The twelfth and thirteenth birthday of a Jewish boy and girl is known as a Bar and Bat Mitzvah respectively. On this day you become a full-fledged member of the Jewish community. You assume the obligation of observing all the *Mitzvot*, laws and customs of the Torah.

This booklet serves as an introduction and guide to some of your responsibilities and obligations. It is only a small part of our wonderful heritage that you can taste. As King David wrote in *Tehilim* (Psalms)

Taste and see that it is good.

I wish you much *mazal* and *brocho* and hope this will only be the beginning of your Torah-true education.

With Torah blessings

RABBI A GERSON

Our Beliefs

Judaism believes that not only people have soul, but even animals, plants and minerals. If G-d may be compared with fire, then each soul is a spark from that fire. The soul is the spark of G-d that gives it existence and life.

Human beings have been blessed with a good and an evil inclination. Our task is to follow the good. It is therefore obvious that all people have the ability to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil. G-d rewards us for the good that we do and punishes us for the bad. Since G-d has given us the ability to choose, he can take away that privilege temporarily (like He did with Paroh) or even permanently. We may control the choices; G-d controls the results of these choices. As a result, whatever occurs, happens the way G-d wants it to.

The Jewish people were chosen by G-d to set an example for the rest of mankind, to be a light unto the nations. This is so that all people will become moral and righteous, living their lives in accordance with G-d's laws. There are 613 commandments for The Jewish people. The nations of the world have seven. These are called the Seven Laws of Noach.

The *Mitzvot* are guidelines to help us lead moral and ethical lives. They help refine our character and bring us closer to G-d.

We believe that the soul is part of G-d and is therefore eternal, like G-d is. While we are alive, we strive to perfect ourselves and come close to Hashem through the *Mitzvot*. The closer we come to Hashem here, the closer we come to Hashem in the World-to-Come. The ultimate reward for *Mitzvot* and for being good people is in the World-to-Come, when the soul experiences closeness to G-d without the body interfering. That is true pleasure: all the good things of this world are nothing by comparison. 'Hell' is a temporary stage of preparation for the World-to-Come. There the soul is purified and cleansed of the impurities that 'cover' it as a result of the mistakes and sins it committed, and which stop the soul from being close to Hashem. Sometimes the soul does not fulfil its mission in this world and has to return again to complete the job; this is called reincarnation.

If a person has these 6 qualities, you may assume that he is the *Mashiach*. We believe that the *Mashiach* (Hebrew for 'the anointed one') will be (1) a human being, (2) male and (3) descended from King David. He will be (4) a Torah scholar and (5) a righteous Jew (*Tzaddik*), who (6) will encourage all Jews to lead a moral, Jewish lifestyle. If he does the following 4 things, you may know that he is the *Mashiach*. He will (1) rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash* (the Holy Temple in Jerusalem), (2) gather in all the Jewish exiles from all corners of the world and ultimately, (3) bring all dead back to life in a time of (4) spiritual and material plenty and peace.

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR

You shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am G-d (Leviticus 19:18). – This is a great principle in Torah life. – SIFRA AD LOC

A non-Jew once came before Hillel. "I am prepared to become a Jew," he said, "on condition that you tell me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot."

"Don't do to others what you wouldn't like to be done to you," replied Hillel. "This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary Go and learn it." -TB SHABBAT 31a

Why did Hillel present the negative?

Why did Hillel not tell the would-be proselyte that to love one's neighbour is the whole Torah? Why did he put it in the negative: "Don't do to others what you don't like yourself"?

For a beginner, "loving one's neighbour," even in the sense of "acting with love towards your neighbour," is too grandiose a project. One has difficulty in imagining what precisely it involves in practice. Therefore Hillel gave him – and us - a guideline to which we can always easily refer. What will benefit our neighbour, what will cause him pleasure or pain, joy or grief? No great research project is needed to establish this. We need only consult our own feelings. We have a handy reference book in our mind. You don't like someone to hang up on you on the telephone? Don't do it to someone else. You don't like to be spoken to brusquely, without a smile? Then you know what not to do to the other person. And so on. Innumerable examples spring to mind. Hillel has provided us with an entire guidebook to the mitzvah of love. For all of us who are still beginners in true Torah living there is a great lesson here. We must train ourselves in stages and not try to run before we can walk. The negative criterion is easy to apply, and it opens our minds to the existence and rights of our neighbour – beginning of all spiritual progress.

"This is the Whole Torah"

Hillel did not tell the would-be proselyte that "love is all you need." He said, "The rest is commentary; go and study it." Concern for your neighbour's needs may be the text, but it is meaningless and unrealisable without the commentary, which is the rest of the Torah. That is, you will never reach the goal without committing yourself to the comprehensive program of practical mitzvot.

Hillel was stating in concise form the main thesis of this book – that all mitzvot of the Torah, both those "between man and man" and those "between man and G-d," are designed to refine our character and increase our sensitivity to all that is just and good.

Maimonidies (Moshe ben Maimon) put the basic belief structure of Judaism in 13 principles:-

1. I believe that G-d creates and guides all creatures, and that the Universe only exists because He makes it. There is nothing independent of Him.
2. I believe that G-d is One. He cannot be divided. He alone is our G-d.
3. I believe that G-d is not physical and is not affected by physical things.
4. I believe that G-d was, is and will be: He is above time, because He created time.
5. I believe that G-d is the only One to Whom we should pray.
6. I believe that G-d communicates with man in order to tell him what to do and that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe that the prophecy of Moshe was true and that Moshe was the greatest of prophets.
8. I believe that the entire Torah now in our hands is the same that was given to Moshe, including the Oral Torah.
9. I believe that the Torah will never be changed or replaced, since it comes from G-d.
10. I believe that G-d is aware of all man's thoughts and actions.
11. I believe that G-d rewards the good and punishes the evil.
12. I believe that the *Mashiach* will come at the time G-d considers proper. I anticipate every day that he will arrive.
13. I believe that there will be a revival of the dead, and that the world will achieve a new spiritual and physical level of perfection.

Signs Of The Covenant

TALLIT

From the age of three a Jewish boy is taught to wear a four-cornered garment under one's shirt. It is a constant reminder to the Jew of all the *Mitzvot* in the Torah. This garment is known as *"Talit Kattan"* (small *Talit*).

The large four-cornered garment worn in Shul is called a "*Talit"*

On both garments there are "*Tzitzit*" (fringes). These are wound in the following way: A double knot, six revolutions, double knot, seven revolutions, double knot, eleven revolutions, thirteen revolutions and a double knot. The five knots and eight strings added to the numerical value of the

word "*Tzitzit*" (600), equal six hundred and thirteen, the total number of *Mitzvot* in the Torah.
The *bracha* for the small *tallit* is

"B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, asher kideshanoo b-mitz-votav vetzivanu al mitzvat tzitzit*"

The bracha for the large tallit is

"B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, asher kideshanoo b-mitz-votav vetzivanu vetzivanu lehitatef batzitzit*".

Small *Tallit - Tallit Katan* or *arba kanfos*
Large *Tallit - Tallit Gadol*

TEFILIN

Tefilin is an important Mitzvah at this time of the *Bar Mitzvah* boy's life. For this is the first time he will officially put them on. He will continue to do so every weekday of his life as a sign of the covenant between Ha-Shem and the Jewish people.

There are four references to the mitzvah of wearing *tefilin*, these paragraphs are written on parchment and placed inside the *tefilin*. The subjects dealt with in these paragraphs are 1) The acknowledgement that Hashem is Master over us. 2) The acceptance of Hashem's commandments. 3 & 4) The great wonders and miracles Hashem performed for us when He took us out of Egypt.

The *tefilin shel yad*, (hand), are placed on the bicep of the left arm, the strap is wound seven times around the fore arm and around the middle finger three times. Finally around the hand to form a *"Shin"*. The significance of the hand and head is:- a) We are reminded that our actions (which are done mainly with our <u>hands</u>) and our thoughts (which arise in our <u>heads</u>) are to be guided by Hashem's commandments.
b) We are also reminded that Hashem took us out of Egypt with 'a mighty <u>hand</u>' and an'outstretched <u>arm</u>'.

The *shel yad* is placed near the heart and the *shel rosh* on the head so they may influence our heart and mind to follow in the way of the Torah and *Mitzvot* and to serve Ha-Shem with all our heart and soul.

If for any reason we cannot say the Morning Prayer, we should put on *Tefillin* anyway. Where necessary, this may be done until sunset. We can fulfil the commandment of *Tefillin* by just putting them on and immediately taking them off. It need not take more than a few minutes. If possible, one should also say the *Shema* while wearing the *Tefillin*.

Tefillin are not worn on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*. The reason being that we need 2 signs to remind us at all times of the '*Brit'*, the Covenant (special relationship or Contract) between Hashem and His people. The *Bris* (Circumcision) is one. The second is *Tefillin*. But Shabbat (and the Festivals) is also a sign of the Covenant, so the sign of Shabbat and Festivals replaces that of *Tefillin*.

[Please see directions on how to put on Tefilin on pages 38-40.]

MEZUZA

And you shall write them (the words of the Torah) upon the doorposts of your house and your gates. –DEUTERONOMY 6:9, 11:21

The *mezuza* is really the doorpost. The scroll of parchment that is affixed to the doorpost has become known as the *mezuza*. The first two chapters of the *Shma* are written by hand on parchment by a *sofer* (scribe). The scroll is rolled up and affixed to the right hand doorpost. (The right-hand side when you enter the room). All doors and gates that have a lintel must have a *mezuza* except bathrooms, toilets and very small areas (less than approx. 4 m^2). The *bracha* that is said before affixing a *mezuza* is: B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, asher kideshanoo b-mitz-votav vetzivanu likbo'ah mezuza*.

The two passages are those in which the mitzva of mezusa appears:

Shema: the unit of G-d and our total commitment to His purposes;

Vehaya im shamoa' : the destiny of Israel depends on its loyalty to the Torah.

These are identical with two of the passages in Tefillin.

The symbolism

We are to make our homes and workplaces holy places where G-d is ever present and where we follow His Torah.

Shema' on the doorpost of the Jewish house proclaims that this home will be filled with the spirit of dedication to G-d and that in it the young generation will be brought up to honour the Torah and keep its mitzvot. At the entrance to factory and store it declares that the work done here and the human relations fostered here will be in accordance with the Torah.

Vehaya im shamoa' teaches us to be aware that all that happens to us in our homes and work comes from G-d and is related to our spiritual actions. Good fortune will not turn our heads, misfortune will not sway us. Whatever the circumstances, our task remains the same.

Mezuza proclaims that the Temple of the Torah is wherever Jewish people live or work. This mitzva ensures that whenever we enter or leave our house we encounter G-d's name. This should make us think of His love and to realize that everything in the world is temporary except the service of G-d, which, being spiritual, lasts forever.

KIPPAH

We learn from the Talmud that men would not go more than four cubits (approx. six feet) with an uncovered head. A covered head is a sign of reverence for Ha-Shem as well as inducing humbleness and humility in a person.

Prayer

The *Mitzvah* of 'Prayer' is fundamental to the concept of setting Ha-Shem before us at all times. Prayer is known as 'worship of the heart.' Prayer needs concentration and intention (*kavana*). One must say the words silently. Through prayer we make a daily contact with Ha-Shem. Although we may pray in any language, it is ideal to pray in Hebrew. The book used for *dovening* is called a *Siddur*. The prayers are set in the *siddur* to help us focus on important subjects and issues. Prayer offers us a unique opportunity to talk to G-d about things that we find important. So you can add your own special prayer to the service in a language you understand and about that which is meaningful to you. On each day we are commanded to *doven* at least three times;

1.*Shacharit* - Morning.
2.*Mincha* - Afternoon.
3.*Ma'ariv* - Evening.

On *Shabbat*, Festivals and *Rosh Chodesh* (New Month), we say *Musaph* (Additional Service). And on *Yom Kippur* there is a fifth service, *Neilah* (Concluding Service).

