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Box 5, Folder 31, "The Jewish Calendar", Undated.



restricted to the home or to the synagogue but are celebrated partly in each. Some are centered more in the home and some more in the community, but any major event is shared with the group.

### THE JEWISH CALENDAR

To understand these festivals and the traditions of Judaism they incorporate, it is helpful that one have an understanding of the Jewish calendar. Unlike the Western calendar, which is based on the sun and contains 365 days in the year, and unlike the Islamic calendar, which is based on the phases of the moon and having 354 days, the Jewish calendar is based on a synthesis of the two. The months are figured according to the moon (twelve months of twenty-nine-and-a-half days each) and the year according to the sun. A whole month is added to the Jewish calendar in leap years in order to make up the extra eleven days. This thirteenth month is known as Adar Sheni (Second Adar). For civil purposes the year begins in the spring (March-April); for religious purposes it commences in autumn (September-October). Although New Year's Day, Rosh Hashonoh, comes in the autumn, the Jew feels that the annual cycle begins in the spring with the celebration of Passover (Pesach). In East-European Jewish life, workers were hired "from Pesah to Pesach."

The following are the twelve months of the Jewish calendar, together with the major Jewish festivals, fasts and holy days they contain:

NISAN (March-April)-Pesach (Passover)

IYAR (April-May)-Lag Go'Omer (the "Mid-Lenten" period)

SIVAN (May-June)--Shovuos (Pentecost, the Festival of Weeks)

TAMMUZ (June-July)--Shiv'ah Osor Be'Tammuz (the fast commemorating the

breach of the walls of Jerusalem)

OV (July-August) -Tishoh Bo'Ov (the fast recalling the destruction of the Temple)

ELUL (August-September)--Rosh Chodesh (the first day of the month, commencing preparations for the penitential season)

TISHRI (September-October)--Rosh Hashonoh (the New Year)

Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)

CHESHVON (October-November)--

Sukkos (the Festival of Booths)

Simchas Torah (Rejoicing with the Torah)

KISLEV (November-December)--

Chanukkah (the Festival of Lights)

-TEVES (December-January)--Asarah

Be'Teves (the fast commemorating the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem)

SH'VOT (January-February)--Chamishoh

(Osor Bi-Sh'vot (the New Year for Trees)

ADAR (February-March)--Purim (the Festival of Lots)

Within this calendar, Jews observe three seasonal festivals which also have historical meaning, Pesach, Shovuos and Sukkos; the fast days linked with tragic events, the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple on Mount Zion; and the solemn High Holy Days of Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur, also known as Yomim Moraim (the Days of Awe), which are neither seasonal nor historical but illustrate the universal human need for self-purification through penitence. The Jewish calendar also includes four minor holidays which are popular



celebrations rather than sacred ones, Purim, Chanukkoh, Chamishoh,  
Osor Bi-Sh'vot and Lag Bo'Omer.

Each of these groups has some days that are glad (the joyous, seasonal festivals) and some that are sad (the fast days), some that are easy and some that are hard to prepare for, some marked by feast and some by fast. The feasting as well as the fasting is a mitsvoh<sup>a/</sup> (commandment); one is enjoined to rejoice as well as to grieve.

The Sabbath and the religious holidays mean translation into a different life. The Jew leaves the maelstrom of daily life and enters into the peace of the holiday world. The clothes one wears, the food one eats, the religious songs one sings and the very spirit of the house in which one lives are different from those of the weekday world. The atmosphere is steeped in history and symbolism. One lives in communion with ages past and with all the dispersed members of the House of Israel (Klal Yisroel), who, in all parts of the earth, are celebrating at the same time and in the same way.

As in the case of the Sabbath, the coming in of the festivals is consecrated by the Kiddush, the prayer for the sanctification of wine, offering thanks for the divine gift of the festival; and their going-out is marked by the Havdolah (literally, "separating"), the ceremony observing the distinction between the holy and the worldly. Each of these sacred days has its individual liturgy in the synagogue as well as its lesson from the Torah and the Prophets (Haftorah), which are explained by the rabbi, the religious teacher, and applied to man's tasks and duties in daily life. The liturgy for daily and Sabbath ser-



services is contained in a prayer book called the Siddur (the order of the service). The prayer book for the holy days and festivals is the Machzor (the cycle of prayers).

Each holiday, like each Sabbath, brings its combination of anxiety and joy. As it approaches, the work of preparing for it seems overwhelming, especially for the Jewish mother--so much to be done, so little time. But when the holiday arrives, worry and tension are forgotten, and all workaday cares are thrust aside. Then everyone relaxes, enjoys and wishes to all "Gut Yontev" (A good holiday). ~~(It is in this spirit that~~  
this <sup>book</sup> ~~album~~ is dedicated to our listeners, Christian and Jew alike.)

## SHABBOS

the Sabbath day of rest which commences Friday at sunset (Erev Shabbos) and concludes Saturday after sunset, derives its character from the biblical declaration that "in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested [sha'vas] and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17). The Jewish conception of the Sabbath involves both physical rest--that is, abstention from work--and spiritual replenishment through study and worship. In Jewish tradition the Sabbath is personified as a bride whose bridegroom is Israel. Kabbolas Shabbos, the greeting of the Sabbath on Friday just before the evening prayers, is celebrated as a symbolic wedding festivity and is regarded as one of the most beautiful parts of the Sabbath observance. The Talmud (Shabbos 119A) tells us that on the eve of the Sabbath, certain Palestinian rabbis of the third century would put on their best clothes and say, "Come, let us go out and meet the Sabbath Queen." Under the influence of the Kabbalists, the religious mystics of the sixteenth century, the

ceremony of greeting the Sabbath with psalms and symbolic marriage songs was introduced in all Jewish communities. To this day it is the custom for the rabbi, the chazan (cantor) and the congregation to turn about at the last stanza of one of these songs, "L'choh Dodi" (Come, O cherished friend to meet the bride) and face the door of the synagogue in the poetic act of expecting the Sabbath Queen to come to her beloved groom, Israel.

The men and boys of the family come home from the synagogue after Friday-evening services. Their first words of zestful greeting to everyone are "Gut Shabbos." The mother has already performed the ritual of lighting the candles and blessing them in Hebrew. The table is prepared, with its white cloth and two Sabbath loaves, the twists called challos, symbol of the double portion of manna received by the Israelites in the wilderness on the eve of Sabbath (Exodus 16: 22, 29). The loaves are covered with a finely embroidered cloth, symbolizing the "fine layer of dew" which covered the manna. The house is imbued with a spirit of sacred rest and family peace, and the father of the house leads the family in singing "Sholom Aleichem."

The Kiddush is recited over the wine, establishing the presence of the Sabbath Queen in the family and the participation of all its members in the Sabbath holiness. The Sabbath meal, with traditional dishes including gefilte fish, noodle soup, carrot pudding (tsimmes) and poultry, is served. Z'miros, table songs whose theme is the delight of the Sabbath day are sung between courses and after the meal, the putting aside of all concerns about business, money and family problems, and the slow, measured pace of the Sabbath day itself, with its emphasis on the life of the spirit, all



strengthen the popular Jewish conviction that "the Sabbath is a foretaste of the world to come."

SHABBOS HAMALKOH

This popular Sabbath song is sung to welcome the Sabbath Queen. It reflects the idea that Sabbath is a queen and a bride, and on the Sabbath, "every Jew is a king."

SHOLOM ALEICHEM

"Peace unto you, O angels of peace. May your coming be in peace, and your going forth."

This melody, which is widely known, is one of the most characteristic Sabbath songs. It is a greeting to the two angels who, according to mystical legend, accompany every Jew from the synagogue to his home on Friday night.

Rosh Hashonoh ushers in the most solemn period of the Jewish religious calendar. Known in the Bible as the Day of Memorial (Yom ha-Zikaron), which falls on the new moon of the seventh month, Tishri, it inaugurates the Ten Days of Penitence (Aseres Yemei Teshuvah). During this period, as tradition asserts, the world, which was created on Rosh Hashonoh, stands under judgment, and the destinies of men are determined for the ensuing year. This period of self-examination, confession and repentance is climaxed by the observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The traditional Rosh Hashonoh greeting, recited in Hebrew usually after synagogue services, is "L'shonoh to'voh ti'ko-seyvu" (May you be inscribed for a good year), or, more simply in Yiddish, "A gut yor." The Hebrew greeting refers to the traditional imagery of the Book of Life, in which the worshipper seeks to have his name inscribed



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for the coming year. Rosh Hashonoh, which is observed by Orthodox and Conservative Jews for two days and by Reform for one day, is not a home festival. Meals are eaten in the home--with the ceremony of spreading honey on the first slice of bread or on a piece of apple eaten as an omen for a sweet year--but the major observance takes place in the synagogue or temple. The atmosphere in the synagogue is at first festive, but the prayers are chanted by the chazan and congregation with a specific intonation and pious fervor associated with the Days of Awe, evoking a profoundly religious attitude. Perhaps the highest peak of religious feeling is reached when the shofar (ram's horn) is blown during the morning service and four times more during subsequent services, symbolizing, among other things, the sovereignty of God over men and nations.

