



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA*
NATIONAL JEWISH COMMITTEE ON SCOUTING

A GUIDE TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

FOR YOUTH SERVING EXECUTIVES

The BSA National Jewish Committee on Scouting (NJCOS) appreciates your efforts as you work to help build positive relationships with your local Jewish community to provide Scouting for Jewish Youth. This guide is provided to help you understand and work successfully with existing and prospective Jewish chartered organizations (COs) in the Scouting program.

A major goal of the NJCOS is to increase the number of Jewish COs, units and Jewish Scouts and to help your Council work positively with the Jewish community. If you have any questions after reading this guide please feel free to contact the NJCOS for further assistance.

Judaism at a Glance

- Judaism is the first of the three religions that trace their origin back to Abraham. The others are Christianity and Islam. Jews believe there is only one God.
- Jewish Spiritual leaders are usually called Rabbis, not priests or ministers. Rabbis are employed by individual congregations to provide spiritual, educational and sometimes administrative leadership to the congregation's members. Rabbis are generally the go-to people when initiating a relationship with a synagogue or temple. The Rabbi may be assisted by a cantor. Cantors are Jewish clergy whose duties include leading singing (chanting) during worship services, leading choirs and often include work in religious schools and adult education. Some larger congregations have executive directors, youth directors and school directors as well. Some smaller congregations may be led by a cantor or a lay leader in place of a rabbi. Both rabbis and cantors serve as Scout

chaplains at Philmont, at national Jamborees and on the council level. Rabbis in the Reform and Conservative movements may be either men or women. In the Orthodox movement they are only men.

Jewish Denominations

- American Judaism has three main movements: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. There are two smaller movements, Reconstructionist and Humanistic.
- The Reform movement is the largest in the United States. It places great emphasis on diversity and inclusion, community outreach and service. It is the most religiously and socially liberal of the Jewish movements.
- The Conservative movement blends inclusiveness, egalitarianism, and commitment to Jewish tradition. Conservative Judaism is moderate in the spectrum of Jewish beliefs and practices. It seeks to avoid the extremes of Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism. Conservative Jews wish to conserve traditional elements of Judaism while permitting reasonable modernization.
- The Orthodox movement, which includes Chabad, is the branch of Judaism that has the strictest adherence to traditional Jewish practices and beliefs. Orthodox Jews strictly observe the Sabbath, religious festivals, holy days and dietary laws.

Worship

- Formal Jewish worship takes place in a synagogue or temple. Orthodox congregations generally refer to their place of worship as a synagogue while Reform congregations often refer to it as a temple. Conservative congregations may have either a synagogue or a temple. Chabad groups (a segment of the Orthodox community) often refer to their houses of worship as Chabad Houses.
- The Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) starts just before sundown Friday night and ends just after sundown Saturday night.

- The Jewish day begins at **sundown**. All Jewish holidays begin at sundown the day before they appear on the calendar you use unless the calendar specifically indicates the Jewish holiday begins at sunset.
- Orthodox and some Conservative organizations prohibit taking pictures, using electronic devices and writing on the Sabbath.

Preparing to Make the Sales Call

- **Contacting a synagogue or temple**

If your council has a local Jewish Committee on Scouting, consider talking to a member of the committee before calling on a synagogue or temple. The committee is there to help you recruit new Jewish COs and should work in partnership with your council membership committee. It may be able to provide an introduction to the rabbi or other spiritual leader of a congregation or the director of another Jewish organization in your community that could become a CO.

Please do not try to contact synagogue or temple staff on Fridays or Saturdays when they are preparing for and observing the Sabbath.

Please do not contact synagogue or temple staff during the two weeks before major Jewish holidays, especially Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover.

- **What to wear**

Synagogues and temples are places of modesty. Visitors should dress modestly. The BSA field or dress uniform is appropriate to wear when visiting synagogues and temples.

Jewish men and some women cover their heads in Orthodox, Conservative and some Reform houses of worship. Head coverings for men are usually found in a basket or box at the entrance to the synagogue. It is a sign of respect to wear one when meeting with the rabbi or the staff.

- **Rules of etiquette between men and women**

The Reform and Conservative movements allow men and women to shake hands and touch but many Orthodox men and women who are not married to each other do not do so. Please do not attempt to try to shake the hand of someone of the opposite sex in an Orthodox synagogue.

- **Using the right vocabulary - a sign of respect and understanding**

Many terms used in the Christian faiths are not appropriate when talking with members of the Jewish faith. Your objective is to create a mutually respectful relationship through sensitivity toward the unique approach that Judaism takes toward religion.

Refer to Jewish houses of worship as synagogues, temples or Chabad Houses. Please do not use the words “church”, “your church,” “churched” or “the church” when referring to a Jewish house of worship.

Judaism does not have a “ministry,” use “ministers,” “pastors,” “reverends” or “priests.” It does not have hierarchical leaders such as “bishops” or the like. The word “rabbi” actually means teacher.

Rabbis and cantors do not “minister” to their congregations. Jews do not refer to a “youth minister” or “pastor” or use the word “minister” in any context.

Jews believe that Jesus was a great man and religious leader but not the “Son of God.” While Christians believe that Jesus will return, Jews believe that the Messiah is yet to come. Most Jews do not observe or celebrate any of the Christian religious holidays or worship any of the Christian saints.

Starting a Jewish Unit

Any Jewish congregation could be a CO. Commonly, a synagogue or temple men’s club or religious school is the designated CO for the synagogue or temple. Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) are social organizations that exist in many American communities. They can also be COs. The executive director, program director or youth director would be the most appropriate contact at a JCC. Local Jewish Federations are organizations that provide social services, conduct charitable campaigns and coordinate community Jewish activities. Federations can also be COs. Jewish fraternal organizations such as the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America also serve as COs.

Scout units hosted by Reform congregations tend to be diverse and inclusive. There is now a resurgence of Scouting within the Reform community. Units at Orthodox synagogues tend to be limited to members of the congregation and other Orthodox Jews due to limitations on their activities required by observance of religious holidays and practices.

Accommodations may need to be made for Jewish Scouts and Scouters who will not participate in training and certain other activities on the Sabbath and major Jewish holidays.

Consult with the Jewish organization you working with to determine the best times for training, parent meetings and the like.

When contacting an Orthodox congregation, please contact your council Jewish Committee on Scouting Chairman or the NJCOS for help and advice. The Orthodox community has a number of cultural and religious traditions and restrictions that the NJCOS would be happy to help you understand for the best results.

Messianic Jews (Jews for Jesus) are not part of the community served by the NJCOS. Members of Messianic Jews are not eligible to earn the Jewish religious emblems.

Resources

Jewish calendar - The Jewish calendar is lunar and is based on the cycles of the moon. Therefore, Jewish holidays are observed on different days on the secular calendar each year. To understand how these holidays may impact your program, please consult the BSA Interfaith calendar at www.Scouting.org/religious.

Jewish Scouting literature - Visit the website of the National Jewish Committee on Scouting at www.JewishScouting.org and learn more about Jewish Scouting activities and the religious emblems program. There are resources found on this website under the NEW UNITS tab at the top of the website landing page.

Letters of Support and Endorsement - The Reform Movement has published a letter of support and endorsement of Boy Scouting. The Jewish War Veterans has also released a letter of support. Please click http://www.jwv.org/programs/patriotic/boy_scouts and <http://www.jewishscouting.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CSA-BSA-Memo-.pdf> to see these letters of support.

The National Jewish Committee on Scouting

The National Jewish Committee on Scouting has been a BSA Committee since 1916. It collaborates closely with the National Religious Relationships Committee of the Boy Scouts of America. It has a chairman appointed by the Chief Scout Executive and includes approximately 45 members from throughout the country. The committee has four regional chairmen who have regional Jewish Committees on Scouting.

A number of local councils have local Jewish Committees on Scouting. If your council does not have a local Jewish committee but there are multiple existing and prospective Jewish chartered organizations in your council, formation of such a committee can be very helpful. The NJCOS has published a guide to help you form a local Jewish Committee on Scouting and will assist you in forming one.

The NJCOS maintains a full range of religious emblems for Jewish Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Venturers and awards for Jewish Scouters. It provides Jewish-content programming and support for councils and units with Jewish COs and Lone Jewish Scouts as described on its website, www.JewishScouting.org. It creates and maintains relationships with national Jewish organizations, international Jewish Scout Associations and provides advice and assistance to local Jewish units and councils. The BSA is represented by the NJCOS as a charter member of the International Forum of Jewish Scouts of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM).

The NJCOS provides advice to the BSA on Jewish matters. The NJCOS website, www.Jewishscouting.org, contains additional information on starting new units on its “New Units” page. The “New Units” page also contains a fully downloadable recruiting manual that may prove helpful.

***Scouting for Jewish Youth* Pamphlet**

The NJCOS has developed a new recruiting pamphlet, *Scouting for Jewish Youth*. Copies are available from the National Service Center (National Alliance Team). The pamphlet can be a valuable tool for you in creating new units at Jewish institutions.

More Information for Youth Serving Executives – Click this link: <http://www.jewishscouting.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/More-Information-for-Youth-Serving-Executives.pdf>

