

Aleph Emblem

Aleph Emblem Workbook

Scout: _____

Date: _____



This workbook is designed to assist Scouts working on their Aleph Emblem. Information contained in the workbook is taken directly from a variety of websites. Each Scout is responsible for determining what is appropriate for their faith.

Aleph Emblem

Comments, Questions, Edits

Email: J. Levens at JDL13@comcast.net

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ALEPH APPLICATION FORM

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For Cub Scouts Grades 4 - 5

The National Jewish Committee on Scouting developed the Aleph emblem to help you, a Cub Scout or Webelos Scout who is Jewish, learn more about Judaism. Just as Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the activities you are about to start working on are among your first steps as a Scout that will lead you to understanding more about your religion.

What Does the Aleph Emblem Look Like and Where Do I Wear It?

The Aleph emblem is a medal worn over the left pocket of your Cub Scout uniform. It has a Torah and a Ner Tamid on it, to remind you that once you have earned it, others will depend upon you to teach them.

How Do I Start Working on It?

Follow these simple steps.

1. Along with your mom and dad, talk to your rabbi or religious school teacher about being your counselor.
2. Start working on the activities and keep a neat record of your work in a notebook.
3. As you finish each activity, discuss what you have done with your mom or dad or counselor.
4. When you have finished all the activities, have your mom or dad and counselor sign the page called "Certification". The notebook is for you to keep and use.

Activities for Earning the Aleph Emblem *(Initial on the left and indicate date completed)*

1. **THE TORAH**
 - A. Name the five books of the Torah.
 - B. Which of the Ten Commandments do you know best? Name five of the commandments.
 - C. In your notebook, tell what these five commandments mean.
 - D. In your notebook, try to copy one verse of the Torah as it is found in a Torah scroll, or write the meaning of the English verse in your own words.
2. **PRAYER**
 - A. Recite the "Shema" in Hebrew.
 - B. In your notebook, tell what the words of the "Shema" mean to you.
 - C. Learn the Hebrew blessings over bread, wine, and fruit.
3. **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**
 - A. Give the Hebrew names of six Jewish holidays observed during the year.
 - B. Describe how these six holidays are observed.
 - C. In your notebook, tell which of the Jewish holidays you like the most, and why.

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- D. On which holidays are the following objects used?
- Shofar
 - Spice box
 - Menorah
 - Cup of Elijah
 - Haggadah
 - Megillah
 - Lulav (palm branch)
- E. Draw or paint two of these objects or make them out of cardboard, wood, or metal.
4. **BIBLE HERO**
- A. Tell the story of two of these Bible heroes: Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Deborah, or Elijah.
- B. In your notebook, tell why you chose these two heroes.
5. **FAMOUS AMERICAN JEWS**
- A. In your notebook, write a brief report on two great American Jews. Here are a few examples: Asher Levy, Haym Salomon, Francis Salvador, Judah Touro, Uriah P. Levy, Emma Lazarus, Jacob H. Schiff, Louis D. Brandeis, Albert Einstein, Henrietta Szold, and Rebecca Gratz.
6. **THE SYNAGOGUE**
- A. Attend Sabbath services at least twice a month for three months and report on one Torah reading for each month.
- B. In your notebook, draw pictures of the Ark and the Ner Tamid in your synagogue and describe what they mean to the Jewish people.
7. **THE JEWISH HOME**
- A. Which object on the outside of a house or an apartment tells us that Jews live there?
- B. Draw this object or make it out of wood, plastic, cardboard, or metal.
8. **THE LAND OF ISRAEL**
- A. Read a book, magazine article, or news item about Israel and write a report on it in your notebook.
- B. Tell what you know about two cities or places in Israel. Examples are: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, the Negev, Haifa, the Kotel (Western Wall), Masada, Beersheba, and the Galilee.
- C. Draw the flag of Israel or make it out of construction paper or cloth, and write a paragraph describing its meaning to Jews the world over.

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THE TORAH

The five books of the Torah

Genesis (תּוֹשָׁאֲרַב, Bereshit: "In the beginning...")

Exodus (תּוֹמֵשׁ, Shemot: "Names")

Leviticus (אֲרִיקָיו, Vayyiqra: "And he called...")

Numbers (בַּמִּדְבָּר, Bamidbar: "In the desert...")

Deuteronomy (דֵּוֹרְבַד, Devarim: "Words", "Discourses", or "Things")

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.
2. You shall have no other G-ds but me.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your G-d in vain.
4. You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.
5. Honor your mother and father.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Torah Verse

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים

This is the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1, the very beginning of the Bible. It is pronounced **be-re-SHIYT ba-RA eh-lo-HIYM** and is usually translated "In the beginning G-d created...."

The first word (reading right-to-left) is **be-re-SHIYT**. It is from the Hebrew root resh-aleph-shin, meaning "head, start, beginning," with the preposition bet on the front, meaning "in, on, at." So this word could be translated "in beginning" or "at start" or "at the head." The Hebrew name for the Jewish holiday Rosh Hashanah is from this same root, and means "head of the year" or "beginning of the year" -- Ha is the definite article "the" and Shanah is "year."

The second word is **ba-RA**, meaning create, shape or fashion. It is from the Hebrew word bet-resh-aleph.

The third word is **eh-lo-HIYM**, one of several names for G-d in the Hebrew Bible.

So a word-for-word translation might be "in-beginning created G-d."

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PRAYER

Shema

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One.

Blessing Over Bread

Hold the bread and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha-olam

Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe

הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ (אָמֵן)

hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz. (Amen).

who brings forth bread from the earth. (Amen)

Blessing Over Wine

Raise the glass of wine and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam

Blessed are you, Lord, our G-d, sovereign of the universe

(if using wine or grape juice)

בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן (אָמֵן)

borei p'ri hagafen (Amen)

Who creates the fruit of the vine (Amen)

Blessing Over Fruit

Hold the fruit and say:

Ba-ruch a-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-o-lam,

bo-rei p'ri ha-eitz.

Blessed are You, *Lord* our G-d, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

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RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Holiday Names & Dates

Below is a list of all major holiday dates for the next five years. All holidays begin at sundown on the date before the date specified here.

	5768	5769	5770	5771	5772
Rosh Hashanah	9/13/2007	9/30/2008	9/19/2009	9/9/2010	9/29/2011
Yom Kippur	9/22/2007	10/9/2008	9/28/2009	9/18/2010	10/8/2011
Sukkot	9/27/2007	10/14/2008	10/3/2009	9/23/2010	10/13/2011
Shemini Atzeret	10/4/2007	10/21/2008	10/10/2009	9/30/2010	10/20/2011
Simchat Torah	10/5/2007	10/22/2008	10/11/2009	10/1/2010	10/21/2011
Chanukah	12/5/2007	12/22/2008	12/12/2009	12/2/2010	12/21/2011
Tu B'Shevat	1/22/2008	2/9/2009	1/30/2010	1/20/2011	2/8/2012
Purim	3/21/2008	3/10/2009	2/28/2010	3/20/2011	3/8/2012
Pesach (Passover)	4/20/2008	4/9/2009	3/30/2010	4/19/2011	4/7/2012
Lag B'Omer	5/23/2008	5/12/2009	5/2/2010	5/22/2011	5/10/2012
Shavu'ot	6/9/2008	5/29/2009	5/19/2010	6/8/2011	5/27/2012
Tisha B'Av	8/10/2008	7/30/2009	7/20/2010	8/9/2011	7/28/2012

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first and second days of Tishri. In Hebrew, Rosh Hashanah means, literally, "head of the year" or "first of the year." Rosh Hashanah is commonly known as the Jewish New Year.

The Jewish New Year is a time to begin introspection, looking back at the mistakes of the past year and planning the changes to make in the new year.

The name "Rosh Hashanah" is not used in the Bible to discuss this holiday. The Bible refers to the holiday as Yom Ha-Zikaron (the day of remembrance) or Yom Teruah (the day of the sounding of the shofar). The holiday is instituted in Leviticus 23:24-25.

No work is permitted on Rosh Hashanah. Much of the day is spent in synagogue, where the regular daily liturgy is somewhat expanded. In fact, there is a special prayerbook called the machzor used for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because of the extensive liturgical changes for these holidays.

One popular observance during this holiday is eating apples dipped in honey, a symbol of our wish for a sweet new year. Another popular practice of the holiday is Tashlikh ("casting off"). We walk to flowing water, such as a creek or river, on the afternoon of

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the first day and empty our pockets into the river, symbolically casting off our sins. Small pieces of bread are commonly put in the pocket to cast off. Tashlikh is normally observed on the afternoon of the first day, before afternoon services. When the first day occurs on Shabbat, many synagogues observe Tashlikh on Sunday afternoon, to avoid carrying (the bread) on Shabbat.

The common greeting at this time is L'shanah tovah ("for a good year"). This is a shortening of "L'shanah tovah tikatev v'taihatem", which means "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. Many Jews who do not observe any other Jewish custom will refrain from work, fast and/or attend synagogue services on this day. Yom Kippur occurs on the 10th day of Tishri. The holiday is instituted at Leviticus 23:26 et seq.

The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement," and that pretty much explains what the holiday is. It is a day set aside to "afflict the soul," to atone for the sins of the past year. On Yom Kippur, the judgment entered in these books is sealed. This day is, essentially, your last appeal, your last chance to change the judgment, to demonstrate your repentance and make amends.

Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and G-d, not for sins against another person. To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs you committed against them if possible. That must all be done before Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is a complete Sabbath; no work can be performed on that day. It is well-known that you are supposed to refrain from eating and drinking (even water) on Yom Kippur. It is a complete, 25-hour fast beginning before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur and ending after nightfall on the day of Yom Kippur.

Most of the holiday is spent in the synagogue, in prayer. In Orthodox synagogues, services begin early in the morning (8 or 9 AM) and continue until about 3 PM. People then usually go home for an afternoon nap and return around 5 or 6 PM for the afternoon and evening services, which continue until nightfall. The services end at nightfall, with the blowing of the tekiah gedolah, a long blast on the shofar.

Sukkot

The Festival of Sukkot begins on Tishri 15, the fifth day after Yom Kippur. It is quite a drastic transition, from one of the most solemn holidays in our year to one of the most joyous. Sukkot is so unreservedly joyful that it is commonly referred to in Jewish prayer and literature as Z'man Simchateinu זמן שמחתנו, the Season of our Rejoicing.

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Sukkot is the last of the Shalosh R'galim (three pilgrimage festivals). Like Passover and Shavu'ot, Sukkot has a dual significance: historical and agricultural. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Agriculturally, Sukkot is a harvest festival and is sometimes referred to as Chag Ha-Asif חג האסיף, the Festival of Ingathering.

The word "Sukkot" means "booths," and refers to the temporary dwellings that we are commanded to live in during this holiday in memory of the period of wandering. The Hebrew pronunciation of Sukkot is "Sue COAT," but is often pronounced as in Yiddish, to rhyme with "BOOK us."

Sukkot lasts for seven days. The two days following the festival, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, are separate holidays but are related to Sukkot and are commonly thought of as part of Sukkot.

The festival of Sukkot is instituted in Leviticus 23:33 et seq. No work is permitted on the first and second days of the holiday. Work is permitted on the remaining days. These intermediate days on which work is permitted are referred to as Chol Ha-Mo'ed, as are the intermediate days of Passover.

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

Tishri 22, the day after the seventh day of Sukkot, is the holiday Shemini Atzeret. In Israel, Shemini Atzeret is also the holiday of Simchat Torah. Outside of Israel, where extra days of holidays are held, only the second day of Shemini Atzeret is Simchat Torah: Shemini Atzeret is Tishri 22 and 23, while Simchat Torah is Tishri 23.

These two holidays are commonly thought of as part of Sukkot, but that is technically incorrect; Shemini Atzeret is a holiday in its own right and does not involve some of the special observances of Sukkot. We do not take up the lulav and etrog on these days, and our dwelling in the sukkah is more limited, and performed without reciting a blessing.

Shemini Atzeret literally means "the assembly of the eighth (day)." Rabbinic literature explains the holiday this way: our Creator is like a host, who invites us as visitors for a limited time, but when the time comes for us to leave, He has enjoyed himself so much that He asks us to stay another day. Another related explanation: Sukkot is a holiday intended for all of mankind, but when Sukkot is over, the Creator invites the Jewish people to stay for an extra day, for a more intimate celebration.

Simchat Torah means "Rejoicing in the Torah." This holiday marks the completion of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings. Each week in synagogue we publicly read a few chapters from the Torah, starting with Genesis Ch. 1 and working our way around to Deuteronomy 34. On Simchat Torah, we read the last Torah portion, then proceed immediately to the first chapter of Genesis, reminding us that the Torah is a circle, and never ends.

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This completion of the readings is a time of great celebration. There are processions around the synagogue carrying Torah scrolls and plenty of high-spirited singing and dancing in the synagogue with the Torahs. Drinking is also common during this time; in fact, a traditional source recommends performing the priestly blessing earlier than usual in the service, to make sure the kohanim are not drunk when the time comes! As many people as possible are given the honor of an aliyah (reciting a blessing over the Torah reading); in fact, even children are called for an aliyah blessing on Simchat Torah. In addition, as many people as possible are given the honor of carrying a Torah scroll in these processions. Children do not carry the scrolls (they are much too heavy!), but often follow the procession around the synagogue, sometimes carrying small toy Torahs (stuffed plush toys or paper scrolls).

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are holidays on which work is not permitted.

Chanukah

Chanukah, the Jewish festival of rededication, also known as the festival of lights, is an eight day festival beginning on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev.

The story of Chanukah begins in the reign of Alexander the Great. Alexander conquered Syria, Egypt and Palestine, but allowed the lands under his control to continue observing their own religions and retain a certain degree of autonomy. Under this relatively benevolent rule, many Jews assimilated much of Hellenistic culture, adopting the language, the customs and the dress of the Greeks, in much the same way that Jews in America today blend into the secular American society.

More than a century later, a successor of Alexander, Antiochus IV was in control of the region. He began to oppress the Jews severely, placing a Hellenistic priest in the Temple, massacring Jews, prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion, and desecrating the Temple by requiring the sacrifice of pigs (a non-kosher animal) on the altar. Two groups opposed Antiochus: a basically nationalistic group led by Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah Maccabee, and a religious traditionalist group known as the Chasidim, the forerunners of the Pharisees (no direct connection to the modern movement known as Chasidism). They joined forces in a revolt against both the assimilation of the Hellenistic Jews and oppression by the Seleucid Greek government. The revolution succeeded and the Temple was rededicated.

According to tradition as recorded in the Talmud, at the time of the rededication, there was very little oil left that had not been defiled by the Greeks. Oil was needed for the menorah (candelabrum) in the Temple, which was supposed to burn throughout the night every night. There was only enough oil to burn for one day, yet miraculously, it burned for eight days, the time needed to prepare a fresh supply of oil for the menorah. An eight day festival was declared to commemorate this miracle.

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Tu B'Shevat

Tu B'Shevat, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat, is a holiday also known as the New Year for Trees. The word "Tu" is not really a word; it is the number 15 in Hebrew, as if you were to call the Fourth of July "Iv July" (IV being 4 in Roman numerals).

Tu B'Shevat is the new year for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing. See Lev. 19:23-25, which states that fruit from trees may not be eaten during the first three years; the fourth year's fruit is for G-d, and after that, you can eat the fruit. Each tree is considered to have aged one year as of Tu B'Shevat, so if you planted a tree on Shevat 14, it begins its second year the next day, but if you plant a tree two days later, on Shevat 16, it does not reach its second year until the next Tu B'Shevat.

There are few customs or observances related to this holiday. One custom is to eat a new fruit on this day. Some people plant trees on this day. A lot of Jewish children collect money for trees for Israel at this time of year.

Purim

Purim is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. It commemorates a time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination.

The story of Purim is told in the Biblical book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his daughter. Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to become part of his harem. King Ahasuerus loved Esther more than his other women and made Esther queen, but the king did not know that Esther was a Jew, because Mordecai told her not to reveal her identity.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. In a speech that is all too familiar to Jews, Haman told the king, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from those of every other people's, and they do not observe the king's laws; therefore it is not befitting the king to tolerate them." Esther 3:8. The king gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman, to do as he pleased to them. Haman planned to exterminate all of the Jews.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare herself, then went into the king. He welcomed her. Later, she told him of Haman's plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

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The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the Bible that does not contain the name of G-d. In fact, it includes virtually no reference to G-d. Mordecai makes a vague reference to the fact that the Jews will be saved by someone else, if not by Esther, but that is the closest the book comes to mentioning G-d. Thus, one important message that can be gained from the story is that G-d often works in ways that are not apparent, in ways that appear to be chance, coincidence or ordinary good luck.

The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

The primary commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of Esther. The book of Esther is commonly known as the Megillah, which means scroll. Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as megillahs (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of The Megillah. It is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet and rattle gragers (noisemakers; see illustration) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to "blot out the name of Haman."

During the holiday, we are commanded to eat, drink and be merry. It is also customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies, and to hold beauty contests.

Passover

Pesach begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nissan. It is the first of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Shavu'ot and Sukkot). Agriculturally, it represents the beginning of the harvest season in Israel, but little attention is paid to this aspect of the holiday. The primary observances of Pesach are related to the Exodus from Egypt after generations of slavery. This story is told in Exodus, Ch. 1-15. Many of the Pesach observances are instituted in Chs. 12-15.

The name "Pesach" (PAY-sahch, with a "ch" as in the Scottish "loch") comes from the Hebrew root Pei-Samekh-Cheit פִּיחַ, meaning to pass through, to pass over, to exempt or to spare. It refers to the fact that G-d "passed over" the houses of the Jews when he was slaying the firstborn of Egypt. In English, the holiday is known as Passover. "Pesach" is also the name of the sacrificial offering (a lamb) that was made in the Temple on this holiday. The holiday is also referred to as Chag he-Aviv חַג הָאָבִיב, (the Spring Festival), Chag ha-Matzot חַג הַמַּצּוֹת, (the Festival of Matzahs), and Z'man Cheiruteinu זְמַן חֵירוּתֵנוּ, (the Time of Our Freedom) (again, all with those Scottish "ch"s).

Probably the most significant observance related to Pesach involves the removal of chametz (leaven; sounds like "hum it's" with that Scottish "ch") from our homes. This commemorates the fact that the Jews leaving Egypt were in a hurry, and did not have time to let their bread rise. It is also a symbolic way of removing the "puffiness" (arrogance, pride) from our souls.

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Chametz includes anything made from the five major grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt) that has not been completely cooked within 18 minutes after coming into contact with water. Orthodox Jews of Ashkenazic background also avoid rice, corn, peanuts, and legumes (beans) as if they were chametz.

The grain product we eat during Pesach is called matzah. Matzah is unleavened bread, made simply from flour and water and cooked very quickly. This is the bread that the Jews made for their flight from Egypt.

The day before Pesach is the Fast of the Firstborn, a minor fast for all firstborn males, commemorating the fact that the firstborn Jewish males in Egypt were not killed during the final plague.

On the first night of Pesach (first two nights for traditional Jews outside Israel), we have a special family meal filled with ritual to remind us of the significance of the holiday. This meal is called a seder סדר, from a Hebrew root word meaning "order," because there is a specific set of information that must be discussed in a specific order. It is the same root from which we derive the word "siddur" סידור, (prayer book). Pesach lasts for seven days (eight days outside of Israel). The first and last days of the holiday (first two and last two outside of Israel) are days on which no work is permitted.

Jewish Objects

Object	Match to Object
Shofar	Chanukah
Spice box	Passover
Menorah	Passover
Cup of Elijah	Purim
Haggadah	Shabbat
Megillah	Sukkoth
Lulav (palm branch)	Yom Kippur

BIBLE HEROS

Noah (ca. 2704-1755 BCE)

Noah was the son of Lamech and born ten generations after Adam. The Torah relates that "Noah was a righteous man in his generation" (Genesis 6:9) and thus spared the fate of all humanity at that time to the earth's destruction by water. Noah builds an ark at G-d's command, and takes his wife, sons Shem Ham and Japheth, and his son's daughters into the ark. The ark also saves a male and female of each animal. (Genesis 7) After 150 days of floating, the ark lands on Mount Ararat. When they enter on dry land, Noah and his family prepare sacrifices to G-d. G-d promises that he will never again destroy the earth through flood. He shows the family a sign of his eternal covenant: A rainbow.

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Abraham (c. 1813 BCE - c. 1638 BCE)

According to Jewish tradition, Abraham was born under the name Abram in the city of Ur in Babylonia in the year 1948 from Creation (circa 1800 BCE). He was the son of Terach, an idol merchant, but from his early childhood, he questioned the faith of his father and sought the truth. He came to believe that the entire universe was the work of a single Creator, and he began to teach this belief to others.

Abram tried to convince his father, Terach, of the folly of idol worship. One day, when Abram was left alone to mind the store, he took a hammer and smashed all of the idols except the largest one. He placed the hammer in the hand of the largest idol. When his father returned and asked what happened, Abram said, "The idols got into a fight, and the big one smashed all the other ones." His father said, "Don't be ridiculous. These idols have no life or power. They can't do anything." Abram replied, "Then why do you worship them?"

