

Glossary of Hebrew Terms

A

Abba - father

Acharon Shel Pesach - The last day of Passover.

Aharon - Older brother of Moshe, Moses.

Ahavas Yisrael - Loving a fellow Jew.

Aleph - First letter of the Hebrew alphabet

Aleph / Bais - The Hebrew alphabet consisting of twenty-two letters.

Aliyah - lit. Going up; Call to the Torah; Move to the land of Israel.

Am Yisroel - All Jews, the nation of Israel.

Avodah, Avodas Hashem - Service of G-d.

Avodah Zarah - Idolatry.

Avraham - Abraham, the first patriarch of the Jewish people.

Ayin Hara - The evil eye.

B

Bais - Second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Bar Mitzvah - When a young man reaches the age of thirteen he accepts the responsibility of fulfilling the the Torah and it's commandments. This is a much-celebrated event by family and friends, as it is his inauguration into Jewish adulthood.

Bas - Daughter, girl.

Bas/Bat Mitzvah - When a young woman reaches the age of twelve she accepts the responsibility of fulfilling the Torah. This is a much-celebrated event by family and friends, as it is her inauguration into Jewish adulthood.

Bayis - House; **Ben** - Son, boy.

Beis Din - Rabbinical court.

Beis HaMikdash - The (First or Second) Temple in Jerusalem.

Beis Medrash - House of Study.

Bracha - Blessing, a prayer.

Bris Mila - Jewish male circumcision on eighth day after birth.

Bubby - Yiddish for grandmother.

C

Challah - (a) A tithe of dough for the Kohen; (b) A braided loaf baked in honor of Shabbos.

Chasidism - lit. "pious ones". A Jewish movement that arose in 18th century Ukraine, teaching closeness to G-d through simple piety and ecstatic singing and dancing.

Chaim - Life

Chasan - Groom.

Ches - Eighth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Chumash - lit. "five". One of the five books of the Torah.

Chuppah - Marriage canopy for a Jewish wedding.

D

Daled - The fourth letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

Daven, Davening - Pray, praying.

E

Eretz Yisrael - The Land of Israel

Erev... - lit. `Evening', the eve of [a Sabbath or a festival]

F

Frum - Religious, devout, pious

G

G-d - Creator and Ruler of everything. The dash is used in place of the middle letter out of respect and caution not to destroy His Holy Name.

Gadol - Great, large.

Gan Eden - the Garden of Eden, aka the World to come.

Gehenom - Hell.

Gemara - see "Talmud".

Gematria - A system of numerical values and mystical significance for each letter, word, phrase,

chapter, parsha of the Torah and Tenach.

Get - Jewish divorce.

Geulah - Redemption

Gezunterhait - Yiddish for, in good health, said after one sneazes.

Goy - (a) Non-Jewish person. (b) A nation.

H

Haftorah - lit. `Final passage'. The passage from the Prophets read in the synagogue after the reading from the Torah.

Haggadah - lit. `Telling'. Book from which the Seder service is conducted on Passover.

Halachah - (a) The body of Torah law; (b) a particular law.

Har Sinai - Mount Sinai.

Hashem - lit. 'The name'. Commonly used to refer to G-d, while avoiding casual use of His name in conversation.

Hey - Fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. **Hoshana Rabbah** - The seventh day of the festival of Sukkos

I

Ima - Mother.

J

Jew - A person who was born of a Jewish mother, A person who converted to Judaism.

K

Kabbalah - lit. `received tradition'. The body of classical Jewish mystical teachings, the central text of which is the book of Zohar.

Kallah - Bride.

Kiddush - Blessing over wine and bread on Shabbos and Jewish Holidays.

Kippah - Yarmulka, skull cap.

Kittle - A white robe worn at festive occasions like at one's own wedding, Yom Kippur and Pesach. A pious person is usually buried in the kittle he wore during his lifetime at the festivities.

Kal Yisrael - All the people of Israel.

Kohen, Kohanim - `Priests', i.e., Descendants of Aharon.

