Introduction to Judaism

For Law Enforcement Officers and Security Professionals

June 2022

Introduction

Faith-based institutions and organizations are a fundamental component of many communities, supporting vital needs from the spiritual and psychological to the physical. In many locations, the faith-based community not only operates houses of worship, but also civic and community institutions including day schools, community centers, senior homes, and camps. Protecting these institutions ensures that not only our faith-based community, but our larger society can exist in peace and safety. This requires coordination, cooperation, and trust between the faith-based community and the public sector, particularly law enforcement and security professionals.

The Jewish community, specifically, has recognized the value of these relationships – at times, due to necessity. The Jewish community remains the number one target of religiously motivated hate crimes in the United States and has seen near historic increases in antisemitic incidents over the last several years. This has included vandalization of physical spaces, cyberattacks, physical assaults on members of the community, and deadly acts of targeted violence. In many of these instances, the Jewish community has relied on and been comforted by the strong response and support of the law enforcement and security community. Building, nurturing, and maintaining these relationships is critical given the threats faced.

The Secure Community Network, as the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America, has assessed – in collaboration with our partners in local, state, and federal law enforcement – that as a community and country we collectively face the most complex and dynamic threat environment in this nation's history. Simply put, the challenges, threats, and issues we face are too large for any one organization or community to try to face alone. Addressing these issues and securing the freedoms that are the bedrock of our nation are responsibilities that we all share.

This guide provides background information to assist law enforcement officers and security professionals with better understanding and recognizing the dynamic and diverse nature of the Jewish community in the United States. We strive to not merely ensure more productive, positive, and collaborative interactions, but to develop, foster, and strengthen true relationships of trust. These relationships not only enhance the safety and security of the Jewish community, but of the whole community. Moreover, their creation allows for honest dialogue between partners, particularly around difficult or complex issues.

It is our hope that this guide not only provides useful information but, as the law enforcement and security community use it, you will see the benefits of working in partnership with the faith-based community, identifying similar goals and objectives. Through this, we hope to enhance understanding and strengthen our relationship, creating a safer, more secure environment so that everyone may live, work, play, and pray in safety.

Michael G. Masters
National Director & Chief Executive Officer
Secure Community Network

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To all those members of the community and those who work on behalf of the community, and who strive every day to strengthen and lift up the Jewish people and our community – ensuring that our history, values, and traditions live on in future generations.

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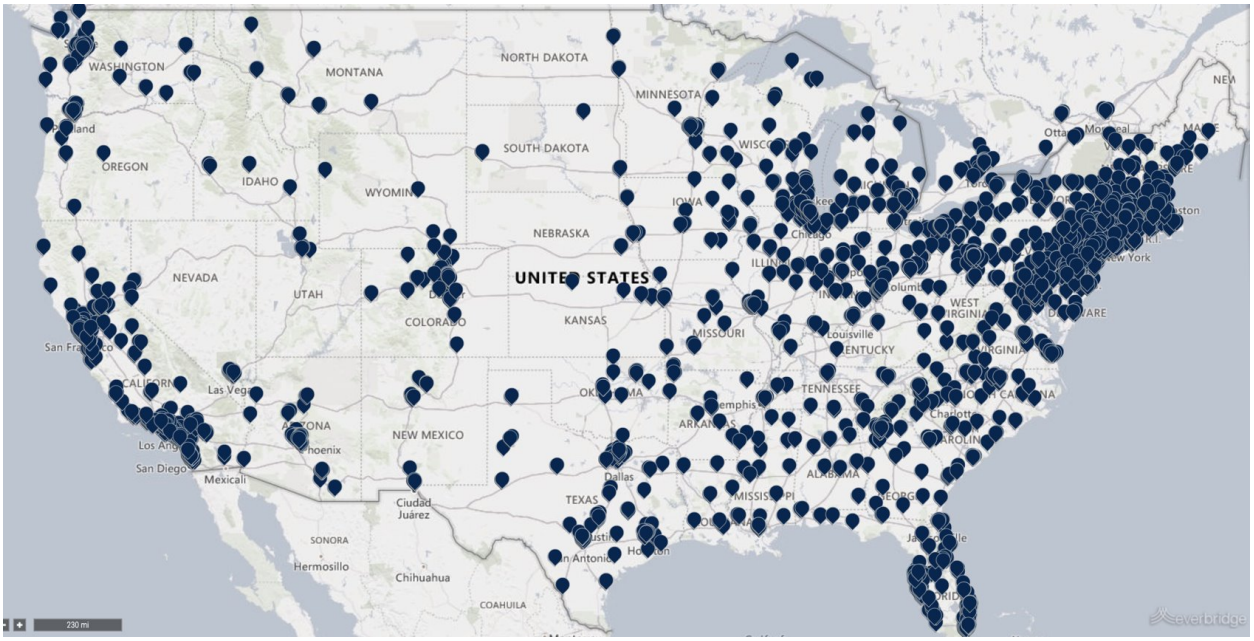
This guide aims to provide an introduction and short review of Judaism for law enforcement officers and security professionals. Therefore, this reference should not be regarded as a comprehensive overview of Judaism or Jewish traditions and practices. Instead, information included in the document refers to certain aspects of Judaism that these individuals may find relevant when performing their duties.

It also is important to note that while at its base, Judaism and its tenets are similar across the world, communities and individuals differ in practice and beliefs.

For an accurate and in-depth understanding of your local Jewish community, reach out to community leaders, such as rabbis, heads of synagogues and other organizations, school masters, etc.

The American Jewish Community

The approximately 7.6 million Jewish residents of the United States constitute roughly two percent of the American population and trace their presence in this country to the mid-seventeenth century. From the time of the Declaration of Independence, Jews have been an integral component of the diversity of the United States. Jewish Americans live in every U.S. state and territory, belong to every major political party, span all socio-economic categories, and share the same ideals, hopes, concerns, and aspirations of the American dream as do their neighbors of different faiths and beliefs. Jewish Americans serve in all facets of the private sector, as well as in government, including all branches of the military and local, state, and federal law enforcement.



There are an estimated 8,000 – 12,000 Jewish facilities throughout the United States, a fraction of which are represented on this map.

Communal Organization Structure

Despite its extraordinary diversity, the American Jewish community shares many interests. On issues ranging from community engagement and cultural celebrations to policy and advocacy efforts, several organizations exist to convene and coordinate the vast majority of the Jewish community, often known as the "organized Jewish community." Collectively, these organizations are estimated to represent more than 85% of the American Jewish community. However, Judaism does not have a formal hierarchical structure. There is no chief rabbi or other official of Judaism as a whole, and no single organization that can issue edicts for all Jews. As this guide will explain, most American Jews formally or informally identify as affiliated with one or more movements of Judaism and Jewish organizations. Each of these groups has its own leadership and policy-making structure.

Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

Founded in 1956, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (CoP) is comprised of 53 of the most consequential national Jewish non-profit organizations.[1] It serves as a collective to advance the interests of the American Jewish community, sustain broad-based support for Israel, and address the critical concerns facing world Jewry.

It is representative of organizations with mandates that span the ideological, religious, and political spectrum, a reflection of the diversity of the American Jewish community.

Jewish Federations

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) represents 146 Jewish Federations and a network of nearly 400 independent communities, which raise and distribute more than $2 billion annually for social welfare, social services, and educational needs. The Federation movement protects and enhances the well-being of Jews worldwide through the values of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *tzedakah* (charity and social justice), and Torah[2].

An individual Federation typically serves as the central coordinator and convener for communal Jewish life in a given community. Many of the larger Federations operate campuses or building complexes that host the community and house both the lay, non-professional leadership, and professional staff. Often the lay leadership of Jewish Federations are successful and influential individuals from the private sector who are dedicated to promoting and carrying out the missions of their respective Federations.

Many of the complexes may also include educational facilities for children, recreational centers, libraries, and auditoriums for large gatherings or special events. Unlike other Jewish facilities, such as synagogues, Federations are not oriented to the religious aspects of Jewish life, but are more focused on cultural, social, and welfare efforts. Typically, these facilities service not just the Jewish community, but local visitors and members regardless of religious or cultural background.

[1] See Appendix C
[2] See Appendix A

Jewish Community Security

Jewish community security concerns are shaped by a 3500+ year history of enslavement and persecution, the genocide of the Holocaust during the Second World War, and antisemitism and targeted violence that continues to this day.

Given the heightened nature of the threat directed at the Jewish community, Jewish organizations have taken steps to enhance their own safety and security. At the national level, these efforts are often coordinated with and through the Secure Community Network (SCN).

Secure Community Network (SCN)

SCN, a nonprofit 501(c)(3), is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America. Founded in 2004, by JFNA and the CoP, SCN's team of intelligence, law enforcement, homeland security, and military professionals work with communities and partners across North America to develop and implement strategic frameworks that enhance the safety and security of the Jewish people through intelligence and information sharing, developing and implementing best practice policies and procedures, undertaking assessments, identifying physical security solutions for organizations' facilities, delivering training, providing consultation and supporting incident response.

SCN was created in coordination between the Jewish community, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to ensure a professionally staffed organization of individuals with security expertise was able to serve as a liaison to federal law enforcement to effectively address incidents, threats, and events. SCN continues to serve as the official liaison on behalf of the organized Jewish community with these federal partners, as well as other national, state, and local law enforcement and public safety entities.

The SCN Duty Desk oversees incident, intelligence, and threat reporting, tracking, and response for both law enforcement and community partners. Staffed by a team of intelligence analysts, the Duty Desk ensures the Jewish community has access to professional support and information 24/7/365. It is housed in the state-of-the-art National Jewish Security Operations Command Center (JSOCC).

SCN's Community Protection Program leads efforts to deploy best practice guidance and solutions in a consistent manner, to include standardized baseline threat, vulnerability, and risk assessments and delivery of physical security consultation and expertise through all phases of facility target hardening, from retrofitting existing buildings to new construction facility security design planning.

