretz Yisrael*
- ≈ *The Holy Places*
- ≈ *Israel Today*
- ≈ *Map of Israel*

THE PROMISED LAND

We find many times in the *Chumash* that G-d promised *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants.

“The L-rd appeared to Abraham and said, I will give this land to your descendants.” [*Bereishit* 12:7]

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT ERETZ YISRAEL

Many of the 613 *mitzvot* are connected with *Eretz Yisrael*, e.g. Tithes, the *Shmittah* [Sabbatical year when the land lies fallow], worshipping and sacrifices in the Temple etc. *Eretz Yisrael* has a special *kedushah* — holiness — so much so, that one who lives there may only leave for a very good reason, e.g. to marry a wife or to learn Torah. Many great Jews kissed the land upon entering.

It is a *mitzvah* to live in *Eretz Yisrael*. Those who live in the Diaspora should support the needy in *Eretz Yisrael*. Going to live in Israel is called going on *Aliyah*.

THE HOLY PLACES

Although the whole of *Eretz Yisrael* is a Holy Land, certain sites are of special significance;

- 1) **The Western Wall** The only remaining wall standing from the Second Temple in Jerusalem is the Western Wall, often referred to as “the *Kotel*.” The *Midrash* tells us that the Divine Presence never departed from the Wall. Anyone who visits feels deeply touched and prays for the rebuilding of the Temple and for peace, prosperity and good health for the Jewish people and all mankind. It is called the “Gate of Heaven”. The Wall is also known as the Wailing Wall since many Jews go there to lament the destruction of the Temple and hope and to pray for *Moshiach*.
- 2) ***Kever Avot*** [*Kever* = Grave *Avot* = Fathers]. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Adam and Eve are all buried in a cave in Chevron. This cave is called *M'arat Hamachpaylah* — The cave of doubles — since four couples are buried there. The Matriarch Rachel is buried on the way to Chevron in *Kever Rachel*. It is customary to pray at these sites and ask the Fathers and Mothers of the Jewish people to intercede in Heaven on our behalf.
- 3) **Miron, Tiberias, Tzfat** Many great Jewish Sages are buried in *Eretz Yisrael*. To name a few; Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in Miron, (thousands of Jews flock to his grave on *Lag B'Omer*), Rambam and Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes in Tiberias, the Arizal and Rabbi Yosef Karo, the author of the *Shulchan Aruch*

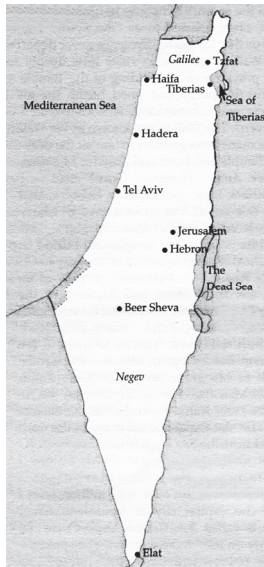
in Tzfat. All the above cities are in the north east of Israel near the Sea of Tiberias.

ISRAEL TODAY

At present, there are over five million Jews living in Israel. The capital city is Jerusalem where the government sits in a building called the *Knesset*.

Industry and technology is highly developed and the agricultural settlements called a *kibbutz* or *moshav* produce high quality produce. The currency is the Israeli Shekel. Israel's main airport is called Ben-Gurion airport near Tel-Aviv, a large city on the Mediterranean. The spoken language is *Ivrit* — Hebrew with Sephardic pronunciation.

MAP OF ISRAEL



Chapter 15

≈ THE 12 TORAH PASSAGES ≈

INTRODUCTION

Imagine you were given the task of selecting from all Jewish holy books a number of passages that summarize the essence of Judaism. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, a man of extraordinary wisdom and vision, in fact the greatest Jewish leader of our generation, did just that. The Rebbe selected 12 Torah Passages — or 12 *Pesukim*, from the entire range of Jewish literature and suggested that every child learn these *pesukim* by heart.

תּוֹרָה צְוָה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מִוֶּשֶׁה קִהְלֵת יַעֲקֹב

**“The Torah that Moshe commanded us is
the heritage of the congregation of
Yaakov.” [Deut. 33:4]**

The Torah was given to us through Moshe, G-d’s most faithful servant. Every single Jewish boy or girl inherits the Torah for his or her self. Imagine how happy a person would be if he just received news that he had inherited 10 million dollars! So too should we be happy on realizing that we have the Torah which is worth far more than money.

The Torah does not just belong to the rabbis or scholars, but to every Jew. Every Jew has his portion in the Torah. In fact, the soul of every Jew is like a letter in a *Sefer Torah* — The Torah is only complete

when all letters are present. Every Jew must study Torah to the best of his ability.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד

“Hear O Israel, G-d is our L-rd, G-d is One.” [Deut. 6:4]

The Shema teaches us that G-d is One and that He is everywhere.

The word *Echod*, אֶחָד, meaning “one” is made up of three letters. The ך represents the four corners of the earth, the ן represents the seven heavens and the earth [7 + 1 = 8]. Both the ך and ן have their source in the א — the One Creator.

This teaches us that not only do we believe there is only one G-d [unlike some religions who believe in many gods], but more than that. We believe that everything in the universe is created afresh every single second by G-d. Just as your heart pumps blood around the body, so too does G-d pump His creative energy into the universe every single second by bringing the whole world into existence. [If G-d were for one second to withdraw this energy, we would cease to exist].

Since G-d is a “hands-on” Creator, we may therefore understand that everything that happens in the world is by *Hashgocha Pratis*— by Divine Providence. The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement, taught that even if the wind turns over a leaf in the street, it is by Divine Providence. G-d has a master plan for creation.

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא
מִמִּצְרַיִם

“In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt.” [*Pesachim* 116b] Some 3300 years ago, G-d delivered the Jewish people from Egypt, from slavery to freedom. As the *Haggadah* tells us: **“If G-d had not taken us out of Egypt, then we would still be slaves there now.”**

We thank G-d every day for our freedom, and we promise in our heart to use our liberty in the best possible way, chosen servants of the King of Kings.

There is a deeper explanation. The Hebrew word for Egypt — *Mitzrayim* — can also mean a “limitation”. Our *Yetzer Hora* often tells us that we can’t do a certain *mitzvah*. Going out of Egypt in the spiritual sense, means breaking away from our own biggest enemy — our *Yetzer Hora*.

The most powerful weapon we have to combat the *Yetzer Hora* is the Torah. The *Talmud* says: “G-d says — I created the *Yetzer Hora* and I have created the Torah as an antidote.”

In every single generation, and in fact, every single day, we must all make the greatest effort to break out of our own personal Egypt, accept the Torah and draw closer to the Holy Land — to serving G-d properly.

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא שְׁנֵאמַר וְעַמְּךָ
כּוֹלֵם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִירְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ נֶצֶר מִטְעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי
לְהִתְפָּאֵר

“All Israel have share in the World to Come, as it is stated [Isaiah 60:21] : ‘And Your people are all *Tzaddikim* [righteous].’ They shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride.”

[*Sanhedrin* 90a]

G-d takes special pride in each and every Jew. He created us, and He cares for us, and watches over us like a gardener who watches over a tender plant. And as we grow, learning His Torah, and doing the wonderful *mitzvot* in it, G-d prepares for us a place in the World to Come.

The Rabbis tell us that the pleasures of the World to Come are unimaginable. Even if we were to add together all the greatest pleasures of this world, they would not equal one hour of the pleasure in the World to Come.

However, being here on earth is the purpose of creation and the World to Come is only a reward. We should not serve G-d in order to get the reward. The Rabbis tell us: “Better one hour of *Teshuvah* and good deeds in this world than all of the World to Come.”

כִּי קְרוֹב אֵלַיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ

“It is within your close reach to follow the Torah in speech, feeling and deed.”

[*Deuteronomy* 30:14]

One should never think that the Torah is too difficult to keep. G-d never asks a person to do something without giving him the ability to do it. G-d asks every Jew to keep the Torah and this *posuk* tells us that it is within our reach to fulfill the *mitzvot*.

וְהָיָה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו וּמֵלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ וּמִבֵּיט עָלָיו
וּבוֹחֵן כְּלָיוֹת וְלֵב אִם עוֹבְדוֹ כְּרָאוּי

“G-d stands over him, and the whole earth is full of His glory and He searches his mind and heart [to see] if he is serving Him as is fitting.” [*Tanya* ch. 41]

We have previously spoken of G-d as a powerful Creator. However, this passage from the Chabad classic *Tanya* teaches us that G-d is a very personal G-d. He is not at all removed from us, too busy with universal affairs to care about us. On the contrary, G-d is concerned for every individual and searches our mind and heart to see if we are serving Him properly. In every circumstance and at any given moment, a person should be aware that G-d is standing by him and watching his thoughts, speech and action. This though should fill a person with feelings of *Yirat Shamayim* — fear of Heaven.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ
“In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth.” [Genesis 1:1]

The opening verse of the Torah tells us that G-d created the heavens and earth. Our Sages of blessed memory comment on the world *Beraishit* — “in the beginning” — that it is made of two words, *Beit* and *Raishit* literally meaning two firsts. They explain that

in fact, the world was created for Torah and the people of Israel, both of whom are scripturally referred to as *Raishit* [first]. The purpose of creation is that the Jews fulfill the directives of the Torah.