Eventually, the one true Creator that Abram had worshipped called to him, and made him an offer: if Abram would leave his home and his family, then G-d would make him a great nation and bless him. Abram accepted this offer, and the *b'rit* (covenant) between G-d and the Jewish people was established. (Gen. 12).

When Abram was 100 and Sarai 90, G-d promised Abram a son by Sarai. G-d changed Abram's name to Abraham (father of many), and Sarai's to Sarah (from "my princess" to "princess"). Sarah bore Abraham a son, Isaac (in Hebrew, Yitzchak), a name derived from the word "laughter," expressing Abraham's joy at having a son in his old age. (Gen 17-18). Isaac was the ancestor of the Jewish people.

Sarah (ca. 1540-1677 BCE)

The biblical matriarch Sarah was the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac. Information about Sarah comes from Genesis chapters 11-23.

Sarah's name was actually Sarai. When Abraham was 99 years old, G-d spoke to him and blessed him with children and land. He changed his name from Abram to Abraham and his wife's name from Sarai to Sarah. G-d also promised Abraham that Sarah would have a child, and that G-d would maintain his covenant with this child, Isaac.

Three days later, three men approached Abraham's tent. He invited them in and Sarah went to prepare food for them. She was listening from the opening of the tent, however, when one of the "men," who were really messengers from G-d, predicted that she would have a child. She laughed; after all, she was 90 years old and Abraham nearly 100! Yet G-d predicted that in one year, she would give birth. One year later, when Abraham was 100, Sarah's son, Isaac, was born.

Sarah died in Kiryat Arba (what is now Hebron) at the age of 127. Abraham bought the Cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite and buried Sarah there.

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Isaac (ca. 1713-1533 BCE)

Isaac was the subject of the tenth and most difficult test of Abraham's faith: G-d commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. (Gen 22). This test is known in Jewish tradition as the Akeidah (the Binding, a reference to the fact that Isaac was bound on the altar).

But this test is also an extraordinary demonstration of Isaac's own faith, because according to Jewish tradition, Isaac knew that he was to be sacrificed, yet he did not resist, and was united with his father in dedication. At the last moment, G-d sent an angel to stop the sacrifice.

Isaac later married Rebecca (Rivka), who bore him fraternal twin sons: Jacob (Ya'akov) and Esau. (Gen 25).

Rebecca

The biblical matriarch Rebecca was the wife of Isaac and the mother of Jacob. Rebecca's father was Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor. Information about Rebecca comes from Genesis chapters 24-28.

When Abraham wanted to find a wife for Isaac, he sent his servant to his hometown of Aram-Naharaim. The servant came to a spring and prayed to G-d. He proposed a sign — the first woman to give water to both him and his camels would be the one who would be right for Isaac. Immediately, Rebecca approached him and, when he asked for a drink, she ran to the spring and brought water for both him and his camels. The servant went with Rebecca to her house, where he received permission from her father and her brother, Laban, to take Rebecca to Canaan as a wife for Isaac. Isaac married Rebecca when he was 40 years old. According to Genesis, he was only comforted after his mother's death when he married Rebecca and took her into his mother's tent.

Rebecca became pregnant with twins. She had a difficult pregnancy and asked G-d about her children. He answered that her two sons would become two nations and the older would serve the younger. She gave birth and named the firstborn twin Esau and the second Jacob. Possibly because of the prophecy, Rebecca favored Jacob.

At one point, there was a famine in Canaan and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar to find food. Rebecca was beautiful and Isaac was scared to tell the people there she was his wife. Instead, he claimed she was his sister. After some time, Abimelech saw them together and confronted Isaac who admitted that he had been scared to tell anyone that Rebecca was his wife. Abimelech then proclaimed to the people that anyone who hurt Isaac or Rebecca would be put to death.

When Isaac was old, he instructed Esau to hunt and prepare a meal and then Isaac would bless him. Rebecca overheard this and told Jacob to pretend he was Esau in order to receive the blessing. Rebecca prepared a dish for Isaac, clothed Jacob in Esau's clothes

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and covered his hands and neck with skins so he would feel as hairy as his brother. The plan worked and Jacob received the blessing from Isaac. When Esau realized what happened, he planned to kill his brother. Rebecca found out and advised Jacob to run to her brother Laban's house in Haran until Esau got over his anger.

The bible does not write when Rebecca died, but only that she was buried in the Cave of Machpelah.

Jacob

Isaac's wife Rebecca (Rivka) gave birth to fraternal twin sons: Jacob (Ya'akov) and Esau. Esau was Isaac's favorite, because he was a good hunter, but the more spiritually-minded Jacob was Rebecca's favorite.

Esau had little regard for the spiritual heritage of his forefathers, and sold his birthright of spiritual leadership to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew. When Isaac was growing old, Rebecca tricked him into giving Jacob a blessing meant for Esau. Esau was angry about this, and about the birthright, so Jacob fled to live with his uncle, where he met his beloved Rachel. Jacob was deceived into marrying Rachel's older sister, Leah, but later married Rachel as well, and Rachel and Leah's maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah. Between these four women, Jacob fathered 12 sons and one daughter.

After many years living with and working for his uncle/father-in-law, Jacob returned to his homeland and sought reconciliation with his brother Esau. He prayed to G-d and gave his brother gifts. The night before he went to meet his brother, he sent his wives, sons, and things across the river, and was alone with G-d. That night, he wrestled with a man until the break of day. As the dawn broke, Jacob demanded a blessing from the man, and the "man" revealed himself as an angel. He blessed Jacob and gave him the name "Israel" (Yisrael), meaning "the one who wrestled with G-d" or "the Champion of G-d." The Jewish people are generally referred to as the Children of Israel, signifying our descent from Jacob. The next day, Jacob met Esau and was welcomed by him.

Jacob fathered 12 sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin. They are the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and the ones for whom the tribes are named. Joseph is the father of two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.

Joseph's older brothers were jealous of him, because he was the favorite of their father, and because he had visions that he would lead them all. They sold Joseph into slavery and convinced their father that Joseph was dead. Joseph was brought into Egypt, where his ability to interpret visions earned him a place in the Pharaoh's court, paving the way for his family's later settlement in Egypt.

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Rachel

The biblical matriarch Rachel was the wife of Jacob and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Information about Rachel is found in Genesis chapters 29-35.

Rachel was the second daughter of Laban, Rebecca's brother. Rachel lived in Haran and worked as a shepherdess. She is described as "shapely and beautiful" (Genesis 29:17).

Jacob ran to Haran to escape from his brother Esau. He reached a well and asked some shepherds there if they knew Laban. They answered that Laban's daughter Rachel was approaching at that moment. Jacob kissed Rachel and told her that he was Rebecca's son, and Rachel's relative. She invited him to her house, and he began to work for Laban. After a month, Laban asked Jacob what his wages were to be. By then, Jacob loved Rachel and answered that he would work seven years to marry Rachel. After Jacob fulfilled his commitment, Laban made a feast at which he was to give his daughter to Jacob, but instead of giving him Rachel, Laban gave Jacob his oldest daughter, Leah. Jacob confronted Laban, who agreed to give him Rachel one week later, provided Jacob would work for him an additional seven years. Jacob agreed, and married Rachel whom he loved more than Leah.

Leah quickly gave birth to four sons. Rachel became jealous of her sister. After Leah had seven children, Rachel finally conceived. She named her son Joseph, noting that G-d "has taken away (in Hebrew *asaph*) my disgrace" and praying that G-d would "add (*yoseph*) another son for me" (Genesis 30:23,24).

After Joseph was born, Jacob told Rachel and Leah that G-d had commanded him to return to his homeland of Canaan. They responded that he should do what G-d told him and they would follow. Jacob prepared to leave and, while Laban was out shearing sheep, Rachel stole Laban's idols without Jacob's knowledge. It is not written explicitly why she stole them. Some commentators say it was to prevent Laban from worshipping idols, while others say that the idols actually had some magical power and Rachel did not want them revealing to Laban the way that Jacob traveled. Jacob did not tell Laban that he was leaving. When, three days later, Laban discovered that Jacob was gone and chased after him, he blamed Jacob for stealing his idols. Laban searched the tents of Jacob and his wives, but Rachel hid the idols in a camel cushion and Laban could not find them. Laban left the next morning and Rachel continued to travel with Jacob.

The next time Rachel is mentioned is when Jacob met with his estranged brother Esau. Jacob formed a receiving line of his wives and children, putting Rachel and Joseph last, so they could escape if necessary.

They traveled to Beth-El and from there began a journey to Ephrath. Rachel was pregnant again and, on the way, suffered a hard labor and died in childbirth. In her last breath, she named her son Ben-oni ("son of my suffering") but Jacob called the child Benjamin ("son of the right hand" or "son of the south"). Jacob buried Rachel on the road where she died

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and set up a monument. Early descriptions of the tomb claim that it consisted of 11 stones placed by Jacob's sons and one bigger stone placed by Jacob himself.

According to Midrash, Jacob buried Rachel on the road so that the Jews would pass her grave as they traveled into exile and she would be able to pray for them. This is supported by the words of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote, at the start of the Babylonian exile, "A cry is heard in Ramah...Rachel weeping for her children" (Jeremiah 31:15).

Joseph (ca. 1562-1452 BCE)

The biblical Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob. He was born to Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, in Paddan-Aram after she had been barren for seven years. Joseph fathered two of the twelve tribes of Israel: Ephraim and Manasseh. Information about Joseph is found in Genesis chapters 37-50.

At the age of 17, Joseph was a shepherd alongside his brothers. Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons. Joseph would report his brothers' misdeeds to his father and Jacob gave Joseph a "coat of many colors." The other brothers were jealous of Joseph and hated him. Joseph only further provoked this hatred when he told his brothers about two of his dreams. In the first, sheaves of wheat belonging to his brothers bowed to his own sheaf. In the second, the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowed to him.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to check on his brothers. Joseph went to Shechem and, when his brothers were not there, followed them to Dothan. When the brothers saw him, they plotted to kill him and throw him into a pit. The oldest brother, Reuben, suggested that they merely throw Joseph into the pit, so Reuben could secretly save Joseph later. When Joseph approached, the brothers took his coat and threw him into the pit. They sat down to eat and saw a caravan of Ishmaelite traders from Gilead in the distance. Judah came up with the idea to sell Joseph into slavery. Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver. The brothers then dipped his coat into the blood of a slaughtered goat and brought it back to Jacob. Jacob recognized the coat and concluded that a beast had killed his son. He mourned for many days and was inconsolable.