SCN also develops and delivers a variety of training and exercise programs tailored specifically to and for the needs of the Jewish community. From BeAware: Introduction to Situational Awareness training and SCN's capstone Countering Active Threat Training, to hands-on Stop the Bleed® training with SCN-issued training tourniquets, SCN training is delivered every week throughout the Jewish community.

In partnership with law enforcement and public safety agencies, SCN is dedicated to ensuring the safety, security, and resiliency of the North American Jewish community via a consistent, professional, comprehensive, and coordinated approach.

There are currently approximately 65 full-time, professionally led, community-wide Jewish security programs across the United States, all generally based in local Jewish Federations. Additionally, several national organizations, such as Hillel International, have implemented security programs. This allows for close coordination with law enforcement and first responders, but also equips the community to address safety and security as a proactive partner.

The Jewish security apparatus continues to expand to ensure all centers of Jewish life are protected against the evolving threats to Jewish and communal life in the United States.

Historic Nature of Threats & Attacks Against the Jewish Community

Both historically and in modern times, Jewish people have faced persistent bias, prejudice, hostility, and, at times, violence. This is generally categorized as antisemitism.

In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted the following working definition of antisemitism:

> *Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.*

This definition has subsequently been adopted by the United Nations, European Union, Organization of American States, Council of Europe, and dozens of countries as well as regional, state, and local governments worldwide.[3]

Historic Antisemitic Tropes

Antisemitic tropes and myths have circulated throughout history. While each one is based on a different concept, they all encourage and incite hate and violence against Jews.

One of the most common myths that feeds antisemitism is the deicide, or the belief that Jews killed Jesus. Historians and Christian leaders alike have confirmed that it was Roman official Pontius Pilate who gave the order to crucify Jesus and that the Jews of the time cannot be blamed. For example, in 1964, the Catholic Church discredited Jewish deicide through Nostra Aetate, declaring that Jesus's death "cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today." Despite this, the claim of deicide is one that has consistently and repeatedly been held against the Jewish people throughout history.

Another historic false claim about Jews is that they murdered Christian children and used their blood for rituals. This accusation, known as blood libel, has often led to mob violence and pogroms against entire Jewish communities. The earliest versions of the blood libel accused Jews of crucifying Christian children on Passover, with later versions of the libel claiming the use of blood in baking the traditional Passover unleavened bread (*matza*). While the historic blood libel tales were commonplace in Europe, recent years have seen similar accusations leveled by activists and politicians in the Middle East, as well as Russian nationalist groups.

[3] https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

Throughout the years there have been many negative characteristics applied to Jews, to include the claims that Jews are cheap, greedy, and materialistic. These specific stereotypes span back to the European Middle Ages when, under the feudal system, Jews were banned from owning land and encouraged to be moneylenders.

A common, modern antisemitic belief is that Jews have power and control over the banks, media, Hollywood, and the U.S. government, and plan to take control of the world. Inspired by the conspiracy text, "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," these antisemitic mischaracterizations influenced many to believe that Jews control policy and major events.

The Holocaust

The Holocaust is the state-sponsored killing of six million Jews and approximately five million other minorities[4] by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1941-1945.

When the Nazi party came to power in Germany in 1933, led by Adolf Hitler, they blamed the Jewish people for the country's problems, both economic and social. Throughout the 1930s, in what was presented to the German citizens as an attempt to rectify those wrongs, German Jews were steadily denied their freedoms and rights. As the Nazi Reich waged war and occupied lands across Europe, they imposed these same restrictions on the populations of those countries, eventually leading to isolation in ghettos and many people being held in concentration camps in Europe.

The Nazi "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" formulated in January 1942, initiated deportations to specifically designated extermination camps. Distinguished from the concentration camps, which had been established prior to World War II for individuals who were considered "undesirable" by the German government, extermination camps were built specifically for the expeditious killing of populations. Located solely outside Germany – primarily in Poland – the extermination camps included Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec, and Chelmno. While each camp operated slightly differently, they were united in their purpose of quick and inexpensive murder and disposal of bodies. It is estimated that 2.7 million people were murdered in the six Nazi extermination camps between 1940 and 1945.

Minimization and outright denial of the Holocaust, while present in fringe discourse in the United States and globally for decades, has emerged in more mainstream channels in recent years. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, politicians and private citizens have used comparisons of mask or vaccine mandates to the Holocaust. Members of the Jewish community, historians, and others continue to advance education efforts to benefit communal understanding of the Holocaust, especially as remaining survivor numbers dwindle.

Zionism and Anti-Zionism

Zionism is most commonly defined as the national liberation movement of the Jewish people – a movement for the self-determination of the Jewish people in a homeland of their choice. Coined in the late 1800s mostly as a response to frequent and ongoing pogroms and attacks against the European Jewish community, Zionism

[4] To include Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, communists, LGBTQ, Roma (colloquially referred to as gypsies), and people with mental or physical disabilities.

originally called for the establishment of a Jewish state. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, Zionism has also come to refer to the development of the State and protection of its citizens.

Anti-Zionism is opposition to the State of Israel, its right to exist as a Jewish state, or both. Anti-Zionists, typically synonymous with anti-Israel activists, tend to claim Zionism advocates the supremacy of the Jewish people and the repression of minorities and, specifically, the Palestinian people. Anti-Zionists may attempt to differentiate anti-Zionism from anti-Jewish sentiment in an effort to delegitimize Israel without criticizing Judaism or appearing antisemitic. Some argue that anti-Zionism has become a socially and politically acceptable form of antisemitism, allowing people to work to repress and oppress Jews under the guise of anti-Israel rhetoric.

Attacks Against the U.S. Jewish Community

Extremist groups have historically targeted Jewish interests with a number of violent and indiscriminate tactics, including assassinations, hijacking and hostage taking, active shooter attacks, letter bombs, suicide bombings, and more. Some of the significant attacks targeting the U.S. Jewish community over the last 14 years include:

- **22 January 2009**: A white supremacist was arrested in Brockton, Massachusetts after he allegedly killed two people and raped and attempted to kill a third. The arrest pre-empted what authorities believe was a planned racially motivated killing spree directed at Jews and non-whites that would have continued later that evening. He plotted to attack a synagogue bingo night in Brockton, Massachusetts.
- **20 May 2009:** Four individuals were arrested in connection with an alleged homegrown terror plot to bomb two synagogues in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. The suspects also planned to target military aircraft with a Stinger missile at a New York Air National Guard Base.
- **01 June 2009:** An individual killed one soldier and wounded another in an attack at a military recruitment center in Little Rock, Arkansas. He also conducted internet research on Jewish organizations in several cities as targets for possible attacks.
- **10 June 2009**: An extremist with ties to white supremacist groups opened fire at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., killing one security guard.
- **12 May 2011:** Two men from Queens, New York were arrested for plotting to bomb and attack Manhattan synagogues. Reports indicate that the men purchased guns and discussed attacking the synagogues.
- **13 April 2014:** An avowed white supremacist killed three people outside of a Jewish Community Center and an assisted living facility in Overland Park, Kansas.
- **27 October 2018:** A man shouting antisemitic slurs opened fire inside the Tree of Life Congregation, a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He killed 11 congregants and wounded four police officers and two others. The rampage stands as the deadliest against the Jewish community in U.S history.
- **05 November 2018:** A New York-based individual was arrested and charged with hate crimes after antisemitic messages were found at a Brooklyn synagogue. The individual was also charged with setting several fires, including one in the coat closet of a Yeshiva school in the Williamsburg neighborhood and other locations associated with the Jewish community in Brooklyn.
- **23 November 2018:** Police in Los Angeles arrested an individual after security camera footage showed him making a U-turn in his vehicle and then driving into a group of people, braking before hitting anyone. Other footage showed the man then backing up the vehicle and attempting to hit the group again. The targets believed the man attacked them because they were Jewish.
- **27 April 2019**: A man entered the Chabad of Poway in Poway, California, opening fire on congregants. The shooter killed one congregant and wounded three others.

- **20 November 2019:** A Jewish man was stabbed outside a synagogue in Monsey, New York.
- **10 December 2019:** Two individuals shot and killed a police officer at a cemetery and three civilians in a kosher supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey. The two suspects were killed at the scene.
- **28 December 2019:** An individual entered a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, and stabbed five people. The alleged attacker was arrested in New York City hours later.
- **02 May 2020:** An individual walked into a store in Stow, Ohio carrying a sword and a hatchet. He asked about the location of Kent State University and stated that he was looking for Jews to kill. The individual was arrested in June 2020 for charges relating to firearms and was identified as one of two who marched with antisemitic signs at a protest in Cleveland, Ohio in April 2020.
- **23 June 2020:** A Jewish man was stabbed in the head in Carson City, Nevada by an unknown individual shouting "Heil Hitler, you piece of s***!"
- **22 July 2020:** A Holocaust memorial in Charleston, South Carolina was vandalized with antisemitic phrases involving concentration camps.
- **23 August 2020:** A team associated with the antisemitic website GoyimTV hung a banner reading "The Jews Want A Race War" over a heavily trafficked highway in Los Angeles, California.
- **30 March 2021:** A swastika and SS were spray painted on an academic building facing the Hillel on the first day of Passover.
- **19 May 2021:** Jewish outdoor diners were harassed and attacked by a group asking if there "were any Jews" at a restaurant in Los Angeles, California. The same night, an Orthodox Jewish man was chased by two vehicles with Palestinian flags, and a nearby kosher restaurant's front door was shattered.
- **15 June 2021:** An individual was arrested after allegedly assaulting a Jewish child and threatening to kill the child's family in Los Angeles, California.
- **01 July 2021:** A Chabad rabbi was stabbed outside a Jewish school in Brighton, Massachusetts.
- **31 October 2021:** An individual set a fire outside the main sanctuary of a synagogue in Austin, Texas.
- **15 January 2022:** An individual took four congregants, including a rabbi, hostage inside Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas. After 12 hours, the victims were able to escape and law enforcement fatally shot the suspect.
- **30 March 2022:** An individual was arrested and charged for making antisemitic threats against a Jewish day school, the location of his employment. The subject reportedly posted images of himself holding a firearm while working at school as a private security guard with threatening captions.
- **01 November 2022:** An individual residing in New Jersey was arrested after uploading a manifesto containing a threat to attack a synagogue. The subject was sentenced to 15 months in prison.
- **13 July 2023:** An individual residing in Mississippi was charged for making a series of phone calls to synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. The defendant allegedly spoke to individuals answering the calls, and repeatedly referenced the genocide of six million Jews during the Holocaust, stating "Heil Hitler," "all Jews must die," and "we will put you in work camps".
- **August 2023:** An individual made threatening social media posts, website comments, and emails towards the jury and witnesses during the trial of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Synagogue mass shooter. The subject also placed stickers in predominantly Jewish areas of Pittsburgh, directing people to the website containing his threats and antisemitic messages. He was arrested and charged with multiple crimes following the trial.
- **28 September 2023**: An individual was arrested and charged with making hoax bomb threats to over 150 institutions across multiple states, including New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Arizona, and Alaska, between 15 September and 21 September 2023.