Kohen Gadol - High Priest.

Kosher - Food permitted to be eaten by Torah observant Jews.

Kotel – Wall, more specifically “the Kotel” a reference to the Western Wall

L

Lashon Hara - speaking any form of evil about another Jew. It is forbidden to speak Lashon Hara about another person, EVEN IF IT'S TRUE.

M

Malach - Messenger, angel sent to carry out a mission for Hashem.

Mashiach - lit. `The anointed one'. The Jewish Messiah.

Matzah - Unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is prepared in a Kosher-for-Pesach location with only kosher-for-Pesach utensils. Only eighteen minutes are permitted to mix, roll, perforate and bake Matzah from the time water and flour are mixed.

Mazal Tov - Good luck, congratulations.

Mechitzah - A physical barrier. Wall, curtain, that separates men and women in the Synagogue.

Medrash - One of the classical collections of the Sages' homiletical teachings, commentary on the Torah.

Megillas Esther - The book of Esther which is read on Purim.

Melaveh Malkah - Festive meal held after the close of Shabbos to escort the departing Sabbath Queen.

Mem - Thirteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Mezuzah; pl. Mezuzos - small parchment scroll written by a scribe and affixed to the doorpost, containing the first two paragraphs of Shema.

Mikveh - ritual bath

Minyan - Quorum of ten men required for communal prayer.

Mishkan - The Tabernacle.

Mishnah - The germinal statements of law which are elucidated by the Gemarah.

Mishpachah - Family, relatives.

Mitzvah; pl. Mitzvos - A religious obligation; one of the 613 Commandments that are written in the Torah.

Mohel - Individual who performs the circumcision of a Jewish male.

Moshe - Moses.

Motzei Shabbos - Saturday night after Shabbos concludes.

Mussaf - The additional prayer of Shabbos and other Jewish holidays.

N

Navi - Prophet.

Niddah - The time when a woman is in a state of separation from her husband.

Nissan - First month of the Jewish Year.

Nun - The fourteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

P

Parsha - Portion of the Torah read each week, one of the fifty-four weekly divisions of Torah.

Pesach - Passover, an eight day festival celebrating G-d's deliverance of the Jews when they were slaves in Egypt. The first two days and the last two days of Pesach are observed as holy days. The in between days are termed Chol Hamo'ed - intermediate days.

Posek - lit. Decisor; Rabbi whose legal decisions are authoritative.

Pshat - The plain meaning of (e.g.) a Scriptural passage.

Purim - Even though Purim represents a very significant event it is considered a minor holy day since it is not part of the Torah. It centers on the plot by the wicked Haman to murder all the Jews in King Ahasuerus 127 provinces and how Hashem used Queen Esther and her uncle Mordechai to bring relief and deliverance to the Jewish people.

R

Rabeinu - Our teacher.

Rasha - Evil person.

Rashi - A great sage and commentator on the Torah.

Rav - Rabbi.

Rebetzin - Rabbi's wife.

Rivkah - Rebecca, the wife of Yitzchak the second patriarch.

Rosh Hashanah - lit., 'head of the year'. The Jewish new year, which falls on the first two days of Tishrei.

S

S'chach - The covering of a Sukkah. This covering must consist of natural growth that does not provide a complete cover - such as bamboo or tree branches.

Seder - lit. 'order'; pl., Sedarim. The order of service observed on the first night of Pesach (and outside of the land of Israel, on the first two nights).

Sefer - Book.

Sefer Torah - pl., Sifrei Torah. Torah scroll.

Shabbos - The Jewish Sabbath, celebrated weekly from Friday at sundown till Saturday at nightfall.

Shabbos Goy - A non-Jew who does work on Sabbath that a Jew cannot do.

Shadchan - Matchmaker or marriage broker.

Shalom - Peace, also used as a greeting as "hello" or "goodbye".

Shavuot - lit. 'weeks'. A Festival commemorating the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Shavuot falls on the 6th of Sivan, and outside of the land of Israel, also on the 7th of Sivan.