The daily services are made up of the following prayers

Shacharit	**Mincha**	**Mariv**
Morning Blessings (Birchot Hashachar)		
Verses of Song (Pesukei D'Zimrah)	Ashrei	
Barchu		Barchu
Shema and Blessings		Shema and blessings
Amidah	Amidah	Amidah
Tachanun (supplications)	Tachanun	
Torah Reading Monday Thursday, Fast Day	Torah Reading (Fast Days)	
Concluding prayers including Aleinu	Aleinu	Aleinu

The Sh'ma

The Shma is the first Torah verse that a child learns and is the last statement a Jew makes before he/she dies.

The essence of the Mitzvah to recite the Sh'ma is to accept G-d as the ultimate Ruler of the world and mankind. The bold letters ♦♑ spell the Hebrew word for "Witness". We call on Israel (the Jewish People) to be witnesses to the statement that The L-rd is or G-d the L-rd is the One and Only" This is also a protest against any form of polytheism (belief in more than one god). There is one G-d - one commitment.

♦♋□♐⊙♦ ⬥❖ ✞♌♒♎◎❖♳○♦ ⬥❖ &♎◎♦□❒

▪☝⌗♒ ♑ ♎⅄■▪☺▪

Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our G-d, The Lord, the One and Only

The *Sh'ma* consists of three paragraphs taken from the Torah.

1. *D'varim* 6:4-9 The first paragraph teaches the Oneness of Ha-Shem, the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven (*Kabalat ol malchut shamayim*) and the mitzvah of teaching Torah to our children, for through the study of Torah we get to understand more

about G-d and His *mitzvoth.* It includes the symbolic *mitzvoth* of *Tefilin* and M*ezuzah* which dedicate our bodies and our homes to serving G-d.

2.*D'varim* 11:13-21 The second paragraph teaches us the concept of reward and punishment. This means that we are responsible and accountable for our actions. Our connection to the Land of Israel is emphasised in this paragraph. When we keep to the *mitzvoth* and obey the Laws of the Torah, then we are assured that we will be prosperous in the Land of Israel. Otherwise we face exile. There is mention of the *mitzvoth* of *Tefilin* and M*ezuza* as well as teaching Torah to the next generation.

3. Ba*m*idbar 15:37-41 The third paragraph contains the mitzvah of *Tzitzit*. We have learnt that this *Mitzvah* reminds us of the 613 *Mitzvot* in the Torah. The paragraph ends with the mitzvah to remember the Exodus from Egypt, which we must bring to mind every day of our lives.

The Sh'ma is said twice daily, in the morning at the *Shacharit* service and in the evening at the *Ma'ariv* service. The *Sh'ma* is also said just before going to sleep, this is called *"Kriat Sh'ma al hamitah".*

One recites the first Verse of the Sh*'ma* loud so as to concentrate on what one is saying.
It is customary to place one's hand over one's eyes when reciting the first verse to prevent one from becoming distracted.

The second line "*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto L'Olam Va'ed*" is said softly. This verse is not written in the Torah. The tradition is that when Yakov was on his deathbed, his sons recited the Sh'ma and he responded Baruch Shem…" to affirm the belief in One G-d. Another commentary states that this verse is used by the Angels to praise G-d. When Moshe went up Mt Sinai, he heard the angels singing this verse. He brought it down with him and taught it to the Children of Israel. So as not to make the angels angry that he took their words of praise, we say them softly.

When saying the *Sh'ma* one must be careful to say each word separately, as there are 245 words in the *Sh'ma*. When praying alone, one begins with the words "Ayl Melech Ne'eman" (G-d, Faithful King) When praying with a minyan, the *Chazan* repeats the last three words, these three plus 245 equals 248, corresponding to the 248 limbs in ones body. On the word *'Tzitzit'* and at the end of the *Sh'ma*, one kisses ones "*Tzitzit*".

There are *brachot* before and after the *Sh'ma*. Please consult your *Siddur*.

Amidah.

The *Amidah* (standing prayer), or *Shemoneh Esray* (18 Blessings) is the central prayer of all services. It consists of an introduction, body and conclusion.

Introduction- Three *brachot* describing the greatness of Ha-Shem.

Body - Thirteen requests and desires for the individual, community and nation.

On *Shabbat* and festivals there is one *Bracha* mentioning *Shabbat* or the relevant festival.

Conclusion - Three brachot of thanks to Ha-Shem.
At the close of the *Amidah* there is a wish that our lips that are used for prayer are not used for lies, *Lashon Harah* and other unworthy speech.
The *Amidah* is said silently by the whole congregation and at *Shacharit* and *Mincha* is then repeated aloud by the *Chazan*. There is no repetition at *Ma'ariv*.
During the repetition, *Kedusha* (sanctification of Ha-Shem) is inserted between the third and fourth *brachot*.

Kaddish

Kaddish is said by the *Chazan* at the end of each section of the service. *A mourner also recites Kaddish* during the eleven months after the funeral. This prayer is not a prayer of mourning or death. It is a prayer praising Ha-Shem, and showing the mourners readiness to accept the will of Ha-Shem.

Kriat HaTorah

The Torah is divided into portions. Each *Shabbat* a portion (*Sidra*, *Parsha*) is read, completing the whole Torah in a year. We begin on *Simchat Torah* and end the following year on *Simchat Torah*.

Amount of Aliyot on the different days	
Shabbat Afternoon, Monday & Thursday Morning	3
Rosh Chodesh, Chol Hamo'ed and Channukah	4
Festivals and Rosh Hashana	5
Yom Kippur	6
Shabbat	7 (Minimum)

At the end of the reading from the Torah, two people are called up to do *hagbah* and *gelilah*; one to lift up the Torah so everyone can see and the other to roll and fasten it. '*Hagbah'* means 'lift up' and '*gelilah'* means 'to roll'. [See page 41 for guidelines]

Someone who has been through a dangerous situation recites the blessing "*Hagomel*". These situations include coming out jail, travelling through a desert or over the sea, recovering from a serious illness or operation and being saved from a near death experience.

Hallel

Hallel means "praise" and consists of a number of Psalms. It is said on the following days: *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, *Sukkot*, *Channuka* and *Rosh Chodesh*.

Order of Service

Shabbat: *Shacharit*, Torah Reading, *Musaph*.
Chagim (festivals) and *Rosh Chodesh*: *Shacharit*, *Hallel*, Torah Reading, *Musaph*.
Chanukah: *Shacharit*, *Hallel*, Torah Reading.

Proclamation of the New Moon

On the *Shabbat* before *Rosh Chodesh* (the New Month), we announce the day when the new month will begin. A short prayer for the new month is said. This *Shabbat* is called *"Shabbat Mevorchim".*

Tefillah B'Tzibur (Communal Prayer)

Judaism stresses the importance of communal prayer. The impact of many people praying is far greater than if one were to pray alone. Certain prayers may only be said if there is a *Minyan*, such as *Kaddish, Kedusha* and *Bar'chu*. The Torah can only be read if there is a *Minyan.* A *Minyan* consists of ten men over the age of *Bar-Mitzvah*. Communal prayer is always in Hebrew.

Individual Prayers

There are of course prayers that are said individually, for example *Birkat Hamazon* (Grace after meals) and various *Brachot*. The prerequisite for these prayers is that they should be said only in a clean place, free from polluting odours.

Birkat Hamazon - Grace after Meals

Bread is part of our staple diet and we are therefore obligated to "*bench*". to say the *birkat hamazon* after eating bread. The verse states "And you shall eat and be satisfied

and bless Ha-Shem..." Since everyone is satisfied with a different amount of food, the Rabbis fixed 27 grams (± one slice of bread) as the minimum amount of bread after which one must say *birkat hamazon*.

If three or more men over the age of *Barmitzvah* eat together, they form a "*mezuman*" and begin the birkat hamazon with *"Rabotai Nevarech"*. If a minyan eat together, the word *"Elo-him"* is added in the *zimun* (Invitation to say Grace).

Birkat Hamazon is made up of four *Brachot*;

1. Blessing for Nourishment - Composed by Moshe to thank G-d for the manna that we received in the desert.
2. The Blessing for the Land - Composed by Joshua after seeing how Moshe wanted to enter the Land and how anxious the Patriarchs were to be buried there.
3. The Blessing for Jerusalem - Composed by David and Solomon. David who occupied Jerusalem, made reference to Israel, Your people and Jerusalem, Your city. Solomon, following the construction of the Temple, added, Your great and holy House. Following the destruction and the exile, the blessing was changed to include a prayer for the return of the land, the Temple and the Davidic dynasty.
4. The Blessing for G-d's Goodness - Composed by the wise men of Yavneh as an expression of gratitude to Ha-Shem for preserving the bodies of the victims of the Roman massacre at Betar, and for eventually allowing them to be brought to burial.

The *Birkat Hamazon* concludes with brief pleas for Ha-Shem's compassion.

Bracha Acharona

The *Bracha Acharona* is said after eating cakes, confectionery, grapes, raisins, dates, figs, pomegranates or olives, and after drinking wine or grape juice. The Land of Israel was blessed with these particular species and they are therefore given a special *bracha* also called "*Birkat May'aiyin Shalosh*" (Mini Grace).

Borei Nefashot

This blessing is said after eating any food or drinking any liquid other than those mentioned in *Birkat Hamazon* and the *Bracha Acharona*. e.g. meat, fish, cold drink, chocolate, fruit, vegetables etc. If these were eaten in a meal together with bread, only *Birkat Hamazon* is recited and not *Borei Nefashot*

Brachot before performing a Mitzvah

Jews regard the opportunity of performing a *Mitzva*, a wonderful privilege, deserving of a special *Bracha*. These *brachot* have and extra phrase, "...Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us regarding..."

Examples of *Mitzvot* requiring a *Bracha*;
washing hands on arising in the morning
before eating bread,

before putting on *Talit Katan, Talit Gadol, Tefilin*,
before lighting Shabbat or Yom Tov candles,
before performing a *Bris* or *Pidyon Haben*,
on counting the *Omer*,
affixing a *Mezuza*,
immersing vessels in the *Mikva*,
separating *Challah* from the dough.

BRACHOT OVER FOOD, DRINK AND FRAGRANCE

Washing hands before eating bread - *Baruch ata .. asher kideshanu bemitzvotav v'tzivanu al netilat yadayim.*

Before eating bread - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, Hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Before eating cakes & cookies - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, Borei minay mezonot.*

Before drinking wine or grape juice - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, Borei pri hagafen.*

Fruit from a tree - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, melech Ha'Olam Borei Pri Ha'etz.*

Vegetables - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, Borei Pri Ha'adamah.*

Before eating or drinking any other foods - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech ha-olam,*
shehakol neeheye bid'varoh.

Before smelling fragrances or spices - B*aruch ata Ado-nai Elohaynoo melech Ha'Olam boray minay vesamin.*

The Daily Way of Life

The concept of kindness includes all forms of kindness shown by a person whenever he exerts himself on behalf of another. The Torah teaches " And you shall love your neighbour as yourself"(Vayikra 19:18). It is difficult to measure how much you love yourself. Hillel the sage therefore said " What is hateful to you, do **not** do to others."

Acts of kindness included in this *Mitzvah* are:-

- Hospitality - making guests feel comfortable in your home.
- Visiting the ill - in hospital or in their home.
- Comforting mourners - during the week of *Shiva*.
- Provide funds to help poor girls to marry.
- To return a lost article to the owner.

TZEDAKAH

Tzedakah means charity. It is a Torah law to help those who less fortunate than ourselves. Turning a blind eye to someone in need is an *aveirah*, a transgression of the law. Each person must give *tzedakah* according to his means. Ideally one should give 10% of ones income (after Tax has been deducted) or pocket money to needy people or institutions. Pledges to *tzedakah* must be paid promptly especially if it is made in *shul* during the Torah reading service.