- **31 October 2023:** A Cornell University student from Pittsford, New York, was arrested on federal charges for making threats to kill or harm through interstate communications. The student posted threatening messages on an online discussion site, including posts advocating for the deaths of Jewish individuals.

In the 14 months between October 2018 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the Jewish community faced four deadly attacks.** During that same time frame, federal law enforcement **arrested over two dozen individuals plotting attacks** on Jewish institutions.

In 2019, there were **34 mass attacks** in the United States. 2019 saw a **14% increase in anti-Jewish hate crimes** across the United States, with the single greatest hate-related motivator of the offenders of the 34 mass attacks being antisemitism. In 2020, **nearly 60% of religiously motivated hate crimes were directed at the Jewish community.**[5]

According to the FBI, **2022 saw the highest number of antisemitic incidents in three decades, with a 37% increase from 2021**. Again, **more than half of all religion-based hate crimes in 2022** were directed at the Jewish community. By August 2023, SCN's Duty Desk had already recorded more incidents than the entire 2021 period. By November 2023, the number of reported incidents exceeded the total number of incidents recorded in all of 2022, with **October 2023 being the highest month in SCN's nearly 20-year history, with a 192% increase from October 2022.**

The nature of reported incidents has largely consisted of **suspicious activity, threats, cyber incidents, bomb threats, and property damage.** Recently, there has been an **uptick in swatting incidents**; swatting has been used as a fear-inducing technique that in addition to terrorizing and disrupting the communities affected, can also significantly impact law enforcement resources and response efforts.

SCN has worked with local, state, and federal authorities to ensure coordination between law enforcement and the Jewish community across North America, to include safety and security resources and a national swatting update in conjunction with the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

As evidenced by the number of incidents over the past decade, **Jewish facilities continue to be primary, secondary, and/or ancillary targets of domestic terror plots.** While the strategic threat of terrorism has shifted and evolved, the United States – and, specifically, "soft targets" such as houses of worship, community centers, camps, and schools – **continue to face the challenge and threat posed by the recruitment, radicalization, and impact of domestic terrorism and homegrown extremism.**

[5] https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2019/topic-pages/victims

Israel and the Relationship to Judaism

Background Information, Common Themes, and Frequently Raised Issues

The below chapter aims to provide a brief overview of the State of Israel and common themes and topics often raised in relation to it. It is important to note that the chapter does not encompass all relevant information about Israel, its neighboring countries and territories, nor political, religious, ethnic, or nationalist points of contention in the region.

Detailed descriptions of the below as well as additional topics and issues are offered by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL)[6] and the Jewish United Fund – Israel Education Center Lexicon[7].

The Biblical Connection

The State of Israel is the modern Jewish state, established in 1948. The name of the state originates in the Jewish Bible, also known as the Torah or the Old Testament, as the name given by God to Jacob, with the descendants of Jacob known as the Israelites. According to Biblical tradition, the land of Canaan, the ancient name for the Land of Israel, was promised by God to the Israelites and was inhabited and ruled by them discontinuously, eventually ending in 70 AD/BCE with the fall of the Second Temple under the Roman Empire.

Establishment of the Modern State

Upon the British announcement that it would end its mandate over the land of Palestine, the United Nations established a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) which recommended a division of the land into two states: one Jewish and one Arab. The Zionist-Jewish leadership accepted the plan, while the Palestinian Arabs and surrounding Arab nations rejected it. On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to approve the partition plan.

The State of Israel was established according to the approved partition plan as an independent sovereign state on 14 May 1948, immediately following the termination of the British Mandate over the territory.

Palestinian Arabs rose in opposition to the State's creation, joining armies from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, as well as a formation from Saudi Arabia, in attacking Jewish civilian areas and armed forces.

Agreements in 1949 between Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria established formal armistice lines, with Egypt and Jordan retaining control over the Gaza Strip and West Bank respectively.

Nakba

Arabic for "catastrophe," the word *nakba* is often used by those opposed to the establishment of the State of Israel to refer to the events surrounding the establishment. Nakba Day is commemorated annually on May 15, typically marked by demonstrations and protests.

[6] https://www.adl.org/resources/insights-into-israel-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict
[7] https://www.juf.org/IEC/IEC-Lexicon.aspx

Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian Conflicts

Since its establishment, Israel and some or all of its neighbors have engaged in sporadic military actions against each other.[8]:

- 1948-1949: War of Independence
- 1956: Suez Campaign
- 1967: Six Day War
- 1973: Yom Kippur War
- 1982-1983: The First Lebanon War
- 1987-1990: The First Intifada
- 2000-2003: The Second Intifada
- 2006: The Second Lebanon War
- 2008-2009: Operation Cast Lead
- 2012: Operation Pillar of Defense
- 2014: Operation Protective Edge
- 2021: Operation Guardian of the Walls
- 2023: Operation Swords of Iron

The West Bank, Gaza, and the Palestinian Territories

During the 1967 Six Day War, Israel gained control of large swaths of land from Egypt (the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip), Jordan (the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem), and Syria (the Golan Heights). The war was precipitated by the massing of armies from Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon along Israel's border, and the concentration of Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsula following Egypt's expulsion of UN Emergency Forces from the area.

While the State of Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian control as part of a 1978 peace accord with Egypt, annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, and withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it has retained control of the West Bank and the approximately one million Palestinians living there, maintaining civil and military presence in the area. The West Bank and Gaza are often referred to as "the territories" or "occupied territories." Critics of the State of Israel claim that it is an illegitimate occupier of these territories, while others see the entire State as an occupying force on Palestinian land.

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Established under the Oslo Accords in 1994, the Palestinian Authority (PA) governs the West Bank. Prior to 2007, the PA also governed the Gaza Strip but was ousted when Hamas seized control of the area. Hamas is an extremist Islamic-Palestinian militant organization made up of militant and political wings, and is recognized as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the United States Government and several other countries.

[8] https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/map

Settlements

The term is used to refer to Jewish communities established in the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 Six Day War. The issue of these settlements has become a main point of contention in Israeli-Arab peace negotiations, with the PA calling for freezing settlement construction as a pre-condition for restarting peace talks. All Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip were relocated out of the territory in 2005, as part of Israel's unilateral decision to disengage from the region.

BDS Movement

A common claim by anti-Israel activists is that Israel is an apartheid state and that it should be fought as the apartheid in South Africa was fought, with boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS).

Apartheid, meaning "separate development" in Afrikaans, was a framework in place in South Africa of legalized racism imposing segregation. This framework included banning blacks from 'white areas,' preventing mixed race sexual relations and marriage, and more.

The State of Israel does not have any similar laws in place against its Arab and non-Jewish citizens, nor against those of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Israeli-Arabs and other minorities have a full range of civil and political rights, and hold prominent positions in society, including as members of the Israeli Parliament and members of the Supreme Court. While Palestinians in the West Bank and in Hamas-controlled Gaza territories must adhere to Israeli policies that differ from those outside them, such as checkpoints and the security barrier, these measures are implemented to ensure security against terrorist activity rather than segregate populations based on race or ethnicity.

07 October 2023 and Operation Swords of Iron

On 07 October 2023, the terrorist group Hamas launched a cross-border surprise attack in Israel, resulting in the deadliest massacre of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust, with more than 1,200 brutally killed and approximately 240 taken hostage. These horrific events prompted the launch of Israel's Operation Swords of Iron, consisting of large-scale air and land operations in Gaza and a continuously growing number of casualties.

Jewish communities in the United States and globally arranged vigils, rallies, and protests to mourn the devastation and call for the release of Israeli and other hostages held in Gaza. Concurrently, counter-protests, opposing rallies, and other gatherings were also held. There are many examples of violent rhetoric, harassment, and even physical violence resulting from engagement between opposing attendees as well as in seemingly unprompted circumstances. College campuses became a particular flashpoint for these events. Amidst this environment, SCN saw a 192% increase in incident reports for October 2023 when compared to October 2022.

Consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the U.S.

The high tension between Israelis and Palestinians has spread globally. In recent years, and notably following 07 October 2023, there has been a significant rise in rallies and calls for both support and opposition to the State of Israel. These events have contributed to the rise in antisemitism and have allowed antisemitic incidents and hateful calls for action to be masked as anti-Zionist or anti-Israel. Many events have been

centered in big cities and on college campuses, often leading to altercations, vandalism, and cyber threats and harassment.

The normalization and rise of explicit hate towards the Jewish community over recent years comes with greater risk during the High Holidays and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel's Independence Day), which marks the Nakba. These circumstances have necessitated added caution by the community and law enforcement, as well as additional security.

Ethnic and National Diversity in the Jewish Community

The Jewish community is diverse, with religious, ethnic, racial, cultural, and political differences between individuals, communities, and denominations. Jewish Americans – even those in the United States for generations – speak a multitude of languages including but not limited to Hebrew, Yiddish, Arabic, Farsi, Russian, Spanish, and French.