Shechinah - The Divine Presence

Shechitah - Ritual slaughtering.

Shehecheyanu - lit. 'Who has granted us life'). Blessing pronounced on seasonal and other occasions for thanksgiving.

Shema - A prayer which proclaims the Oneness of Hashem, and the Jewish dedication to Him. The Shema is prayed twice a day everyday.

Shtetl - Small Jewish Village

Shoah - Holocaust.

Shofar - A ram's horn, blown during the Rosh Hashanah services.

Shul - Jewish synagogue.

Shemittah - The seven-yearly Sabbatical year.

Shemoneh Esrei - lit. '18'. Refers to the main "Amidah," the prayer said while standing that is the central part of every prayer service.

Shivah - Mourning period of seven days by immediate relatives upon the death of a spouse, mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter.

Siddur - Prayer book.

Simcha - lit. Happiness. A Jewish family or community celebration, such as a wedding, bar/bas mitzvah, etc.

Simchas Torah - lit. 'the rejoicing of the Torah'. Festival immediately following Sukkos, on which the yearly Torah-reading cycle is concluded and recommenced.

Siyyum - lit., 'conclusion'. Celebration marking one's completion of the study of a portion of Torah or Talmud.

Succos - The festival of dwelling in booths. This is a seven-day holiday in which there is a commandment to live in booths.

Sukkah - The special booths used during the holiday of Succos.

T

Tallis - Prayer shawl.

Tallis Katan - lit. 'small garment'. Refers to a small four-cornered garment, with Tzitzis attached, customarily worn throughout the day.

Talmud - The basic compendium of Jewish law, thought, and Biblical commentary. When unspecified refers to the Talmud Bavli, the edition developed in Babylonia, and edited at end of the fifth century C.E.; the Talmud Yerushalmi is the edition compiled in the land of Israel at end of the fourth century C.E.

Tanach - Acronym for Torah (the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im (the Prophets), and Kesuvim (the Writings).

Tashlich - Ceremony of casting off one's sins at a live body of water on Rosh HaShanah.

Tefillin - Phylacteries. Small black leather cubes containing parchment scrolls inscribed with Shema Yisrael and other Biblical passages, bound to the arm and forehead and worn by men at weekday morning prayers.

Tefillin Shel Rosh - lit. Tefillin of the head. Of the two Tefillin, the one worn on the head.

Tefillin Shel Yad - lit. Tefillin of the hand. Of the two Tefillin, the one worn on the arm.

Tehillim - lit. 'praises'. The book of Psalms.

Tes - The ninth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Teshuvah - lit. 'return'. Repentance.

Tisha B'Av - lit. 'The Ninth of [the month of] Av') - A fast day commemorating the Destruction of both Temples.

Todah Rabah - Thank you very much!

Torah: the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, also known as the Five Books of Moses and the Pentateuch. In addition to the Torah (the Written Law), G-d gave Moses a more comprehensive explanation of the Written Law known as the Oral Law. Both the Written and Oral Law constitute the Torah.

Traif - Not Kosher.

Tzaddik - pl., Tzaddikim). A righteous individual.

Tzitzis - Fringes.

V

Vav - The sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Y

Yahrtzeit - The anniversary of the day of death for parents or other relatives.

Yeshiva - Religious Jewish school where Torah is studied.

Yeshiva Bochur - An unmarried young man attending a Yeshiva.

Yetzer Harah - Evil inclination.

Yetzer Hatov - Good inclination.

Yid - Yiddish for Jew.

Yiddishkeit - Yiddish for Jewish.

Yisroel, Yisrael - (Nation of) Israel.

Yizkor - Prayer in memory of the dead.

Yom Kippur - The Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year. This is the Day that the fate of every living creature and all nations for the coming year, is sealed.

Yom Tov - Jewish holiday.

Yud - Tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Z

Zaidy - Yiddish for grandfather.

Zayin - The seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet.