

Maccabee Emblem Workbook

Scout: _____

Date: _____



*This workbook is designed to assist Scouts working on their Maccabee 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.*

Maccabee Emblem

Comments, Questions, Edits

Email: J. Levens at JDL13@comcast.net

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MACCABEE APPLICATION FORM

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that _____ has completed the Maccabee emblem requirements. We recommend that he be approved for this honor.

Parent Signature and Date

Counselor Signature and Date

Synagogue or School

Local council Jewish Committee (if one exists) Signature and Date

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For Jewish Tiger Cubs and Cub Scouts, grades 1-3

The National Jewish Committee on Scouting developed the Maccabee emblem to help you, a Tiger Cub or Cub Scout who is Jewish, learn more about Judaism. It also will help you earn the Aleph emblem as a Cub Scout or Webelos Scout, the Ner Tamid emblem as a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or Venturer, and the Etz Chaim award as a Boy Scout or Venturer.

The Maccabee emblem takes its name from Judah Maccabee and his brothers, who led the military and religious struggle against the Syrian King, Antiochus, who attempted to suppress the practice of Judaism. Their revolt ended in victory with the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 167 B.C.E. The holiday of Hanukkah (Feast of Lights) celebrates this victory.

How Do I Start Working on It?

Follow these simple steps:

1. Along with your parent or adult partner, ask your rabbi or religious school teacher to serve as your counselor.
2. Start working on the activities/requirements and keep a neat record of your work in a notebook.
3. As each activity/requirement is completed, discuss what you have done with your adult partner.
4. When you have finished all the activities/requirements, have your adult partner and counselor sign the section titled "Certification". The notebook is for you to keep and use.

How Do I Meet the Requirements?

The requirements that follow are subdivided into six categories: Jewish names, holidays, terms, symbols and objects, community helpers, and heroes.

Needed resource materials should be readily available either in the library of a local synagogue, Jewish school, or community worker.

Virtually all of the requirements should lend themselves to fulfillment at home with the active assistance of a parent.

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

I. Names

In your notebook, provide the following Jewish names:

1. Your own _____
2. Your mother's _____
3. Your father's _____
4. One grandfather's _____
5. One grandmother's _____
6. A synagogue in your area _____

II. Holidays

In your notebook, provide the Hebrew names of four of the following Jewish holidays. In addition, tell three facts about each of the four and carry out at least one suggested activity connected with each of the four holidays.

1. Passover
2. New Year
3. Day of Atonement
4. New Year of the Trees
5. Sabbath
6. Feast of Booths
7. Feast of Weeks
8. Israel Independence Day
9. Feast of Lots
10. Festival of Lights

III. Terms

In your notebook, tell what each of these terms means.

1. Mazal tov
2. Shalom
3. Yom tov
4. Torah
5. Mitzvah

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IV. Symbols, Objects and Articles

In your notebook, identify five of the following objects. Indicate how they are used. Draw three of the five articles or construct them out of wood, oak tag, cardboard, Styrofoam, metal, or other materials as suggested.

1. Siddur (prayer book)
2. Shofar
3. Mezuzah
4. Matzah
5. Lulav
6. Menorah
7. Dreidel (called "svivon" in Hebrew)
8. Tallit (some pronounce it "tallis")
9. Haggadah

With the approval of your counselor, you may substitute two of the following symbols for two of the above symbols: Magen David (Star of David), afikoman, gragger, kippah (yarmulke), Aron Ha-Kodesh (Holy Ark).

V. Community Helpers

In your notebook, briefly tell what two of the following persons do. In both cases, give the name of one such person in your community or in a nearby one. Interview one of them.

1. Rabbi
2. Cantor
3. Jewish educator (principal, teacher)
4. Jewish Community Center worker (JCC or YMHA)

If you wish, you may substitute a sofer (scribe) or a Jewish Federation worker for one of the above.

VI. Heroes

In your notebook tell briefly about five of the following important Jews.

1. Abraham
2. Moses
3. King David
4. Mordecai
5. Judah Maccabee
6. Hillel
7. Rabbi Akiba

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8. Haym Salomon
9. Theodore Herzl
10. Anatoly (Natan) Shcharansky

With the approval of your counselor, you may substitute three of the following for three of the above names: Deborah, Queen Esther, Maimonides, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir.