Meanwhile, the traders took Joseph down to Egypt where Potiphar, an officer and head of the kitchen of Pharaoh, bought him. Joseph was successful there and Potiphar made Joseph his personal attendant, putting him in charge of the entire household.

Joseph argued with Potiphar's wife. As a result she slandered him first to her servants and then to her husband. Potiphar was furious and sent Joseph to a jail for the king's prisoners. In prison, the chief jailor liked Joseph and put him in charge of all the other prisoners, including Pharaoh's butler and baker. One night both the butler and the baker had strange dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams, saying that in three days time the butler would be recalled to his former position while the baker would be killed. Sure enough, three days later, Pharaoh restored the butler to his job and killed the baker. Joseph asked the butler to mention his name to Pharaoh in the hope that he would be freed, but the butler forgot about Joseph.

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Two years later, Pharaoh himself had two dreams that his magicians could not interpret. The butler then remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sent for the 30-year-old Joseph. He appeared before Pharaoh and told him in the name of G-d that the dreams forecasted seven years of plentiful crops followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh to make a wise man commissioner over the land with overseers to gather and store food from the seven years of abundance to save for the years of scarcity. Joseph's prediction and advice pleased Pharaoh and he made Joseph his second-in-command.

Joseph traveled throughout Egypt, gathering and storing enormous amounts of grain from each city. During these years, Joseph had two sons. The first Joseph named Manasseh, meaning, "G-d has made me forget (*nashani*) completely my hardship and my parental home" ([Genesis 41:51](#)). He named the second son Ephraim, meaning, "G-d has made me fertile (*hiprani*) in the land of my affliction" ([Genesis 41:52](#)). After seven years, a famine spread throughout the world, and Egypt was the only country that had food. Joseph was in charge of rationing grain to the Egyptians and to all who came to Egypt.

Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come to visit him, and told them to bring their households to Egypt where he would give them the best of the land. Joseph gave each of them a wagon, provisions for the trip and a change of clothing. He gave Benjamin 300 pieces of silver and several changes of clothing. He also sent a large present back for his father.

Joseph lived 110 years. He saw great-grandchildren from both his sons. Before he died, he told his brothers that G-d would one day bring them up from Egypt into the land that G-d promised their fathers.

Moses

Moses was the greatest prophet, leader and teacher that Judaism has ever known. In fact, one of [Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith](#) is the belief that Moses' prophecies are true, and that he was the greatest of the prophets. He is called "Moshe Rabbeinu," that is, Moses, Our Teacher/[Rabbi](#). Interestingly, the numerical value of "Moshe Rabbeinu" is 613: the number of mitzvot that Moses taught the Children of Israel! He is described as the only person who ever knew G-d face-to-face (Deut. 34:10) and mouth-to-mouth (Num. 12:8), which means that G-d spoke to Moses directly, in plain language, not through visions and dreams, as G-d communicated with other prophets.

Moses was born on 7 Adar in the year 2368 from Creation (circa 1400 BCE), the son of Amram, a member of the tribe of Levi, and Yocheved, Levi's daughter (Ex. 6:16-20).

The name "Moses" comes from a root meaning "take out," because Moses was taken out of the river (Ex. 2:10).

Moses was born in a very difficult time: Pharaoh had ordered that all male children born to the Hebrew slaves should be drowned in the river (Ex. 1:22). Yocheved hid Moses for

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three months, and when she could no longer hide him, she put him in a little ark and placed it on the river where Pharaoh's daughter bathed (Ex. 2:2-3). Pharaoh's daughter found the child and had compassion on him (Ex. 2:6). At the suggestion of Moses' sister Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter hired Yocheved to nurse Moses until he was weaned (Ex. 2:7-10). Yocheved instilled in Moses a knowledge of his heritage and a love of his people that could not be erased by the 40 years he spent in the anti-Semitic court of Pharaoh.

Little is known about Moses' youth. One traditional story tells that when he was a child, sitting on Pharaoh's knee, Moses took the crown off of Pharaoh's head and put it on. The court magicians took this as a bad sign and demanded that he be tested: they put a brazier full of gold and a brazier full of hot coals before him to see which he would take. If Moses took the gold, he would have to be killed. An angel guided Moses' hand to the coal, and he put it into his mouth, leaving him with a life-long speech impediment (Ex. 4:10).

Although Moses was raised by Egyptians, his compassion for his people was so great that he could not bear to see them beaten by Pharaoh's taskmasters. One day, when Moses was about 40 years old, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave, and he was so outraged that he struck and killed the Egyptian (Ex. 2:11-12). But when both his fellow Hebrews and the Pharaoh condemned him for this action, Moses was forced to flee from Egypt (Ex. 2:14-15).

He fled to Midian, where he met and married Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest (Ex. 2:16-21). They had a son, Gershom (Ex. 2:22). Moses spent 40 years in Midian tending his father-in-law's sheep. A midrash tells that Moses was chosen to lead the Children of Israel because of his kindness to animals. When he was bringing the sheep to a river for water, one lamb did not come. Moses went to the little lamb and carried it to the water so it could drink. Like G-d, Moses cared about each individual in the group, and not just about the group as a whole. This showed that he was a worthy shepherd for G-d's flock.

G-d appeared to Moses and chose him to lead the people out of Egyptian slavery and to the Promised Land (Ex. Chs. 3-4). With the help of his brother Aaron, Moses spoke to Pharaoh and triggered the plagues against Egypt (Ex. Chs. 4-12). He then led the people out of Egypt and across the sea to freedom, and brought them to Mount Sinai, where G-d gave the people the Torah and the people accepted it (Ex. Chs. 12-24).

G-d revealed the entire Torah to Moses. The entire Torah includes the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) that Moses himself wrote as G-d instructed him. It also includes all of the remaining prophecies and history that would later be written down in the remaining books of scripture, and the entire Oral Torah, the oral tradition for interpreting the Torah, that would later be written down in the Talmud. Moses spent the rest of his life writing the first five books, essentially taking dictation from G-d.

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After Moses received instruction from G-d about the Law and how to interpret it, he came back down to the people and started hearing cases and judging them for the people, but this quickly became too much for one man. Upon the advice of his father-in-law, Yitro, Moses instituted a judicial system (Ex. 18:13-26).

Moses was not perfect. Like any man, he had his flaws and his moments of weakness, and the Bible faithfully records these shortcomings. In fact, Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land because of a transgression (Deut. 32:48-52). Moses was told to speak to a rock to get water from it, but instead he struck the rock repeatedly with a rod, showing improper anger and a lack of faith (Num. 20:7-13).

Moses died in the year 2488, just before the people crossed over into the Promised Land (Deut. 32:51). He completed writing the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) before he died.

Moses was 120 years old at the time that he died (Deut. 34:7). That lifespan is considered to be ideal, and has become proverbial: one way to wish a person well in Jewish tradition is to say, "May you live to be 120!"

Deborah

Deborah is perhaps the Bible's greatest woman figure. Deborah stands exclusively on her own merits. The only thing we know about her personal life is the name of her husband, Lapidot. "She led Israel at that time," is how the Bible records it. "She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah ... and the Israelites would come to her for judgment" (4:4).

During Deborah's time, a century or so after the Israelite entry into Canaan, the valley in which she and her tribe lived was controlled by King Jabin of Hazor. Deborah summoned the warrior Barak and instructed him in G-d's name to take ten thousand troops and confront Jabin's general, Sisera, and his army's nine hundred iron chariots, on Mount Tabor.

The battle takes place during the rainy season, and Sisera's chariots quickly bog down in the mud. The Israelites overwhelm Hazor's army, and inflict heavy casualties.

The famed "Song of Deborah", exults in the breaking of the Canaanite stranglehold over much of the country: "So may all Your enemies perish, O Lord," is Deborah's parting shot, though the true Jewish victory went even deeper than the destruction of Sisera and his chariots. According to the Talmud, Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest figures in Jewish history, was a direct descendant of Sisera. That a descendant of this great enemy of the Jews became a great Jewish rabbi and scholar represented the Jews' ultimate victory over their ancient Canaanite opponent.

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Elijah

Each Passover, a special cup of wine is filled and put on the seder table. During the Seder, the door of the house is opened and everyone stands to allow Elijah the Prophet (*Eliyahu ha-Navi*) to enter and drink. At every *brisis*, a chair is also set aside for Elijah. At the conclusion of Shabbat, Jews sing about Elijah, hoping he will come "speedily, in our days...along with the Messiah, son of David, to redeem us."

Elijah is a heroic figure in Jewish tradition. It is he who stands up to King Ahab, whose Phoenician wife has introduced the worship of the idol Baal into the Jewish Kingdom.

Elijah curses Ahab, "As the Lord lives, the G-d of Israel who I serve, there will be no dew or rain except at my bidding" (I Kings 17:1). Afterward, G-d tells the prophet to hide from the King in a brook known as Wadi Cherith. Meanwhile, as Elijah warned, the country suffers a serious drought.

After trying to track Elijah down for three years, Ahab's top aide, Obadiah, finds the prophet. Knowing that Elijah's curse had been fulfilled, Obadiah is hesitant to turn him in, but he is also afraid of what the King would do if he does not. Elijah makes the decision easy by promising to go before Ahab that day. He agrees not out of fear of the King, but because G-d has commanded him, "Go, appear before Ahab, then will I send rain upon the earth" (18:1).

When Elijah meets Ahab he challenges the 450 priests of Baal imported by Jezebel to a contest at Mt. Carmel to prove whose G-d is the true G-d. The priests and Elijah slaughter a bull as a sacrifice and call on G-d to consume it. The priests try a variety of prayers, dances and even self-mutilation, but nothing happens. Elijah then calls on G-d to prove his power and a great fire comes from the sky and burns the bull. The Israelites who witness the act declare, "The Lord, He [alone] is G-d" (*Adonai, hu ha-Elohim*, [I Kings 18:39]), a commitment to monotheism recited today seven times at the end of the Yom Kippur service each year. Elijah then tells the people to kill the priests, and they obey.

Despite his "victory," Elijah sees no change in the kingdom and has to flee to the desert to escape the wrath of Jezebel. G-d then comes to Elijah again and reassures him that he is not alone, that others have resisted the temptation to worship idols. Elijah is told to go to the mountain of Horeb where he witnesses a series of examples of G-d's power -- an earthquake, powerful wind and fire -- before being instructed to return to the city (19:12).

Given his career as a prophet, it should not be surprising that it should end in a miraculous way. When Elijah returned from his sojourn in the desert he ran across a young man plowing a field named Elisha. He took Elisha under his wing to be his successor.