Bearing this in mind, we must take everything in the world and use it for a *mitzvah* purpose. Even when we do simple things such as eating, we should eat for a holy purpose i.e. to serve G-d with the energy produced by the food. In short, we should serve G-d in all our ways.

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבַנְיֵיךָ וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשֹׁבְתֶךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלַכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ
וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ

“And you shall teach the Torah to your children and you should speak about it when you are at home and when you travel, before you lie down to sleep and when you wake up.” [Deuteronomy 6:7]

The Torah instructs us to teach the words of Torah to our children and students. Learning Torah is one of the greatest *mitzvot* and what one learns one should teach to others.

This *posuk* further instructs us that our daily conversation should be filled with words of Torah, both at home and away from home. We should refrain from idle chatter.

“When you lie down and get up” is the Biblical source for reading the *Shema* in the evening and morning.

יְגַעְתִּי וְלֹא מָצָאתִי אֵל תִּאֲמִין לֹא יְגַעְתִּי וּמָצָאתִי אֵל
תִּאֲמִין יְגַעְתִּי וּמָצָאתִי תִאֲמִין

“If someone says: ‘I have worked hard but I have not been successful,’ don’t believe

him. If someone says: 'I have not worked hard and I have been successful,' don't believe him. If someone says: 'I have worked hard and I have been successful,' believe him!"

"Man was born to toil [work hard]." [From the book of Job].

G-d is good and wishes to give us good things. However, He wants us to earn what we have. We will feel much more fulfilled if we know we have worked hard and deserve a reward. True success therefore comes only if a person has worked hard.

**וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כְּמוֹךָ – רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר זֶה כְּלָל גָּדוֹל
בַּתּוֹרָה**

"Rabbi Akiva says: 'you should love your fellow as yourself', is a basic principle of the Torah." [Leviticus 19:18, Midrash]

The 613 *mitzvot* can be divided into two categories: *mitzvot* between man and G-d, e.g. prayer, *Tefillin*, *Mezuzah*; and *mitzvot* between man and man. One may not neglect either *mitzvot* between man and G-d or between man and man. In fact, if one is lacking in the *mitzvah* of *Ahavat Yisrael* — Love your Fellow Jew — then there is something missing in one's love of G-d. As our Father in Heaven, G-d is happy with us when we love each other and live peacefully. Thinking about another and doing a favor for another is a basic principle of the Torah.

וְזֶה כָּל הָאָדָם וְתַכְלִית בְּרִיאָתוֹ וּבְרִיאַת כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת
עָלְיוֹנִים וְתַחְתּוֹנִים לִהְיוֹת לוֹ דִּירָה זֹאת בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים

**“The purpose of the creation of every Jew
and of all the worlds is to make a dwelling
place for G-d in this world.”**

[*Tanya* Ch. 33]

This quote from *Tanya* teaches us that the reason why G-d made each Jew and why He created the whole world is so that by following the Torah and *mitzvot* we can make ourselves, and our homes and the world around us, a dwelling place for G-d where He will live, just as we live in our own homes.

יְשֻׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעוֹשָׁיו פִּירוּשׁ שְׂכַל מִי שֶׁהוּא מְזַרַע
יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לוֹ לְשִׂמּוֹחַ בְּשִׂמְחַת ה' אֲשֶׁר שֵׁשׁ וְשִׂמְחַ
בְּדִירָתוֹ בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים

**“The Jews should rejoice in their Maker.
Every Jew should share in G-d’s joy, who
rejoices and is happy in His dwelling in
this world.”** [*Tanya* Ch. 33]

Every Jew, no matter what sort of background or learning he has had until now, even until a minute ago, so long as he is a Jew, is a member of the Jewish people; and he should be happy and proud that *Hashem* has given him the special and greatest mission he could have — to make himself, make his home and make the world around him, a place where G-d is at home.