#### UN'SANEH TOKEF

"Let us tell how utterly holy this day is."

The chanting of this liturgical poem, which is repeated on Yom Kippur, is regarded as one of the most exalted moments of the service. Among East-European Jews especially when the Ark of the Torah is opened and the chant of this prayer begins, one can hear sobs from men and women. A section of the piy-yut (poem) tells of the grandeur and majesty of the Great Day of Judgment:

On Rosh Hashonoh their destiny is inscribed and on Yom Kippur it is sealed; how many shall pass away and how many shall be brought into existence; who shall live and who shall die...But repentance, prayer and charity cancel the stern decree.

Legend holds that this poem was written in the tenth century by the scholar Rabbi Amnon of Mayence at the time of his martyrdom when

he faced the choice of forced baptism or death.

OVINU MALKEYNU

"Our Father, our King, we have sinned before Thee."

This is possibly the oldest and certainly among the most stirring of all the litanies of the Jewish year. The Talmud (Ta'anis 25b) attributes some of its lines to Rabbi Akiba, the great second-century sage, who spoke them on a fast day in a time of drought. In the course of the centuries, new invocations were added, some expressing normal tribulations and needs of human existence while others, like the grim refrains toward the end, are the responses of Jews to the terrible massacres that accompanied the Black Death in the fourteenth century, when in the whole of Germany only three Jewish communities escaped total annihilation. The present Ashkenazic, or East-European, rite consists of forty-four invocations that are recited throughout the Days of Awe, except on the Sabbath when one ought not to be sad but cheerful. The Midrash, or rabbinic commentary, says regarding this prayer: "As soon as a man has the moral strength to see himself as he is and make the confession 'I have sinned,' the powers of evil lose their hold over him."

YOM KIPPUR

Day of Atonement

Yom Kippur is the most sacred of the Jewish holy days. It comes ten days after Rosh Hashonoh, on the tenth of Tishri, and is a solemn fast day from sundown to sundown. Known in Jewish tradition as "the Sabbath of Sabbaths," it is characterized by individual and communal spiritual regeneration to be sought through fasting, self-examination, and atonement. The biblical foundation of



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For on this day shall atonement be made  
for you to cleanse you; from all your sins shall  
ye be clean before the Lord. It is a Sabbath  
of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls;  
it is a statute forever.

As commentators have observed, Yom Kippur is not a magical "Day of Pardon"; rather, it is an annual experience designed to restore a dedicated people to the state of holiness necessary to its mission in the world. During the long day of prayer in the synagogue, each worshipper confesses his own sins and the sins of all, for each is implicated in and responsible for the acts of all.

As it is a religious commandment to fast on Yom Kippur, so is it a religious requirement to eat festively the evening before. The emphasis on feasting before and after the fast underscores the fact that the purpose of abstinence from all food and drink on Yom Kippur is not to mortify the flesh but to sensitize the soul. The soul is not helped by physical suffering, Judaism holds, but only by the symbolism and by the turning of the person away from self-indulgence in material things. After the last meal of Yom Kippur eve is over, the father blesses all his children, laying his hands on their heads, and kisses each one as if they all were going on a long journey. The



whole family hastens off to the synagogue, and from then until sun-down the next day, they will not leave the sanctuary except to sleep and will not eat or drink.

The synagogue is crowded, and the atmosphere has a special quality and intensity. The sanctuary gleams in white, with a special white cover for the Ark and the pulpit; the white robes of the rabbi, cantor and other pious Jews; the white tale'sim (prayer shawls) and yarmulkes (skull caps)--all symbols of purity and spiritual cleanliness, recalling the white linen garments the High Priest of Israel (once called the Pontiff) donned as he ministered on this day in the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple. An air of solemn and exalted absorption falls over the congregation as the service commences with the cantor's chanting of the moving "Kol Nidrei."

Perhaps the most vivid moment occurs on Yom Kippur day, when the rabbi and cantor lead the congregation in the dramatic reenactment, through poetic recitations and ancient melodies, of the ceremony of atonement as practiced in the Temple almost 3,000 years ago. After reciting in Hebrew the ancient confessionals of the High Priest, in which he asked God's forgiveness for his own sins, the sins of other priests and the sins of the entire people of Israel, the cantor and the rabbi prostrate themselves on the ground and bury their faces, exactly as did their ancestors in Jerusalem.

1 The concluding prayers of Yom Kippur are called N'iloh, which means closing. Originally, the word probably referred to the closing of the gates of the Temple, but Jewish tradition has spiritualized its meaning by interpreting it to refer to the closing of the gates

of heaven. During the closing hours of the day, when the sun is setting and the shadows fall, one has the final opportunity to do penance wholeheartedly and to plead to be "inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life." One long, resounding blast, symbolizing sacred jubilation, is then blown on the ram's horn.

### KOL NIDREI

#### "All Vows"

The "Kol Nidrei" is the powerful and solemn overture to the entire Yom Kippur service. Recited on Yom Kippur evening by the cantor and congregation, this plaintive melody sets the mood of humble contrition and hope for forgiveness that dominates the spirit of the Great Day until the next sundown. This Aramaic prayer is a formula for the dispensation of vows, and scholars differ over its origins. The most generally held view dates the "Kol Nidrei" from the Spanish Inquisition of the fifteenth century, when some 150,000 Jews were compelled to adopt Christianity or be expelled to adopt Christianity or be expelled from the country. Many of these forcibly converted Jews attended the synagogue covertly at the risk of their lives and used the "Kol Nidrei" text as a form of renouncing the vows imposed upon them by the Inquisition. The melody of this prayer originated in the sixteenth century in southern Germany and is used universally by Ashkenazic Jews; Sephardic (Spanish-Portuguese) Jews recite the text to the chant of S'lichos, simple prayers of supplication. This stirring prayer has made such an imprint on the observance of Yom Kippur eve that this night is often



referred to as the eve of "Kol Nidrei."

SUKKOS is both a seasonal and a historical holiday. It is a festival of thanksgiving, celebrating the reaping of the summer fruits at the beginning of autumn, and relates to the time when our farmer ancestors dwelled in booths during the "ingathering of the harvest," another name for Sukkos. Historically, it commemorates the perilous journey of the Israelites through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The reference to booths derives from the biblical commandment: "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days...that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the Land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23: 42-43). Sukkos is one of the three pilgrim festivals--Pesach and Shavuot are the other two--marked in ancient times by statutory pilgrimages to the sanctuary or Temple in Jerusalem. Many of the Sukkos ceremonials observed today derive from the Temple practices. The symbols of Sukkos as the festival of ingathering are bundles of plants, usually imported from the Holy Land: the lulav, the tall palm branch bound with willow and myrtle, and the esrog, the aromatic citron. Both in the synagogue and in the sukkah, or booth, at home (when urban living allows for building one), the worshipper holds fruit and boughs together, symbolizing one human brotherhood mutually responsible for the welfare and good name of the whole, and shakes them up and down in the direction of the four corners of the earth while chanting a Hebrew prayer of gratitude for divine blessings. The two festive days of Sukkos, on which work is forbidden, are followed by five intermediatedays, chol ha-moed (literally, "the weekly (weekdays) within the holy days"). The climax of the eight-day



holiday (Reform Jews observe seven days) comes in the synagogue on Simchas Torah (Rejoicing with the Torah), when the end of the reading of the Torah scrolls is celebrated.