One day Elisha becomes aware that Elijah's time on earth is nearly over. They are walking together and, when they reach the Jordan River, Elijah strikes the water with his

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cloak and the river parts to allow them to cross. Later, the prophet asks Elisha what he can do for him before he goes and Elisha asks for "a double portion of your spirit."

Elijah replies that it is a difficult request, but "If you see me as I am being taken from you, this will be granted to you; if not, it will not" (2:9-10). Then a fiery chariot, drawn by fiery horses, comes out of the sky and takes Elijah away to the heavens. Elisha picks up the cloak Elijah dropped and strikes it against the river, causing the waters again to separate. Seeing this, Elijah's followers proclaim, "Elijah's spirit now rests on Elisha" (2:15).

Aaron

Aaron was Moses' older brother. He was born in 2365, three years before Moses, before the Pharaoh's edict requiring the death of male Hebrew children. He was the ancestor of all koheins, the founder of the priesthood, and the first Kohein Gadol (High Priest). Aaron and his descendants tended the altar and offered sacrifices. Aaron's role, unlike Moses', was inherited; his sons continued the priesthood after him (Num. 20:26).

Aaron served as Moses' spokesman. As discussed above, Moses was not eloquent and had a speech impediment, so Aaron spoke for him (Ex. 4:10-16). Contrary to popular belief, it was Aaron, not Moses, who cast down the staff that became a snake before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:10-12). It was Aaron, not Moses, who held out his staff to trigger the first three plagues against Egypt (Ex. 7:19-20; Ex. 8:1-2 or 8:5-6; Ex. 8:12-13 or 8:16-17). According to Jewish tradition, it was also Aaron who performed the signs for the elders before they went to Pharaoh (Ex. 4:30).

Aaron's most notable personal quality is that he was a peacemaker. His love of peace is proverbial; Rabbi Hillel said, "Be disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them near the Torah." According to tradition, when Aaron heard that two people were arguing, he would go to each of them and tell them how much the other regretted his actions, until the two people agreed to face each other as friends.

In fact, Aaron loved peace so much that he participated in the incident of the Golden Calf (Ex. 32), constructing the idol in order to prevent dissension among the people. Aaron intended to buy time until Moses returned from Mount Sinai (he was late, and the people were worried), to discourage the people by asking them to give up their precious jewelry in order to make the idol, and to teach them the error of their ways in time (Ex. 32:22).

Aaron, like Moses, died in the desert shortly before the people entered the Promised Land (Num. 20).

Miriam

Miriam was Aaron and Moses' older sister. According to some sources, she was seven years older than Moses, but other sources seem to indicate that she was older than that.

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Some sources indicate that Miriam was Puah, one of the midwives who rescued Hebrew babies from Pharaoh's edict against them (Ex. 1:15-19).

Miriam was a prophetess in her own right (Ex. 15:20), the first woman described that way in scripture (although Sarah is also considered to be a prophetess, that word is not applied to her in scripture). According to tradition, she prophesied before Moses' birth that her parents would give birth to the person who would bring about their people's redemption.

Miriam waited among the bulrushes while Moses' ark was in the river, watching over him to make sure he was all right (Ex. 2:4). When the Pharaoh's daughter drew Moses out of the water, Miriam arranged for their mother, Yocheved, to nurse Moses and raise him until he was weaned (Ex. 2:7-9).

Miriam led the women of Israel in a song and dance of celebration after the Pharaoh's men were drowned in the sea (Ex. 15:20-21). She is said to be the ancestress of other creative geniuses in Israel's history: Bezalel, the architect of the mishkan (the portable sanctuary used in the desert) (Ex. 31:1-3) and King David.

According to tradition, because of Miriam's righteousness, a well followed the people through the desert throughout their wanderings, and that well remained with them until the day of Miriam's death.

Like her brothers, Miriam was not perfect. She led her brother Aaron to speak against Moses over a matter involving a Cushite woman he had married (Zipporah, or possibly a second wife) (Num. 12:1). They also objected to his leadership, noting that he had no monopoly on Divine Communication (Num 12:2). For this, Miriam was punished with tzaaras (an affliction generally translated as leprosy) (Num. 12:10). However, Aaron pled on her behalf, and she was cured (Num. 12:11).

Like her brothers, Miriam died in the desert before the people reached the Promised Land (Num. 20:1).

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FAMOUS AMERICAN JEWS

Haym Salomon (1740-1785)

In the early 1770s, at the time of the partition of Poland, Haym Salomon left his family and arrived in New York on the eve of the Revolution. His command of German made him welcome to the Hessian forces, which he served as a supplier of goods. When the British suspected him of spying, Salomon was arrested and confined to prison for a time.

Salomon's command of several languages enabled him to serve as a broker to the French officials in Philadelphia. In the diary of Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance for the new American government, Salomon's name appears frequently in the period 1781-84. Morris wrote: "This broker has been useful to the public interests ..." Salomon prospered and was able to be financially helpful to a number of public figures, such as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. In 1782, Madison acknowledged the "kindness of our little friend in Front Street, whose assistance will preserve me from extremities but I never resort to it without great mortification as he obstinately rejects all recompense."

When Haym Salomon died prematurely in January 1785, he held \$353,000, largely in depreciated certificates of indebtedness and continental currency ... all virtually worthless. The Pennsylvania Packet wrote "He was remarkable for his skill and integrity in his profession and for his generous and humane deportment."

Francis Salvador (1747-1776)

When we think of Jewish heroes of the American Revolution, Haym Salomon, the "financier" of the patriot cause or Isaac Franks, aide-de-camp to General George Washington, are the first names that come to mind. Rarely do we hear of South Carolina's Francis Salvador, the first identified Jew to be elected to an American colonial legislature, the only Jew to serve in a revolutionary colonial congress and the first Jew to die for the cause of American liberty.

Francis Salvador was born in London in 1747, the fourth generation of Salvadors to live in England. His great grandfather Joseph, a merchant, established himself as a leader of England's Sephardic community and became the first Jewish director of the East India Company. When George III ascended the British throne, Joseph Salvador arranged an audience for the seven-man delegation that officially congratulated the king on behalf of the Jewish community.

Even before Francis Salvador's birth, his family developed interests in America. Salvador's grandfather teamed with two other leaders of the London Jewish community to raise funds to send some of London's destitute Jews to the new British colony in Savannah, Georgia. The Georgia trustees subsequently voted to ban Jewish immigration to Georgia but not before grandfather Salvador and his two associates had landed forty-two Jewish settlers in Savannah in July, 1733. When the founder of the colony, James

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Oglethorpe, intervened on behalf of the Jews, the trustees decided to let them stay. The Salvador family then purchased personal land holdings in South Carolina.

As a young man, Francis Salvador was raised in luxury in London. He was well educated by private tutors and traveled extensively. At age twenty, he married his first cousin, Sarah, and took his place in the family shipping firm. The devastating effects of a 1755 earthquake in Lisbon, where the family had extensive interests, weakened the family fortune. The failure of the East India Company completed its ruin. By the early 1770's, virtually the only thing left of the Salvador family's immense wealth was the large plot of land they had purchased in the South Carolina colony.

In 1773, in an attempt to rebuild the family fortune, Francis Salvador moved to South Carolina. Intending to send for his wife Sarah and their children when he had prepared a proper home for them, Salvador arrived in Charleston in December and established himself as a planter on a seven thousand acre tract he acquired from his uncle. Salvador found himself drawn to the growing American movement against British rule and unhesitatingly threw himself into the patriot cause. Within a year of his arrival, at the age of 27, Salvador was elected to the General Assembly of South Carolina. He became the first Jew to hold that high an elective office in the English colonies. He would hold the post until his sudden death.

In 1774, Francis Salvador was elected as a delegate to South Carolina's revolutionary Provincial Congress, which assembled in Charleston in January 1775. The Provincial Congress framed a bill of rights and prepared an address to the royal governor of South Carolina setting forth the colonists' grievances against the British crown. Salvador played an important role in the South Carolina Provincial Congress, which appointed him to a commission to negotiate with Tories living in the northern and western parts of the colony to secure their promise not to actively aid the royal government.

When the second Provincial Congress assembled in November 1775, Salvador urged that body to instruct the South Carolina delegation in Philadelphia to vote for American independence. Salvador played a leading role in the Provincial Congress, chairing its ways and means committee and serving on a select committee authorized to issue bills of credit to pay the militia. Salvador was also part of a special commission established to preserve the peace in the interior parts of South Carolina, where the English Superintendent of Indian Affairs was busily negotiating treaties with the Cherokees to induce the tribe to attack the colonists.

When the Cherokees attacked settlements along the frontier on July 1, 1776, massacring and scalping colonial inhabitants, Salvador, in an act reminiscent of Paul Revere, mounted his horse and galloped nearly thirty miles to give the alarm. He then returned to join the militia in the front lines, defending the settlements under siege. During a Cherokee attack early in the morning of August first, Salvador was shot. He fell into some bushes, where he was subsequently discovered and scalped. Salvador died forty-five minutes later. Major Andrew Williamson, the militia commander, reported of Salvador that, "When I came up to him after dislodging the enemy and speaking to him,

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he asked whether I had beaten the enemy. I told him ‘Yes.’ He said he was glad of it and shook me by the hand and bade me farewell, and said he would die in a few minutes."

His friend Henry Laurens reported that Salvador's death was "universally regretted," while William Henry Drayton, later Chief Justice of South Carolina, noted that Salvador had "sacrificed his life in the service of his adopted country." Dead at twenty-nine, never again seeing his wife or children after leaving England, Salvador was the first Jew to die waging the American Revolution. Ironically, because he was fighting on the frontier, he probably did not receive the news that the Continental Congress in Philadelphia had, as he urged, adopted the Declaration of Independence.

Judah Touro (1775-1854)

According to Judah Touro's tombstone, he is inscribed in "the Book of Philanthropy, to be remembered forever." No epitaph could be more deserving. Touro's name is indelibly associated with American Jewish philanthropy, a community trait of which American Jews can be proud.

Touro grew up in Newport, Rhode Island, the second son of Isaac Touro, who was *chazzan* of Yesuat Israel, Newport's Sephardic synagogue. The Revolutionary War destroyed Newport's prosperity, and Judah's childhood was marked by poverty. A Tory, Judah's father remained with his family in Newport after the British captured the city. The Touro family became dependent on the charity of British troops, who ultimately helped the Touro family relocate to Jamaica, West Indies, where Isaac died in 1783. His mother took Judah and his siblings to Boston to live with her brother, Moses Michael Hays.

When Judah's mother died in 1787, Hays raised the Touro children. He taught Judah and his brother Abraham to observe Jewish traditions and apprenticed them in his international commercial ventures. In 1801, Judah unexpectedly left for New Orleans. No one is certain why he left in such haste, but the gossip of the time had it that his uncle refused to allow him to marry his first cousin, Catherine Hays. In any case, Touro never married.

When the U.S. acquired New Orleans in 1803, its economy boomed, and Judah established himself as a merchant, shipper and leader in local social life. During the war with England in 1812, Touro fought as a volunteer under the command of General Andrew Jackson. In the great battle of Jan. 1, 1815, Touro was severely wounded and near death, but over the next year a close friend nursed Touro back to health. The wound appeared to have had psychological as well as physical effects: The previously social Touro withdrew almost entirely from civic life and devoted himself to his businesses.

Despite his success, Judah always remembered his youthful poverty and lived modestly. He invested in real estate but never mortgaged his properties to finance other ventures. Touro was reported to have said, "I have saved a fortune by strict economy, while others had spent one by their liberal expenditures."

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In his 50s and 60s, most of Judah's charity was directed to non-Jewish causes. Most significantly, he donated the final \$10,000 needed to complete the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston, which for nearly 20 years had languished as an unfinished stump for want of funding. He made a major gift to the public library in his native Newport, and in New Orleans he contributed to a number of Protestant churches and to the building of the Catholic cathedral.

In his early 70s, his life was significantly influenced by his acquaintance with two outstanding Jewish leaders. Touro developed a friendship with Gershom Kursheedt of New Orleans and conducted a correspondence with Rabbi Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia. These men convinced Touro of the importance of being Jewish in more than words. Touro helped found congregation Nefuzoth Yehuda in New Orleans, which followed the Sephardic rituals of his youth. He subsequently built its synagogue and began to attend services regularly, provided the land and funds for its religious school, bought land for its cemetery and annually made up for any deficits incurred. He also founded the city's Jewish hospital, the Touro Infirmary.

In the last year of his life, Touro wrote a will which set the standard of American Jewish philanthropy. After modest bequests to family members and friends, Touro donated the bulk of his fortune to strengthen Jewish life. He left \$100,000 to the two leading Jewish congregations and Jewish benevolent organizations in New Orleans. Another \$150,000 went to Jewish congregations and charitable institutions in 18 other cities around the United States. He directed that \$60,000 be dispensed to relieve poverty and provide freedom of worship to Jews in Palestine. He also left bequests to non-Jewish institutions such as Massachusetts General Hospital, which his brother had helped found.

At his request, Touro was buried with his family in Newport. One of his legacies made it possible to reopen and restore the long-abandoned Newport synagogue where his father had served as *chazzan* and which now bears the family name. The Jewish Encyclopedia observes that, in his day, "No American Jew had ever given so much to so many agencies and causes; nor had any non-Jew done so much in such varied ways."

Uriah Phillips Levy (1792-1862)

Born into a large, Jewish family from Philadelphia, Uriah Levy ran away at age ten to serve as a cabin boy on a trading ship. As promised, Levy returned to Philadelphia for his Bar Mitzvah. However, by age fourteen, Levy had returned to the sea. By the time war broke out between the United States and Great Britain in 1812, Levy was an experienced sailor. Levy reported for duty as a sailing master aboard the *U.S.S. Argus* in June 1813. In August, the ship Levy was sailing on was captured and the crew was sent to Dartmoor Prison in England. Levy remained a prisoner at Dartmoor for sixteen months.

After witnessing flogging in the Navy firsthand, Levy joined those who opposed corporal punishment and in 1838, while commanding the *U.S.S. Vandalia*, developed his own system of discipline, substituting mild reforms for corporal punishment. Because of his refusal to inflict corporal punishment on a young seaman, he was court-martialed and

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dismissed from the service, however President Tyler overturned the decision. In 1857, the Navy dismissed forty-nine officers, including Levy. Levy fought the decision through a Court of Inquiry and was reinstated. After his reinstatement, he rose to command the Mediterranean fleet and received the honorary rank of Commodore.

Levy, an ardent admirer of Thomas Jefferson, purchased Monticello, the late President's estate in 1836 and publicly announced that he intended to restore the property to its original condition and open it for visitation. The house and grounds remained in the Levy family until the estate was sold to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation in 1923.

Commodore Levy died on March 22, 1862. However, he left behind many legacies. A statue of Thomas Jefferson commissioned by Levy, stands today in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. In 1959, the Navy's oldest Jewish Chapel located in Norfolk, Virginia, was renamed the Commodore Levy Chapel in honor of Levy's dedication to his religion and his country.

Emma Lazarus (1849-1887)

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," proclaims the "Mother of Exiles" in Emma Lazarus's sonnet "The New Colossus." Her best-known contribution to mainstream American literature and culture, the poem has contributed to the belief that America means opportunity and freedom for Jews, as well as for other "huddled masses." Through this celebration of the "other," Lazarus conveyed her deepest loyalty to the best of both America and Judaism.

Born on July 22, 1849, Lazarus was the fourth of Esther (Nathan) and Moses Lazarus's seven children. She grew up in New York and Newport, Rhode Island, and was educated by private tutors with whom she studied mythology, music, American poetry, European literature, German, French, and Italian. Her father, who was a successful sugar merchant, supported her writing financially as well as emotionally. In 1866, when Emma was only seventeen, Moses had *Poems and Translations: Written Between the Ages of Fourteen and Sixteen* printed "for private circulation." Daughter Emma dedicated the volume "To My Father."

Lazarus's most productive period was the early 1880s. In addition to numerous magazine poems, essays, and letters, she published a highly respected volume of translations, *Poems and Ballads of Heinrich Heine*, in 1881, and *Songs of a Semite: The Dance to Death and Other Poems*, in 1882. This was also the period in which Lazarus most obviously spoke out as self-identified Jew and American writer simultaneously.

Until this period, Lazarus's "interest and sympathies were loyal to [her] race," but, as she explained in 1877, "my religious convictions ... and the circumstances of my life have led me somewhat apart from my people." Although her family did belong to the Sephardic Shearith Israel synagogue in New York, and she did write "In the Jewish Synagogue in Newport" when she was young, it appears that learning of the Russian pogroms in the early 1880s kindled Lazarus's commitment to Judaism. This change in attitude is evident

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in her writing, as well as in her work with the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society-meeting Eastern European immigrants on Wards Island-and in her efforts to help establish the Hebrew Technical Institute and agricultural communities for Eastern European Jews in the United States.

At the same time that Lazarus was writing more self-consciously as a Jew, she was also writing as an American. Her 1881 essay "American Literature" (*Critic*) defended American literature against the charge that America had no literary tradition and that America's poets had left no mark. "American Literature" was followed by "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow" (*American Hebrew*) and the eulogy "Emerson's Personality," both published in 1882. The latter appeared in the *Century*, three months after "Was the Earl of Beaconsfield a Representative Jew?" and two months after "Russian Christianity vs. Modern Judaism." Lazarus also published the poem "To R.W.E." in 1884 (*Critic*).

Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus" in 1883 "for the occasion" of an auction to raise money for the Statue of Liberty's pedestal. The poem was singled out and printed in the *Catalogue of the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition at the National Academy of Design* because event organizers hoped it would "awaken to new enthusiasm" those working on behalf of the pedestal.

Lazarus traveled to Europe twice, the first time in 1883. Lazarus's second trip to Europe was a longer one, lasting from May 1885 until September 1887. According to her sister Josephine Lazarus's biographical sketch, Emma "decided to go abroad again as the best means of regaining composure and strength" after Moses Lazarus died in March 1885. This journey included visits to England, France, Holland, and Italy. Lazarus returned to New York very ill, probably with cancer. She died two months later, on November 19, 1887.

Lazarus dedicated her life to her work. Yet she still had to contend with American and Jewish middle-class prescriptions for womanly behavior. These gender expectations included limitations on a woman artist's expression. In "Echoes" (probably written in 1880) Lazarus spoke self-consciously about women as poets, describing the boundaries drawn around a woman poet who cannot share with men the common literary subjects of the "dangers, wounds, and triumphs" of war and must therefore transform her own "elf music" and "echoes" into song. Successful at that act of transformation, Lazarus found some space in the American literary world.

More than any other Jewish woman of the nineteenth century, Lazarus identified herself and was recognized by readers and critics as an American writer. She was also an increasingly outspoken Jew, and she was a woman. Lazarus's writing benefited from the complexities of her identity. She would not have been as effective on behalf of Jews if she had not believed deeply in America's freedoms, and she could not have been as passionate a writer if she had not uncovered her own meaningful response to Judaism.

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Jacob Henry Schiff (1847-1920)

Jacob Henry Schiff was an important participant in actively accelerating the rapid industrialization of the United States economy during the late 19th and early 20th century. Through his firm, Kuhn, Loeb and Company, he was able to help finance the development and growth of such corporations as Westinghouse Electric, U.S. Rubber, Armour, and American Telephone and Telegraph.

He also served as a director and advisor of numerous insurance companies, banks and other corporations. Schiff was a prime mover in helping to consolidate and expand the American railroad networks,

Schiff was prominent in floating loans for the U.S. government and for foreign nations. He took great delight in floating a spectacular bond issue of 200 million dollars for Japan to help them in their war with Czarist Russia, 1904-1905. Schiff was angered and infuriated with the anti-Semitic pogroms and policies of the czar. Helping Japan fight Russia was one of his methods of striking back at anti-Semitism.

Jacob Henry Schiff was born on January 10, 1847, in Frankfurt- am-Main, Germany. The son of Moses and Clara (Niederhofheim) Schiff, he was a descendant of a distinguished rabbinical family that could trace its lineage back to 1370. He received a secular and religious education at the Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft (a local school).

At age 18, Schiff emigrated to the United States and became a citizen. He went to work in a brokerage firm in New York and he later became a partner in Budae, Schiff and Company. He met and fell in love with Theresa Loeb, the daughter of Solomon Loeb, head of the banking firm, Kuhn, Loeb and Company. They were married on May 6, 1875, and he entered her father's firm.

In 1885, he was named head of the firm because of his financial abilities. Schiff was a strong advocate for the gold standard and he opposed the Silver Purchase Act of 1890. Despite his success in the financial world, he always felt he had a special obligation to the Jewish People. He fulfilled this commitment through his philanthropies.

Schiff was a Reform Jew, but he still retained many of the Orthodox habits of his youth. He was especially active in the establishment and development of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Hebrew Union College. He was a large contributor to the relief programs for the Jewish victims of the Russian Czar's anti-Semitic programs.