REVISION QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

- Q. 1 Summarize the main beliefs of Judaism.
- Q. 2 What does the word “Torah” mean?
- Q. 3 How many a) positive *mitzvot*
b) negative *mitzvot*, are there?
- Q. 4 What is a) The Written Law?
b) The Oral Law?
- Q. 5 Write out the 10 Commandments.
- Q. 6 What is a) *Ahavat Hashem*?
b) *Yirat Hashem*?
- Q. 7 Why do we see good people suffer and bad people prosper?
- Q. 8 What will happen when *Moshiach* comes?
- Q. 9 What are the seven Noachide Laws?

CHAPTER 2

- Q. 1 What is a) the *Yetzer Tov*?
b) the *Yetzer Hora*?
- Q. 2 What is the meaning of a) *Derech Eretz*?
b) *Kiddush Hashem*?
- Q. 3 Which three qualities are proposed by all Jews?
- Q. 4 Outline a few laws of *Tzedakah*.

- Q. 5 What is meant by:
Hachnassat Orchim?
Bikkur Cholim?
Halvayat Hamet?
Hachnassat Kallah?
- Q. 6 How may we follow G-d's example?
- Q. 7 What did Rabbi Akiva say about *Ahavat Yisrael?*
- Q. 8 What is the difference between *Lashon Hora* and *Rechilus?*
- Q. 9 What is the definition of:
Nekamah?
Netirah?
- Q. 10 In which ways should children honor their parents?
- Q. 11 Translate:
Emet
Shalom
Anava
Simchah
Teshuvah
Tzniut

CHAPTER 3

- Q. 1 Write out the *Aleph-Bet* with all the final letters.
- Q. 2 What are the numerical values of:
 תש"ס
 תרס"ו
- Q. 3 Write out the Hebrew months.

- Q. 4 Write the following dates in Hebrew:
 19th *Kislev*
 3rd *Tamuz*
 27th *Tevet*
- Q. 5 What are the significant dates in the month of *Tishrei*?
- Q. 6 What does תנ"ך stand for?
- Q. 7 Write out the names of the Five Books of Moses.
- Q. 8 Name five of the books of the Prophets.
- Q. 9 Name five of the books of the Writings.

CHAPTER 4

- Q. 1 What is the *Mishnah*?
- Q. 2 What is the *Talmud*?
- Q. 3 Who was Rambam?
- Q. 4 What is the *Shulchan Aruch*?
- Q. 5 What is the first verse a child should learn as soon as he can speak?

CHAPTER 5

- Q. 1 Name the three daily prayers.
- Q. 2 What is the content of the *Shema*?
- Q. 3 What is the *Shmonah Esrei*?
- Q. 4 What does *kavannah* mean?
- Q. 5 Give an outline of the order of *Shacharit*.
- Q. 6 What is an *Aliyah*?
- Q. 7 How many people are called up to the Torah on:
Shabbat morning?

Shabbat afternoon?
Monday morning?
Thursday morning?
Rosh Chodesh?

- Q. 8 What is the meaning of:
Aron Hakodesh?
Bimah?
Amud?
Chazzan?
Ner Tamid?

CHAPTER 6

- Q. 1 What is the meaning of:
Kavod?
Oneg Shabbat?
- Q. 2 What is the name of the blessing:
that signals the arrival of *Shabbat*?
that signals the termination of *Shabbat*?
- Q. 3 How many meals do we eat on *Shabbat*?
- Q. 4 Name five forbidden activities on *Shabbat*.
- Q. 5 On *Shabbat*, is it permitted to:
write?
walk to *Shul*?
turn off a light?
wash clothes?
move a brick?
- Q. 6 Why is *Shabbat* called a “Queen”?
- Q. 7 Name two special *Shabbatot*.

CHAPTER 7

- Q. 1 What is *Chametz*?
- Q. 2 How does one do *Bedikat Chametz*?

- Q. 3 What is
a) *Serayfat Chametz*?
b) *Mechirat Chametz*?
- Q. 4 Write out the stages of the Seder.
- Q. 5 Draw a Seder plate with all items in the correct place.
- Q. 6 How many days after *Pesach* is *Shavuot*?
- Q. 7 What do we read in the Synagogue on *Shavuot*?
- Q. 8 What is the Omer? What is *Sefirat HaOmer*?
- Q. 9 What is *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* and when do we read it?
- Q. 10 What is the meaning of *Rosh Hashanah*?
- Q. 11 How do we prepare in the month of *Elul*?
- Q. 12 Why do we blow the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*?
- Q. 13 What special foods do we eat on *Rosh Hashanah*?
- Q. 14 What is *Tashlich*?
- Q. 15 What is prohibited on *Yom Kippur*?
- Q. 16 What is the special *mitzvah* of *Yom Kippur*?
- Q. 17 What is the name of the last prayer of *Yom Kippur* and what does it mean?
- Q. 18 Which special story do we read at *Minchah* on *Yom Kippur*?
- Q. 19 Why do we sit in a *Sukkah*?
- Q. 20 What are the *Arbaah Minim*?
- Q. 21 What do they symbolize?