On the eve of Simchas Torah, gaiety fills the synagogue as the Torah scrolls, with their gleaming satin covers and silver crowns, are taken out of the Ark. Each scroll is carried around the bimah (pulpit) at least seven times, and each adult man carries one around once. The men are called to Ha'kofos (circling) as they are invited to the reading of the Torah. The circling process is long and festive, and the cantor leads each tour, chanting a prayer over and over. Among the Chassidim, a pietist group, this is an especially joyous observance since the members are devoted to serving God in simchah (cheerfulness). The Ha'kofos prepares for the next day of Simchas Torah, when the last verses and then the opening verses of the Five Books of Moses are read, which begins the yearly cycle of Torah reading. Since the days of the G'pnim, the seventh to the eleventh centuries, it has been deemed an honor to be either the Chosan Torah (the bridegroom of the Torah) and be called to the reading of the last section of the Fifth Book of Moses or to be the Chosan B'rishis (the bridegroom of Genesis) and be called to open the reading of the First Book. All over the world on this day, with the same prayers and the same intonation, Jews rejoice over the Torah and renew their loyalty to the Covenant.

V<sup>n</sup>SOMACHTOH

"And You Shall Rejoice"

This is a gay, popular song that reflects the spirit of rejoicing over the Torah, the theme of Simchas Torah.

SISU V<sup>n</sup>SIMCHU

"Rejoice and Be Happy"

The text of this song, translated into English, is:

Rejoice and be happy in festive glee

And gaily clap your hands.

Clang brass cymbals, loud and free,

And sing in merry bands.

Chanukkah, which brings festive joy and the light of the menorah (candelabrum) in the midst of the drab winter season, is rapidly becoming one of the greatest Jewish folk festivals, although traditionally it is a minor event not even mentioned in the Bible. It commemorates one of the great events in Jewish history, the revolt and victory of Judah the Maccabee and his followers over the forces of the Syrian monarch Antiochus. In their struggles against Hellenism and to preserve the right to follow in the path of their God, the Maccabees became the first fighters for freedom of conscience known in world history.

After triumphing over their oppressors, the Maccabees undertook as one of their first acts the cleansing and redidcation of the defiled Temple, whose service had been interrupted for three years. On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev (December) in 165 B.C.E., they redidacted (Chanukkoh means dedication) the Temple with great ceremony and decreed that an eight-day festival commencing on that day be observed yearly. The concept of eight days derives from the tale that when the Maccabees searched the Temple, they found only one small flask of sacred oil, enough to light the menorah for one day. A "miracle" occurred, and the tiny quantity of oil lasted for eight days.

In commemoration of these acts, Jews today light oil lamps or candles each Chanukkoh evening at dusk. The practice is to light one candle the first night and to increase the number by one on each successive evening, the candles being lighted from right to left, the direction of Hebrew writing. Special blessings over the candles, prayers and songs are chanted as part of the religious ceremony. In many ways, Chanukkoh has become a children's holiday, erroneously thought of by some as a Jewidh equivalent of Christmas. Although these festivals are completely different in meaning and ritual, apparently the giving of gifts on both of them has become the common bond. In addition to the fascination of participating in lighting the menorah, Jewish children are delighted by eight nights of Chanukkoh-gelt, the present of money and other gifts to which each child is entitled from every adult relative. The holiday's festivity is increased by the serving of latkes (potato pancakes) and



the spinning of the dreidle, the four-sided top decorated with four Hebrew letters that symbolize the sentence: "A great miracle happened there."

#### MO' OZ TSUR

"Fortress Rock" or Rock of Ages"

One of the most popular songs of Chanukkoh, "Mo'oz Tsur" preserves the religious character of this festival. It is a hymn recalling the redemption of Israel from Egypt, the Babylonian exile, Haman's threat of extermination of the Jews of Persia, and finally the rescue from the terror of Antiochus. "Mo'oz Tsur" appeared for the first time among the Ashkenazic Jews in the Middle Ages.

#### MI YIMALLEL

"Who can retell the mighty deeds that befell Israel?

Who can count them?"

Although Chanukkoh is observed as a religious festival, there is inevitably the reminder of the national and political background of the holiday, the militant revolt of the Maccabees and their martial victory. This song, which emphasizes the physical redemption of the Jewish people through perennial heroism, is especially popular in Israel.

Chamishoh Osor Bi-Sh'vot occurs on the fifteenth of Sh'vot (February)

and is a purely popular celebration of no historical significance.

Originally observed by the Jewish farmers of ancient Palestine as a nature festival on midwinter day, it is said now to mark the date when the sap begins to rise in the trees of the Holy Land. It is customary on this day to eat of the fruit of trees that grow in Israel and to

recite a blessing over it--apples, almonds, carobs, figs, nuts and

pomegranates. The carob (known in European folklore as St. John's Bread after John the Baptist, who ate carobs rather than locusts when he went into the wilderness preaching repentance) is especially favored by Jews on this day because in Jewish tradition the carob betokens humility, a necessary element of penitence. It has become a widespread custom among school children in present-day Israel to observe the day by planting new trees. There are no special synagogue services and no liturgy for this holiday, although among certain pious Jews it is the practice to sit up late the previous evening, reciting passages of the Bible that deal with trees, fruits or the fertility of the earth.

#### HASHKEDIYAH

"The Almond Tree," also known as "Tu Bi-Sh'vot is Here"

— This is a Jewish Arbor Day song hailing the New Year for Trees.

#### ATSEY ZEYTIM OMDIM

"Olive Trees Are Standing"

This folk song, in the form of a round, is very often sung in honor of Chamishoh Osor Bi-Sh'vot. Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth of Adar (roughly, March) and commemorates the triumph of Esther and Mordecai in foiling the plot of Haman, vizier of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) of Persia, who sought to exterminate the Jews of the Persian Empire and who had chosen that day by lot (pur) to carry out his plans. The story is related in the biblical Book of Esther, which is read in the synagogue from a megillah (scroll) both in the morning and on the preceding evening. Although some Jewish scholars hold the origins of Purim to be obscure, it has become the most

~~xxxxxx festival of Jewish people xxxxxxxx The xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~



joyous festival of Jewish deliverance. The Book of Esther, perhaps more a historical novel than a book of history, has been read for generations not only as the ~~encounter~~ encounter between Mordecai, the Jew, and Haman, the Agaiter, but as an allegory of the struggle that Jews have had against the enemies that sought to destroy them. Thus, Whenever a Jewish community was saved from a horrible fate, from pogrom or exile, which a Haman-like despot tried to impose, the community would celebrate yearly the day of ~~x deliverance~~ as a special local Purim in the same manner as the universal Jewish Purim; for example, there are the Purim of Egypt based on an event in 1524, the Wintz Purim of Frankfurt Jews of the seventeenth century, and many others. The thirteenth day of Adar, the day before Purim, is the Fast of Esther, which is observed by very few people since it is not strictly ordained. The day after Purim is Shushan Purim, named for the capital of the old Persian kingdom. The Jews of Shushan celebrated the ~~xxxxxxx~~ victory over Haman a day later than did the other Persian Jews.

Purim is the merriest day in the Jewish year, and from its beginnings amongst the Jews of Persia, it has been celebrated as a spring masquerade, a festival of play and frolic, of merrymaking and mischief, the one day of the year when frivolity is permitted and when the law of moderation in all things may be briefly relaxed. Drinking, even to excess, is regarded as a mitsvoh (commandment). Practical jokes, masquerading in odd costumes and boisterousness are taken for granted; on this carnival day, it is right to be the way one should

never be at any other time.

The highlight of Purim, however, is the reading of the Megillah of Esther in the synagogue. When the reader pronounces the name of Haman for the first time, at the beginning of the third chapter, a deafening tumult breaks out as children twirl their tin or wooden noisemakers and the elders stamp their feet, all designed to beat out the name of the tyrant.

Children in religious ~~schools~~ schools participate in spectacles and plays on Purim themes. After returning from the synagogue on the morning of Purim, hamantaschen, three-cornered cakes filled with poppy seed, are served, and at the noon meal, kreplach, three-cornered pastry filled with meat, is served with soup--based on the legend that Haman wore a three-cornered hat. There is an extensive interchange of gifts (shalach-monos) among Jews. The gifts consist mainly of food delicacies. Poor people are encouraged to give modest gifts and are rewarded with presents of money. After the evening prayers (Maariv), the family sits down to the Purim feast and makes merry in honor of the day.

In Israel, Purim has become a national carnival day known as Ad-lo-yoda (literally "until one does not know")--that is, one makes merry until one does not know whether he is Mordecai or Haman! It is customary both in Israel and in Jewish schools in the diaspora to elect a Queen Esther to reign at the Purim festivities.



SHOSHANAS YA"AKOV  
"The Lily of Jacob"

Although "Shoshanas Ya'akov," which comes from the last paragraph of a Purim meditation, is usually translated as The Lily of Jacob," it is evidently a ~~poetical~~ poetical name for the Jews of Shushan, the capital of old ~~Persia~~ Persia.