PRIORITIES IN TZEDAKA

Charitable Causes in Order of Importance

1. Rescuing captives and hostages.
2. Relief of starving and destitute people.
3. Helping community to build a mikveh.
4. Helping provide Torah education at all levels.
5. Helping to build and maintain a hospital.
6. Helping to build and maintain a synagogue.
7. Provision of dowries for orphaned brides.

Relief of Poverty – Order of Precedence

1. Support of one's parents and relatives.
2. Poor of one's community.
3. Poor of one's own city.
4. Poor of other cities.
5. Non-Jewish poor.
6. For those living in the Diaspora, the poor of the Holy Land have preference over those living elsewhere, but only as regards their minimum basic needs.

Within each category the priorities are :

1. A woman precedes a man.
2. A learned man precedes one is unlearned.
3. Same level of learning – the order of precedence is: Kohen, Levi, Yisrael.

Some institutions in Johannesburg are:-

- ➔ The Chevra Kadisha (The Jewish Helping Hand)
- ➔ The Selwyn Segal
- ➔ Arcadia Home for Children
- ➔ Sandringham Gardens (Home for Senior citizens)
- ➔ Our Parents Home (Home for Senior Citizens)
- ➔ The shul to which you belong
- ➔ Jewish schools and Yeshivot
- ➔ Yad Aharon and Michael (provides food parcels to those who need)

Gemilut Chessed refers to all acts of kindness done for rich or poor. These acts include

- Hospitality to guests. This mitzvah is so great that it is considered even greater than speaking to Hashem, since Abraham excused himself before Hashem and went to look after 3 strangers
- Assisting a poor woman to get married by providing money for a wedding and a reception
- Attending a funeral and helping at the burial.
- Visiting the ill ('*bikkur cholim'*), a) to find out and attend to their <u>needs</u>, b) to <u>pray</u> for them and c) to keep them <u>company</u>
- Making peace between people. Where one is able to speak to the people and they will listen to your advice

LASHON HARAH

The Torah states “You shall not go about as a tale bearer among your people” (Vayikra 19:16). It refers to anything negative we say about another person, whether about that person or about something they said or did. It is forbidden even if we would say it in their presence, even if we would not mind it being said about us, even if it does not cause them any harm or damage and even if it is said as a joke. Our words are considered ‘*lashon harah*’ if they are true. If what we say is not true, it is called ‘slander’ (*Motzi shem Rah*) and is even worse.

The severity of this transgression is explained in this story:

A man went about the community slandering the rabbi and spreading lies about him. One day he felt sorry for what he had done and visited the rabbi to beg his forgiveness. He said he was willing to do anything to make amends. The rabbi told him to take a few feather pillows from his home, cut them open and scatter the feathers to the wind. While it was a strange request for the rabbi to make, it was a relatively simple act to do.
Having done as he was told, he came back to inform the rabbi. “Now,” said the rabbi, “go gather up all the feathers. For despite your obvious sincere remorse and willingness to correct the evil that was done, it is about as possible to repair the damage done by your words as it will be to recover all the feathers.”

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

It is forbidden to cause unnecessary pain or suffering to any living creature. If an animal is dangerous or has some value to humans (medical research) one is permitted to kill it. After all, we are permitted to slaughter animals for food. Hunting is not a Jewish sport.

Before we eat, we must make sure that the animals in our care are fed first.

Kashrut

Kashrut is that section of the Torah that deals with what we are permitted and forbidden to eat. The laws relating to *Kashrut* are there to elevate our eating habits from it's natural animal level to a higher spiritual plane. Eating is not only to satisfy our appetite, but is also an exercise in holiness of the soul. *Kashrut* turns eating into a *Mitzva*. An added benefit is the possible health aspect of eating kosher food. This, however, is not the primary reason for keeping kosher.

Basic Laws

"*Kosher*" means "fit" or "prepared" to be eaten in accordance with Jewish law. The opposite of *kosher* is "*treif*" and refers to food prohibited by the Torah.

Animals

Kosher animals have split hooves and chew the cud. e.g. cows, sheep, goats, certain wild buck. Forbidden animals include camels, pigs, rabbits and carnivores.

Fish.

Only fish with fins and scales are kosher. Examples are soles hake, line fish, salmon.
Seafood, "Creeping things", are *treif*, e.g. crabs, prawns, lobster, crayfish, snails and oysters.

Birds.

Only the birds that are not kosher are listed in the Torah. The kosher kinds are those that are traditionally eaten like chicken, duck, turkey, pigeons and geese.

Shechita.

Before eating animals or fowl, they must be slaughtered in the proper ritual way called *Shechita*. The man who slaughters animals in this manner is called a *Shochet*. He must be a G-d fearing religious Jew who knows the laws and customs of *Shechita*. He takes a razor sharp knife that has no 'nicks' on the cutting edge, and makes a rapid incision across the neck of the animal or bird, severing the wind and food pipe along with the veins and arteries in the neck. This allows for a quick and almost painless method of slaughter as well as a good draining of the blood.

As it is forbidden to eat or drink blood, we must *'kasher'* the meat before cooking it in the following manner:

1.Wash off surface (visible) blood.
2.Soak the meat for 1/2 hour in a bucket used only for this purpose.
3.Place meat on open grid or slanting board and let water run off.
4.The meat must be thoroughly salted with coarse salt and be left untouched for one hour.
5.The meat must then be washed three times to rinse of the salt.

Meat cannot be *kashered* if three days (72 hours) have passed after the animal was slaughtered.

Fortunately, this is all done for you at the kosher butchery. All meat is sold “soaked and salted, ready for the pot”. An exception to this is liver.

Liver contains a great amount of blood and must therefore be roasted over hot coals in order to remove the blood.

Eggs.

Only eggs from kosher birds are kosher. Before using eggs one must ensure there are no blood spots in the egg. If a blood spot is found the whole egg cannot be used.

“You shall not cook a kid (goat, lamb) in its mother’s milk. ”This verse is repeated three times in the Torah. From it we learn that it is forbidden to cook, eat or derive any benefit from a mixture of milk and meat. “Milk” refers to any dairy product.
One may eat meat after milk but one must wait at least three hours to eat milk after meat. There is a custom to wait six hours after meat before eating milk.

All preparation of milk and meat foods is done separately. Foods that are neither dairy nor meat are called *pareve* (neutral) and may be eaten either with milk or meat.

Brachot

Make a Bracha before you bite!

Every living thing – plant, animal or human being – must have food to live. The Creator has provided food for all living things – sunshine and rain make plants grow from the soil, the plants provide food for animals and human beings feed on both plants and animals. The fact that food sustains life is such a ‘natural’ thing, that most people take it for granted. People eat and drink when they are hungry and thirsty, without giving a thought to the wonder of nutrition. We Jews have been taught to look at the daily routine of eating quite differently; we have been taught not to take it for granted. When we say a *bracha* we thank Hashem for looking after our needs and providing us with our sustenance.
Before eating we acknowledge that Ha-Shem is the provider of the food by making a *Bracha* when we finish our meal we say “Thank You to Ha-Shem” for the food we have eaten.

[Please consult your *siddur* for a list of the *Brachot*.]

Processed foods must be checked to ensure all the ingredients are kosher. The Beth Din sends a supervisor (*mashgiach*) to the factories to do this check. The kosher items are listed in the Beth Din Kashrut Guide and many have the “B.D. Diamond” on the box or wrapper. (check out the web page www.uos.co.za for updates)

Shabbat

The *Shabbat* is the very foundation of our faith. It is the sign of the covenant between Ha-Shem and the Children of Israel.

"Between Me and the children of Israel it is a sign for ever..."(Exodus 31,17)

In the *Pasuk*, "Six days shall you labour and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Shabbat to Ha-Shem your G-d, in it you shall not do any manner of work ... for Ha-Shem blessed the Shabbat day and sanctified it"(Exodus 20:9-11), we are told it is a Mitzvah to work for six days of the week and likewise it is a Mitzvah to rest on Shabbat.

There are two areas regarding the observance of Shabbat taken from the ten commandments. In *Shmot*, the fourth commandment states

"*Zachor et Yom HaShabbat*..."- Remember.

And in *Dvarim*, the fourth commandment states

"*Shamor et Yom HaShabbat*..."- Guard.

Zachor-Remember the Shabbat day, referring to the positive aspects of the day, and *Shamor*-Guard the Shabbat day, referring to the negative aspects of Shabbat.

Let's have a look at these two concepts:

The activities we are forbidden to engage in are there to help us realise that it is Ha-Shem who created the world, that He is the Master of the Universe and we are his subjects. We understand that we are not the be all and end all of creation, we may be intelligent and creative, but by refraining from doing a "*Melacha*" we acknowledge that only by the will of Ha-Shem man has "dominion over all the earth", and that Ha-Shem alone is the Source of all creativeness.

A "*Melacha*" is that act that we are not permitted to do on Shabbat. It is defined as:

An act that shows man's mastery over the world by the constructive exercise of his intelligence and skill.

This definition rules out the argument of "How much work is it to switch on a light?" and ones similar to it, because physical exertion has got nothing to do with the concept of a *Melacha*.

Here is a list of the 39 ***Av Melachot***:

1. Ploughing
2. Sowing
3. Reaping
4. Sheaf-making
5. Threshing
6. Winnowing
7. Selecting
8. Sifting
9. Grinding
10. Kneading
11. Baking
12. Sheep-shearing
13. Bleaching
14. Combing raw materials
15. Dyeing
16. Spinning
17,18,19 Weaving Operations
20. Separating into threads
21. Tying a knot
22. Untying a knot
23. Sewing
24. Tearing
25. Trapping or hunting
26. Slaughtering
27. Skinning
28. Tanning
29. Scraping pelts
30. Marking out
31. Cutting into shapes
32. Writing
33. Erasing
34. Building
35. Demolishing
36. Kindling a fire
37. Extinguishing
38. The final hammer blow
39. Carrying from the street into one's home (and visa versa) where there is no *eiruv.*

Modern day situations that are similar to one of these categories are not permitted on Shabbat.

The second concept of *Zachor* relates to the positive aspects of *Shabbat*. Lighting candles, making *kiddush*, mentioning *Shabbat* in our prayers.

There are certain things we may not do on *Shabbat*, yet there are many other activities that we can and must do. These are in the "Remember" category,

Remember to …

- make *Kiddush*,
- *doven* the Shabbat prayers,
- make *Hamotzi* on two *challot*,
- eat three meals,
- sing *Zemirot* at the table,
- be together with one's family without outside distractions, (TV, phone, Internet etc.)
- get a break from the normal routine of the week,
- make Shabbat "An Island in Time".

The lady of the home lights Shabbat candles. Lighting time is 18 minutes before dusk (Check your calendar for the exact time). It is traditional to light at least two candles, symbolising the two aspects of *Shabbat*, *Shamor* and *Zachor*.

Shabbat services begin with *Kabbalat Shabbat*, consisting of a selection of psalms and a poem known as *Lecha Dodi*.

On returning home from *Shul*, it is customary for parents to bless their children. For boys “May the Al-Mighty make you as Ephraim and Menashe...” And for girls, “May the Al-Mighty make you like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah...”
Before making Kiddush we sing *Shalom Aleichem*. This song is an invitation to the two “Angels” that accompany us home from *Shul*. Thereafter we sing *Aishet Chayil*.

The master of the home recites *Kiddush* over a full cup of kosher wine or grape juice. Thereafter the family and guests wash hands and make the bracha “*al netilat yadayim*”.

The master of the home marks the bottom *challah* with the knife, makes *hamotzi* and gives everyone some of the bread.
The meal is then served, *zmirot* are sung and a *Dvar Torah* is shared with the people at the table. After the meal the participants recite *Birkat Hamazon.*

Festivals

Tishrei.

Rosh Hashana falls on the first and second. It is also called *Yom Hazikaron* (Day of Blowing *Shofar*) and *Yom Hadin* (Day of Judgement). The *shofar* is used to "awaken us from the slumber of sin". On *Rosh Hashana* we greet each other by saying*: L'shana Tova Tikatevu V'eteychateymu*. My you be written in the book of life.