Modern Jewry can be categorized into four main ethnic groups. While all groups share the same basic beliefs, tenets, holidays, and traditions, they vary in their specific cultures, interpretations of religious law, practices, and customs.

Ashkenazi: Most of America's Jews can trace their ancestry to Europe and the great migration to the United States that occurred at the turn of the 20th century; they are known as Ashkenazi Jews. Many Jews from Europe, including survivors of the Holocaust, came to the promise and freedom of the U.S. after the Second World War. Most recently, Jews from Europe came to the U.S. seeking freedom and opportunity from the nations that make up the former Soviet Union. (Note that the word "Ashkenazi" is unrelated to the word "Nazi.")

Sephardi: Sephardi Jews trace their heritage to Iberia and the Spanish Diaspora, and were the first to arrive to American shores, escaping persecution in Spain and Portugal in the early 1700s. More recently, Sephardi Jews have immigrated to the U.S. from Cuba and South America.

Mizrachi: Mizrachi Jews come from North African and Middle Eastern ancestry and are often confused or grouped together with Sephardi Jews. Most Mizrachi Jews in North America are recent immigrants from Israel, Iran, some of the Asian former Soviet republics, as well as from Arab lands where they faced religious persecution. More than other Jewish ethnic groups, Mizrachi Jews are likely to maintain ties to individuals from their family's nation of origin. As such, it is common to find synagogues or community facilities dedicated to specific national origins, i.e., a Persian synagogue.

Ethiopian: Ethiopia was home to a large Jewish community for over a dozen centuries. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the majority of this community immigrated to Israel.

Beyond recognizing the existence of, and differences between these four main ethnic groups, it is important to note that the Jewish community incorporates an incredible diversity of backgrounds and identities — including but not limited to Black Jews, Hispanic and Latino Jews, Asian Jews, and multiracial Jews. Studies suggest that Jews of Color represent at least 12-15% of the American Jewish population, or about one million of the 7.6 million Jews living in the U.S.[9] A 2021 study of more than 1,000 self-identified Jews of Color found 66% of respondents identified as "biracial, mixed, multi-racial" or a combination of those identities.[10]

Jews of Color is a pan-ethnic term that may be used to identify Jews whose family origins trace to African, Asian, or Latin American countries. Jews of Color may identify as Black, Latino, Asian American, or of mixed heritage, such as biracial or multi-racial. Mizrachi and Sephardi Jews from North African and Arab lands vary in whether they self-identify as Jews of Color.[11]

The collective Jewish history and individual experiences based on background, identity, and affiliation have elevated attention for some Jewish community members regarding equality, racism, and refugee issues.

Jewish Denominations[12]

Jewish denominations, also known as streams or movements, refer to the categories of religious affiliation among Jews. The different denominations' approach to Judaism as a theology, ethnicity, and culture drive their variances in philosophy and practice.

Members of the various denominations may utilize particular terminology and pronunciations and may incorporate different languages such as Yiddish or Hebrew in both their religious and secular lives. Similarly, manifestations of religious practices and customs may be different between locations, communities, and individuals.

The following offers a brief overview of the main Jewish denominations in North America. It is important to note that the below does not aim to comprehensively detail all movements nor to provide an in-depth review of their beliefs. Rather, the below should be used as a preliminary introduction to the most common Jewish streams.

Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism, representing slightly over a third of U.S. Jewry, emphasizes the importance of Jewish values, traditions, and customs over traditional Jewish law. Rooted in the belief that Judaism must coexist with modern times, Reform Judaism accentuates the evolving nature of faith, acknowledges a diversity of beliefs and practices, and encourages personal choice in matters of religious observance. There is a particular emphasis on social justice issues as a manifestation of the ethics of Jewish practice. The umbrella organization for the Reform movement is the Union for Reform Judaism (known until 2003 as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations).

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[9] https://leichtag.org/press-release-population-of-jews-of-color-is-increasing-in-u-s-despite-undercounting-in-population-studies/https://jcua.org/kol-or/

[10] https://jewsofcolorinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BEYONDTHECOUNT.FINAL_.8.12.21.pdf?utm_source=JoCI+website&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=Beyond+the+Count+report

[11] https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/resolution-our-communitys-pursuit-racial-justice

[12] This chapter refers to North American Jewry and may differ outside the U.S. and Canada.

Reform Judaism tends to view itself as more integrated into modern society, both physically and socially. Reform Jews are less likely to segregate themselves in terms of neighborhoods or stand out in terms of appearance or religious practices.

Conservative Judaism

Approximately 18% of U.S. Jews consider themselves Conservative. The Conservative movement views religious Jewish law as both binding and subject to evolution over time as a result of communal consensus. As such, the movement accepts specific innovations in religious observance, e.g., gender-egalitarian prayer, but maintains a traditional stance on others, such as keeping *kosher*, or following certain dietary restrictions. The umbrella organization for the Conservative movement in the United States is the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (known until 1991 as the United Synagogue of America).

Conservative Jews tend to be more integrated into modern society when compared to Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox sects. Like Reform Jews, Conservative Jews are less likely to stand out in terms of neighborhoods, clothing, or religious practices.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism is considered the most observant of the Jewish denominations. Making up approximately 10% of U.S. Jews, Orthodox Jews adhere to the traditional interpretations of Jewish law. The umbrella organization for the Orthodox movement in the United States is the Orthodox Union (originally called the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America).

Orthodox Judaism can be subcategorized into a number of smaller movements, including:

MODERN ORTHODOX

Also known as Centrist Orthodoxy, Modern Orthodox Jews attempt to balance traditional Jewish observances and secular knowledge. Modern Orthodox Jews make a conscious effort to be full and participating members of modern society while accepting the hardships of integrating those efforts with practicing full adherence to Jewish law.

As a result of their observance of Judaism and how to integrate its practices in the modern secular world, Modern Orthodox Jews are often considered at a balancing point between the strict Ultra-Orthodox customs and those of the more flexible Conservative and Reform streams. While they adhere to clothing and modesty traditions, they are not quite as distinct as Ultra-Orthodox Jews. Similarly, they are more likely to be open-minded to the customs of the broader secular environment.

ULTRA-ORTHODOX (HAREDIM)

Ultra-Orthodox Jews are considered the most religiously adherent Jews. Maintaining a traditional religious lifestyle, Ultra-Orthodox Jews are typically less likely to assimilate or integrate with the wider secular civilian population. Many Ultra-Orthodox Jews speak Yiddish to varying degrees, including communities that communicate in it almost exclusively. Many Ultra-Orthodox communities place particular importance on the leadership of their respective rabbis, at times over the leadership and authority of other entities. As such, some Ultra-Orthodox communities may have different practices due to varied interpretations of Jewish law by their rabbi.

The Ultra-Orthodox communities are the most easily distinguishable Jewish group, given their adherence to strict dress codes and appearance-based traditions. Similarly, many Ultra-Orthodox communities tend to be segregated from the broader modern secular environment, living in specific neighborhoods or areas within cities. Ultra-Orthodox Jews are the most likely sect to prioritize Jewish traditions, practices, laws, and values over those of the modern secular world.

The following define further subsets of Ultra-Orthodox Jews:

Yeshivish: Yeshivish or Litvish Jews focus their religious identity and practice on the intellectual aspects of Judaism, specifically men's study of religious texts. (Note: "Yeshivish" is not to be confused with "yeshiva," which is a generic term for a Jewish school that may or may not be Orthodox.)

Hasidic: Hasidic Jews follow mystic traditions, highlighting the joy in worship and its role in relating to the divine.

Chabad-Lubavitch: A subset of Hasidic Judaism, the Chabad-Lubavitch sect is known for its religious, cultural, and educational outreach activities. They see their mission as caring for the spiritual and material needs of all Jews.

Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism is the smallest of the major Jewish movements. Reconstructionist Judaism views Judaism and the Jewish people as an evolving civilization, with Jewish thinkers interpreting Judaism and Jewish religious law through the prism of modern life and philosophies. Despite a significant variance in members of the sect's adherence to religious law, Reconstructionist Judaism, at its core, teaches that Jewish law is a main tenant of Jewish life, though it should be practiced in a way that is consistent with modern culture and contemporary values.

Unlike more stringent branches of Judaism, Reconstructionist Jews believe that Jewish law should be open to interpretation based on contemporary life and without claims of obligation or a need for enforcement. The umbrella organization for the Reconstructionist movement in the United States is Reconstructing Judaism (known until 2018 as the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities).

Similar to Reform and Conservative Judaism, Reconstructionist Jews tend to view themselves as more integrated into modern society both physically and socially, and are less likely to segregate themselves in terms of neighborhoods or stand out in terms of appearance or religious practices.

Humanistic Judaism

Established in 1963, Humanistic Judaism is the most recent of the Jewish branches. Humanistic Jews see Judaism as a culture – a people with a shared history and holidays – without including a theological element. Adherents of Humanistic Judaism define Judaism as the Jewish people's cultural and historical experience, and observe Jewish traditions, celebrate holidays, and honor life-cycle events in non-theistic ways.

Similar to Reform and Conservative Judaism, Humanistic Jews tend to view themselves as more integrated into modern society both physically and socially, and are less likely to segregate themselves in terms of areas in which they live or stand out in terms of appearance or religious practices. The umbrella organization for the Humanistic movement in the United States is the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

Note: Messianic Judaism

Messianic Jews (often referred to as "Jews for Jesus" after an organization of the same name) view themselves as devoted Jews who also believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah of Israel. They argue that their faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and his death for the sacrifice of humanity's sins stems from biblical scripture. Therefore, Messianic Jews often worship in Hebrew, follow certain Jewish traditions, and celebrate specific Jewish holidays.

While there are tens of thousands of Messianic Jews in the U.S., no major Jewish movement considers their practice to be form of Judaism because they hold faith in Jesus as the Messiah. As a result, there is tension between Jewish denominations and Messianic Jews regarding missionary and outreach efforts in the Jewish community.