The Jews of Shushan rejoiced and were glad when they all of them saw Mordecai in the purple. Thou hast ever been Israel's salvation, and its hope in every generation, to ~~make known~~ make known that all who hope in Thee shall not be ashamed, neither shall any be confounded who put their trust in Thee.

CHAG PURIM  
"The Festival of Purim"

—The theme of this folk tune is: Purim with its songs, dances and masks, is a merry day for us.

## PESACH

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Pesach, the oldest of the Jewish festivals, dates back to the nomadic and agricultural past of Israel. As a seasonal observance, described in the Book of Exodus 12, it marks the beginning of the barley harvest and is celebrated at full moon in the first month of spring by the family paschal meal and the six-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. As a historical occasion, it commemorates the beginning of Israel's national existence, the redemption from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. Known in Jewish tradition as the Season of Our Freedom (Z'man cheru-senu), the saga of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery has become a universal parable, whose symbolism has meaning for all people who strive toward freedom and new life. Pesach not only celebrates redemption as a past event but is celebrated, through the Jewish ceremonial at the Seder service on the first two nights of the festival, as a present experience. "Every Jew should regard himself as if he had personally come out of Egypt," are the words recited each Pesach by every Jew who reads the Haggadah, the running commentary of legend, prayer and exhortation by which the Sedar (order of service) is conducted. Past and present are joined with future hope as Pesach also reaffirms the belief that the future deliverance from war and oppression will come about through a Messiah, a second Moses, who will free the Jews and mankind on the very eve of Passover.



The famous Seder, which brings the whole family together for the long, dramatic service and meal, is the most important feast of the holidays. Jewish adults cherish childhood memories of going to their grandparents' homes for the first day's Seder. They recall the matsoh (unleavened bread), the strange and symbolic dishes that are served at the proper moment, the goblets of wine for the family and the prophet Elijah, the candles, the white tablecloth that symbolizes purity and cleanliness, and the head of the household reclining on pillows, which shows that though once the Jews were slaves, he is now a free man.

The rabbis deemed it a sacred obligation to spread a full understanding of the eternal significance of how a God of justice and freedom espoused the cause of brick-making slaves against a royal oppressor. They evolved the Seder service, whose ceremonies became a notable pedagogic device for educating generations in religion, sacred history and morality. The Seder service begins with the four questions, asked by the youngest child. "Mah Nishtanoh?" (Why is this night different from all other nights?) the child begins in Hebrew, sometimes translating into Yiddish or his native language. With his questions he starts the whole ritual; the Seder is then performed to answer his questions.

The Haggadah is read, chanted and sung by all at the table to well-loved melodies, to be interrupted only by the distribution of ritual foods, which symbolize phases of the exodus. These are: Matsoh, the unleavened

bread of affliction; moror, the bitter herbs recalling the bitter lot of the Israelites in Egypt and of Jews in many other lands after Egypt; charoses, a mixture of chopped apples, nuts and wine, symbolizing the clay from which the children of Israel fashioned bricks to build the pyramids of Egypt; a burned shankbone commemorating the paschal sacrifice in the Temple; a roasted egg, which is dipped in salt water as a reminder of mourning and tears for the destruction of the Temple. Four cups of wine must be drunk, recalling the four expressions used to describe God's deliverance of Israel (Exodus 6:6-7). An elaborate meal follows, climaxed by a bit of child's play over a "stolen" piece of matsoh, called the afikomen, and the second phase of the Seder begins.

The second phase consists entirely of reading the Haggadah, which is a repetition of the biblical story of the exodus with rabbinic comments, and the chanting of psalms, hymns, folk songs and children's rhymes. The high point of this section is the throwing open of the door to the prophet Elijah, who, according to the children, enters the room and sips from his goblet. The prophet has arrived today; the Messiah will come in the future. The service concludes with the singing of the story "Chad Gadyoh" (Only One Kid), a children's fancy replete with legend and symbolism.

On the following night, the second Seder, a replica of the first but not as exciting, is observed by Orthodox and Conservative Jews, but not by Reform Jews, who observe only the first and last days of Passover



days of Passover as full holidays. The four in-between days are chol ha-moed (the weekly weekdays within the holy days) during which work goes on but no chomets (leaven) is eaten. The services in the synagogue contain special piy-yutim (hymns) taken from the Machzor, the special prayer book for the festivals.

MAH NISHTANOH?

"Why is this night different from all other nights?"

The four questions asked at the Seder by the youngest child are found in the Mishnah (Pesachim 10:4), the compilation of sayings and statements of the rabbis covering the period 30 B.C.E. to 220 C.E. The practice is ancient, dating back to the Temple in Jerusalem. The number four is prominent throughout the Seder service: the four questions, the four cups of wine and the parable of the four sons.

DAYENU

"Alone it would have sufficed us."

This passage from the Haggadah is a Litany of Wonders that summarizes the favors that God has bestowed on Israel since the exodus. As each of these benefits is recited at the Seder, the family responds loudly with the word "Dayenu," meaning "Alone it would have sufficed us," or "We should have thought it enough." The fifteen divine favors enumerated

in this passage are said to correspond to the fifteen psalms known as the Shir Ha'maales (Songs of Ascent) and also to the numerical value of the Hebrew letters Yud Heh, which spell the divine name Yah. The general theme of "Dayenu" is that the liberation from Egypt was not completed until Israel had received the Torah and settled in the

Promised Land.

ELIYOHU HANOVI

"Elijah the Prophet"

The theme of this Chassidic chant is:

May the prophet Elijah come soon,

In our time,

With the Messiah, Son of David.

CHAD GADYOH

"Only One Kid"

This song is intended as entertainment for the children to help keep them awake until the conclusion of the Seder service. It is an allegory of the various empires and nations that sought to consume Israel but were in turn consumed.

LAG BO'OMER

"Mid-Lenten" Period

Lag Bo'Omer (the word Lag derives from the Hebrew letters Lamed and Gimmel, which have the numerical value of thirty-three) marks the thirty-third day, virtually the middle, of the Omer, the seven-week period of austerity between Pesach and Shovuos (Pentecost). It falls on the eighteenth day of Iyar (April-May) and has no formal, ritual observance. During the Omer days, which are observed as a kind of Lent, it is not permitted to marry, to cut the hair or nails, to ~~wax~~ wear new clothes, or to attend any form of public entertainment.



Also, the very pious fast every Monday and Thursday. On Lag Bo'Omer, the restrictions are relaxed for twenty-four hours, or according to some rabbinic authorities, right up to Shovuos.

Omer, a Hebrew word meaning sheaf, refers to the scriptural commandment (Leviticus 23:15) that from the day when the first sheaf of barley is offered to God in the sanctuary, seven full weeks must be counted until two loaves of new bread are offered to Him at harvest-time. The counting, known in Hebrew as S'firoh, is begun on the second night of Passover and is performed in a ceremonial manner every evening at sunset during the forty-nine days.

Various explanations for the austerity are offered in Jewish tradition by seeking to link this folk festival with some event in Jewish history. On Lag Bo'Omer, it is said, the scourge of death ceased ~~among~~ among the thousands of pupils of the second-century sage Rabbi Akiba who were stricken by a plague. But this explanation is based on a misreading of a passage in the Talmud. Another historic connection ~~was~~ was sought in the claim that on this day the manna first began to fall in the wilderness. But Exodus 16:13 asserts that this event occurred on the sixteenth, not the eighteenth, of the month. The Kabbalists, religious mystics, declared that on Lag Bo'Omer, Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai, the legendary ~~father~~ father of Jewish mysticism, revealed his mysteries to his disciples just before his death. In tribute to him, a pilgrimage is made on the evening before the festival on the evening before the festival to the traditional site of his grave in the village of Meron, in Israel. At the grave site, the pilgrims

light bonfires and sing and dance all night.

An old custom associated with Lag Bo'Omer is that of children going to the forest with bows and arrows and enjoying the outdoor world of woods and fields.

ALEY GIVAH

"Go Up to the Hills of Judah"

The English translation of the text of this song begins:

On Judah's hills, far from the throng,

A shomer's flute hums plaintive song.

A shepherd tune he softly plays

To call back lambs and colt that stray.

Lee, lee, lee.