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) falls on the tenth. This day is for our personal communication with G-d. We discuss our behaviour during the past year. We ask G-d to forgive us for things we did wrong and to help us to improve in the coming year. The process is called Teshuva. The steps in doing teshuva are

Admitting that I did something wrong
Being sorry about it
Apologising and making it right (apologising to the person, giving back a stolen item).
Making a commitment not to repeat the wrongdoing.

The fast begins at sundown and ends the following evening after dusk. During this period we do not

Eat or drink
bath or shower
wear leather shoes
engage in sexual activities.

On Yom Kippur we are considered like the angels who do not engage in these physical acts. We therefore focus on spiritual matters and not on physical enjoyment.

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) is from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of *Tishrei*. The first and last two days are observed as holy days. The days in between are intermediate days and are called *Chol Hamoed*. During the festival of *Sukkot*, we move out of our houses into a booth called a Sukkah. The roof of the sukkah is made of branches and leaves. We show that we have faith that G-d will protect us from the elements.

We wave the Lulav: *Lulav* (Palm Branch), *Etrog* (Citron), *Haddas* (Myrtle), *Aravoth* (Willows). This symbolizes that G-d is all over (in all directions).

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Shemini Atzeret is the day after *Sukkot*. A special prayer for rain is recited.

Simchat Torah is the day after Shmini Atzeret. We complete the last book of the Torah and commence reading from the first book again. Children carry flags, walk in procession and sing songs.

Cheshvan. No festivals in this month.

Kislev. *Channukah* falls on the twenty-fifth day of this month and lasts for eight days. This festival is celebrated to commemorate the victories of the Maccabbees over Antiochus, the Syrian king. The Greeks attempted to stop the Jews being Jewish by forbidding them to learn Torah, keep Shabbat and do brisses. Yehuda Hamaccabi and his small army managed to chase the Syrian Greek army out of Israel. They cleaned up the Beit Hamikdash and rededicated it. There was one bottle of pure oil left enough for one day that they used to light the Menorah. This lasted eight days. THe festival is celebrated for eight days. On each night a candle is added to the *menorah* so that on the eighth night there are eight candle burning. We use a separate candle, called the *Shamash* to light these lights. A special prayer "*Al Hanissim*" is said as a reminder of these miracles.

Teivet. No festivals in this month. The tenth day however is a fast day because the siege of Jerusalem began on this day. This was the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem and the *Beit Hamikdash.*

Shvat. *Tu Beshvat* is celebrated on the fifteenth day of this month. This is the new year of the trees. we celebrate the day by eating the speacial fruits of Israel; grapes, pomegrnates, olives, dates and figs. Some people plant a tree.

Adar. Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth day of this month. This festival is to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from the wicked Haman. Thanks to Queen Ester and her uncle Mordechai, Haman was executed and the Jews were saved from genocide. Purim means to draw lots. There are four *mitzvot* to perform on Purim:

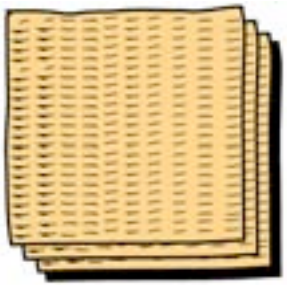
Megilah - Listen to the *Megilah* in the evening and in the morning

Mishlo'ach manot - Give at least two portions of food to at least one friend.

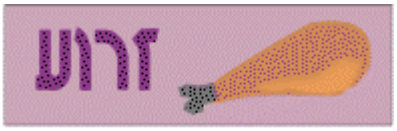
Matanot La'evyonim - Give money to at least two poor people.

Seuda - Enjoy a festive meal during the day.

Nissan. Pesach is celebrated on the fifteenth day of this month and lasts for eight days. The festival is to commemorate the departure of the Jews from Egypt after 210 years of serving the Egyptians as slaves. Pesach is also known as the festival of Passover because in punishing the Egyptians, G-d passed over the houses of the Jewish people. The festival of *Pesach* is also known as: *Zman-Hereitanu* (The Season of Freedom); *Hag-Hamatzot* (The Festival of Matzot); *Chag Haaviv* (The Holiday of Spring). All types of *chametz* (leavened bread) is forbidden on Pesach. This is because the children of Israel had to leave in haste and had no time for the dough to rise. The first two nights of Pesach are celebrated in the Jewish home with a ceremonial supper called the Seder. The Seder table consists of the following:



A. Three matzot representing the three sections of the Jewish people i.e. *Kohanim Levites* and *Israel*.



B. Zeroa - a roasted shankbone representing the Passover offering.

C. Beitzah - Roasted egg representing then Yom Tov offering

D. Charoset - a mixture of nuts, wine, apple and cinnamon. This reminds us of the mortar that our ancestors worked with in Egypt.

E. Maror - bitter herbs or horseradish to remind us of the bitter times the Jews endured as slaves in Egypt.

F. Salt water to remind us of the tears they shed whilst in Egypt.

G. Four cups of wine. Another cup is kept for the Prophet Elijah who we hope will come and bring us redemption.

An integral part of the *Pesach Seder* is the discussion that takes place at the table. It is a positive commandment for a father to tell the story and explain it to his children according to their level of understanding. The *Hagadah* is used as the text for the *Seder*.

Iyar. The holiday of *Lag b'omer* is celebrated in this month. This festival occurs on the thirty-third day of the counting of the Omer. We are commanded in the Torah to count forty-nine days beginning from the second night of Pesach until *Shavuot*. On the thirty-third day a plague which killed many pupils of Rabbi Akiva stopped. it is also the Yortzeit (the day when he died) of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who wrote the Zohar (the book on the Kabbalah).

Sivan. On the sixth and seventh days of this month we celebrate *Shavuot.* It is the festival of Weeks because it begins seven weeks after the counting of the Omer. *Shavuot* is also known as "*Zman Matan Torateinu*" - the season of the giving of the Torah and Ch*ag Habikkurim* - the festival of first fruits. It is on this festival that we read the Book of Ruth which reminds us how Ruth left her religion and her father's home and accepted our Torah.

Shavuot , *Pesach* , and *Succot* are the three Pilgrim Festivals.

Tammuz. The seventeenth day of *Tammuz* is a fast day commemorating break of the siege of Jerusalem. It was on this day that Moses broke the Tablets when he came down the mountain and saw the children of Israel worshipping the Golden calf.

Av. The ninth day of Av is a day of mourning because the two Temples were destroyed and the Jewish people were taken into exile. This fast day is called *Tisha B'Av*. This is a 24 hour fast. We do not wear leather shoes, we do not bath. We sit on the floor. In the evening the book of Aicha (Lamentations) is recitedSpecial prayers called Kinot are recited.

Elul. Although there are no festivals in the month of *Elul*, all our preparations for Rosh Hashana are done. We begin these preparations by sounding the *Shofar* after the morning service through the entire month of *Elul*. The last week is a week of *S'lichot* - special prayers asking the Lord to forgive all our sins.

The Jewish calendar differs from the civil in that the Jewish calendar follows the moon and the civil calendar follows the sun. The solar year has 365 days and the Lunar has 354.
The difference matters because our festivals have to fall in the same season every year (specifically, *Pesach* must fall in the Spring). The seasons depend on the sun, hence our calendar must follow the sun also and we must make up the difference between the sun and moon years (by having leap years). The adjustment is made based on a system devised by the Sages under which the moon (lunar) calendar and the sun (solar) calendar can be synchronized every 19 years. This is done by adding one leap month in the year – seven times in every 19-year cycle. The extra month is called *Adar Sheni* (the second *Adar*).

Rosh Chodesh is the day on which the new moon appears. It is observed with special prayers. At the end of every month that has 30 days we observe two days *Rosh Chodesh* – the 30th day of the previous month and the 1st day of the new month. At the end of a month that has 29 days we have only one day *Rosh Chodesh* – the 1st day of the new month.

Fast Days

Thus says the G-d of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month (Tammuz 17), the fast of the fifth month (Av 9), the fast of the seventh month (Tishrei 3) and the fast of the tenth month (Tevet 10) shall become days of gladness and joy and happy festivals – provided you love truth and peace. – ZECHARIA 8:19

The fasts ordained by the prophets

At the time of the destruction of the First Temple there were still prophets in Israel. These prophets, having witnessed the dire results of national disobedience to the Torah, which they had been warning against for so long, ordained four fasts during the year, corresponding to the four stages of the catastrophe. Their purpose: to help us keep in mind the lessons of our history.

The events commemorated

After so many years of prophetic exhortation, the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians should have acted as an “early warning” of impending disaster. Had we responded, the final catastrophe might have been averted. But the only response was a futile decision to defend the city to the last.

The final collapse and downfall occurred three years later in the searing heat of Tammuz and Av. (The Festivals of the Torah fall in the equable weather of spring and

fall, while the main fasts fall in the extreme heat of mid-summer. We should learn from this to avoid extremes.)

Gedalia, a righteous man, a follower of the prophet Jeremiah, accepted the post of governor of Judea subject to the Babylonian conqueror. He was murdered on Rosh Hashana by a Jew, a member of the royal family, for nationalistic motives. The assassin was apparently a member of the war party that refused to accept defeat by the Babylonians, and were prepared to sacrifice the remnant of Jews remaining in Eretz Yisrael for the sake of their ultra-nationalistic delusions. As a result of this futile act of rebellion, the remnant of Jews left in Eretz Yisrael dispersed, leaving the country desolate. This was the final blow. The fixing of this fast on a par with the others teaches us, say the Rabbis, that the death of the righteous is a grievous a blow to Israel as the destruction of the Temple. We might add that refusal to heed the words of the prophets, even after the catastrophe they predicted had occurred, only completes the work of the enemy.

PATTERN OF THE FAST DAYS

FAST	EVENT	SIGNIFICANCE
10 Tevet	Jerusalem besieged (589 BCE)	Early warning
17 Tammuz	Walls of Jerusalem breached (586 BCE)	Beginning of disaster
9 Av	First and Second Temples destroyed (586 BCE and 70 CE)	Final fury
3 Tishrei	Assassination of Gedalia ben Ahikam (586 BCE)	End of the last official Jewish rule in Israel

The purpose of fasting

Just as the Torah's joyous Festivals provide us with opportunities to reflect on and absorb the great truths of our special relationship with G-d, so the Fast Days encourage us to reflect on the failings which brought upon us these national disasters.

According to our Sages, the First Temple was destroyed because of the sins of idolatry, immorality and bloodshed; the Second Temple because of the more subtle character defects of quarrelsomeness, causeless hatred and love of money. If you want to know which are worse, say our Sages, compare the lengths of the respective exiles. The Babylonian exile lasted only 70 years, while our exile is still not completed after more than 1900 years. The reason is that a person who falls into open and obvious crimes, such as idolatry, etc., is that much closer to repentance. Hidden and inwards sins, like

causeless hatred, are much harder to track down and eradicate and therefore further from repentance; hence the longer exile.

Fasting is a sign of contrition, and helps us to reflect on what we can do to correct these failings which are still with us to the present day. It is also an exercise in self-control, a factor which is essential to any plan for self-improvement.