Organizations and Facilities

Houses of Worships

The centerpiece of Jewish worship and – in many communities – Jewish life, is the synagogue or *shul*. A synagogue can be one or more rooms inside a private residence, a large stand-alone structure, or even part of a sprawling community center. The center of every synagogue is the ark. The ark holds the Torah scrolls, which are hand-scribed and considered holy, and should be treated accordingly. Torah scrolls should never be touched or handled without direct rabbinical supervision and respect. Great discretion should be displayed.

Almost all synagogues also have a *ner tamid*, or eternal light. This is a light fueled by gas or electric bulb hanging above the synagogue's ark. As a symbol of God's eternal presence, the eternal light is never extinguished or switched off.

At the front of most synagogues (or the sanctuary within a synagogue) stands the *bimah*, an elevated platform from which prayer services are led and the Torah is recited. More traditional and Sephardic synagogues will place their bimah in the center of the sanctuary; modern and progressive synagogues locate their bimah in the front of the sanctuary with the ark situated at the back of it. Often, clergy members, honored guests, and other leaders will be seated on the bimah during religious services and events.

Mikveh

Most Jewish communities have a *mikveh*, a ritual bath that holds natural water in which people submerge for ritualistic purification purposes. They are often located within or adjacent to a synagogue. Jewish law requires a woman to participate in a mikveh ritual before getting married and after finishing her menstrual cycle. Traditional practices also require a mikveh ritual for conversion to Judaism. Many observant men and women visit a mikveh before Shabbat and for special occasions, including prior to getting married.

Jewish Schools and After School Programs

Many members of the Orthodox and Conservative movements send their children to private parochial schools known as *yeshivas*. A yeshiva, historically, is an educational institution that focuses on the study of the Torah.

Yeshivas can be elementary, high school, college level, or adult education centers. In Orthodox schools, boys and girls – especially those past bar and bat mitzvah age – might study separately.

Many synagogues and other cultural centers, especially those in the Conservative and Reform communities, will hold after school religious and Hebrew language studies during the week or on weekends for school children.

Jewish Community Centers

The Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) is the continental umbrella organization for the Jewish Community Center (JCC) Movement, which includes more than 350 JCCs, the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM—YWHA or Y), and Jewish Camps in the United States and Canada. JCCA offers a wide range of services and resources to help its affiliates provide educational, cultural, social, Jewish identity-building, and recreational programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. Given their broad service offerings and appeal, JCCs and Ys tend to have significant non-Jewish membership and attendance.

JCCA supports the largest network of Jewish early childhood centers and Jewish summer camps in North America. JCCs and Ys often hold classes, after school activities, day care, and day camps, as well as sporting clubs and athletic activities for many children and teenagers. JCCs and Ys may also provide social services for senior citizens and other members of the community requiring special needs.

Chabad-Lubavitch Centers

Chabad has established some 4,000 centers in more than 75 countries worldwide, reaching more than one million attendees.[13] Typically known as Chabad houses, these religious centers serve as the activity hub for educational, cultural, and social service outreach by the local rabbi, often called a *shaliach*, or emissary. The rabbi and his family tend to live in the same building in which these activities are held, and many are located in communities where a Jewish presence is not well-established. An emphasis of the Chabad house is to provide a safe haven for Jewish travelers and visitors of all denominations.

Potentially due in part to their emphasis on outreach and maintaining an open-door policy, Chabad houses have been targeted in attacks in the U.S. and abroad.

2008 Mumbai Terror Attack – Nariman Chabad House

The Mumbai attacks took place between 26 – 29 November 2008, when 10 members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist organization carried out a series of attacks throughout Mumbai, India. In total, **164 individuals were killed and over 300 wounded**.

Upon arrival in Mumbai, the 10 attackers hijacked cars and split into groups to carry out attacks across the city. Two of the attackers raided the Nariman Chabad House in the city, taking the two Chabad emissaries as well as several residents and visitors of the house hostage.

[13] See also Chabad on Campus

In a siege that lasted three days, a number of people were rescued, among them the baby son of the local Chabad emissaries, and a U.S. Chabad official negotiated with one of the attackers. The siege was broken by a raid conducted by Indian special forces. By the conclusion of the raid and release of Nariman House, the two Chabad emissaries and four additional civilians were killed.

Jewish Camps

As the organized camping movement grew in the United States, so too did the Jewish camp movement. In the early to mid-20th century, camps with distinct Jewish cultural and educational missions emerged, followed by the creation of denominational camps in the 1940s, which quickly became the leading type of Jewish camps. Today, there are a wide variety of Jewish camps, to include camps by Jewish denomination, camps for children of interfaith or LGBTQ families, camps for Jews of Color, camps focusing on sports or technology, and camps with an Israel focus, to name a few.

It is important to note that the Jewish camp movement includes both day camps and overnight camps. While day camps are often within established Jewish community facilities such as JCCs or synagogues, most overnight camps are in remote, rural areas.

University & College Campus Organizations

University and college campuses are often host to many Jewish organizations, to include both social and religiously oriented groups and establishments. The below aims to describe the most common of these organization types and should not be considered a comprehensive or exhaustive list.

HILLEL

Hillel International is the largest Jewish student organization in the world, with connections to over 550 colleges and universities worldwide. Hillel's mission is to encourage students to form connections to Judaism and Jewish life by providing opportunities for students to engage in Jewish experiences, to include Shabbat and holiday celebrations, learning sessions, and travel experiences.

A campus Hillel will most likely be located in a specifically designated building in which most of their events take place, though many operate in shared campus spaces or off-campus sites. Given their mission of encouraging students to connect to Judaism, Hillels tend to have highly publicized events and an open-door policy.

CHABAD ON CAMPUS

The Chabad-Lubavitch movement has established centers on more than 260 college campuses worldwide, typically set up as a house or building that has been designated as the local Chabad house. As with non-campus Chabad centers, these facilities often are co-located as the homes of the rabbi and his family. Affiliated with the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, and, as such, endorsing their same ideals, these houses aim to encourage students to connect to Judaism socially and educationally. Based on the general Chabad-Lubavitch principles, these houses operate with an open-door policy and regularly publicize their events on campus and to the local community.

JEWISH FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

Jewish Greek life emerged as a result of antisemitic tendencies and exclusion of Jews on campus during much of the 20th century; as boarding houses and clubs barred Jews, Jewish fraternities and sororities established themselves as relevant alternatives. The Jewish fraternities and sororities are as diverse as the Jewish community itself, with some endorsing Jewish heritage, others considering themselves Jewish but not a religious organization, and others considering themselves historically Jewish but eschewing any religious traditions, practices, or affiliations.

Like other social Greek organizations, Jewish fraternities and sororities may have specific housing in which their members live or congregate. Unlike other Jewish organizations on campus, Jewish Greek life organizations often require membership for participation in and access to their events.

Jewish & Jewish-Affiliated Museums

Some Jewish communities are home to affiliated museums or other cultural centers. Holocaust museums are among the most common of these entities, with many Jewish communities maintaining a Holocaust museum, memorial, or both. These institutions are often the targets of antisemitic incidents and attacks, to include flyering and graffiti, as well as targeted assaults.

Senior & Assisted Living

Many Jewish communities have senior or assisted living facilities. These facilities may share a campus with other Jewish communal organizations. While they often have significant numbers of non-Jewish residents, many still provide for residents to maintain a Jewish lifestyle and, in addition to having an on-site prayer space, most regularly hold holiday and Shabbat services.

Social Service Organizations

Almost all Jewish communities have organized social service organizations, typically as part of the local Jewish Federation. These organizations vary in mission, scope, and service provision; different communities will have different organizations and organizational structure.

Social service organizations may be located at offices of their own or within other facilities, such as local synagogues, Jewish Federations, or JCCs. While these organizations serve the Jewish population, many also provide services to other individuals regardless of affiliation.

Common types of Jewish social service organizations include:

- Child and family services, including foster care, family support, resources, and special education programs and assessments
- Assisted living for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Anti-hunger programs, to include soup kitchens and meal distribution
- Medical assistance for those without health insurance
- Legal assistance and legal advocacy centers
- Immigration assistance, to include legal assistance and language support
- Mental health and wellness programs, including counseling services
- Domestic abuse support systems and programs
- Disaster relief for areas affected by natural disasters

Israel Advocacy Groups

Many communities are home to one or more Israel advocacy groups. Often a component of an umbrella Jewish organization such as a Jewish Federation or Jewish Community Relations Council, Israel advocacy groups aim to educate about the State of Israel, encourage dialogue on the topic, and promote pro-Israel efforts.

Israel advocacy groups are prevalent on college campuses and often utilize the spaces of or partner with Jewish entities such as Hillel or a Jewish Greek organization for events. With tensions typically heightened around the issue, particularly during periods of conflict in the region, these gatherings can serve as flashpoints for protests and, at times, violence.

Calendar

The Jewish Day

Traditionally, the Jewish day begins in the evening due to rabbinical interpretation of the biblical story of Creation. As such, each Jewish holiday begins at sundown the evening before the day as marked on the secular calendar, similar to Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. For example, Shabbat, or the Sabbath, which occurs every week, begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday.

Regular weekdays have three main sets of prayers or services: morning (*shacharit*), afternoon (*mincha*), evening (*arvit* or *ma'ariv*). Morning prayers are typically the longest and have the most attendees. Reform, Reconstructionist, and many Conservative synagogues may not hold three services every day.

The Jewish Week

Ending on the Sabbath, the Jewish week on the secular calendar places significance on three specific days: Monday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Mondays and Thursdays are days in which the Torah is read during morning prayers. Including comprehensive rituals, the reading of the Torah is considered by many a primary practice of Judaism. As such, services at synagogues on Monday and Thursday mornings tend to include larger numbers than on the other days of the week, excluding Saturdays.

Observance of Holidays

Traditionally, the majority of Jewish holidays are observed with a complete cessation of labor. Evolving and adapting over the years, rabbinical tradition has adjusted the definition of labor to include several productive activities and the use of various technologies such as automobiles, electricity, and more. Followers of non-Orthodox movements may use technology and perform acts of labor based on their individual preferences, such as using transportation to arrive at synagogue on holidays. Non-Orthodox Jews also are more likely to use devices, such as cell phones, on holidays and the Sabbath.

The Sabbath, known as Shabbat or *Shabbos*, is a weekly occurrence beginning just before sundown every Friday and continuing through sundown Saturday night. Considered to be a holiday in Judaism, Shabbat embodies God's cessation of labor following the six days of Creation.

Shabbat is central to Judaism and religious practice, so much so that the phrase *shomer Shabbat* or *shomer Shabbos*, meaning keeper of the Sabbath and referring to those who observe the ordinances of Shabbat, is often used to indicate those who are more religiously observant.

The Torah describes a specific list of activities forbidden on Shabbat and holidays, most of which are agricultural activities and their repercussions. As times evolved, rabbinical analysis has interpreted the list to apply to modern customs. Among the activities and products typically avoided by many observant Jews on Shabbat and holidays are:

- Anything that could be considered work or labor
- Setting, igniting, lighting, fueling, or spreading fires or flames. Most observant Jews consider the use of electricity to fall under the category of ignition. As such, the use of the following is also avoided:
  - Automobiles
  - Cell phones. Most observant Jews will also refrain from carrying their cell phone with them
  - Any appliances requiring turning on or off electricity, including stoves, kettles, lamps, telephones, television, and radio. The use of electricity or electronics that were left on prior to the holiday or are on an automatic schedule are allowed (e.g., hot plates, water boilers, or lamps or lighting)
  - Elevators. Rabbis have authorized the use of elevators that do not require pushing buttons, such as those that have been programmed to stop at all floors and open or close their doors automatically
  - Automatic doors or electronic locks
- Extinguishing fires or flames
- Gardening, to include planting and watering
- Laundry, whether including the use of electricity or not
- Cooking. This excludes any food preparation that maintains the shape or form of the materials (e.g., preparing a salad is allowed, while cooking vegetables to soften them is not)
- Writing
- Construction of any permanent structure, including setting up any protective covering (e.g., opening and closing of umbrellas)
- Demolition
- Repairing or fixing. As a result, observant Jews often avoid using otherwise permitted items on holidays that could break and require repairing or fixing, such as bicycles

Many non-Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox Jews will not follow all of these laws and base their observance of these rules on individual decisions and interpretations.

It should also be noted that many of these activities can have caveats or exceptions under the rule of *Pikuach Nefesh*. *Pikuach Nefesh* is the Jewish concept that the preservation of human life can override almost all other religious requirements or ordinances. Traditions, routines, services, and programs may be modified or canceled if the safety, security, or health of the community could be at risk.

The Jewish Year

Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the Jewish calendar is lunar, with periodic adjustments made to ensure that months align with given seasons each year.

Thus, while the Jewish calendar is repetitive and consistent, the holidays vary in their Gregorian dates. For example, the Jewish New Year, *Rosh HaShanah*, always falls on the first day of the Jewish month of *Tishrei*, but will occur on different dates during September and/or October from year to year.

In general, the Jewish calendar is as follows:

Jewish Month	Gregorian Month Range*	Holidays
Shvat	January – February	Tu B'Shvat
Adar	February – March	Purim
Nisan	March – April	Pesach (Passover); Yom HaShoah
Iyar	April – May	Yom HaZikaron; Yom HaAtzmaut; Lag B'Omer
Sivan	May – June	Shavuot
Tammuz	June – July	
Av	July – August	Tisha B'Av
Elul	August – September	
Tishrei	September – October	Rosh HaShanah; Yom Kippur; Sukkot; Simchat Torah
Cheshvan	October – November	
Kislev	November – December	Hanukkah
Tevet	December – January	

*The Gregorian month range is approximate.

JEWISH HOLIDAY CALENDAR

Holiday	Jewish Year 5784 (2023-2024)	Jewish Year 5785 (2024-2025)
Rosh HaShanah	September 15–17, 2023	October 2–4, 2024
Yom Kippur	September 24–25, 2023	October 11–12, 2024
Sukkot	September 29 – October 6, 2023	October 16 –23, 2024
Shemini Atzeret – Simchat Torah	October 6–8, 2023	October 23–25, 2024
Hanukkah	December 7–15, 2023	December 25– January 2, 2025
Tu B'Shvat	January 24–25, 2024	February 12–13, 2025
Purim	March 23–24, 2024	March 13–14, 2025
Pesach (Passover)	April 22–30, 2024	April 12–20, 2025
Yom HaShoah	May 5–6, 2024	April 23–24, 2025
Yom HaZikaron	May 12–13, 2024	April 29–30, 2025
Yom HaAtzmaut	May 13–14, 2024	April 30– May 1, 2025
Lag B'Omer	May 25–26, 2024	May 15–16, 2025
Shavuot	June 11–13, 2024	June 1–3, 2025
Tisha B'Av	August 12–13, 2024	August 2–3, 2025

Given historical processes regarding the establishment of the beginning and end of each holiday, Jews in the diaspora (outside of Israel) have a slightly different holiday calendar than those within Israel. For a number of holidays, Jews in the diaspora celebrate an extra day. These holidays include:

- Rosh HaShanah
- Pesach (Passover)
- Shavuot
- Shemini Atzeret – Simchat Torah

Generally, the Conservative, Orthodox, and Ultra-Orthodox movements adhere to this practice, with members of the Reform, Reconstructionist, and Humanitarian movements choosing on a community or individual basis whether to do so.

Notable Holidays & Days of Commemoration

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive review of all holidays and days of commemoration. Instead, the below offers a review of those that are of particular significance to the Jewish community and/or have safety and security implications.

HIGH HOLIDAYS (HIGH HOLY DAYS)

Beginning with Rosh HaShanah and ending approximately one month later on Simchat Torah, the High Holidays – also known as the High Holy Days – are often considered the most important of the Jewish holidays.

The High Holidays services see the highest attendance rates of any day of the year, with synagogues often issuing tickets for seats to moderate attendees.

Rosh HaShanah: Rosh HaShanah is the Jewish New Year. Celebrated with candle lighting in the evenings and festive meals, Rosh HaShanah is also marked by the sounding of a ram's horn known as a *shofar* during the morning services on both days of the holiday.

On the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, and continuing through the end of Sukkot, the Jewish custom of *tashlich* may be observed. Literally meaning "to cast off", tashlich is a ritual in which worshippers symbolically throw their sins away. Taking place near bodies of water (e.g. rivers, lakes, oceans, or on bridges), it is common to see individuals or groups congregating around these areas at various times between the two holidays.

Yom Kippur: Taking place 10 days after the beginning of the Jewish year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is considered by many to be the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Beginning on the evening before the holiday, Yom Kippur is an occasion for Jews to pray for forgiveness for their sins. It is observed by a stringent fast that forbids individuals from eating, drinking, or consuming anything from sundown to sundown, as well as numerous prayer services.

Sukkot and Simchat Torah: Sukkot is a seven-day holiday that takes place a few weeks after Yom Kippur. Commemorating God's protection of the Israelites as they traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land, the holiday is celebrated by residing outside in a temporary dwelling known as a *sukkah*. While this tradition is typically observed at individual, private homes, synagogues often construct these huts on their grounds and host events throughout the holiday in the outdoor structures. The first two full days are official holidays and include adhering to the restriction of abstaining from work. The following five days are quasi-holidays, allowing work but still regarded as holy. Sukkot is immediately followed by Shemini Atzeret-Simchat Torah, a holiday marked by festivities and dancing with the Torah scroll.

PURIM

Purim celebrates the story told in the biblical Book of Esther, which has become an affirmation of the dangers of antisemitism for Jews living in the diaspora. Considered the most joyous of Jewish holidays, the holiday includes a public reading of the Book of Esther, often with participants arriving in costume. The holiday emphasizes the importance of joy, and many communities and congregations hold carnivals and parties for the entire family. It should be noted that some Jewish communities also include a tradition of drinking to excess.

PESACH

Pesach, or Passover, commemorates the people of Israel's Exodus from the Land of Egypt. Starting on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Nissan, Pesach is a week-long holiday. The main observances of this holiday center on a special meal, a *seder*, in which the story of the Exodus is retold, as well as the prohibition on eating foods

made from leavened grains (i.e., wheat, barley, and oats). While most individuals attend family seders, some community institutions also host these meals on their premises. Passover typically aligns with the Easter holiday on the Gregorian calendar.

YOM HASHOAH

Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, typically falls in April. *Shoah*, meaning utter destruction in Hebrew, refers to the events of the Holocaust. Many synagogues and Jewish facilities, including community centers, schools, assisted or senior living homes, and museums, commemorate Yom HaShoah by holding memorial ceremonies, reading testimonies, meeting with survivors, and lighting memorial candles. Yom HaShoah is not a religious holiday, and as such there are no restrictions on electricity or other traditional prohibitions on this day.

YOM HAZIKARON

Yom HaZikaron, Israel's Memorial Day, commemorates the members of Israel's military, security services, and those killed in terror attacks. Yom HaZikaron is a solemn day, often including memorial ceremonies that take place at both religious and secular facilities, including synagogues, community centers, and schools. It is not a religious holiday, and as such there are no restrictions on electricity or other traditional prohibitions on this day.

YOM HAATZMAUT

Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, comes the day after Yom HaZikaron to symbolize the sacrifice that the country made for its independence and continued existence. Many Jewish facilities celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut by holding parades, fairs, or carnivals. Yom HaAtzmaut is not a religious holiday, and as such there are no restrictions on electricity or other traditional prohibitions on this day.

Yom HaAtzmaut honors a contested issue in the establishment of the modern State of Israel, and celebrations may draw ire from anti-Israel groups.

Minyan & Services

A main tenet of Jewish religious practice is the need for a *minyan*, a group that consists of a minimum of 10 Jewish adults in order to perform most prayers and rituals. Orthodox communities require a minyan to be comprised of men.

While prayers are allowed in almost any setting with the only requirement being the need for a *minyan*, most services are conducted at synagogues or designated indoor areas.

Among the more religiously observant, men and women are physically separated during prayer. This separation can be a physical partition known as a *mechitzah* (e.g., a sheet, fence, or adjustable wall) or in the form of architecturally separated areas, often constructed as different floors of the building designated for each gender. Separate entrances are less common, but do exist. For the most part, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist services are egalitarian, meaning that men and women can pray next to each other.

When entering a prayer service or sanctuary, especially in Orthodox and Conservative synagogues, it is customary for men to wear a skullcap known as a *kippah* or *yarmulke* as a sign of modesty and respect. A non-Jewish law enforcement officer entering a synagogue is not required to put on a *kippah*, but it would be construed as a sign of respect to do so.

Orthodox men and Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist men and women may wear a prayer shawl known as a *tallit or tallis* during morning services. Additionally, observant Jewish men and some women in Conservative services will wear *tefillin*. *Tefillin* consists of two black leather boxes containing the most significant Jewish prayer – the *Shema* – and straps, with one box placed on the forehead and the other on the bicep.

Modesty

As with most of the world's religions, the more religiously observant Jewish denominations place importance on modesty, specifically between the sexes or genders.

Clothing and Outward Appearance

The most recognizable aspects of Jewish modesty practices center on outward appearance. Though the various denominations – indeed, every individual – apply the concept of modesty differently, the basis of the practice is that an individual's appearance reflects the soul and must therefore be respectful.

Skirts, typically to the knee or below, are standard for religiously observant women, as are longer sleeves and higher necklines. Among the more observant Orthodox women, there is a tradition of covering one's hair once married. Hair covering occurs in many ways, including wigs and scarves. Most women who cover their hair do so when leaving the house or when interacting with individuals outside of their family.

The hair covering itself is a religious practice and not an ornamental accessory; most women will object to being asked to remove it while in public.

Orthodox men – and some Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews, usually men –wear a *kippah* or comparable head covering at all times and may wear more modest clothing. Within the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements, women may also be seen wearing a *kippah*. More observant men tend to also wear *tzitzit,* fringes worn throughout the day under one's shirt.

Ultra-Orthodox men likely will be seen with long sleeves, long pants, sometimes a long black coat, and *payot or payos*, which are long, unshaven sidelocks. Many married Hasidic men also may wear a fur hat known as a *shtreimel* on holidays, a practice that originated in 18th century Poland.

Touch and Interaction

Modesty is not only conveyed through clothing and hair coverings, but also through interactions between the sexes or genders.

Many Orthodox Jews follow a practice known as *shemirat negiya* and refer to themselves as *shomer negiya*, meaning they will not physically touch a member of the opposite sex or gender unless that person is part of the immediate family. This restriction includes both innocent and routine touches, such as handshakes, as well as contact that can be considered sexual in nature. Similarly, many will take care not to be alone with a member of the opposite sex or gender, except for familial relations. When meeting an observant Jew of the opposite sex or gender for the first time, it is respectful to let the other person choose whether to initiate physical contact.

It is important to note that many Jews may allow transgressions from modesty practices under the rule of *Pikuach Nefesh*. Despite this, when possible, it is recommended to set up private and secluded areas if any deviation from these modesty standards is necessary, especially in more religiously observant communities. Deviation may be necessary in case of an emergency, imminent danger, searches required by law, or injury.

Death, Burial, and Mourning Practices

Judaism places as much importance on issues surrounding death and burial as it does on other traditions and religious practices. Believing that both body and soul are holy and deserving of respect, Judaism maintains traditions for the treatment of both post-mortem.

As with most customs, the different denominations may vary their level of adherence to the traditions described below.

A critical tenet is the need for expeditious treatment and burial of the body. Except for specific circumstances, burial is typically carried out within 24 hours of death. Situations that have received rabbinical approval for postponement of burial include:

- When the government or similar authority requires a delay, including for the transportation of the body, completion of paperwork, or post-mortem examinations and autopsies.
- When awaiting the delivery of shrouds or a proper casket.
- If relatives or the eulogizing rabbi are delayed or are arriving from a distance.
- If the burial is to fall on or close to the Sabbath. Rather than hold the ceremony on a Friday afternoon, the burial may be postponed until Sunday.
- The first day of major holidays or festivals. The burial should not fall on the first day of major holidays and will be postponed if this is the case.

Immediately Following Death

Immediately following the death of an individual, a series of traditions and rituals are to be completed:

- **Blessing**: A special blessing is to be recited by those present at the time of death.
- **Covering of the body**: The eyes and mouth of the deceased are to be closed, and the face covered by a sheet or cloth. It is traditional for a child or close relative of the deceased to perform these actions when possible.
- **Lighting of candles**: The body of the deceased is to be lowered to the floor and candles lit near the head of the deceased.
- **Forgiveness**: As the body is being lowered to the floor, forgiveness should be asked of the deceased.
- **Recitation of psalms**: After the candles have been lit, psalms are to be recited.
- **Arrangement of Taharah**: This cleansing ritual is performed by the Chevra Kadisha, a burial society consisting of those knowledgeable in traditional Jewish duties and formalities. The *Taharah* can be arranged by a rabbi or through a funeral home; in most cases, the immediate family is not involved in the coordination or the rituals themselves.
- **Watching of the body**: Whenever possible, individuals should stay with the body until the funeral. They recite prayers or psalms as they guard the body prior to burial.

Many modern-day, secular burial practices are contradictory to traditional Jewish methods. Out of respect for the deceased, autopsies and displays of the body should be avoided, when possible. To allow the body to return to the earth from which it came, and to allow for a future resurrection of the dead, cremation and embalming are also traditionally not allowed.

Funeral and Burial

Jewish tradition dictates that a Jewish person be buried among and by fellow Jews. As such, Jewish individuals are typically buried in Jewish cemeteries and only Jews handle the body, carry the casket, lower it into the grave, and fill the grave with soil.

A Jewish funeral entails many factors:

- **Rending of garments**: According to Jewish tradition and religious law, first degree relatives are to tear their clothing, typically above the heart. Usually done at the beginning of the funeral service, the rending of the garments is meant to express sorrow and pain.
  - Some communities perform the ritual immediately following the death, or upon interment. In many cases, a black ribbon is attached to clothing to be used for the ritual.
- **Eulogy**: The eulogy can be given by the officiating rabbi or any individual who knew the deceased.
- **Procession**: While traditionally the coffin was carried on shoulders to the cemetery and followed by a procession of family and friends, today the procession takes place either before the hearse leaves for the cemetery or from the hearse to the gravesite.
- **Burial**: Traditionally, Jews were buried only in ceremonial shrouds. Modern North American practices, however, require a casket. Therefore, caskets for Jewish funerals are made of all wood (typically pine) so that swift decomposition allows the body to return to the earth from which it came. Following the lowering of the casket into the grave, participants in the funeral fill the grave and cover the casket with soil – sometimes only ceremonially – by hand or by use of a shovel. The funeral is then concluded with the recitation of several prayers.
- **Mourning**: Immediately following the funeral, the formal mourning process begins. Those attending the funeral organize in two lines through which the mourners pass to symbolize the community's embrace. The mourning then relocates to a location designated for the seven days of *shiva*.

Post-Funeral Mourning

There are several stages of Jewish mourning, beginning from the moment of death and continuing through a year following the burial. The practices described are required, by Jewish tradition, only of first-degree relatives, with the larger circle of friends and family regarded as those offering support and comfort. Jews of all movements observe many of these traditions, but practices differ.

- **Pre-burial mourning:** Considered to be the most intense of the mourning stages, this phase takes place from the moment of death through the end of the funeral. During this stage of mourning, the deceased's first-degree relatives are exempt from all religious laws and observances.
- ***Shiva***: The *shiva* is a seven-day period beginning immediately after the burial that traditionally takes place in the home of the bereaved. Incorporating many different elements, observing *shiva* allows the mourners to disconnect from their everyday lives, focus on the memory of the deceased, and grieve their loss:
- Condolence meal: when arriving home from the cemetery following the funeral, the mourners are presented with a special condolence meal.
- House of mourning: the mourners remain at the same location for the entire seven-day period, with the community coming to join them.
- Memorial candles: upon return to the home from the funeral, special memorial candles are to be lit. These candles, usually provided by the funeral home, remain lit for the entire seven-day period.
- Covering of mirrors: it is traditional for mirrors throughout the house of mourning to be covered.

- "Sitting" *shiva*: this refers not only to the Jewish practice that mourners stay in the same location for this seven-day period, but also to the tradition that mourners sit on hard stools or chairs lower than the norm.
- Prohibition from secular and day-to-day activities: according to Jewish law, working and conducting business, personal grooming, marital relations, music, and entertainment, as well as the wearing of leather are forbidden for those sitting shiva.
- Making a *shiva* call: A tradition of consoling the bereaved, making a *shiva* call refers to the act of visiting the mourner(s) during this seven-day period, participating in prayers, and memorializing the deceased.
- Prayers and services: The three daily prayers are to take place in the house of mourning. A *minyan* should gather so that the mourners can participate in communal prayer without leaving the house. For those days that require reading of the Torah scroll, a scroll may be borrowed from a local synagogue.
- The Sabbath: Shabbat officially overrides the rituals of mourning. As the Sabbath approaches on Friday night, public displays of mourning are adjourned and the mourners are to bathe and change clothes. Mourners are also permitted to leave the house to attend services at synagogue.
- "Getting up" from the *shiva*: on the morning of the seventh day, immediately following morning prayer service, the *shiva* officially ends and mourners resume daily activities.
- **The *Sheloshim* or *Sh'loshim***: Literally meaning "the thirty," this period of mourning takes place for the 30 days following the burial. Despite no longer sitting *shiva* after the first week, mourner(s) continue certain mourning practices and avoid specific secular and/or joyous activities, such as enjoying music or entertainment, attending joyous events, cutting one's hair, etc.
- **The First Year**: For those mourning the death of a parent, the mourning practices defined in the *Sheloshim* stage are to be continued for an entire year.
- ***Yahrzeit***: The anniversary of an individual's passing, the *yahrzeit* is traditionally observed on the Hebrew calendar date of passing. The *yahrzeit* is customarily marked by lighting candles, reciting the mourner's prayer, and attending synagogue services.

Pikuach Nefesh

Pikuach Nefesh (literally "saving a life") is the concept in Judaism that the preservation of human life can override almost all other religious requirements or ordinances.

The majority of Jews agree that whether the situation is acute or chronic, the concept of *Pikuach Nefesh* overrides other religious traditions. For example, most will acknowledge that organ donation overrides the prohibition against desecrating a corpse, or that a heart attack or childbirth will override the ban on using electricity on the Sabbath if one is to call an ambulance or drive to the hospital.

The concept of *Pikuach Nefesh* is commonly known among Jews, and therefore can be cited should the need arise. Law enforcement and first responders may find that many Jews are more cooperative with instructions that seem contrary to their religious beliefs or practices if it is explained to them that the instructions are given due to a life-and-death situation. In fact, due to *Pikuach Nefesh*, some neighborhoods with a large Orthodox population will have a *Hatzalah*, a volunteer ambulance service that permits individuals to drive ambulances and use electricity to treat Jews on holidays, including Shabbat.

It is recommended to engage with local community leaders in cases in which the concept of *Pikuach Nefesh* is needed in order to circumvent religious laws. These leaders can assist in properly explaining the situation to the community and reassuring individuals as to the necessity.

Appendix A: Key Terms

Ashkenazi: One of four main ethnic groups of Jews. Jews of German ancestry, but used to refer to Jews with a Central Eastern European heritage. (Note: The word "Ashkenazi" is unrelated to the word "Nazi.")

Bar Mitzvah (m.), Bat Mitzvah (f), B'nai Mitzvah (pl.): The process of a child symbolically becoming a Jewish adult. A woman typically becomes Bat Mitzvah at age 12, and a man becomes Bar Mitzvah at age 13. In the U.S., depending on the denomination, a Bar or Bat Mitzvah will often be celebrated by a prayer service and reception or party. Given the celebratory nature of the holiday, along with its connection to the child's birthday, larger than usual crowds are expected at the synagogue service, with the facility often serving as the venue for the reception or party, as well.

Bimah: An elevated platform in the synagogue from which prayer services are led, and the Torah is recited. More traditional and Sephardic synagogues will place their *bimah* in the center of the sanctuary; modern and progressive synagogues locate their *bimah* in the front of the sanctuary with the ark situated at the back of it. Often, clergy members, honored guests, and other leaders will be seated on the *bimah*.

Bris, brit milah: Male ritual circumcision ceremony taking place on the eighth day after birth. The *bris* is often an introduction of the baby to the community, and as such these events tend to have large crowds. A baby girl may be formally introduced in a naming ceremony on the eighth day after birth, although this is not a religious requirement.

Cantor (*Chazzan*): A member of clergy who chants services and leads prayer through song. Rabbis often lead prayers and songs, and rabbi may also be a trained chazzan, but a chazzan's training is primarily focused on spiritual music.

Erev: Hebrew word for "evening." Since all Jewish holidays start at sundown, *Erev* refers to the evening that begins a holiday (e.g., *Erev Shabbat* is Friday night, and *Erev Rosh HaShanah* is the eve of the New Year).

Eruv: Physical boundary, often fences or firmly held string between poles, around an area that designates a private or semi-public domain. The eruv permits the enclosed area to be considered one place, without which observant Jews would not be able to carry objects from one place to another on holidays. An eruv must be maintained and checked regularly and is usually under the authority of a Jewish organization. The sensitivity of utility and public works crews about disturbing an eruv can vary widely.

Ethiopian: One of four main ethnic groups of Jews. While Ethiopia has been the home to Jewish communities for well over ten centuries, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the majority of this community immigrated to Israel.

Halachah: Jewish law. Translated "path to follow."

Havdalah: Short service that concludes Shabbat on Saturday evenings.

Jews of Color: A pan-ethnic term that may be used to identify Jews whose family origins trace to African, Asian, or Latin-American countries. Jews of Color may identify as Black, Latino, Asian-American, or of mixed heritage

such as biracial or multi-racial. Mizrachi and Sephardi Jews from North African and Arab lands vary in whether they self-identify as Jews of Color."[14]

Kaddish: Jewish prayer recited by mourners.

Kippah (s.), *kippot* (pl.): Skullcap (*yarmulke*) worn during Jewish prayer services, and by some at all times.

Kosher: Adherent to Jewish dietary laws.

Lay Leadership: Non-clergy professionals and volunteers who are dedicated to promoting and carrying out the missions of their respective Jewish institutions or organizations.

Mechitzah: Physical partition or architectural divide used to separate men and women in prayer settings.

Mezuzah: A small box that is situated on the right doorpost of a room. Inside the *mezuzah* is a scroll with verses from the Torah, including the most sacred prayer: the *Shema*. Often a symbol of protection, some people touch the mezuzah and kiss their hand upon entering a room. These are an outward symbol that may be used to identify a Jewish dwelling or structure occupied by Jews.

Minyan: Prayer quorum consisting of at least 10 Jewish adults (10 men in the Orthodox movement).

Mitzvah: Literally means "commandment." Used to describe a good deed.

Mizrachi: One of four main ethnic groups of Judaism. Mizrachi Jews come from North African and Middle Eastern ancestry, and are often confused with, or grouped together with, Sephardic Jews. Most Mizrachi Jews in North America are recent immigrants from Israel, Iran, some of the Asian former Soviet republics, as well as from Arab lands where they faced religious persecution.

Ner Tamid: A light fueled by gas or electric lightbulbs hanging above the synagogue's ark. As a symbol of God's eternal presence, the Eternal Light is never extinguished or switched off.

Pikuach Nefesh: "Saving a life." Concept that saving a human life overrides almost all other religious prohibitions and requirements.

Rabbi, *Rav* (Hebrew), *Rebbe* (Yiddish): Jewish clergy leader who leads prayer services, funerals, community events, weddings, and is an educator in the Jewish community.

Rosh Chodesh: First day of the Jewish month.

Seder: Ritual ceremony on the first two days of Passover; typically conducted in individual homes before an evening meal.

Sephardic: One of four main ethnic groups among Jews. Sephardic Jews (known as *Sephardi* or *Spharadim*) trace their heritage to Iberia and the Spanish Diaspora, and were the first to arrive to American shores, escaping persecution in Spain and Portugal in the early 1700s.

Shabbat (Hebrew), *Shabbos* (Yiddish): Jewish Sabbath, starting Friday at sundown and ending Saturday at sundown. The traditional greeting is *Shabbat shalom* (Hebrew for "Sabbath peace") or *gut Shabbos* (Yiddish for "Good Sabbath" and usually pronounced "Good Shabbos" by English speakers).

[14] https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/resolution-our-communitys-pursuit-racial-justice

Shiva: Seven-day period of mourning for immediate relatives after a funeral.

Siddur: Jewish prayer book.

Sukkah: Outdoor hut or dwelling that is built for the holiday of *Sukkot*.

Talmud: Rabbinic commentaries on the Torah (*Mishna*) and reflections on those commentaries (*Gamarra*).

Tanach: Acronym that stands for the complete Jewish Bible. Contains the Five Books of Moses (Torah), Prophets, and Writings.

Tashlich: Literally meaning "to cast off." Tashlich is a Jewish ritual conducted on the afternoon of Rosh HaShanah, or anytime between then and the end of Sukkot. The ritual, in which the worshippers symbolically cast off their sins, is conducted at a body of water (river, lake, ocean, or on top of bridges).

Tefillin: Two black leather boxes that contain a significant Jewish prayer (the *Shema*) and straps, with one box placed on the forehead and the other on the bicep.

Torah: Five Books of Moses, hand-written on a scroll. Judaism's most holy object and consists of Jewish law. Known in Christianity as the Old Testament.

Tzedakah: Signifies the act of giving charity. Means *justice* or *righteousness* in Hebrew.

Tzizit: Four corner fringes on a *tallit* and often worn throughout the day by observant Jews as an undergarment.

Yahrzeit: The anniversary of a loved one's passing according to the Hebrew calendar.

Yeshiva: Jewish school that provides religious and often secular education.

Z''l: Acronym for "of blessed memory" in Hebrew. Indicates someone who has passed away.

Appendix B: Resources

Brandeis University – Steinhardt Social Research Institute; American Jewish Population Project: ajpp.brandeis.edu/map

Chabad: chabad.org

Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations: conferenceofpresidents.org

Judaism 101: jewfaq.org

My Jewish Learning: myjewishlearning.com

Orthodox Union: ou.org

Reconstructing Judaism: reconstructingjudaism.org

Reform Judaism.Org: reformjudaism.org

The Jewish Federations of North America: jewishfederations.org

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism: uscj.org

Union for Reform Judaism: urj.org

Appendix C: Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alpha Epsilon Pi
Ameinu
American Friends of Likud
AIPAC
AJC
American Jewish Congress
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
American Sephardi Federation
American Zionist Movement
American-Israel Friendship League
Americans for Peace Now
AMIT
ADL
Association of Reform Zionists of America
Bnai Zion
B'nai B'rith International
Central Conference of American Rabbis
CAMERA
Israel Bonds
Emunah of America
FIDF
Hadassah
HIAS
Hillel
JCC Association of North America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
The Jewish Federations of North America
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish National Fund
Jewish Women International
MERCAZ USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Young Israel
NA'AMAT USA
National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry
ORT America
Rabbinical Assembly
Rabbinical Council of America
Religious Zionists of America
JINSA
Union for Reform Judaism
Orthodox Union
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's International Zionist Organization
Women's League for Conservative Judaism
Workmen's Circle
World ORT
World Zionist Organization
Zionist Organization of America

ADJUNCT MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Cantors Assembly
Maccabi USA
Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem

For the electronic version of this guide, scan the QR code above or visit **securecommunitynetwork.org/intro-to-judaism**

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