## SHOVUOS

### Pentecost, Festival of Weeks

Shovuos, which follows the "Lenten" period of Omer, is known in Jewish tradition as Chag ha-Kotsir, the feast of the harvest, and also as Yom ha-Bikkurim, the day of the offering of the first loaves of the new crop to God, as enjoined by Leviticus 23:17. These designations, linking the festival with the end of the barley harvest in ancient Palestine, emphasize the biblical view of the presence of divine salvation in nature and of man's partnership with God in creation. But what has elevated this nature festival into a historic festival of great spiritual significance has been its association with the giving of the Torah to Israel. Biblical narrative states that the Israelites, after wandering for seven weeks in the wilderness, reached Mount Sinai in the month of Sivan, exactly three months after their departure from Egypt (Exodus 19:1). It was on the sixth day of Sivan, asserts Jewish tradition, that the Ten Commandments were given to Israel, thus establishing Shovuos as Z'man Matan Torahsenu (the Season of the Giving of Our Torah). The rabbis speak of Shovuos as the concluding festival to Passover, for the deliverance from bondage was not an end in itself; it was the prelude to Sinai, where Israel crowned the freedom obtained on Passover with the vow to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The dominant theme of the giving of the Law and the Covenant concluded between God and His people is reflected in the services of the synagogue.

On the first day of Shovuos, the lesson from the Torah includes the solemn reading of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-20). The Book of Ruth is read as a prelude to the Minchah (afternoon service) because it expresses the two main features of the Festival of Weeks: the ingathering of the harvest, and the acceptance of the Law and Revelation of God by a pagan woman who embraced the faith of Israel. On the second day, the reading is from Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17, which deals with the observance of the Feast of First Fruits.

The universal meaning of the Decalogue for all mankind was affirmed by the rabbis who taught that the Revelation at Sinai was given in desert territory which belongs to no one nation exclusively, and it was heard not by Israel alone but by all the inhabitants of the earth. A Midrash (rabbinic commentary) ~~points out~~ points out that the divine voice divided itself into the seventy tongues then spoken on earth so that all the children of men might understand the redemptive message contained in these one hundred twenty Hebrew words that form the fundamentals of universal morality.

Unlike Pesach and Sukkos, Shovuos has ~~no~~ no distinctive ceremony. In many homes and synagogues, it is customary to decorate ~~with~~ with flowers and branches, harking back to the ancient rejoicing in the gifts of the earth. Orthodox and Conservative Jews observe two days of Shovuos, which fall on the ~~sixth~~ sixth and seventh of Sivan; in Israel and among Reform Jews, one day is observed, as originally ordained. In modern Jewish life, it has become customary in Conservative and Reform congregations to confirm boys and girls on Shovuos; in this



ceremony, the adolescents pledge their adherence to the Covenant, which was concluded on this day with their forebears. It has also been customary that the Jewish child be initiated into the study of the Torah, Jewish religion and the Hebrew language on Shovuos so that to him too the Festival becomes a personal experience of Revelation. The great family feature of Shovuos is the serving of dairy dishes in all possible combinations: blintzes, kreplach with cheese, cheese ~~strudel~~ strudel. One explanation for this custom is that when the Jews returned to their tents after receiving the Torah, they were so tired and hungry that they could not wait until the women prepared a meat meal, so they hastened to eat whatever dairy products were available.

BORUCH ELOHEYNU

"Blessed is OUR Lord"

Blessed is our Lord Who created us for His glory,  
Who distinguished us from the erring,  
Who gave us Torah and everlasting life.

YISMACH

"He Will Rejoice"

Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion,  
For Thou didst call him a faithful servant;  
A crown of glory didst Thou set upon his head.

## TISHOH BO'OV

### Mourning for the Temple

Tishoh Bo'Ov, the ninth day of the Jewish month of Ov (July-August), is the most important of the four historical fast days that commemorate events connected with the destruction of the ancient Temple and of Jerusalem. The other three fasts are the tenth of Teves \* (December-January), marking the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem; the seventeenth of Tammuz (June-July), (June-July), commemorating the breach made in the walls of the Holy City; and the third of Tishri (September-October) recalling the assassination of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah appointed by Nebuchadnezzar.

According to Jewish tradition, it was on the ninth day of Ov in the year 586 B.C.E. that the first Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. On the same day six hundred fifty-six years later, 70 C.E., the second Temple was burned by Titus. In the year 135 C.E., the Second War of Independence against the Romans, with the Jewish forces under Bar Chochba and Rabbi Akiba, ended with the fall of the fortress Bethar on the ninth of Ov. By tragic coincidence, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 also began on this "black-letter" day of Jewish history. In our own time, a great catastrophe is bound up with Tishoh Bo'Ov; on that day in 1914, Russia ordered the mobilization of her armies, and the World War started. A year later, Russia evacuated all Jews from the border provinces, and a period of great ~~xxxxxx~~ catastrophe began for East-European Jews, who still remember that their misfortunes began on Tishoh Bo'Ov.



Neither Tishoh Bo'Ov nor the other three fast days are ordained by the Torah, and therefore they do not rank as sacred days. They were first mentioned by the prophet Zechariah (518 B.C.E.), who vaguely referred to Tishoh Bo'Ov as "the fast of the fifth month."

In a characteristic, self-critical mode of explanation, the Talmud ~~xx~~ states that God decreed this day as one of misfortune and ~~xxxx~~ woe at the very beginning of Jewish history because the ninth of Ov was the day the Jews in the Sinai desert bewailed their fate when the spies brought back a bad report from Canaan. Thereupon God declared, "You cried without cause; I will, therefore, make this an eternal day of mourning for you." It was then, says tradition, that the decree was ordered for the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jews amongst the nations.

While the fast of Ov is marked by all the rigor of the Day of Atonement by the most traditional Jews, Reform Judaism has practically discarded the observance for theological reasons. Reform Judaism regards the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of Israel throughout the world not as a disaster to be overcome only with the advent of the Messiah, but as the beginning--though tragic at the time of its occurrence--of another and even more significant stage of Israel's historic mission "to be a light unto all mankind."

Among pious, traditional Jews, Tishoh Bo'Ov is preceded by three weeks of mourning, lasting from the seventeenth day of Tammuz to

the day itself. During this period and especially during the nine days preceding the fast of Ov, all celebrations are forbidden; one is not allowed to cut one's hair; bathing is forbidden; no meat is eaten; no new clothing is to be put on. At the final meal before the fast, on the eve of Tishoh Bo'Ov, some Jews dine on hard rolls (often bagles) and eggs, sprinkling the eggs with ashes, a ritual associated with mourners after funerals.

After the meal, Jews go to the synagcgue, which is dimly lighred. The paroches (curtain) is removed from the Ark, or the Ark is draped in black. The worshippers sit on low benches or on boxes they have brought with them; they wear slippers and pray like mourners with bowed heads. The Baal Koreh, the traditional reader of the Torah, chants the Book of Lamentations, purportedly written by the prophet Jeremiah, who foretold and witnessed the downfall. (Modern scholars now ascribe authorship to various Jewish poets who were eyewitnesses of the destruction or who lived shortly thereafter.) One can almost feel the pain at these services over the destruction of Jerusalem, a city full of people that became a ~~widow~~ widow.

At the morning service (Sha-charis) the tale'sim (prayer shawls) and tefillin (phylacteries) are not worn; instead, they are donned for the afternoon services, when they are ordinarily not worn. Worshippers sit on the ground and recite kinos (dirges or odes of mourning) over the passing of the Temple and the religious and national life of which it was the sumbol and the embodiment. The closing sections of the kinos express Israel's longing for the Holy Land and contain prayers for her speedy restornation. A fascinating custom is prevalent

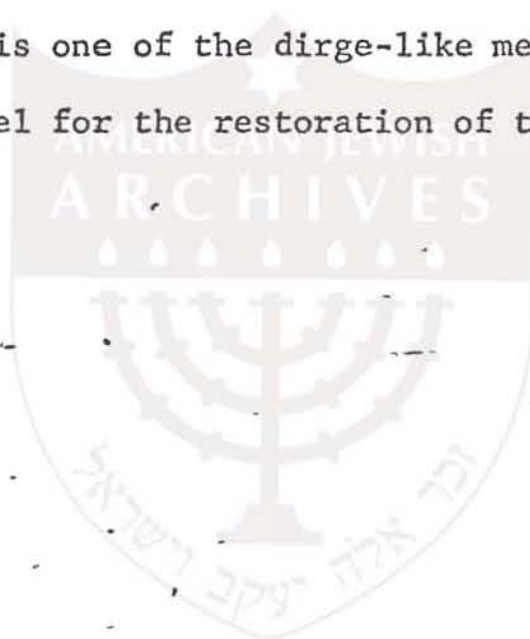


among oriental Jewish women. They anoint themselves with fragrant oils after midday of this fast, for it is believed that this is the birthday of the Messiah, who will arise out of despair and bring consolation to his people.

YIBONEH HAMIKDOSH

"O, may the Temple be rebuilt  
may the Temple be rebuilt."

"Yiboneh Hamikdosh" is one of the dirge-like melodies that expresses the yearning of Israel for the restoration of the Temple.



## HATIKVAH

### Jewish National Anthem

#### Hatikvah

"Hatikvah" (The Hope) became the anthem of the Zionist movement after it was organized in 1879 and was adopted as the national anthem of Israel on its founding in 1948. Written by the Hebrew poet Naphtali Herz Imber (1856-1909) and set to music by a Palestinian pioneer settler, Samuel Cohen, "Hatikvah" consists of nine stanzas that speak of the longing for Zion.

Yet is our hope not lost, the ancient hope,  
to dwell in the land of our fathers, in the city  
where David encamped.

#### Further Reading

For information regarding an annotated bibliography on Judaism, Jewish traditions, the history and sociology of the Jewish people, and Jewish-Christian relations, write to Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum at the American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022.



## THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish people, both in the past and in the present, is a world-wide fellowship which transcends political, cultural, and economic barriers. [This fellowship is the result not of common

blood, soil, or race. Rather it is grounded in the b'ris, the Covenant, made between the Divine and the people of Israel.

Central to the existence of the Jewish people is the affirmation that "God, Torah and Israel are one." Jewish tradition

asserts that the Jewish people have survived their 3,000-year long history, most of which was lived in the diaspora--the

dispersion--because Israel and God are bound to each other by the Covenant, a special contract that is binding upon

all generations. Under the terms of the Covenant, Israel has agreed to serve, in return for God's providential care,

"as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation -- that is,

as God's witness in the world of men. The holy task to

which the Jews committed themselves at the foot of Mount

Sinai is to live as a model society, a concrete fulfillment

of the teachings of the Torah as epitomized in the words

of the prophet Micah, "to do justly, to love mercy, to

walk humbly with thy God."

The Jewish people are held together not only by the bonds of a distinctive religion, but also by the ties of a common

history, a common culture, a common social experience, and a common destiny. The Jewish communities in the various countries of the world see themselves as branches on the one tree of Jewish peoplehood, and bound by a mystique of interdependence.

The nature and structure of the Jewish community is unique and unprecedented. It conforms to no other pattern existing among other religious-ethnic groups. In ancient times, when all Jews dwelt in the same land of Palestine, they organized their communal life as a monarchy. In later times, they were organized in the ghettos of Europe as a religious minority governed by a uniform Jewish religious law. At other times, Jews were a national minority, as during the period of oppression under Czarist Russia that held scores of national minorities in subjection. In 19th century Germany, some Jews became a religious denomination conforming to the dominant Protestant pattern. Zionism, the 20th century movement which resulted in the creation of the State of Israel, reflected the experience of the Jews in the 19th century movements of European nationalism combined with ancient Jewish messianic expectations to be restored to the birthplace of Jewish existence. Thus, the Jewish community transcends nationalism and even religion as these terms are conventionally understood.

Something of the same unconventionality applies to the place of the individual in Jewish life. One who is born to a Jewish mother is bound to Judaism and the Jewish people even when he rejects them. He is born into a "natural society," one



of the earliest forms of human association in which the individual becomes a member of the people at the same time that he enters its religious cult. There are those who adhere to the Jewish people for other than theological reasons, who nevertheless remain Jews in good standing by virtue of their identification with the fate and destiny of their people, as expressed in their participation in Jewish communal life.

In our time, Jewish communities are organized in a variety of differing ways, reflecting responses to local circumstances. In Argentina, the Jewish community has an over-all body, called the DAIA, which includes the religious, cultural, and social groupings. In Belgium, the Jewish representative body which incorporates both religious and cultural groups is the "Consistoires." In Great Britain, the Jewish community is represented through a variety of bodies--the religious, through the United Synagogue of Great Britain (which is a Jewish version of the Anglican establishment) and its elected Chief Rabbi; the lay or social action elements through the British Board of Deputies, the Anglo-Jewish Association and others.

The American Jewish community rests on three pillars--the Synagogue, institutionalism, and Jewish solidarity. The Synagogue, institutionalism, and Jewish solidarity. The Synagogue, or

Temple, is the supreme religious institution of Jewish life, performing in its ancient functions of service as the House of Prayer, the House of Study, and the House of Assembly. Like the Church and other religious institutions in America, the Synagogue also engages in manifold "secular" activities of a social or cultural character, even as the so-called Jewish secularist frequently engages in religious activity. (Writes the sociologist, C. Bezallel Sharman, "Rare indeed is the secularist Jew who would not have his newborn son circumcised, would not insist on a religious wedding for his daughter, or would discard religious services at a funeral.")

As will be explained more fully later, the American Synagogue includes three major branches--Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Each of these Jewish "denominations" has its own national rabbinic body and lay congregational group. The Orthodox groups are the Rabbinical Council of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations. The Conservatives are the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of America. The Reforms are the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. These groups are member agencies of the Synagogue Council of America, founded in 1926, which coordinates common activity in social action, interreligious relations and international affairs. There are other Jewish religious bodies which are not members of the Synagogue Council, including the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, the Agudas Israel, and Young Israel.



In most local Jewish communities there exist "interdenominational" Rabbinic associations.

In contrast to the Christian church-centered groups, the Jewish community carries out major aspects of its collective purposes in philanthropy, education, social welfare, community relations and intergroup relations through specialized agencies which are not under the auspices of the Synagogue. Following are the areas served by national and local Jewish bodies:

1. Social Welfare -- Philanthropy and social service, joined with overseas relief, have been a major unifying force in American Jewish life. In response to the Jewish tradition of Tzedakah, a Biblical term meaning both charity and justice, Jews have established a network of agencies, including hospitals, child care, homes for the aged, family counseling, immigrant aid, vocational training, and others. These services are organized on the community level into federations and welfare funds. Most of these belong to the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, which comprises some 200 member agencies, operating in 800 communities. The National Conference of Catholic Charities is the equivalent of the Council of Jewish Federations. The Jewish equivalent to the Bishops' Overseas Relief Fund is the United Jewish Appeal, which raises funds for overseas relief and for assistance to the State of Israel.

Jewish Education and Culture

Operating on the widespread conviction that education is the cornerstone of Judaism, the Jewish community has created a system that includes Sunday schools, weekday afternoon schools, and all-day or parochial schools. More than 600,000 Jewish children attend these schools, and most of which are affiliated with the American Association of Jewish Education--the Jewish counterpart of the National Catholic Education Association. Most Jewish religious and non-synagogal bodies also sponsor adult education programs, which are held in Synagogues and Temples and in Jewish Community Centers.

The National Jewish Welfare Board is the parent body of Jewish Community Centers, which serve the educational and recreational needs of Jews, regardless of their "denominational" commitments. The NJWB also serves as the service agency for the Jewish community in providing chaplains for the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Hillel Foundation of B'nai B'rith conducts programs among Jewish college students on the campuses, and is the equivalent of the Newman Clubs. The American Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Publication Society are specialized membership agencies. Groups which continue to serve the cultural interests of Jewish

labor are the Workmen's Circle and the Farband-Labor Zionist Order. The promotion of the Hebrew language is the major activity of a group called Histadruth Ivrit, and the Congress for Jewish Culture ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ stimulates interest in the Yiddish language. The English-Jewish weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines, roughly serving the same purposes as the diocesan publications, and the Yiddish-language press are also major media of education and information.

#### Community Relations --

The protection of the civil, political and religious rights of the Jews ~~every~~ everywhere, and the strengthening of American democracy, have been important aspects of Jewish public endeavor in the United States. There are a number of specialized Jewish organizations, known as community relations or human relations agencies, which have directed special attention to combatting anti-Semitism, and to promoting inter-faith and interracial amity, to the extension of civil rights and liberties to all Americans, and to the upholding of the separation of church and state.

