

Judaism: Practices

Key Words:

Dietary laws: Food laws that were given by God, found in the Torah. These rules relate to what may/may not be eaten, and its preparation.

Kosher: Food that is 'clean' and that meets the requirements of the dietary laws.

Trefah: Forbidden food – literally means 'torn'. It does not fulfil the Jewish dietary laws/is not kosher.

Mourning rituals: Refers to set practices that are carried out by Jews as a way of grieving for loved ones who have died.

Talmud: Oral Law. A source of authority; was not written down for many centuries, it was then expanded with rabbinic explanation/commentaries.

Shabbat: The Sabbath/holy day of the week; beginning at sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday.

Synagogue: The place of public worship, also used for study and gathering. Literally means 'coming together'.

Jews have set periods of **mourning** which decrease in intensity over the period of a year. Most Jews are buried rather than cremated. A short funeral service is held at the cemetery ideally within 24 hours after the person's death.

Tallit: A prayer shawl made from wool or silk. A long tassel is attached to each corner.

Tefillin: Pair of small leather boxes containing extracts from the Torah. Strapped to the forehead and around the upper arm in line with the heart

The Synagogue is a building where Jews meet for worship, study, social activities and charitable events. It is also where Jews celebrate festivals and rites of passage. You will find a **menorah** and **Star of David** in every synagogue.

Reform Synagogue	Orthodox Synagogue
In a reform synagogue the service can be said in English as well as Hebrew and the singing is accompanied. The leader of the service faces the congregation most of the time. Men and women have mixed seating.	Orthodox synagogues will hold daily services so that they can pray together. In an orthodox synagogue, the service is in Hebrew, the signing is unaccompanied and the person leading the service will be facing the ark with his back to the congregation. Men and women are segregated.



Jews are expected to pray 3 times a day.

A synagogue contains 3 key features in its main prayer hall:

- Aron Hakodesh (Ark):** a cabinet where the Torah scrolls are kept. The holiest part of the synagogue.
- The **Ner Tamid:** an ever-burning light kept on at all times to symbolise God's presence.
- Bimah:** The raised reading platform from where the Torah is read.



The Tenakh is the main Jewish sacred text and the Talmud is a commentary which helps Jews to put the laws of the Tenakh into practice.



Studying the Tenakh and Talmud is important particularly to Orthodox Jews. The Tenakh contains 5 books of the Torah, 8 books of the Nevi'im (prophets) and 11 books of the Ketuvim (writings). The Talmud is in 2 main parts; the Mishnah and the Gemara.

Shabbat is celebrated with a Friday night meal. It is like welcoming a special Queen or bride into the home and all work is done to prepare the home before sunset on Friday.

- **Lesson 1 – Why is the synagogue important?**
- **Lesson 2 – Worship in the synagogue**
- **Lesson 3 – Shabbat in the home**
- **Lesson 4 – The Tenakh and the Talmud**
- **Lesson 5 – Brit Milah**
- **Lesson 6 – The Marriage Ceremony**
- **Lesson 7 – Dietary Laws**
- **Lesson 8 – Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur**
- **Lesson 9 – Pesach**
- **Lesson 10 – Revision**

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy". Shabbat is a day of rest where no work is to be done in line with the Mitzvot. It is a reminder of the 7th day of creation when God rested and a time to celebrate with family. Friday evening = first service in the synagogue. Saturday morning = main service. It includes a reading from the Torah as well as a sermon, prayers and blessings. The congregation will stand as the Ark is opened to reveal the Torah scrolls

2 candles are placed on the table along with 2 loaves of challah bread and wine or grape juice in the Kiddush cup. Shabbat is welcomed through the female member of the family lighting the candles 18 minutes before sunset. The end of Shabbat is marked by the Havdalah service which occurs when 3 stars are seen.

Rituals VS Festivals



Rituals: religious ceremonies that are performed according to a set pattern. (usually once in a lifetime)

Festivals: a period of religious celebration (often annual).

Amidah: Central prayer in worship. Consists of 19 blessings that are praising, petitions and thanksgiving.

Rosh Hashanah is a **2 day festival** that marks the start of the **Jewish New Year**. Many Jews believe that during Rosh Hashanah, God judges their actions over the past year and decides their fortune for coming year. The Shofar is blown to remind Jews to repent. Sweet foods are eaten to wish for a sweet new year.



The **festival** of Yom Kippur is the **holiest** and most important day in the year when God's judgement from Rosh Hashanah is finalised. Jews fast for 25 hours and do no work, no bathing and no sex. They wear white as a symbol of purity. During the 10 days in between the start of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Jews try to make up for their wrongdoings over the past year and seek forgiveness from God.

Pesach is the Passover **festival** that lasts for 8 days. It celebrates the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt. One of the most important parts of the festival is the Seder meal where special foods are shared. Unleavened bread to remind them that the Israelites did not have time for the yeast in the bread to rise. The Seder plate contains parsley dipped in salt water to represent the sweat and tears of the Israelites in slavery. The egg represents their new life and the lamb bone reminds them of the sacrifice made.



Bar/Bat Mitzvah means son/daughter of the commandment. This is a **ritual** where Girls aged 12 and boys aged 13 are considered to be old enough to take full responsibility for their faith. A boy will read from the Torah at a Shabbat service after his 13th birthday. He will wear a tallit and make a speech. Reform Jewish girls have a similar ceremony to boys but Orthodox will mark the girl's Bar Mitzvah with a family meal and small religious gifts.

The **ritual** of Marriage is a 2-step process. A period of engagement called the betrothal which typically lasts for a year is followed by the wedding itself. A wedding can take place on any day except Shabbat or a festival. The marriage contract is signed in the presence of witnesses and then read out and given to the bride. 7 blessings are recited as part of the marriage itself, the rabbi makes a short speech, the groom breaks a glass under his foot and the congregation wishes the couple good luck before they spend a short time alone to symbolise their new status as a married couple. This is followed by the wedding reception which includes music and dancing.

Brit Milah is the **ritual** ceremony that happens when a baby boy is 8 days old. The baby is circumcised by a trained person known as a Mohel in a simple operation that quickly heals. This recalls the covenant made with Abraham **"be the sign of the covenant between Me and you"**.