There was hardly a Jewish organization which was not the recipient of his contributions. His interest and love for Jewish literature found him contributing generously to the Jewish Publication Society. He funded a program for a new English translation of the Bible. He helped to establish the Jewish Division in the New York Public Library.

Schiff was always concerned about humanity and sickness. He contributed heavily to Montefiore Hospital in New York where he served as president for 35 years. During

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those years, he visited the hospital weekly. He contributed generously to many Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, including the Semitic Museum at Harvard University; he gave one million dollars to Barnard College; contributed to the American Red Cross, Tuskegee Institute, the Henry Street Settlement, etc.

He was one of the founders of the American Jewish Committee and was active in the Jewish Welfare Board.

Jacob Henry Schiff died on September 25, 1920, in his beloved New York City.

Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941)

Louis Brandeis was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1856 to a family tolerant of Jewish and Christian rituals. In later life Brandeis might be best described as a secular humanist. Although he completed his secondary education in Germany, he returned to the United States where he studied law at Harvard. After settling in Boston, Brandeis became a successful lawyer spending a good deal of his time pursuing cases with a political bent. In particular, he enjoyed representing small companies against giant corporations, and aiding the cause of the minimum wage against companies opposed to this principle. In 1912, he supported Woodrow Wilson's nomination for Presidency and in 1916, was appointed a Supreme Court judge, the first Jew ever to be appointed to this position.

Brandeis showed little interest in Jewish affairs until the turn of the century when a combination of his professional work and a changing political climate brought about an alteration. He was introduced to Zionism by Jacob de Haas, an English Zionist, and later still by Aaron Aaronsohn, the Palestinian botanist and founder of Nili.

Brandeis became active in Zionist affairs during the First World War, when he accepted the role of Chairperson of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs. Brandeis had a major impact on the American branch of the Zionist movement, drawing to it a number of sympathizers, improving its organization and its finance.

Whilst he resigned his official position on joining the Supreme Court, he nonetheless worked behind the scenes to influence President Woodrow Wilson to support the Zionist cause. After the war, Brandeis headed a delegation of American Zionists to London where at a conference differences emerged between Chaim Weizmann and himself. These arguments over the role of the organization and its pursuit of political activities caused a rift between the two leaders with Weizmann gaining the upper hand. Brandeis withdrew from Zionist activity although he continued to take part in Eretz Israel economic affairs. Brandeis did intervene from time to time in political matters for example he appealed to Roosevelt to oppose the British partition scheme of 1937 calling instead for the whole area of Eretz Israel to become a Jewish National Home.

Brandeis represented a rather different genre of Zionism, one born out of the American context that affirmed Zionism as part of American ethnic identity. It was Brandeis who coined the term that "to be a good American meant that local Jews should be Zionists."

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Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

One of the greatest physicists of all time, Nobel Prize winner and discoverer of the special and general theory of relativity, Albert Einstein was born on March 14, 1879, in Ulm, Wurttemberg, of Jewish parents.

He spent his early years in Munich where his father set up a small electrochemical business. As a boy he was fascinated by algebra and geometry, though he detested the barracks discipline of German schools. In 1896, he entered the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich, graduating in 1900 and receiving his doctorate from Zurich in 1905. Unable to get an academic position, he took a post with the patent office in Bern while continuing to pursue his concern with the fundamental problems of physics.

In 1905, he published four brilliant papers in the *Annalen der Physik* which were to transform twentieth-century scientific thought. He established the special theory of relativity, predicted the equivalence of mass (m) and energy (e) according to the equation $e = mc^2$, where (c) represents the velocity of light; he created the theory of Brownian motion and founded the photon theory of light (photoelectric effect) for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1921.

Einstein joined the German University of Prague in 1910 and then, in 1913, through Max Planck received a Professorship at the Prussian Academy of Science in Berlin.

In 1916, Einstein published his *Die Grundlagen der allgemeinen Relativitatstheorie* (Relativity, the Special and the General Theory: A Popular Exposition, 1920), which profoundly modified the simple concepts of space and time on which Newtonian mechanics had been based. His prediction of the deflection of light by the gravitational field of the sun was borne out by a British team of scientists at the time of the solar eclipse in 1919, making Einstein a household name.

Throughout the Weimar years he was lionized, especially abroad, though in Germany not only his work but also his pacifist politics aroused violent animosity in extreme right-wing circles. Anti-Semites sought to brand his theory of relativity as 'un-German' and during the Third Reich they partially achieved their objective, when Einstein's name could no longer be mentioned in lectures or scholarly papers, though his relativity theory was still taught.

During the 1920s Einstein traveled widely in Europe, America and Asia and identified himself with various public causes such as pacifism, Zionism, the League of Nations and European unity. When Hitler came to power in January 1933, Einstein was in California and he never returned to Germany, being almost immediately deprived of his posts in Berlin and his membership of the Prussian Academy of Sciences.

His property was seized and a price put on his head by Nazi fanatics. His books were among those burned publicly on May 10, 1933, as manifestations of the 'un-German

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spirit'. As an outspoken opponent of National Socialism his name became synonymous with treason in the Third Reich.

Einstein emigrated to the United States where he became a Professor at the Institute of Advanced Studies (Princeton) and an American citizen in 1940. Alarmed at the prospect that Hitler's Germany might acquire an atomic bomb after two German physicists had discovered the fission of uranium, Einstein signed a letter to President Roosevelt in August 1939, which sparked off the Manhattan project. It was one of the great ironies of his career that the pacifist Einstein, through this action, should have helped initiate the era of nuclear weapons to whose use he was completely opposed.

A lifelong opponent of nationalism, Einstein regarded the Third Reich as a catastrophe for civilization.

Active in Jewish causes he was offered the Presidency of the State of Israel, but declined, "being deeply touched by the offer but not suited for the position."

His simplicity, benevolence and good humor as well as his scientific genius gave Einstein a unique fame and prestige among physicists, even though after the mid-1920s he diverged from the main trends in the field, especially disliking the probabilistic interpretation of the universe associated with quantum theory.

The best-known refugee from Nazism and one of its most adamant critics, Einstein died in Princeton on April 18, 1955.

Henrietta Szold (1860-1945)

Had Henrietta Szold been born in 1960 instead of 1860, she probably would have become a rabbi. One of eight daughters of a Baltimore rabbi, Szold was a passionate and accomplished student of Judaism. She even won permission to study Jewish texts at the then male-only Jewish Theological Seminary, on condition that she never agitate to be granted rabbinic ordination. Later, she translated Heinrich Graetz's monumental multivolume *History of the Jews* from German into English

Szold was, in certain respects, a forerunner of Jewish women's liberation. When her mother died in 1916, a close male friend, Haym Peretz, volunteered to say the Mourner's Kaddish for the dead woman. Szold graciously refused the offer. "I believe," she wrote him, "that the elimination of women from such duties was never intended by our law and custom-women were freed from positive duties when they could not perform them [because of family responsibilities] but not when they could. It was never intended that, if they could perform them, their performance of them should not be considered as valuable and valid as when one of the male sex performed them."

Szold's outstanding contribution to Jewish life was the creation of the largest Jewish organization in American history, Hadassah Women. Although Zionist, Hadassah particularly involved itself in meeting the health needs of both Jews and Arabs in

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Palestine. Today, the foremost hospital in Israel and the entire Middle East is the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. Szold insisted that the most up-to-date medical treatment be extended to the Arabs of Palestine as well as to the Jews, and Hadassah played a major role in lowering Arab infant mortality. The Hadassah spirit of volunteerism and nondiscrimination was unfortunately rejected by the Arab leadership, which may have feared that its example would lessen hatred between Jews and Arabs. In early 1948, just before the State of Israel was declared, Arab troops ambushed and murdered seventy-seven Jewish doctors and nurses from Hadassah Hospital.

During the 1930s, Szold involved Hadassah in a program to rescue Jewish youth from Germany, and later from all of Europe. It is estimated that the program she created, "Youth Aliyah," saved some 22,000 Jewish children from Hitler's concentration camps.

The personal tragedy of Szold's life was that she never married; this woman, whose life was devoted to saving the lives of children, never had children of her own. While in her forties, she did fall passionately in love with the great Talmud scholar Louis Ginzberg. He was fifteen years her junior, and returned her feelings only platonically. Shortly after their relationship ended, she wrote: "Today it is four weeks since my only real happiness was killed." Many years later, she confided to a friend: "I would exchange everything for one child of my own."

To this day Henrietta Szold is regarded as one of the genuine heroic figures of American-Jewish history, a scholarly woman, a passionately committed Jew and a person who saved many thousands of lives.

The organization she founded, Hadassah, has as of 1990 about 350,000 members, and is the largest Jewish organization in the United States.

Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869)

Rebecca Gratz was a devout Jew who dedicated her life to the service of the less fortunate in America. She was born in Philadelphia in 1781 into a wealthy and highly esteemed family that supported the American Revolution. As a young lady, she was one of the most beautiful and gracious women of her time. The attributes didn't deter her from devoting her life to needy and charitable causes.

When she was 20, she organized the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children of Reduced Circumstances in Philadelphia. She served as its first secretary and was a motivating force in its administration and in raising much needed funds. Gratz was also one of the founders of the nonsectarian Philadelphia Orphan Asylum, chartered in 1815 and served as its secretary for more than 40 years.

Sensing that there was a further need to service the needy and the unfortunate in the Jewish community, she organized and founded the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1819. She created the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum in 1855 and led in the establishment of the Fuel Society and the Sewing Society.

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While she was involved with these charitable organizations, she also managed to raise the nine children of her sister, Rachel, who died in 1823.

Rebecca Gratz was always concerned about the religious education of Jewish children. In 1818, she conducted a religious school for 11 Jewish children in her home with the help of an itinerant young rabbinical scholar from Richmond. Unfortunately, the school didn't last long.

Using the Christian Sunday school as a model, she tried again. In 1818, she organized a counterpart. Under the sponsorship of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, the Hebrew Sunday School Society of Philadelphia was created on March 4, her birthday, with about 60 students. She served as its president until 1864. The school was opened to children from all parts of the Philadelphia Jewish community without a fee.

Many Americans called Rebecca Gratz "the foremost American Jewess of her day." Her fame was widespread as many people believed that she was the prototype for Sir Walter Scott's Rebecca, a Jew, in his novel, *Ivanhoe*.

Rebecca Gratz, in her time, was one of the most noble women in the world, who can be compared in modern times, for her work, devotion, and dedication to the needy, to a Mother Teresa of the Catholic faith. She died in 1869 at the age of 88 and was buried in the Mikveh Israel Cemetery in Philadelphia.