The Bible

The Books of the TaNaCh (*Torah*, *Neviyim*, *Ketuvim*) are as follows:

Torah	Nevi'im (Prophets)	Ketuvim (Writings)
Breishit Genesis	*Yehoshua* Joshua	*Tehilim* Psalms
Shmot Exodus	*Shoftim* Judges	*Mishle* Proverbs
Vayikra Leviticus	*Shmuel* Samuel	*Iyov* Job
Bamidbar Numbers	*Melachim* Kings	*Kohelet* Ecclesiastes
Dvarim Deuteronomy	*Yeshayahu* Isaiah	*Esther* Esther
	Yirmiyahu Jeremiah	*Roet* Ruth
	Yechezkiel Ezekiel	*Eichah* Lamentations
	12 Minor Prophets*	*Shir Hashirim* Song of Songs
		Daniel
		Ezra & *Nechemia*
		Divrei Hayamim Chronicles 1 & 2

*The 12 Minor Prophets are: *Hoshea, Yoel, Amos, Ovadiah, Yonah, Michah, Nachum*, *Chabakuk, Zephaniah, Chaggai, Zecharia and Malachi.*

The Twelve tribes of Israel are:-

Reuven	Levi	Shimon	Yehuda
Yissachar	Zevulu	Dan	Naftali
Gad	Asher	Yosef*	Benyamin

Sometimes Yosef is counted as 2 tribes – Efraim and Menashe. In that case, Levi is not counted as one of the tribes, but as a special, separate group

This is what G-d did during the creation:

Light and Darkness

Separate Heavens and water

Land and Water

Sun, Moon & Stars

Birds and Fish

Animals & Man

Shabbat - G-d Created Rest

The 10 Commandments

Man and G-d	Man and Man
1. I am the L-rd your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (the mitzvah to believe in Hashem)	6. You shall not murder.
2. You shall have no other gods before Me (You shall not make an idol)	7. You shall not commit incest or adultery.
3. You shall not use the name of G-d in vain	8.You shall not steal (kidnap).
4. Remember the Shabbat and keep it holy	9.You shall not testify falsely.
5. Honour your father and mother	10.You shall not desire (the belongings of another).

Israel the Holy Land

HOW ISRAEL DEVELOPED:

After the Jews were exiled 2000 years ago they were dispersed around the world. These Jews kept their Jewish ness but also adapted to the surroundings of the country that they lived in. For example the European Jewry adopted the surrounding languages i.e.: French, German…they dressed like them, and adopted some of their customs. During the 2cnd world war, Jews were persecuted by the German government. They were killed, enslaved and expelled out of European society. Some tried to escape onto ships that were leaving Germany headed for other countries around the world. But those countries turned the ships away and the Jews were sent back to Germany and put into concentration camps. Now, the Jewish people had become refugees, no country wanted them and they were forced into slavery until the war was over. The war ended in 1945, the Jews were freed by the allies and now had to return to their homes which no longer existed, therefore the Jews needed somewhere safe to live where they would not have to answer to any foreign govt and could live freely as Jews with their own country and own army. Therefore in 1948 the world agreed to give the land of Israel to the Jewish people.

HOW THE JEWS MADE ISRAEL SO SPECIAL:

WELL…many chalutzim [pioneers] arrived in Israel to find swamplands. Jews united together to build and create a beautiful land for themselves and their future generation's. Kibbutzim were started as the Jews did not have a lot of money and needed to share all the resources that they had. On the kibbutz every one was treated

the same, had the same things and lived the same way. As Israel began to be more developed many more settlements began to spring up and the population grew and grew. And now our beautiful land has almost 5 million Jews living, working, shopping and *davening* in a 1st world country that has contributed amazingly to the world. This accomplishment was due to the idealistic vision of our brothers and sisters that dedicated their lives to building up our land so that we can live happily and fulfil our forefather's dreams of living as one united nation in our promised land.

HAVE WE ALWAYS LIVED IN PEACE?

As Israel was born in 1948, 5 Arab nations attacked our small country. This was the war of Independence. The next war was fought in 1967 called "the 6-day war". In 1973 the Yom Kippur war was fought. Israel was victorious in all three battles. These victories were a miracle from Hashem. We were such a new country, such a small country with a small army, fighting against some of the most powerful empires of the Arab world. Currently Israel is fighting a different kind of war and internal war against terrorism. We are being plagued by homicide bombers where the enemy have chosen to target innocent civilians instead of fighting a fair war of army against army. Please G-d, it will end soon and no more lives on either side will be lost. We have always gotten through these difficult times by believing in G-d, sticking together as Jews and supporting our fellow Jews in the holy land.

WHY IS ISRAEL SO SPECIAL TO US?

Israel is our pride and joy. Jews never stand alone when Israel is around. Jews all over the world have an overwhelming feeling of love and responsibility towards Israel and one another. We see this in many situations where Jews in *chutz la'aretz* (the diaspora) have been in danger or need and Israel has come to their assistance. An example was the raid into Entebbe. A passenger plane on route to Israel carrying 103 Jews was hijacked by terrorists and held hostage in Uganda. Yonatan Netanyahu led a special

army unit to Uganda to rescue them. This was a very dangerous mission for the Israeli army, but Jews were in need and the most important thing was to save them. The mission was successful and every passenger was returned safely to Israel. Unfortunately Netanyahu did not come home, eye whiteness say that he ran 100 metres in front of his platoon to create a decoy. He gave up his life for what he believed in the most "his intense love for his fellow Jews". Operations like this have proven Israel's love and commitment to her people. *The Law of Return* allows any Jew to come and live in Israel, no questions asked. No matter where you are in the world, Israel will be there to help you. How blessed we are to have such a united nation.

WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO ISAREL?

.Israel is the ultimate home for the Jews We go hand in hand when we unite and live together one nation under the rule of one G-d in one land.

HATIKVAH

In The Jewish heart *A Jewish spirit still sings,*	Kol ode balevav P'nimah -	
And the eyes look east *Toward Zion*	Nefesh Yehudi homiyah	
Our hope is not lost, *Our hope of two thousand years,*	Ulfa'atey mizrach kadimah Ayin l'tzion tzofiyah.	
To be a free nation in our land,	Ode lo avdah tikvatenu Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim:	
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem	L'hiyot am chofshi b'artzenu - Eretz Tzion v'Yerushalayim	

Death and Mourning

Death is a night that lies between two days - the day of life on earth and the day of eternal life in the world to come. We learn in *Pirkei Avot* that this world is the preparation for the world to come. The soul of man is eternal and on death returns to Ha-Shem in Heaven. The body must return to the dust from whence it came.

In order to help those left behind, the mourners, there is a set system of mourning. This does not mean that when the period of mourning ends, the pain goes away and the memories disappear. It helps people too deal with the situation.

THE FUNERAL

The body is placed in a plain pine coffin and accompanied by the mourners, their family and friends to the grave. The coffin is lowered into the grave and covered with sand. *Kaddish* and other prayers are recited at the service.

KRIAH

The mourners (mother, father, brother, sister, spouse, son and daughter) must tear their shirt or jacket just before the funeral. A child mourning a parent, tears on the left hand side, the other mourners on the right hand side. The tearing of the garment is an opportunity for psychological relief. It allows the mourners to give vent to their pent up anguish by means of a controlled, religiously sanctioned act of destruction. The *bracha "Baruch...dayan Ha'emet"* (Ha-Shem is the true Judge) is said by the mourners. This statement means that they may not understand what has happened and why it has happened, but they accept that this is the will of Ha-Shem.

SHIVA

The first week of mourning is called Shiva. During this time, the mourners stay at home. They sit on low chairs. They do not wear leather shoes nor bathe or have marital relations. These are all physical acts of enjoyment and pleasure and are not in keeping with the mood in a house of mourning. Prayers take place in the home. It is a great mitzvah to visit the mourner and comfort him/her. The visitor must sit quietly near the mourner and speak only when spoken to by the mourner. One should not kiss nor touch the mourners. The "party atmosphere" that we sometimes see in a house of mourning is not the way it should be.

SHLOSHIM

30 For a month after the funeral, the mourners are not permitted to have haircut nor attend any happy or festive occasions. A child does not attend public gatherings like weddings *barmitzvahs* etc. for the entire year after the funeral. This is as a sign of respect for the parent and all that they had done for the child.

Kaddish

The kaddish is not a prayer for the dead. There is no mention of death. On the contrary, it is an affirmation of life, a declaration of faith in the future. The bereaved person stands before the community of Israel and declares - in spite of the tragedy that has befallen him – that he remains confident that G-d's name will one day be recognized as great and holy throughout the entire world. And, he adds, this is not something for the dim and distant future; he wants it to be realized now, speedily and in our days.

Here speaks the true spirit of Israel.
The Torah deals with mortality by transcending it.

KADDISH

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba. (Amen) B'alma di'vra chi'rutei, v'yamlich malchutei, b'cha'yay'chon u'v'yo'may'chon u'v'chayei di-chol-beit yisra'eil ba-a-ga-la u-vi'zman kariv v'im'ru amein.

Y'hei shmei raba m'vorach l'olam u'l'ol'mei ol'maya.

Yitbarach, v'yishtabach, v'yitpa-ar v'yit'ro'mam, v'yitnasei, v'yit'hadar v'yit-aleh, v'yit'halal, sh'mei di-ku'desha brich hu.

L'eila, (ool'eila) min-kol-bir'chata v'shirata, tush'bechata v'nechemata di-amiran b'alma, v'im'ru amein.

Tit'kabel tzelat'hon u'va'huton d'chol beit yisrael kadam ahuvon di'bishmaya v'imru amein.
Y'hei shlama raba min shemaya v'chayim aleinu v'al-kol-yisraeil v'im'ru amein.

Oseh shalom bim'romav hu ya-a-se shalom aleinu v'al kol yisraeil v'im'ru amein.

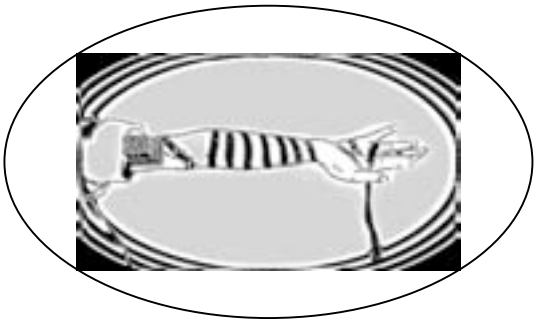
SHUL TERMINOLOGY

Siddur - Prayer Book.
Machzor - Prayer Book for Yom Tov.
Sefer Torah - The scroll of the five books of Moses.
Aron Kodesh – The Holy Ark
Parochet - The curtain in front of the Ark.
Ner tamid - The lamp burning in front of the Ark
Yad - The pointer used when reading from the Torah
Bima - The platform on which the Chazan stands.
Sidra - The portion of the Torah read on Shabbat
Haftorah - The portion read from the Prophets on Shabbat
Aliyah - Honour of making the Bracha on reading the Torah
Hagba - Lifting the Torah.
Glila - Rolling and dressing the Torah
P'sicha - Opening the Ark

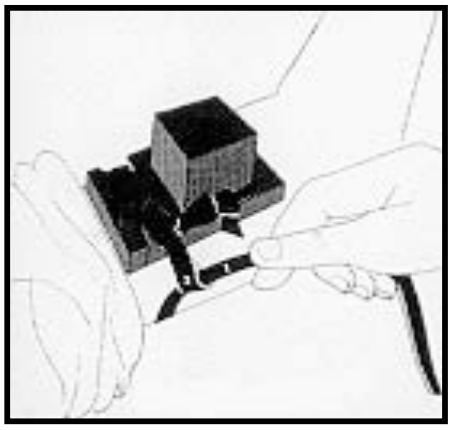
CONCLUSION

You may think that you have only tasted a little but we know you have already learnt a great deal. Now you have a further obligation, as Hillel, our great Sage teaches us, to join us in being one of the disciples of Aaron, in loving your fellow man and teaching him what you have learnt. By doing this you can bring him closer to the Torah as we have tried to bring you.

THE MITZVAH
OF TEFILIIN

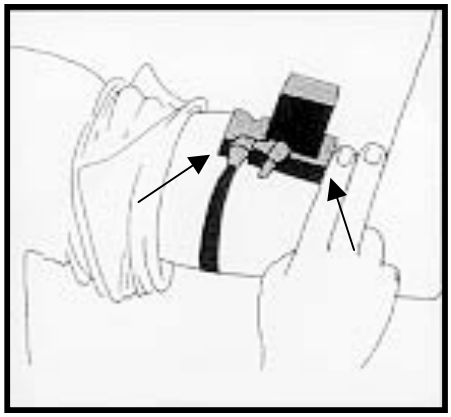


The Sequence of putting on Tefillin. □"□□



The *Tefillin Shel Yad* (arm Tefillin) is placed upon the arm with the elongated section (through which the strap is threaded) facing towards the shoulder.