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THE 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 זְמַן שִׂמְחָתֵינוּ, 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 (also known as the Feast of Weeks), 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. 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.

Tu B'Shevat (New Year for Trees)

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).

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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 (also known as the Feast of Lots) 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.

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.

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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 פֶּסַח, 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 הָאֵבִיב, (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.

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.

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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.

Sabbath

Shabbat (Hebrew: שַׁבָּת, *shabbāt*, "rest/inactivity"; the Sabbath, often **Shabbos** using Ashkenazi pronunciation), is the weekly day of rest in Judaism, symbolizing the Seventh Day in the Book of Genesis, after six days of creation.

It is observed from sundown on Friday until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. Shabbat is ushered in by lighting candles. Candlelighting time changes from week to week and from place to place, depending on when the sun sets.

Israel Independence Day - Yom Haatzmaut

Yom Ha'atzmaut (Hebrew: יּוֹם תּוֹאֲמַצְעָה *yom hā-‘ašmā’ūṯ*), **Israeli Independence Day**, commemorates the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948.

It falls on the 5th of the Jewish lunar month Iyar, celebrating the declaration of the state of Israel by David Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948, and the end of the British Mandate of Palestine.

It is always preceded by Yom Hazikaron, the Israel fallen soldiers Remembrance Day on the 4th of Iyar (pronounced "eeyahr").

An official ceremony is held every year on Mount Herzl on the eve of *Yom Ha'atzmaut*. The ceremony includes a speech by the speaker of the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), a dramatic presentation, a ritual march of soldiers carrying the Flag of Israel, forming elaborate structures (such as a Menorah, Magen David and a number which represents the age of Israel) and the lighting of twelve beacons (one for each of the Tribes of Israel).

Every year a dozen Israeli citizens, who made a significant contribution in a selected area, are invited to light the beacons.

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TERMS

Mazal Tov

Mazal Tov (Hebrew: בוט לזמ) literally means "good fortune" in Hebrew. This phrase has been incorporated into Yiddish as "**Mazel Tov**," and is now used in Modern Hebrew and English as well. It is often used to mean "congratulations."

The expression comes from the Mishnaic Hebrew *mazzāl*, meaning "constellation" or "destiny." This in turn is thought to have derived from the Akkadian language *manzaltu*, *mazzaztum*, "position of a star," from *izuzzu*, "to stand." Adding the word *tôb*, meaning "good," a direct English translation would be "good fortune or destiny", or even "your constellation (or zodiac or stars) were good".

"Mazal Tov" is often said frequently and sometimes loudly at Jewish celebrations. The phrase is often used on the occasion of celebrations such as Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, weddings, or births.

Shalom

Shalom (שָׁלוֹם) is a Hebrew word meaning *peace*, *hello*, *goodbye* and *wellbeing*. As it does in English, it can refer to either peace between two entities (especially between man and G-d or between two countries), or to the well-being, welfare or safety of an individual or a group of individuals. It is also used as a greeting to either say hello or farewell, and is found in many other expressions and names.

Yom Tov

A Jewish holiday or Jewish Festival is a day or series of days observed by Jews as a holy or secular commemoration of an important event in Jewish history. In Hebrew, Jewish holidays and festivals, depending on their nature, may be called *yom tov* ("good day") (Yiddish: *yontif*) or *chag* ("festival") or *ta'anit* ("fast").

Torah

The *Torah* (תּוֹרָה) is the most important document in Judaism, revered as the inspired word of G-d, traditionally said to have been revealed to Moses.

The word Torah means "teaching," "instruction," "scribe," or "law" in Hebrew.

It is also known as the **Five** Books of Moses, the Book of Moses, the Law of Moses (*Torat Moshe* תּוֹרַת־מֹשֶׁה), *Sefer Torah* in Hebrew (which refers to the scroll cases in which the books were kept), or Pentateuch (from Greek Πεντετεύχος "five rolls or cases").

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The Torah comprises the first five books of the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible. The five books of the Torah, their names and pronunciations in the original Hebrew, are as follows:

Genesis (תּוֹשָׁעָרָב, *Bereshit*: "In the beginning...")

Exodus (תּוֹמֵשׁ, *Shemot*: "Names")

Leviticus (אֶרְקִיּוֹ, *Vayyiqra*: "And he called...")