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THE SYNAGOGUE

Ark

Probably the most important feature of the sanctuary is the Ark. The name "Ark" is an acrostic of the Hebrew words *Aron Kodesh*, which means "holy cabinet." The word has no relation to Noah's Ark, which is the word "teyvat" in Hebrew. The Ark is a cabinet or recession in the wall, which holds the Torah scrolls. The Ark is generally placed in the front of the room; that is, on the side towards Jerusalem. The Ark has doors as well as an inner curtain called a parokhet. This curtain is in imitation of the curtain in the Sanctuary in The Temple, and is named for it.

Ner Tamid

In front of and slightly above the Ark, you will find the ner tamid, the Eternal Lamp. This lamp symbolizes the commandment to keep a light burning in the Tabernacle outside of the curtain surrounding the Ark of the Covenant. (Ex. 27:20-21).

An Eternal Light (Ner Tamid) hangs above the ark in every synagogue. It is often associated with the menorah, the seven-branched lamp stand which stood in front of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is also associated with the continuously-burning incense altar which stood in front of the ark (see First Kings, chapter 6). Our sages interpreted the Ner Tamid as a symbol of G-d's eternal and imminent Presence in our communities and in our lives.

Where once the Ner Tamid was an oil lamp, as was the menorah which stood outside the Temple in Jerusalem, today most are fueled by either gas or electric light bulbs. There is at least one Ner Tamid, located at the Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Md., perpetually lit via a photovoltaic power source (solar). The Eternal Lights are never extinguished or turned off.

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THE JEWISH HOME

Mezuzah

On the doorposts of traditional Jewish homes, you will find a small case. This case is commonly known as a mezuzah (Heb.: doorpost), because it is placed upon the doorposts of the house. The mezuzah is not, as some suppose, a good-luck charm, rather, it is a constant reminder of G-d's presence and G-d's mitzvot.

The mitzvah to place mezuzot on the doorposts of our houses is derived from Deut. 6:4-9, a passage commonly known as the Shema (Hear, from the first word of the passage). In that passage, G-d commands us to keep His words constantly in our minds and in our hearts, by (among other things) writing them on the doorposts of our house. The words of the Shema are written on a tiny scroll of parchment, along with the words of a companion passage, Deut. 11:13-21. On the back of the scroll, a name of G-d is written. The scroll is then rolled up and placed in the case, so that the first letter of the Name (the letter Shin) is visible (or, more commonly, the letter Shin is written on the outside of the case).

The scroll must be handwritten in a special style of writing and must be placed in the case to fulfill the mitzvah. It is commonplace for gift shops to sell cases without scrolls, or with mechanically printed scrolls, because a proper scroll costs more than even an elaborately decorated case (\$30-\$50 for a valid scroll is quite reasonable). According to traditional authorities, mechanically printed scrolls do not fulfill the mitzvah of the mezuzah, nor does an empty case.

The case and scroll are then nailed or affixed to the right side doorpost on an angle, with a small ceremony called Chanukat Ha-Bayit (dedication of the house - yes, this is the same word as Chanukah, the holiday celebrating the rededication of the Temple after the Maccabean revolt against Greece). A brief blessing is recited.

Why is the mezuzah affixed at an angle? The rabbis could not decide whether it should be placed horizontally or vertically, so they compromised!

Every time you pass through a door with a mezuzah on it, you touch the mezuzah and then kiss the fingers that touched it, expressing love and respect for G-d and his mitzvot and reminding yourself of the mitzvot contained within them.

It is proper to remove a mezuzah when you move, and in fact, it is usually recommended. If you leave it in place, the subsequent owner may treat it with disrespect, and this is a grave sin.

Aleph Emblem

THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Jerusalem

Jerusalem (Hebrew: יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) is the capital and largest city of Israel in both population and area, with 732,100 residents in an area of 125.1 square kilometers (49 sq mi).

Located in the Judean Mountains, between the Mediterranean Sea and the northern tip of the Dead Sea, the city has a history that goes back as far as the 4th millennium BCE, making it one of the oldest cities in the world. Jerusalem has been the holiest city in Judaism and the spiritual center of the Jewish people since the 10th century BCE. The city contains a number of significant ancient Christian sites and is considered the third-holiest city in Islam.

The walled area of Jerusalem, which constituted the entire city until the 1860s, is now called the Old City. The Old City has been traditionally divided into four quarters, although the names used today—the Armenian, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Quarters—were only introduced in the early 19th century. Despite having an area of only 0.9 square kilometer (0.35 square mile), the Old City is home to several sites of key religious importance: the Temple Mount and its Western Wall for Jews, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Christians, and the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims.

Modern Jerusalem has grown up around the Old City, with its civic and cultural hub extending westward toward Israel's urban center in Gush Dan. The Arab population resides in clusters in the North, East and South.

Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv-Yafo (Hebrew: תֵּל-אָבִיב) more commonly Tel Aviv, is the second most populous city in Israel, after Jerusalem, with a population of 384,600. Tel Aviv is located on Israel's Mediterranean coastline over an area covering 51.8 km. It is the main city of the largest and most populous metropolitan area in Israel, Gush Dan (Dan Bloc), whose population numbers 3.15 million as of 2007.

The City of Tel Aviv was originally founded in 1909 by Jewish immigrants as an alternative to expensive housing in the neighbouring historic port city of Haifa. Tel Aviv's extensive growth eventually overtook its Arab-majority neighbour, and the two towns were united into the municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo in 1950, two years after the establishment of the State of Israel.

Tel Aviv is today considered the center of Israel's globally oriented economy, and is the anchor of the area popularly known as "Silicon Wadi". It is also considered Israel's cultural capital due to its vibrant, modern, cosmopolitan character.

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Negev

The Negev (Hebrew: נֶגֶב) is the desert region of southern Israel which makes up the majority of Israel's official Southern District. The origin of the word *Negev* is from the Hebrew root denoting 'dry'. In the Bible the word *Negev* is also used for the direction 'south'.

Haifa

Haifa (Hebrew: הַיְפָה *Hefa*) is the largest city in Northern Israel and the third-largest city in the country, after Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, with a population of about 267,800. The city is a seaport located on Israel's Mediterranean coastline in the Bay of Haifa, about 90 km north of Tel Aviv, and is one of the country's major industrial centers.

Haifa is built on the slopes of the historic Mount Carmel. Known in the 3rd century CE as a dye making center, the city is today home to a mixed population of Jews and Arabs, as well as to the Bahá'í World Centre, and two world-class academic institutions, the University of Haifa and the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology. High tech companies such as Intel, IBM, Microsoft, Motorola, and Google have opened R&D facilities in Haifa in recent years.

Kotel (Western Wall)

The Western Wall (Hebrew: יִבְרֵעָמָה לַתּוֹכָה, translit.: *HaKotel HaMa'aravi*), or simply The Kotel (Yiddish pronunciation: Kosel), is a Jewish religious site located in the Old City of Jerusalem. The wall itself dates from the Second Temple period, (516 BCE - 70 CE). It is sometimes referred to as the Wailing Wall (Arabic: *il-Mabka*), referring to Jews who come to the site to mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Masada

Masada (a romanisation of the Hebrew הַדְּצִמָּה, *Metzada*, from הַדְּצִמָּה, *metzada*, "fortress") is the name for a site of ancient palaces and fortifications in the South District of Israel on top of an isolated rock plateau, or large mesa, on the eastern edge of the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea. Masada became famous after the First Jewish-Roman War (also known as the Great Jewish Revolt) when a siege of the fortress by troops of the Roman Empire led to a mass suicide of the site's Jewish Sicarii fugitives when defeat became imminent. Today, Masada is a very popular tourist destination.

Beersheba

Beersheba (Hebrew: בְּעֵר שֶׁבַע, Be'er Sheva) is the largest city in the Negev desert of Israel. It is often referred to as the "Capital of the Negev." In 2005, when the population reached 185,000, it became the sixth largest city in Israel.

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Beersheba is the administrative centre for the southern region of Israel and home of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Soroka Medical Center, and the Israel Sinfonietta Beersheba.

Beersheba has grown considerably since the founding of the state in 1948. A large portion of the population is made up of Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries after 1948, and newcomers from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union. Beersheba is surrounded by a number of satellite towns: the mainly Jewish Omer, Lehavim and Metar and several Bedouin towns, the largest of which are Rahat, Tel Sheva and Lakiya.

Galilee

The Galilee (Hebrew: לילגה *ha-Galil*), meaning "circuit", is a large region overlapping with much of the North District of Israel. It is traditionally divided into three regions: Safed, the Galilee's "Capital", with the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Kinneret, and the hilly landscape of the area

The Galilee includes more than one-third of present-day Israel, traditionally defined as extending from Biblical Dan on the north, at the base of Mount Hermon, along Mount Lebanon to the ridges of Mount Carmel and Mount Gilboa on the south, and from the Jordan Valley on the east across the plains of the Jezreel Valley and Akko to the shores of the Mediterranean on the west.

- ❑ The Western Galilee, also called the "Northern Coastal Plain", stretches from north of Haifa up to Rosh HaNikra on the Israel-Lebanon border.
- ❑ The Lower Galilee reaches from Mount Carmel and Mount Gilboa in the south to the Beit HaKerem Valley in the north. Its eastern border is the Jordan River.
- ❑ The Upper Galilee extends from the Beit HaKerem Valley northwards into southern Lebanon. Its eastern border is the Sea of Galilee and the mountains of the Golan Heights. The "Finger of the Galilee" (Hebrew: לילגה עבצא, *Etzba HaGalil*) is a panhandle along the Hulah Valley; it contains the towns Metulla and Qiryat Shemona and the rivers of Dan and Banias.

Most of the Galilee consists of rocky terrain, at heights of about 500-700 meters. There are several high mountains such as Mount Tabor and Mount Meron. The relatively low temperatures and the large amounts of rainfall every year made the Galilee a center of flora and wildlife, and many birds annually migrate from colder climes to Africa and back through the Hulah-Jordan corridor. The streams and waterfalls, the latter mainly in the Upper Galilee, along with vast fields of greenery and colorful wildflowers make it a popular tourist attraction in Israel.

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Israeli Flag



The history of the flag of Israel has its genesis in the Zionist movement. The Zionist movement's goal was to seek the re-establishment of a home in Eretz - Israel for the Jews.

Israel was part of the British Mandate. On November 29, 1947, the British Mandate was officially partitioned by the United Nations into Arab and Jewish states. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel took place on the 14th May 1948 at the Tel Aviv Museum.

On the 28th of October 1948, the Flag of the state of Israel was proclaimed. Briefly, it consisted of a white background with two dark sky blue stripes over the whole length of the flag. In the middle of the white background was the star of David -- a symbol long associated with Jewish people.

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Notes