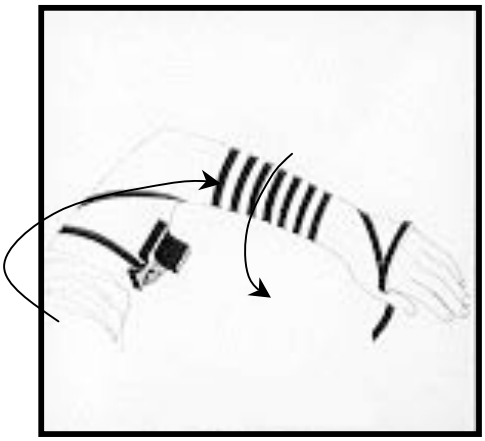
Before securing the Tefillin by pulling the strap tight, the blessing for the arm Tefillin is said.
Baruch Atah Ado-nai Elo-haynu Melech Ha'olam, asher kideshanoo b'Mitzvotav v'tzivanoo Lehaniach Tefillin



The Box of the *tefillin* should rest on the bicep, not too close to the elbow or right next to the shoulder.

It should also stand upright on the bicep when the arm is held outstretched with palm facing upwards.

When the arm is relaxed with palm facing towards the body, the box should lean slightly towards the heart.

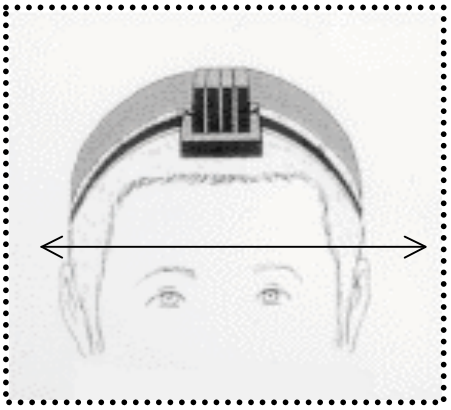


When tightened, the strap is wound once on the upper arm across the inside of the elbow.

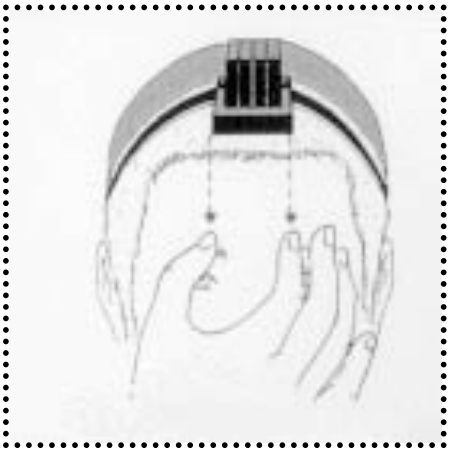
The strap is wound over the arm towards the body as opposed to under the arm towards the body.

It is wound 7 times along the lower arm.

It is wound across the wrist and once across the palm. The remainder of the strap is wound on the last turning on the hand.

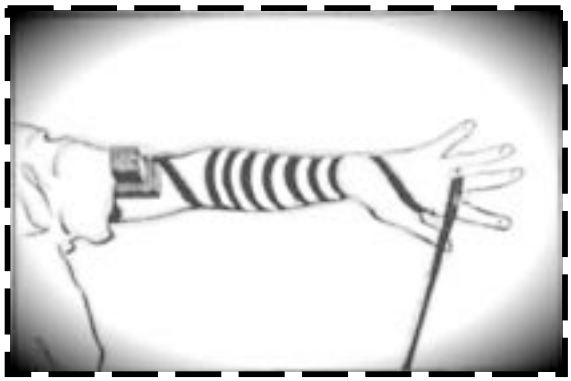


The *tefillin shel rosh* (head tefilin) is placed on the head. The front of the box must rest above the hairline – or where the hairline originally was. If the fit is too wide and the front rests below the hairline, it is incorrectly placed and the *Mitzvah* is not fulfilled properly.



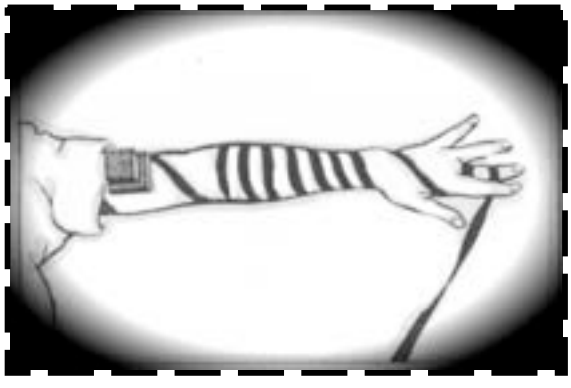
Additionally, the box should rest squarely on the centre of the head. One should always ensure that the *tefillin* are placed exactly, as the Mitzvah is dependant more on the placement of the *Batim* (boxes) than the straps.

When the box is secured on the head the second blessing – for the head *tefillin* - is said.
Baruch Atah Ado-nai Elo-haynu Melech Ha'olam, asher kideshanoo b'Mitzvotav v'tzivanoo Al Mitzvat Tefillin – Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto le'olam va'ed.

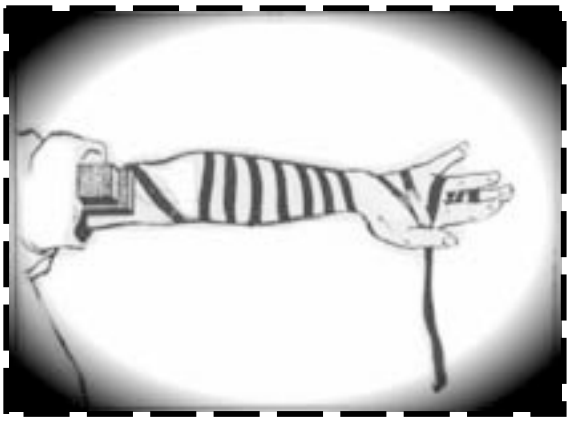


The strap on the hand is unwound, leaving only the strap across the wrist/back of hand.

It is wound once on the **first joint** of the middle finger - Saying
Ve'Airastich li leOlam….



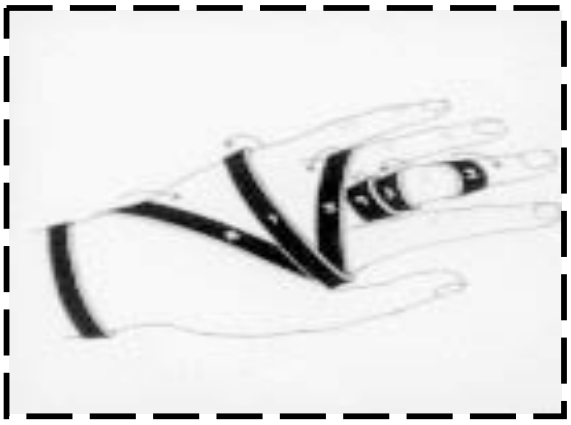
It is wound again on the **second joint** of the middle finger - Saying
Ve'Airastich li betzedek uvemishpat
Uvechesed uverachamim…..



A third ring is made **over the first ring** (first joint) - Saying

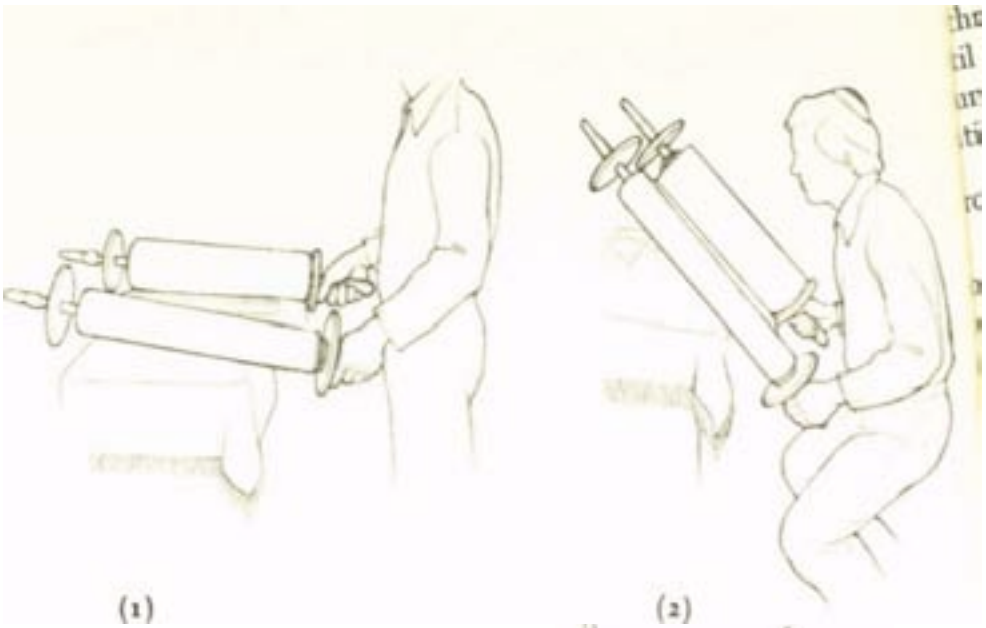
Ve'airastich li beEmuna veyadat et A-d-o-nai.

The strap is wound over the ring finger and back towards the base of the thumb. This should form a 'V' shape on the back of the hand.



The final step is to wind the strap in the middle of the 'V' – this should form an approximation of the Hebrew letter 'SHIN'.

Procedure for Hagbah



(3)

(1) Roll open the Torah scroll so that three columns of script are visible. A seam attaching two sections of parchment should also be visible, preferably centred, so that it may absorb any undue stress on the parchment that may occur when the scroll is lifted.

(2)With one hand on each of the *eitz hayim* handles, slide the Torah scroll toward you until it is halfway off the table. Then, bending the knees, apply leverage downward. (3) Bring the scroll to an upright position and lift it upward as you straighten yourself up. (4) Holding the Torah aloft, turn your body in all directions, or at least somewhat to the right and left, so that the Torah script can be seen by everyone in the congregation. The whole purpose of this ritual is to enable the congregation to see the Torah script. When they do, they say:

This is the Torah that Moses set before the children of Israel (Deut.4:44); by the hand of Moses according to the command of God (Num.9:23).

Sit down in a seat prepared for you on the *bimah* and let the one who is to do *glilah* take over with the dressing of the Torah. After he is through dressing the Torah, remain seated, holding the Torah, until the Prayer Leader is ready to take it. In some congregations, a young boy may be sent up to take the Torah from you and to hold it until it is time to return it to the Ark.

Test yourself:

OUR BELIEFS

Q. DO ALL PEOPLE HAVE A SOUL?
A. Yes. Not only do all people have a soul, but even the animals, plants and minerals. If G-d may be compared with fire, then each soul is a spark from that fire. This soul is the spark of G-d which gives it existence and life.

Q. DO WE HAVE FREE CHOICE?
A. Yes. We possess a good inclination and an evil inclination. Our task is follow the good inclination. Therefore, all people have the ability to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil. We are rewarded for the good we do and punished for the bad.

Q. IF WE HAVE FREE CHOICE, DOES THIS NOT LIMIT G-D?
A. No. Firstly, because G-d is the One who gives us this ability to choose. If Hashem wanted, He could take it away from us temporarily (as He did with Pharoah) or even permanently. Secondly, although we control our choices, Hashem controls the results of these choices. As a result, whatever occurs, happens the way Hashem wants it to.

Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JEW AND A NON-JEW?
A. The Jewish people were chosen by G-d to set an example for the rest of mankind, to be 'a light to the nations' so that all people will become moral and righteous, living their lives
following G-d's laws. We Jews have 613 commandments, non-Jews have 7.

Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MITZVOT?
A. Mitzvot are the rules by which we lead moral lives. The mitzvot make us into the type of people we should be, refining us and bringing us closer to G-d.

Q. DO WE BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH, HELL OR REINCARNATION?
A. We believe that the soul is part of G-d and is therefore eternal, like G-d is. While we are
alive, we strive to perfect ourselves and come close to Hashem through the mitzvot. The
closer we come to Hashem here, the closer we come to Hashem in the World-to-Come. The ultimate reward for mitzvot and for being good people is in the World-to-Come, when the soul experiences closeness to G-d without the body interfering. That is true pleasure: all the good things of this world are nothing by comparison. 'Hell' is a temporary stage of preparation for the World-to-Come. There the soul is purified and cleansed of the impurities that 'cover' it as a result of the mistakes and sins it committed, and which stop the soul from being close to Hashem. Sometimes

the soul does not fulfil its mission in this world and has to return again to complete the job; this is called reincarnation.

Q. WHO WILL BE THE MASHIACH?
A. If a person has these 6 qualities, you may assume that he is the Mashiach. We believe that the Mashiach (Hebrew for 'the anointed one')will be (1) a human being, (2) male and (3) descended from King David. He will be (4) a Torah scholar and (5) a righteous Jew (Tzaddik), who (6) will encourage all Jews to lead a moral, Jewish lifestyle. If he does the following 4 things, you may know that he is the Mashiach. He will (1) rebuild the Beit HaMikdash, (2) gather in all the Jewish exiles from all corners of the world and ultimately, (3) bring all dead back to life in a time of (4) spiritual and material plenty and peace.

TALLIT

Q. FROM WHERE DO WE LEARN THE LAW OF TZITZIT?
A. From the third paragraph of the Shema which begins Vayomer Hashem el Moshe'.

Q. HOW DO WE PUT ON A TALLIT GADOL?
A. The bracha is made when holding the Tallit. Then it is placed on one's head and the ends
thrown over the left shoulder, for a few moments.

TEFILLIN

Q. WHY DO WE WEAR TEFILLIN?
A. Because Hashem commanded us in His Torah 'to tie them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be boxes between your eyes.'

Q. WHAT LESSONS ARE WE SUPPOSED TO LEARN FROM FACT THAT THE TEFILLIN ARE WORN ON OUR ARM AND OUR HEAD?
A. a) We are reminded that our actions (which are done mainly with our hands) and our thoughts (which arise in our heads) are to be guided by Hashem's commandments.
b) We are also reminded that Hashem took us out of Egypt with 'a mighty hand' and an
'outstretched arm'.

Q. WHAT DO TEFILLIN CONSIST OF?
A. Two small leather boxes (Battim) each containing four passages of the Torah written on parchment in special script, and leather straps (Retzuot) to secure the boxes to the arm and head respectively. The head box is called the 'Shel Rosh' and the arm box is called the 'Shel Yad'.

Q. IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE TEFILLIN SHEL YAD DIFFER FROM THE TEFILLIN SHEL ROSH?

A. a) The four passages in the 'Shel Yad' are written on one piece of parchment, while in the
'Shel Rosh' the same four passages are each written on separate pieces of parchment.
b) The 'Shel Yad' consists of one compartment and the 'Shel Rosh' has 4 compartments.
c) The 'Shel Rosh' has the letter 'Shin' on its sides, the 'Shel Yad' does not.

Q. WHAT SUBJECTS ARE COVERED IN THESE PASSAGES?
A. Passage 1) The acknowledgement that Hashem is Master over us. Passage 2) The
acceptance of Hashem's commandments. Passages 3 & 4) The great wonders and miracles Hashem performed for us when He took us out of Egypt.

Q. WHAT DO WE DO IF WE CANNOT PUT TEFILLIN ON IN THE MORNING?
A. If for any reason we cannot say the Morning Prayer, we should put on Tefillin anyway.
Where necessary, this may be done until sunset. We can fulfil the commandment of
Tefillin by just putting them on and immediately taking them off. It need not take more than a few minutes. If possible, one should also say the Shema while wearing the Tefillin.

Q. WHY DO WE NOT PUT ON TEFILLIN ON SHABBAT AND FESTIVALS?
A. We need 2 signs to remind us at all times of the *'Brit'*, the Covenant (special relationship or Contract) between Hashem and His people. Circumcision is one. The second is Tefillin. But Shabbat (and the Festivals) is also a sign of the Covenant, so the sign of Shabbat and Festivals replaces that of Tefillin.

PRAYERS

Q. HOW MANY TIMES A DAY DO WE SAY THE 'SHEMA' AND WHEN?
A. Three times: at Shacharit, Maariv and again before going to sleep.

Q. WHAT IS THE 'AMIDAH' AND HOW IS IT TO BE SAID?
A. The main prayer of each service. We say it quietly, while standing straight, facing
Jerusalem, with our feet together. On weekdays it consists of 19 Brachot (blessings); 3
Introductory, 13 middle and 3 concluding blessings. The middle blessings are the prayers for our daily needs.

Q. HOW DOES THE SHABBAT (OR FESTIVAL) AMIDAH DIFFER FROM THE WEEKDAY AMIDAH
A. On Shabbat and Festivals we leave out the prayers for our daily needs and say instead a single bracha dealing with the significance of Shabbat or the

respective Festival. (In other Words the Shabbat and Festival Amidot contain 7 brachot).

Q. WHAT IS 'KEDUSHAH'?
A. It is the prayer added by the Chazan at the beginning of the third bracha of the Amidah, said when he repeats the Amidah. It repeats the angels' praise of Hashem – 'Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh… - Holy, Holy, Holy is the L-rd of Hosts' – and the bracha deals with the holiness of Hashem.

Q. WHAT IS 'KADDISH'?
A.'*Kaddish'* is a special prayer of praise to Hashem written in Aramaic beginning with
*'Yitgadal Veyit-kadash…*Magnified and sanctified be His Great Name…' It contains the declaration – *'Yehei Shmei…'*('Let His Great Name be blessed for ever') which should be said with great enthusiasm.

Q. WHAT IS THE MOURNER'S KADDISH?
A. It is the Kaddish said by mourners and those who have *'Yahrtzeit'*, at the end of the service after Aleinu and after reading the Psalm of the Day – 'Shir Shel Yom'.

Q. WHAT IS 'AL HANISSIM' AND WHEN IS IT SAID?
A. 'Al Hanissim' means 'For the miracles'. We say this prayer during the festivals of
Chanukah and Purim, thanking Hashem for the miracles He has done for us. We say it in the Amidah after *Modim* and in the Grace After Meals (*Birkat HaMazon*).

Q. WHAT IS 'YA'ALEH VEYAVO' AND WHEN IS IT SAID?
A. '*Ya'aleh Veyavo'* is the special prayer we say in the Amidah right before Modim on Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMoed and in the Grace After Meals (Birkat HaMazon).

TORAH READINGS

Q. WHAT IS AN 'ALIYAH LETORAH'?
A. This means 'going up to the Torah'. The man who is called up to the Torah is getting an '*aliyah la-Torah'.*

Q. WHAT ARE 'HAGBAH' AND 'GELILAH'?
A. 'Hagbah' means 'lift up' and *'gelilah'* means 'to roll'. At the end of the reading from the Torah, two people are called up to do hagbah and gelilah; one to lift up the Torah so everyone can see and the other to roll and fasten it.

Q. WHAT IS 'BIRKAT HAGOMEL'?
A. This is a blessing a person says after being saved from a dangerous situation (a man says
it in front of the Torah).

SHABBAT

Q. WHAT REASON DOES THE TORAH GIVE FOR COMMANDING US TO OBSERVE THE SHABBAT?

A. Because Hashem created the universe in six days and made the seventh day holy and rested on it.

Q. WHAT ARE WE NOT ALLOWED TO DO ON SHABBAT?

A. 'Melecht Machshevet', which means 'creative activity'. This includes many activities,
among them lighting fire, cooking, writing and carrying outside.

Q. WHAT TIMES DOES SHABBAT START AND FINISH?

A. It starts on Friday afternoon 18 minutes before sunset (the times can be found in Jewish
newspapers and Calendars) except in the summer here in Johannesburg, when we do not start later than 6.15 p.m. Shabbat ends on Saturday evening after 3 stars can be seen in the sky, about 30 minutes after sunset.

Q. WHY DO WE HAVE TWO LOAVES (CHALLOT) ON THE TABLE ON FRIDAY NIGHT AND SHABBAT DAY?

A. To remind us of the double portion – Lechem Mishna' – of manna which fell on Friday in the desert.

Q. WHY IS THERE A TABLECLOTH UNDER AND A CLOTH OVER THE CHALLOT?

A. a) To remind us of the layers of dew which surrounded the manna.
b) So the challot are covered during Kiddush, since a bracha is normally said on bread first. By covering them, the challot are not embarrassed by being overlooked.

Q. WHAT IS 'KABBALAT SHABBAT'?

A. The service said before Maariv on Friday evenings, through which we accept Shabbat at Shul, made up of 6 Psalms, the Lecha Dodi song and the Psalm of Shabbat.

Q. WHAT IS THE ORDER OF THE SERVICE ON SHABBAT MORNING?

A. 1) Shacharit, 2) the Torah reading and Haftorah, then 3) Musaf.

Q. WHAT IS THE 'MAFTIR' AND 'HAFTORAH'?

A. On Shabbat and Festival mornings the Rabbis instituted that we should read a portion from the Prophets in addition to the weekly Portion from the Torah. The portion from the Prophets is called the Haftarah. But before this, the person called to read the Haftarah is also honoured with a short portion from the Torah reading as well, which is called the Maftir.

Q. WHAT IS 'SHALOSH SEUDOT'?

A. The expression means 'three meals', since we are obliged to have three Shabbat meals – one in the evening, one in the daytime after Shacharit and Musaf, and one in the afternoon. This last meal is usually called 'Shalosh Seudot' (or more correctly Seudah Shlishit). Many Synagogues serve a Seudah Shlishit (a third meal) between Mincha and Maariv on Shabbat.

Q. WHAT IS 'HAVDALAH'?

A. This is the prayer said at the conclusion of the Shabbat or Festival. After Shabbat it consists of four brachot:

a) on wine,
b) on spices,
c) on flames of a candle (since we were not permitted to make fire on Shabbat),
d) on the various divisions established by Hashem; between day and night, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations and between the Shabbat and weekdays.

THE FESTIVALS

Q. WHAT IS 'YOM TOV'?

A. Literally, 'a good day', referring to the Festivals.

Q. WHAT ARE THE 'SHALOSH REGALIM'?

A. Literally, 'three feet', referring to the three pilgrim festivals – Pesach, Shavuot and Succot when all Jews walked to the Beit HaMikdash in Jerusalem.

Q. WHAT IS 'CHOL HAMOED'?

A. Literally, 'the weekdays of the Festival', referring to the middle days between –

a) The first 2 days of Pesach and the last 2 days.
b) The first 2 days of Succot and the last days – Shmini Atzeret & Simchat Torah.

On these days, important work that cannot be done later, is permitted.

Q. WHAT IS THE PRAYER BOOK USED ON FESTIVALS?

A. A 'Machzor', literally a 'cycle', the cycle of our yearly prayers.

Q. WHAT OTHER FESTIVE (HAPPY) DAYS DO WE OBSERVE TODAY?

A. Lag BaOmer, Tu BiShvat (the New Year for trees), Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel Independence Day) and Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Liberation Day).

Q. WHAT ARE THE 2 SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS OF PESACH?

A. The Torah forbids having chametz (leavened products) in one's possession or eating it during Pesach.

Q. WHAT EXACTLY IS 'CHAMETZ'?

A. A mixture of flour made of any of the 5 grains (wheat, barley, oats, spelt and rye) and water which has remained for more than 18 minutes without being baked. Many products contain these ingredients and are also forbidden.