- Q. 22 What is *Hoshana Rabbah*?
- Q. 23 What happens on *Simchat Torah*?
- Q. 24 What does *Chanukah* celebrate?
- Q. 25 How [in which order] does one light the *Menorah*?
- Q. 26 What are the special *mitzvot* of *Purim*?
- Q. 27 Name five fast days and their significance.

CHAPTER 8

- Q. 1 What are the signs of a *kosher* animal?
- Q. 2 What is the meaning of:
a Hechsher?
Treif?
a Shochet?
Cholov Yisrael?
Parev?
- Q. 3 What must be done to meat before it is *kosher* to eat?
- Q. 4 What are the signs of a *kosher* fish?
- Q. 5 What makes a kitchen “*kosher*”?

CHAPTER 9

- Q. 1 What is the name of the man who writes a *Sefer Torah*?
- Q. 2 What is a *Hachnassat Sefer Torah*?
- Q. 3 What is written inside *Tefillin*?
- Q. 4 Where are the *Tefillin* placed?
- Q. 5 What is the meaning of the three letters *Shin, Daled, Yud* on the reverse side of a *Mezuzah*?

Q. 6 What is the meaning of *Tzitzit*?

CHAPTER 10

Q. 1 What is a *Mikvah*?

Q. 2 Describe a *Brit Milah*.

Q. 3 What is a *Pidyon Haben*?

Q. 4 What happens on the occasion of a *Bar Mitzvah*?

Q. 5 Describe a Jewish wedding.

Q. 6 What is the meaning of:
Levaya?
Shivah?
Kaddish?

CHAPTER 11

Q. 1 What is *Birkat Hamazon*?

Q. 2 How do you wash *Netilat Yadayim*:
upon awakening in the morning?
before eating a meal of bread?

Q. 3 Which *Berachah* do you make on:
an apple?
yogurt?
chocolate cake?
grape juice?
fish balls?

Q. 4 What is *Al Hamichyah* and when is it said?

Q. 5 When is *Borei Nefashot* recited?

Q. 6 What is the special *berachah* made on eating
new fruit?

Q. 7 What does *Baruch Hashem* mean?

CHAPTER 12

- Q. 1 What are the special responsibilities of a *Levi* today?
- Q. 2 What are the special responsibilities of a *Kohen* today?
- Q. 3 Is a *Kohen* allowed to visit a cemetery?

CHAPTER 13

- Q. 1 What did G-d create on each of the six days of creation?
- Q. 2 How many generations were there:
from Adam to Noah?
from Noah to Abraham?
from Abraham to Moses?
- Q. 3 Name the main Jewish leaders from the time of Moses to King Solomon.
- Q. 4 Who destroyed the first Temple?
- Q. 5 When did the story of *Purim* take place?
- Q. 6 When did the story of *Chanukah* take place?
- Q. 7 Who destroyed the second Temple?
- Q. 8 On which date were the Temples destroyed?
- Q. 9 How many Jews died during the Holocaust?
- Q. 10 In which year was the State of Israel declared?

CHAPTER 14

- Q. 1 Where is:
the *Kotel*?
Kever Avot?
Kever Rachel?

- Q. 2 Name a few mitzvot that are special to the Land of Israel.
- Q. 3 How many Jews live in Israel today?
- Q. 4 What is the capital city of Israel?
- Q. 5 Where is the main airport?
- Q. 6 What is the name of the spoken language of Israel?
- Q. 7 Draw a map of Israel marking the towns of:
Jerusalem
Tel Aviv
Elat
Haifa
Tiberias
Hebron
Tzfat



לזכות

הבחור הבר מצוה

הת' **יצחק** שי' **דובאוו**

ב' אדר תשע"ג

ויה"ר שיגדל להיות

חסיד ירא שמים ולמדן

ושליח כ"ק אדמו"ר

לאויוש"ט הכל מתוך

בריאות נכונה בגו"ר גם יחד

Now משיח