The Jewish community relations agencies operate nationally and on a local community level. The American Jewish Committee, which has pioneered in social science research and religious textbook studies, is a membership agency founded in the wake of the Russian persecution of Jews in 1906. The American Jewish Congress, also a membership group, specializes in legislative activity. The Anti-Defamation



League is the community relations arm of B'nai B'rith, a Jewish fraternal organization. The Jewish Labor Committee is composed of members from labor organizations. The Jewish religious bodies also include community relations among their programs, as does the Jewish War Veterans. The majority of national Jewish community relations agencies belong to the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC), which also numbers among its constituency sixty local community councils.

#### Fraternal and Service Groups

Jewish social clubs, in addition to serving the need for recreation and entertainemtn, engage in some kind of communal service and participate in public affairs. B'nai B'rith, the oldest and largest Jewish fraternal organization, is active in a broad ~~program~~ program of Jewish endeavor, as well as in American civic and patriotic undertakings. The Knights of Columbus would be something of a Catholic counterpart. Diversified programs similar to those of B'nai B'rith are carried out by the National Council of Jewish Women. Hadassah is the largest Women's Zionist group and is joined by the Labor Zionist Pioneer Women in many activities ~~in~~ on the American Jewish scene in addition to their health, education and welfare work in Israel.

A ~~number~~ number of fraternal orders, which originated early in this century to meet the urgent needs of immigrants, continue to function--among them, B'rith Abraham, B'rith Shalom, Free Sons of

Israel, and B'nai Zion. The landmanschaften, the organizations of individuals who migrated from the same towns in Europe to the United States, continue to keep alive ties with the old world communities that have survived the Nazi holocaust.

Concern for the fate of the Jewish people has given rise to a number of religious, cultural, and ~~ix~~ ideological movements that have profoundly affected the life of American Jews. Zionism has been among the most important of the ideological movements. To religious Jews, Zion is deeply rooted in the messianic traditions of Judaism, and to nonprofessing Jews Zion represents the possibility of Jewish cultural fulfillment. In their work for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the majority of the American Jews were moved not alone by a sense of charity for the refugees from the concentration camps, but they were also mindful that the restoration of the Holy Land would enrich their spiritual sensibility, and enhance their lives as Jews and as Americans.

## JUDAISM

The 5,500,000 Jewish people who live in the United States belong to three religious branches of Judaism--Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

Orthodox Jews observe Jewish religious traditions based on the commandments (mitzvos) contained in the Torah, the five books of Moses, in accordance with the interpretations of the Rabbinic codes which guide the religious practices and ethical behavior of Jews in their daily conduct. Their house of worship is a Synagogue, on whose pattern of worship the church liturgy is based. Hebrew is the main language of prayer, and the men worship with their heads covered, reflecting the ancient Semitic tradition of reverence for the presence of the Divine. They also wear the tallis or prayer shawl. The men and women sit separately in Orthodox Synagogues, and there is no instrumental music nor female voices used in the services. In the Holy Temple in Jerusalem the sexes were separated and Orthodoxy retains that practice. They also observe the dietary laws, popularly known as "keeping kosher." These regulations do not allow the ~~xx~~ traditional Jew to eat pork or any meat which is not ritually prepared. Fish which do not have fins or scales, such as shell-fish, lobster, or shrimp, are ~~xxxx~~ also not eaten, nor do they mix meat and dairy foods and dishes, a practice intended



to extirpate an idolatrous rite common among Israel's pagan neighbors. Traditional Jewish homes use two sets of dishes, one of which is used only for meat foods, the other for milk foods. These disciplines in food recall Christian abstinences to ~~expel~~ extirpate an idolatrous rite common among Israel's pagan neighbors. Traditional Jewish homes use two sets of dishes, one of which is used only for meat foods, the other for ~~an~~ milk foods. These disciplines in food recall Christian abstinences and practices which accompany the observance of Lent. Every meal is hallowed by moments of prayer and thanksgiving before and after the meal.

Reform Jews have "reformed" many of the traditional rituals and ceremonies, believing that the forms of religion which reflect particular historic or cultural situations should change as life itself changes. Their house of worship is called a Temple. The prayers are recited in Hebrew and in English. Instrumental music and choirs of mixed voices are widely used. The men and women sit together in family groups, and the men need not cover their heads with yarmulkes (skull caps). The dietary laws are generally not observed. While most Reform Jews do not follow the strict observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days, many do observe the family ritual of welcoming the Sabbath by lighting candles on Friday eve and in observing the rites related to the Biblical festivals. Reform Judaism, however, does not regard halachah, Jewish religious law, as binding, as do Orthodox and most Conservative Jews. They stress the ethical and prophetic

aspects of Judaism and are active in social justice.

Conservative Jews are the "center" movement in American Judaism, appearing sometimes to lean closer to the Orthodox; at other times, they resemble Reform Jews. Founded for "the preservation in America of historical Judaism" they follow the dietary laws of traditional Judaism, and the men always worship with their heads covered and ~~waxxx~~ wear the tallis (prayer shawl) on appropriate occasions in the Synagogue or Temple (Conservative houses of worship are called both, sometimes "Jewish Center" as well). Both Hebrew and English are used in the prayer service which is read from the siddur, Hebrew for the prayer book or service. The use of instrumental music and mixed choir, and the sitting together of the men and women will depend on how traditional the congregation is in its practices. While the Sabbath is observed in traditional fashion, most Conservative Jews ride by auto to the Synagogue based on a recent rabbinic ruling. The ~~observance~~ observance of the holy days and festivals are identical with those of Orthodox Judaism.

Within Conservative Judaism there exist the Reconstructionist schools of thought which have sought to reconstruct Judaism as a natural religion in order to make it relevant to contemporary rational and scientific thought.

Although Judaism has definite beliefs and practices, there is no fixed basic creed that is obligatory on all Jews. A person born of a Jewish mother or who voluntarily converts to Judaism is considered Jewish. What has been required most consistently is



some positive manifestation of loyalty to and identification with the Jewish people.

As indicated in the section on "The Jewish Community, the values and ideal maintained across centuries by Jews as part of their religious and historical tradition have been preserved and communicated not only through the Synagogue, but also through a variety of educational, cultural, philanthropic, and community relations agencies that exist within the Jewish community and are not under the direct aegis of the Synagogue. It is possible therefore for a Jew who has not affiliated with the Synagogue to be acknowledged by his neighbor as a loyal and committed Jew. For he may be devoting significantly his spiritual and physical resources in the cause of other institutions within the Jewish community; and the ~~likely~~ likelihood is that at crucial periods in his life and in that of his family--birth, marriage, death--he will call upon the values and rites of the ~~Synag~~ Synagogue.

Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews share many things in common. Their history originates with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they regard the exodus from Egypt and the events at Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses as fundamental to their existence as covenant people. They also share the same sacred literature. The Jewish Bible is what Christians call the Old Testament, and contains the same 39 books. The first five books of Moses, written by hand on a scroll of parchment, are called the Torah. The Torah is kept in the Holy Ark, Aron Ha-kodesh, which is the focal point of every Jewish house of worship. The Ark is generally on the eastern



wall of the Synagogue or Temple as a mark of tribute to Jerusalem which lies in an easterly direction. The 66 volumes of the Talmud contain the explanations of the Biblical commandments as well as new regulations ~~which~~ which were enacted by the Rabbis and Sages after the Jewish Bible was completed.

The Jewish people believe that God is one. As stated earlier, Judaism teaches that God cannot become man nor can man become God. This conception is ~~xx~~ reflected in the "watchword" of Judaism found in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

#### THE SYNAGOGUE

This austere spirituality is reflected for example in the fact that the inner adornments of the Synagogue are usually without any symbolic representation. Judaism fears that a symbol may become an image, the object of idolatrous worship, and were this to happen the essential spirituality of the Torah would be compromised. For this reason the physical object of the Torah itself is not holy; it has no inherent divine substance. The Jew believes, however, that the teachings of the Torah reflect the revelation of the will of God. Thus the Synagogue has made the study of the Torah a form of worship as important as prayer itself. The Synagogue is conceived, in one of its primary functions, as a schoolhouse, a forum, rather than a religious shrine; it is the House of God where the Jews are taught how to perform the commandments of God.

Despite the simplicity of the sanctuary, there are some

ritual symbols which are artistically wrought. The Torah Scroll is encased in an embroidered cloth mantle, its wooden rollers may be adorned with silver crowns, and a silver breastplate is often strung across the mantle, recalling the breastplate worn by the High Priest of Israel. A silk or velvet cover, called a paroches, hangs over the Ark and may contain ornamental Biblical symbols. The menorah or candelabrum recalls the ancient Temple, where it first stood. A perpetual light, called ner tamid, hangs before the Torah Ark, symbolizing the eternity of faith.