Numbers (בְּמִדְבָּר, *Bamidbar*: "In the desert...")

Deuteronomy (דְּבָרִים, *Devarim*: "Words", "Discourses", or "Things")

Mitzvah

Mitzvah (Hebrew: מִצְוָה], "commandment"; plural, *mitzvot*; from מִצַּו, *tzavah*, "command") is a word used in Judaism to refer to (a) the commandments, of which there are 613, given in the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) or (b) any Jewish law at all.

The term can also refer to the fulfillment of a *mitzvah* as defined above.

The term *mitzvah* has also come to express any act of human kindness.

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SYMBOLS, OBJECTS & ARTICLES

Siddur (prayer book)

A siddur (Hebrew: סידור; plural *siddurim*) is a Jewish prayer book, containing a set order of daily prayers.

Shofar

A shofar (Heb.: שופר) is a horn that is used as a musical instrument for Jewish religious purposes. It is intimately connected with both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The shofar originated in Israel for Jewish callings.

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!

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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.

Matzah

Matza (also Matzah Hebrew מַצָּה, in Ashkenazi matzo or matzoh, and in Yiddish, matze, Greek - "Masa", or "Massa") is a cracker-like bread made of white plain flour, and water. The dough is pricked in several places and not allowed to rise before or during baking, thereby producing a hard, flat bread.

Matza is the substitute for bread during the Jewish holiday of Passover, when eating chametz - bread and leavened products - is forbidden. Eating matza on the night of the seder is considered a positive mitzvah, i.e., a commandment.

Lulav

Lulav (Hebrew: בלול) is a ripe, green, closed frond of the date palm tree. It is one of the Four Species (*arba'ah minim* - מינימ העברא) used in the daily prayer services during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. The other species are the hadass (myrtle), aravah (willow), and etrog (citron).

Menorah

The **menorah** (Hebrew: הַמְנוּחָה), is a seven branched candelabrum and has been a symbol of Judaism for almost 3000 years. It was used in the ancient Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Lit by olive oil in the Tabernacle and the Temple, the menorah is one of the oldest symbols of the Jewish people. It is said to symbolize the burning bush as seen by Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25).

Dreidel (called "svivon" in Hebrew)

A dreidel (Yiddish: לדיירד, Hebrew: סביבון, *Sevivon*) is a four-sided top, played with during the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. Each side of the dreidel bears a letter of the Hebrew alphabet:

נ (Nun), ג (Gimel), ה (Hei), ש (Shin), which together form the acronym for "לודג סנ" (Nes Gadol Haya Sham – "a great miracle happened there"). These letters also form a mnemonic for the rules of a gambling game played with a dreidel: Nun stands for the Yiddish word *nit* ("nothing"), Hei stands for *halb* ("half"), Gimel for *gants* ("all"), and Shin for *shteln* ("put"). In the state of Israel, the fourth side of most dreidels is inscribed with the letter פ (Pe), rendering the acronym, הפ הייה לודג סנ, *Nes Gadol Haya Po*—"A

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great miracle happened here" referring to the fact that the miracle occurred in the land of Israel.

Tallit (some pronounce it "tallis")

The tallit (Hebrew: Hebrew: תלית), also called tallis (Yiddish, plural *taleysm*), is a prayer shawl that is worn during the morning Jewish services (the *Shacharit* prayers) in Judaism, during the Torah service, and on Yom Kippur and other holidays. It has special twined and knotted fringes known as *tzitzit* attached to its four corners. The tallit is sometimes also referred to as the *arba kanfot*, meaning "four corners."

Haggadah

The Haggadah (Hebrew: הַגְּדָה) contains the order of the Passover Seder. Haggadah, meaning "telling," is a fulfillment of the scriptural commandment to each Jew to "tell your son" about the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt, as described in the book of Exodus in the Torah.

Magen David (Star of David)

The Star of David or Shield of David (Magen David in Hebrew, מגן דָּוִד with nikkud or מגן דוד without) is a generally recognized symbol of Jewish Community and Judaism. It is not a religious symbol.

It is named after King David of ancient Israel; and its usage began in the Middle Ages, alongside the more ancient symbol of the menorah. Geometrically it is the hexagram. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 the Star of David on the Flag of Israel has also become a symbol of Israel.

Afikoman

Afikoman (Hebrew language: אֶפִיקוֹמָנָה, based on Greek, *epikomen* or *epikomion*, meaning "that which comes after" or "dessert") is a piece of matzo which is hidden at the start of the Passover Seder and is eaten at the end of the festive meal. After the *afikoman* is eaten, one may not consume any other food for the rest of the night, aside from the Third and Fourth Cups of Wine and beverages such as water or tea.

Gragger

A Purim gragger, also called "*ra'ashan*" (noisemaker), used when Haman's name is mentioned during the reading of the Megilla, as tradition dictates, to blot out the name of evil.

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Kippah (yarmulke)

A **kippah** (Hebrew: כִּפּוּת *kippa*, plural *kippot*. Yiddish: קאַפעלע **kapele** "small cap", though more often יאַרמלקע *yarmulke* sometimes rendered *yarmelke* or *yarmulka*, from the Polish *jarmulka*) is a thin, slightly-rounded skullcap traditionally worn at all times by Orthodox Jewish men and often by both men and women in Conservative and Reform communities during services.

Aron Ha-Kodesh (Holy 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.

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COMMUNITY HELPERS

Rabbi

Rabbi, in Judaism, means a religious ‘teacher’, or more literally, ‘great one’. The word *Rabbi* is derived from the Hebrew root word רב, *ray*, which in biblical Hebrew means ‘great’ or ‘distinguished (in knowledge)’. Sephardic and Yemenite Jews pronounce this word רבִּי *ribbī*; the modern Israeli pronunciation רַבִּי *rabbī* is derived from a recent (18th century) innovation in Ashkenazic prayer books, although this vocalization is also found in some ancient sources. Other varieties of pronunciation are *rəvī*, *rubbī*, and, in Yiddish, *rebbə*.

Cantor

A hazzan, chazzan or khazn (Hebrew for "cantor," תירבע: "זוז") is a Jewish musician trained in the vocal arts who helps lead the synagogue in prayer.

Sofer (scribe)

A Sofer, (Heb: "scribe", סופר) is a Jewish scribe who can transcribe Torah scrolls and other religious writings such as those used in Tefillin and Mezuzot. By simple definition a Sofer is simply a copyist, but in their religious role in Judaism they are much more.

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HEROES

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.

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).

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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 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!"

King David

David (c.1037 BC - 967 BC; reigned Judah c.1007 BC - 1005 BC, Judah and Israel c.1005 BC - 967 BC; Hebrew: דָּוִד, Standard *David* "beloved") was the second king of the united Kingdom of Israel. He is depicted as a righteous king—although not without fault—as well as an acclaimed warrior, musician and poet (he is traditionally credited with the authorship of many of the Psalms). His life and reign, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible's books of Samuel (from I Samuel 16 onwards) and Chronicles, have been of central importance to Jewish culture.

Mordecai

Mordecai or Mordechai (Hebrew: מֶרְדֵּכַי, Standard *Mordochay* Tiberian *Mordōkay*) - the son of Jair, of the tribe of Benjamin, is one of the main personalities in the Book of Esther in the Hebrew Bible.

Judah Maccabee

Second leader of the Judean revolt against the Greco-Syrian empire [166 BCE]. Westerners have traditionally referred to the third son of Mattathias of Modein by the Latinate form of his name: Judas Maccabeus. A Judean priest, he assumed command of Judean resistance to Greek forces after his father's death [165 BCE]. His defeat of the Greek governor of Samaria led to even more stunning victories over larger Greek armies at Beth-horon & Emmaus. After this, Judah captured Mt. Zion, purged the temple of Hellenistic cult paraphernalia, reconstructed the sanctuary according to Torah prescriptions and re-consecrated it to the worship of YHWH [Dec. 164 BCE]. The festival of Chanukah was later instituted to commemorate this triumph. Judah was

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repelled, however, in his attempt to drive the Syrian garrison from the rest of Jerusalem and was defeated near the village of Beth Zechariah, southwest of Jerusalem [162 BCE]. He died in the battle of Elasa (north of Jerusalem). Though Judah himself never held an official political position other than ad hoc general of the Jewish rebellion, he had a major influence on the direction of later history by initiating an alliance with the republic of Rome against the Greek Syrian empire. He was succeeded by his youngest brother Jonathan who, like him, left no male heirs. But the descendents of his older brother Simon became the Hasmonean dynasty of Judean rulers.

Hillel

Hillel (הלל) (born Babylon traditionally c.110BCE-10CE in Jerusalem) was a famous Jewish religious leader, one of the most important figures in Jewish history. He is associated with the development of the Mishnah and the Talmud. Renowned within Judaism as a sage and scholar, he was the founder of the House of Hillel school for Tanna'im (Sages of the Mishnah) and the founder of a dynasty of Sages who stood at the head of the Jews living in the land of Israel until roughly the fifth century of the Common Era. He is popularly known as the author of two sayings: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" and the expression of the ethic of reciprocity, or "Golden Rule": "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn." Hillel lived in Jerusalem during the time of King Herod and the Roman Emperor Augustus. In the Midrash compilation Sifre (Deut. 357) the periods of Hillel's life are made parallel to those in the life of Moses. Both lived 120 years; at the age of forty Hillel went to the Land of Israel; forty years he spent in study; and the last third of his life he was the spiritual head of the Jewish people. A biographical sketch can be constructed; that Hillel went to Jerusalem in the prime of his life and attained a great age. His activity of forty years likely covered the period of 30 BCE to 10 CE.

Rabbi Akiba (50-135 C.E.)

A poor, semi-literate shepherd, Akiba became one of Judaism's greatest scholars. He developed the exegetical method of the Mishnah, linking each traditional practice to a basis in the biblical text, and systematized the material that later became the Mishnah.

Rabbi Akiba was active in the Bar Kokhba rebellion against Rome, 132-135 C.E.. He believed that Bar Kokhba was the Moshiach (messiah), though some other rabbis openly ridiculed him for that belief (the Talmud records another rabbi as saying, "Akiba, grass will grow in your cheeks and still the son of David will not have come.") When the Bar Kokhba rebellion failed, Rabbi Akiba was taken by the Roman authorities and tortured to death.

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

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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."

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)

Theodore (Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl, the visionary of Zionism, was born in Budapest in 1860. He was educated in the spirit of the German Jewish Enlightenment of the period, learning to appreciate secular culture. In 1878 the family moved to Vienna, and in 1884 Herzl was awarded a doctorate of law from the University of Vienna. He became a writer, a playwright and a journalist. The Paris correspondent of the influential liberal Vienna newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* was none other than Theodore Herzl.

Herzl saw the need for encouragement by the great powers of the aims of the Jewish people in the Land. Thus, he traveled to the Land of Israel and Istanbul in 1898 to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. When these efforts proved fruitless, he turned to Great Britain, and met with Joseph Chamberlain, the British colonial secretary and others.

The 1903 Kishinev pogrom and the difficult state of Russian Jewry, witnessed firsthand by Herzl during a visit to Russia, had a profound effect on him. He requested that the Russian government assist the Zionist Movement to transfer Jews from Russia to Eretz Yisrael.

At the Sixth Zionist Congress (1903), Herzl proposed the British Uganda Program as a temporary refuge for Jews in Russia in immediate danger. While Herzl made it clear that this program would not affect the ultimate aim of Zionism, a Jewish entity in the Land of Israel, the proposal aroused a storm at the Congress and nearly led to a split in the Zionist movement. The Uganda Program was finally rejected by the Zionist movement at the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905.

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Herzl died in Vienna in 1904, of pneumonia and a weak heart overworked by his incessant efforts on behalf of Zionism. By then the movement had found its place on the world political map.

Herzl coined the phrase "If you will, it is no fairytale," which became the motto of the Zionist movement. Although at the time no one could have imagined it, Zionism led, only fifty years later, to the establishment of the independent State of Israel.

Anatoly (Natan) Shcharansky

Natan Sharansky (Hebrew: יקסנרשׁ נתנ, Russian: Натан Щаранский, born Anatoly Borisovich Shcharansky (Russian: Анатолий Борисович Щаранский) on 20 January 1948) is a notable former Soviet dissident, anticommunist, Zionist, Israeli politician and writer.

Sharansky is a distinguished fellow at the Shalem Center and headed its strategic studies institute. From March 2003 until May 2005, he was a Minister without portfolio, responsible for Jerusalem, social and Jewish diaspora affairs. Previously he served as the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Minister of Housing and Construction since March 2001, Interior Minister of Israel (July 1999 - resigned in July 2000), Minister of Industry and Trade (1996-1999). He resigned from the cabinet in April 2005 to protest plans to withdraw Israeli settlements from the occupied Gaza Strip. He was re-elected to the Knesset in March 2006 as a member of the Likud Party. In October 2006, it was announced that he planned to retire from politics. He resigned from the Knesset on November 20, 2006.

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

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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.

Queen Esther (478 B.C.E.)

Esther (named for the Goddess, Ashtar) was a Persian Jew who was orphaned at a young age. The Israelites had been exiled to Babylonia in 586 B.C.E. and still remained there. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, was older than she and he raised Esther. Esther was still a young woman when her presence was requested at the palace of King Ahasuerus.

Ahasuerus had recently "disposed of" his wife, Queen Vashti. Vashti had displeased the king. Ahasuerus needed a new wife and he called upon all of the women in Persia to present themselves at the palace.

Esther was an extremely beautiful woman and Ahasuerus chose her to be his queen. Esther moved away from her Jewish community and into the palace. Mordecai advised her not to admit to her Jewish heritage because he was unsure of the king's sentiments towards the Jews.

Meanwhile, Haman, an anti-Semitic advisor to the king, was plotting a day of execution for all of the Jews in Persia. He brought his proposal to King Ahasuerus and the king signed it, without realizing that his own bride would be affected by this mass slaughter.

Esther did not know about his agreement between Ahasuerus and Haman, but Mordecai came to the palace to inform her. He demanded that she speak to the king and beg him to revoke the decree. Esther knew that no one, not even the queen, could approach the king without first being called. Fearing for her own life, she told Mordecai that she wanted to simply stay out of the entire ordeal.

Mordecai explained to his cousin that when the 14th of Adar came upon them, even she, the queen, would not be spared. Esther quickly changed her mind and called upon the king to come to a dinner with herself and Haman. Luckily, Ahasuerus cared very much for his new queen, and was receptive of Esther's invitation.

When she, Haman, and Ahasuerus sat down to their meal, Esther began to plead with the king not to kill his own queen. Ahasuerus, of course, was very surprised by Esther's outburst. Esther revealed Haman's plan in its entirety, and then admitted to her own past as a Jew from Shushan. Ahasuerus, a proud (and rather hot-tempered) king, decided to hang Haman for treason and for threatening the life of his queen. Haman and his ten sons hanged on the 14th of Adar, the day set for the execution of the Jews.

Esther, while she needed some convincing, was able to save the Jewish population in Persia. She is considered one of the most heroic women in Jewish history. Her story is read every year on Purim.

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Maimonides (1135-1204)

Maimonides was a twelfth century Jewish sage. Maimonides was the first person to write a systematic code of all Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*; he produced one of the great philosophic statements of Judaism, *The Guide to the Perplexed*; published a commentary on the entire Mishna; served as physician to the sultan of Egypt; wrote numerous books on medicine; and, in his "spare time," served as leader of Cairo's Jewish community.

Maimonides's full name was Moses ben Maimon; in Hebrew he is known by the acronym of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Rambam. He was born in Spain shortly before the fanatical Muslim Almohades came to power there. To avoid persecution, Maimonides fled with his family, first to Morocco, later to Israel, and finally to Egypt.

Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952)

Chaim Weizmann was born in Motol, Russia in 1874. He received his education in biochemistry in Switzerland and Germany. Already in Geneva, he became active in the Zionist movement. In 1905 he moved to England, and was elected to the General Zionist Council.

Weizmann's scientific assistance to the Allied forces in World War I brought him into close contact with British leaders, enabling him to play a key role in the issuing of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917 in which Britain committed itself to the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine.

In 1918, Weizmann was appointed head of the Zionist Commission sent to Palestine by the British government to advise on the future development of the country. There, he laid the foundation stone of the Hebrew University. That same year Weizmann met in Aqaba with Emir Feisal, son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca, the leader of the Arab movement, to discuss prospects of reaching an understanding on the establishment of independent Arab and Jewish states.

Shortly after, Weizmann led the Zionist delegation to the Peace Conference at Versailles, and in 1920 became the president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). He headed the Jewish Agency which was established in 1929.

In the 1930's, Weizmann laid the foundations of the Daniel Sieff Research Institute in Rehovot, later to become the Weizmann Institute, a driving force behind Israel's scientific research. In 1937, he made his home in Rehovot.

Chaim Weizmann again served as President of the WZO from 1935-1946. During the years that led up to World War II, he invested much effort in establishing the Jewish Brigade. He also tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the issuing in 1939 of the White Paper, which in effect halted Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Maccabee Emblem

After the end of World War II, Weizmann was instrumental in the adoption of the Partition Plan by the United Nations on November 29, 1947, and in the recognition of Israel by the United States.

With the declaration of the State of Israel, Weizmann was chosen to serve as the first President of Israel. This role he filled until his death in 1952.

David Ben Gurion

David Ben-Gurion (Hebrew: דָּוִד בֶּן-גּוּרִיּוֹן, born David Grün on 16 October 1886, died 1 December 1973) was the first Prime Minister of Israel. Ben-Gurion's passion for Zionism, which began early in life, culminated in his instrumental role in the founding of the state of Israel. After leading Israel to victory in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Ben-Gurion helped build the state institutions and oversaw the absorption of vast numbers of Jews from all over the world. Upon retiring from political life in 1970, he moved to Sde Boker, where he lived until his death. Posthumously, Ben-Gurion was named one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Important People of the Century.

Golda Meir (1898-1978)

Golda Meir was born in Kiev in 1898. Economic hardship forced her family to emigrate to the United States in 1906, where they settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In high school she joined the Zionist group, "Poalei Zion" (Workers of Zion). She immigrated to British Mandate Palestine in 1921 with her husband, Morris Myerson, and settled in Kibbutz Merhavva.

Moving to Tel Aviv in 1924, she became an official of the Histadrut Trade Union and served in a managerial post with the union's construction corporation, Solel Boneh. Between 1932 and 1934 she worked as an emissary in the United States, serving as secretary of the Hechalutz women's organization; she also became secretary of the Histadrut's Action Committee, and later of its policy section.

When the pre-state British Mandatory Authorities imprisoned most of the Jewish community's senior leadership in 1946, she replaced Moshe Sharett as head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, the chief Jewish liaison with the British. Elected to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, she was active in fundraising in the United States to help cover the costs of the Israeli War of Independence, and became one of the State's most effective spokesmen.

In 1948, David Ben-Gurion appointed Golda Meir to be a member of the Provisional Government. A few days before the Declaration of Independence, Ben-Gurion sent her disguised as an Arab on a hazardous mission to persuade King Abdullah of Jordan not to

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attack Israel. But the King had already decided his army would invade the Jewish state following the British departure.

In June 1948, Meir was appointed Israel's Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Elected to the Knesset as a Mapai member in 1949, she served as Minister of Labor and National Insurance until 1956. In June 1956, she became Foreign Minister, a post she held until January 1966. As Foreign Minister, Meir was the architect of Israel's attempt to create bridges to the emerging independent countries of Africa via an assistance program based on practical Israeli experience in nation building. She also endeavored to cement relations with the United States and was successful in creating extensive bilateral relations with Latin American countries.

Between 1966 and 1968, she served as Secretary-General of Mapai, and then as the first Secretary-General of the newly formed Labor Party. When Prime Minister Levi Eshkol died suddenly in early 1969, the 71-year-old Meir assumed the post of Premier, becoming the world's third female Prime Minister (after Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka and Indira Gandhi of India).

As Prime Minister she inherited Eshkol's second National Unity Government administration, but this broke up over the question of continuing the cease-fire with Egypt in the absence of a peace treaty. She then continued in office with the Alignment (Labor & Mapam), the National Religious Party and the Independent Liberals.

The major event of her administration was the Yom Kippur War, which broke out with massive coordinated Egyptian and Syrian assaults against Israel on October 6, 1973. As the postwar Agranant Inquiry Commission established, the IDF and the government had erred seriously in their assessment of Arab intentions.

Although she and the Labor Party won the elections (postponed due to the war until December 31, 1973), she resigned in 1974 in favor of Yitzhak Rabin. She passed away in December 1978 and was buried on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.