Q. WHAT IS 'MECHIRAT CHAMETZ' & WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

A. It is the legal procedure by which we sell all our chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach begins, because we may not have Chametz in our possession during Pesach. Usually we are able to buy it back after Pesach ends and thus use it later.

Q. WHAT IS 'BEDIKAT CHAMETZ' AND WHAT IS ITS REASON?

A. It is the search for chametz which we do the night before Pesach. Not only is it forbidden to own chametz during Pesach, it is even prohibited for a Jew to have any benefit after Pesach from chametz that was left in a Jews' possession over Pesach. We therefore either sell our chametz or destroy it. The night before Pesach we search our home as a final check to make sure we have removed all the chametz.

Q. WHAT IS THE 'HAGADAH'?

A. It is the book containing the order of service for the Passover Seder.

Q. WHAT IS 'MATZAH'?

A. It is the special unleavened bread which we are commanded to eat on Pesach.

Q. WHAT FOODS ARE ON THE SEDER PLATE AND WHAT DO THEY SYMBOLIZE?

A. a) A roasted egg – reminding us of the Pilgrim-Festival offering in the Temple.

b) A roasted meat-bone – reminding us of the Passover offering in the Temple.

c) Maror (bitter herbs) – reminding us of the bitter experience as slaves in Egypt. (Some customs use two sets of maror).

d) Charoset (a mixture of nuts, apples and wine) – reminding us of the mortar used by the Jewish slaves to build the cities of Pitom and Ramses in Ancient Egypt. The wine symbolizes the blood of those Jewish slaves who died doing this work.

e) Karpas (a vegetable) – eaten as a type of appetizer to show we are free people and to stimulate the children's interest. It is dipped in saltwater.

Q. WHY ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SETS OF DISHES REQUIRED FOR PESACH?

A. Because all leavened foods are forbidden on Pesach and we may not use dishes which have already been used for leavened foods.

Q. SHAVUOT FALLS ON A FIXED DAY AFTER PESACH. WHY?

A. Hashem commanded us to count 49 days (7 weeks) starting with the second day of Pesach (when the Omer sacrifice was brought). On the 50th day we celebrate Shavuot. These days are called 'Sefirah' or 'Sefirat HaOmer' which means 'to count the Omer'. It took the Children of Israel that time to march from Egypt to the foot of Mount Sinai.

Q. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHAVUOT?

A. On this day the Torah was given to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. During Temple days, the farmers in Israel brought the first ripe fruits on this day to the Temple (the first ripe fruits are called bikkurim in Hebrew).

Q. WHAT IS A 'SUCCAH'?

A. It is a temporary home used during Succot. It has to have at least 3 walls, which may even be made of brick. The roof is 'temporary' – it must be made of cut-off branches or loose, thin strips of wood or bamboo. It is also customary to decorate the Succah so as to make the mitzvah as beautiful as possible.

Q. WHICH ARE THE FOUR SPECIES WE USE ON SUCCOT?

A. The palm branch (lulav), the willow (aravah), the myrtle (hadas) and the citron (etrog).

Q. WHEN AND WHAT IS 'YOM HA'ATZMA'UT'?

A. On the 5th of Iyar. It is Israel's Day of Independence.

Q. WHAT ARE THE FOLLOWING AND WITH WHICH OCCASIONS ARE THEY ASSOCIATED?

i. Tashlich – a prayer said after Mincha on the first day of Rosh Hashanah near a spring of water with fish in it. 'Tashlich' means 'to throw away' – referring to our sins which we ask Hashem to throw away (cancel).
ii. Kaparot– a custom of swinging a chicken or money over one's head on the day before Yom Kippur. Kaparot comes from the word 'kapara', which means 'to atone for'. We realize that we deserve to be treated like the chicken, but Hashem forgives our sins. Money may be used instead, which we give away to charity. The chicken is then slaughtered by a shochet and it, or it's value, is given to the poor.
iii. Menorah – candelabra – a lamp for candles with 8 branches (+ 1 Shamash) that we light on the festival of Chanukah, reminding us of the miracle of oil that burnt for eight days in the time of Yehuda HaMaccabi.
iv. Shofar – an instrument made out of a ram's horn, that we blow on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This is a reminder of the self-sacrifice of our father Yitzchak when he was willing to give up his life on an altar and later was exchanged for a ram.
v. Hakafot – 'going around' the Shul with the Sifrei Torah on the Festival of Simchat Torah.
vi. Selichot – Prayers that are said before Shacharit in the mornings before Rosh Hashona. This comes from the word 'slicha' – 'pardon' – when we ask Hashem to pardon our sins. Selichot are also said on fast days.

MEALS

Q. WHY DO WE MAKE A BRACHA BEFORE WE EAT?

A. Every living thing – plant, animal or human being – must have food to live. The Creator has provided food for all living things – sunshine and rain make plants grow from the soil, the plants provide food for animals and human beings feed on both plants and animals. The fact that food sustains life is such a 'natural' thing, that most people take it for granted. People eat and drink when they are hungry and thirsty, without giving a thought to the wonder of nutrition. We Jews have been taught to look at the daily routine of eating quite differently; we have been taught not to take it for granted. When we say a bracha we thank Hashem for looking after our needs and providing us with our sustenance.

Q. WHAT DO WE DO BEFORE STARTING A REGULAR MEAL WHERE BREAD IS EATEN?

A. We wash our hands – twice the right hand and then twice the left – and say the blessing
'Baruch…asher…al netilat yadayim' then dry our hands.

Q. WHAT DO WE SAY AT THE START OF A MEAL WHERE BREAD IS NOT EATEN?

A. The bracha for each main type of food, e.g. cake, fruit, vegetables, meat etc.

Q. WHAT BRACHA IS SAID AFTER EATING FOODS OTHER THAN BREAD?

A. The shorter form of Grace (Al Hamichiya etc., found in the Artscroll Siddur p.200) is said when one eats – foods made of wheat or barley (e.g. cake and biscuits), wine, figs, grapes, pomegranates, dates and olives. After all other foods and drinks a bracha of Borei Nefashot (Artscroll p.202) is said.

DIETARY LAWS

EXPLAIN THE FOLLOWING HEBREW WORDS THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DIETARY LAWS.

a) Kosher Literally it means 'fit' or 'acceptable', referring to food that conforms to Jewish dietary law requirements.
b) Kashrut – the state of being 'kosher'.
c) Treif - the opposite of 'kosher', therefore it means 'unfit' or 'unacceptable'.
d) Pareve – Used to refer to food that is neither dairy nor meat, e.g., fish, fruit, vegetables.
e) Milchik – Yiddish for 'dairy'.
f) Fleishik Yiddish for 'meaty'.

CALENDAR

Q. HOW DOES THE JEWISH CALENDAR DIFFER FROM THE GENERAL CIVIL CALENDAR?

A. Our year has 354 days, while the general calendar follows the sun and has 365 days in a Year. We are therefore short 11 days each year.

Q. WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

A. Because our festivals have to fall in the same season every year (specifically, Pesach must fall in the Spring). The seasons depend on the sun, hence our calendar must follow the sun also and we must make up the difference between the sun and moon years (by having leap years).

Q. HOW DO WE ADJUST THE DIFFERENCES?

A. The Rabbis devised a system under which the moon (lunar) calendar and the sun (solar) calendar can be synchronized every 19 years. This is done by adding one leap month in the year – seven times in every 19-year cycle.

Q. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE EXTRA MONTH (13TH) IN A JEWISH LEAP YEAR?

A. Adar Sheni or Adar Bet.

S. WHAT IS 'ROSH CHODESH'?

A. The day on which the new moon appears is Rosh Chodesh and it is observed with special prayers. At the end of every month that has 30 days we observe two days Rosh Chodesh – the 30th day of the previous month and the 1st day of the new month. At the end of a month that has 29 days we have only one day Rosh Chodesh – the 1st day of the new month.

LAWS OF HUMAN CONDUCT

Q. HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE TO TZEDAKA?

A. The Torah says – 'You should open your hand wide to him and give him sufficient for his need'. The Sages set a figure of between 10% and 20% of your (after-tax) income.

Q. WHAT IS 'GEMILUT CHESED'?

A. All acts by which we help our fellow men, whether by giving or lending money, or doing some needed personal service, whether for the rich or poor.

Q. WHAT IS 'LASHON HARAH'?

A. Literally, 'a bad tongue' or 'bad speech'. It refers to anything negative we say about another person, whether about that person or about something they said or did. It is forbidden even if we would say it in their presence, even if we would not mind it being said about us, even if it does not cause them any harm or damage and even if it is said as a joke. Our words are considered 'lashon harah' if they are true. If what we say is not true, it is called 'slander' and is even worse.

Q. HOW DO WE CARE FOR THE SICK?

A. We are to visit the sick ('bikkur cholim'), a) to find out and attend to their needs, b) to pray for them and c) to keep them company.

Q. WHAT IS HACHNASAT ORCHIM?

A. Hospitality to guests. The mitzvah to show hospitality to guests is so great that it is considered even greater than speaking to Hashem, since Abraham excused himself before Hashem and went to look after 3 strangers.

Q. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH WE MUST HONOUR OUR PARENTS?

A. a) We are not allowed to contradict them, b) we obey their instructions, c) we are not allowed to wake them, unless they have told us to beforehand, and d) we do not sit on their seats, even when they are away from home.

Q. HOW DO WE BEHAVE IN THE PRESENCE OF ELDERS?

A. The Torah requires us to rise before the aged, to give honour and respect to our elders and to Torah scholars.

Q. WHAT IS 'NICHUM AVELIM'?

A. This is the mitzvah of comforting mourners. We visit them during the first week of their mourning (Shiva) and we wish them – 'May the Almighty comfort you among the rest of the mourners for Zion and Jerusalem'. (The local custom of wishing 'long life' is really an optional extra).

Q. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE JEWISH LAWS CONCERNING KINDNESS TO ANIMALS?

A. a) We are not allowed to hurt or overwork them, b) we are not allowed to work them on Shabbat, c) if their burden is too heavy we have to help lighten it, d) we must feed them before we sit down to our own meals.

BIBLE

Q. WHO LIVED THE LONGEST OF ANY HUMAN BEING AND HOW LONG?

A. Methuselah – 969 years.

Q. HOW LONG DID IT TAKE NOACH TO BUILD THE ARK AND HOW OLD WAS HE WHEN HE COMPLETED THE ARK?

A. It took 120 years to build the Ark. He was 600 years old when he completed it.

Q. HOW MANY OF EACH SPECIES WERE TAKEN ON THE ARK?

A. 14 (7 pairs) of each Kosher animal and 2 (one pair) of each non-Kosher animal.

Q. FROM WHICH OF NOACH'S SONS ARE THE JEWISH PEOPLE DESCENDED?

A. From Shem.

Q. WHO ARE THE 'AVOT' (PATRIARCHS)?

A. Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

Q. WHO ARE THE 'IMAHOT' (MATRIARCHS)?
A. Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah.

Q. WHO WAS TAKEN TO THE 'AKEIDAH'?
A. Yitzchak.

Q. HOW MANY WIVES AND CHILDREN DID AVRAHAM HAVE?
A. He had two wives – Sara and Hagar, and two children – Yitzchak and Yishmael.

Q. WHAT WAS THE NAME OF AVRAHAM'S SERVANT?
A. Eliezer.

Q. HOW MANY WIVES AND CHILDREN DID YAAKOV HAVE?
A. Four wives – Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, and 12 children.

Who's Who in the Bible

Adam and Eve

Kayin, Hevel, Shayt

Noach

Shem Cham and Yefet

Avraham and Sarah (and Hagar)

Yitzchak and Yishmael

Yitzchak and Rivka

Eisav and Yakov

Yakov and Leah and Rachel (Bilhah and Zilpah)

Reuven Shimon Levi Yehuda Yissachar Zevulun Dan Naftali Gad Asher Yosef Benyamin and Dina

Amram and Yocheved

Aharon Miriam and Moshe.

Moshe and Tziporah

Gershom

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