#### THE LITURGY

In the Synagogue, as contrasted with the ancient Temple, any adult male may lead in the ritual. During the weekday Synagogue services, conducted in the morning (shacharis), ~~after~~ afternoon (minchah,) and evening (maariv), one will find these services are usually conducted entirely by the lay members of the congregation. Even on the Sabbath, the most significant service of the week, the rabbi participates in the Hebrew prayers in the same manner as any other member of the lay congregation. There is a fixed ritual to the service, a traditional prayer system which has come down from the earliest Synagogues in Palestine, Babylonia, and the dispersion.

These prayers, collected in a book called the Siddur, meaning the "order" or prayers, are read by every member of the congregation, who respond to the leader of the ritual who chants these selections. Most of the prayers consist of excerpts from the Book of Psalms, together with other Scriptural passages. While any adult male is permitted to



lead the traditional chant of the liturgy, most congregations engage a professional cantor (chazan) who serves as a minister of music.

## THE RABBI

The Rabbi occasionally leads in responsive readings of Hebrew and English texts. Yet, in contrast to the minister and the priest, the rabbi still appears to be less active in the conduct of public worship. Even the Scriptural lesson which is read from the Scroll~~x~~ is not read publicly by the rabbi, but rather by the Synagogue Readers (Ba~~l~~ Koreh). The Reader chants the weekly portions of the Torah in accordance with a traditional mode or cantillation, whose musical origins go back 2,000 years, and have echoes in the Gregorian chant.

The Rabbi does have defined ritual and religious functions. He preaches the sermon on the Sabbaths and holidays. The key to his function is found, however, in the meaning of the word. "Rabbi" is Hebrew for teacher. His preaching is essentially teaching, for his function is to interpret the laws, traditions and concepts of Judaism in order to help give meaning to the whole of life. It is his primary function to seek to help his congregation and its members to transform their lives with holiness by fulfilling the commandments of Judaism, in joy and devotion.



Each congregation can elect its own rabbi without regard to any other authority. The Synagogue is completely autonomous and its affairs are conducted principally by its membership and trustees; it is not subject to presbyterian or episcopal jurisdiction. From time to time the national rabbinic or congregational bodies may intercede when a local problem emerges. While the rabbi of each congregation is its religious teacher and interpreter, his authority is principally one of moral influence, rather than of special grace. He is ordained as a rabbi by the faculty of his seminary, to teach and to interpret the Law and the commandments. Thus, the rabbi is not a priest because he performs no ritual for his group only with it. But the rabbi is also not a minister, because he does not act as God's representative in offering access to personal salvation. He is, both in theory and in practice, a "teaching elder" whose role is to help guide his people by clarifying and interpreting for them the Mosaic Law and the rabbinic codes.

It should be noted that the presence of a rabbi is not required for congregational services. According to Jewish law, a minyan (quorum) of ten adult Jewish males constitutes a congregation, and any Jewish male who has been bar-mitzvah (generally at the age of 13) is considered competent to lead the services.

The three branches of Judaism maintain their own seminaries for the training of rabbis. The major Orthodox seminary is at Yeshiva University in New York City. The Conservative seminary is the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The Reform seminary has two branches,

in New York City, the Jewish Institute of Religion and in Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College.

#### THE JEWISH HOME

While the Synagogue is vital to Jews, the home is even more basic to Jewish religious life. As Rabbi Stuart E. Rosenberg has written, "The Synagogue is a 'schoolmaster' where the laws of life are explained; the home, the principal arena for their application." Throughout the centuries, when Synagogues were destroyed, Judaism survived because the home remained loyal to the religious teachings of the Synagogue. Perhaps this is why Jews feel that religious education cannot be properly imparted in public schools--it can only be authentic and effective if parents in the home accept their responsibility to shape and mold the moral character of their children.

An ongoing, continuing series of religious activities permeates the entire Jewish household, and these help the young Jew to establish a sense of loyalty to the Jewish faith.

#### JEWISH HOLY DAYS

Although they may differ in some of the details, most Jewish people celebrate the same festivals, fasts and holidays. These are celebrated as living experiences, acts of presentday commitment, rather than nostalgic reminiscences. The observances are enacted as collective acts of the community of Israel, and not a performance of private devotion. It is for this reason that Jewish holidays, as well as the



the personal events of birth and marriage, are never restricted to the home or to the synagogue but are celebrated partly in each. Some are centered more in the home and some more in the community, but any major event is shared with the group.

Within the Jewish religious calendar, Jews observe three seasonal festivals which also have historical meaning, Passover (Pesach), Pentecost (Shavuot), and the Festival of Booths (Sukkos); the fast days linked with tragic events, the fall of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Temple on Mount Zion; and the solemn High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, also known as Yomim Noraim (the Days of Awe,) which are neither seasonal nor historical but illustrate the universal human need for self-purification through penitence. The Jewish calendar also includes four minor holidays which are popular celebrations rather than sacred ones, Purim, Chanukkah, Chanukah, and Simchat Torah (the New Year for Trees), and Lag B'Omer (the "Mid-Lenten" period).

The High Holy Days-- the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) inaugurates the period of self-examination, confession and repentance, and is climaxed by the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Observed in September and October, these holy days emphasize that all men and nations stand under the sovereignty of God. The ram's horn (shofar) dramatically symbolizes this idea and the chanting of the Kol Nidre (All Vows) prayer underscores the need for spiritual regeneration.



The Three Pilgrim Festivals--The Festival of Booths (Sukkos) is the Jewish Thanksgiving holiday marking the ingathering of the fall harvest. A booth (sukkah) is constructed and many Jewish people live in it for eight days, ~~xxx~~ recalling the practice of their ancient Israelite ancestors. An esrog or citron, and a lulav, a palm branch combined with a willow branch and myrtle are the symbolic harvest plants of this festival pointing to one human brotherhood. The last day of Sukkos is called the "Joy of the Torah" (Simchas Torah), and the weekly cycle of Torah readings is completed and begun agains.

Passover (Pesach), observed in the spring of the year, commemorates the beginning of Israel's national existence wrought ~~through~~ through the exodus from Egypt. It is marked by a family service (Seder) at which time the ritual (Haggadah, literally "the reading") is eaten and four cups of wine are drunk with accompanying blessings.

Pentecost (Shovuous), coming 50 days after Passover, marks the day on which the Ten Commandments were given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. In modern Jewish life it has been customary to confirm on this day boys and girls who have completed their course of study in their religious schools.

The "Victory" Holidays -- The Festival of Lights (Chanukkoh), observed in December, celebrates the first recorded struggle in the history of the world for religious freedom, and marks the victory of the

Maccabees over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus in the second century before the present era. Candles are lit on each of the eight nights, and presents are exchanged.

The Feast of Lots (Purim), observed in March, celebrates the victory over prejudice recorded in the Biblical Book of Esther. It is the one time in the year when noise and merrymaking is permitted in the House of Worship. A noisemaker is sounded when the name of the tyrant Haman is read from the Scroll, making this a joyous festival of Jewish deliverance from oppression.

The Sabbath--This weekly day of rest begins with sundown Friday evening and continues until sundown Saturday. In the home it is observed by the lighting of candles and with prayers for the sanctification of wine (Kiddush) and over bread (Motzi). Services are held in the Synagogue and Tempel during which the weekly portion of the Torah is read to the congregation. Tradition holds that "the Sabbath is a foretaste of the world to come."

The Jewish people, even though they differ in some of the details, also observe the birth of a child, marriage, and the death of an individual with special ceremonies. Children receive Hebrew as well as English names, which takes place during a Synagogue ceremony, and boys are circumcized eight days after birth. Marriages are generally consecrated by a rabbi, although civil marriages are accepted as legally binding. Divorces, though discouraged, are permitted.



The Jewish dead are buried in simple caskets, and a funeral service is held in the chapel. Orthodox and Conservative Jews do not permit cremation, holding the human body is sacred. Reform Jews permit cremation as well as ground and mausoleum burials, since they do not believe in physical resurrection. They emphasize the immortality of the soul.

An excellent introduction to this aspect of Jewish traditions is to be found in the book, Milestones in the Life of the Jew, by Rabbi Donald G. Frieman (Bloch Publishing Co.). This book explains the practices and meaning of the traditions of circumcision, the naming of the child, the redemption of the first-born, bar mitzvah and bas mitzvah, marriage, funeral and mourning rites.

