



Ealing Agreed Syllabus: guidance for teachers

KS2_4: Belief and practice,
Judaism

Overall aim: to explore beliefs and practices of Judaism and what it means to be a Humanist Jew

<i>Sacred history</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	
<i>Aim:</i> to introduce the pivotal figure of Abraham in Jewish sacred history	<i>SEN</i>	begin to explore the concept of ‘sacred history’; learn about Abraham and ‘the one god’.
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Note: Before starting this unit ask students to do a bit of research at home about their origins. Where were they born? Where did their parents come from? Grandparents? What is the story of their family? Is there one figure in their family tradition that stands out from the others?</p>		
<p>Starter: Discuss the concept of different types of history. For example, pupils’ own family ‘origin’ stories. What is similar about these stories, what is different? Are there any occasions when the family reminisces about their history? Ask class to try and define something that helped shape their family’s beliefs.</p>		<p>It might be best to teach this unit in years 5 or 6 when pupils are better able to reflect on some of these issues.</p>
<p>Activity 1: Get children to compare and contrast their personal story with, say, their parents’ or grandparents’ stories. For instance, a grandparent who was born and grew up—and perhaps still lives—in another country might have a very different ‘story’ to a pupil who was born in Britain.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Explore the concept that for many people their ‘origin’ story is perceived as ‘sacred’. This is particularly true for the Jewish tradition, where much of their history is contained in the Hebrew bible, called the <i>Tanakh</i> or <i>Mikra</i> (‘that which is read’). You might like to explain that the word <i>Tanakh</i> is actually an acronym, made up of the subdivisions of the Hebrew bible: <i>Torah</i> (‘Teaching’, also known as the Five Books of Moses), <i>Nevi’im</i> (‘Prophets’) and <i>Ketuvim</i> (‘Writings’)—hence <i>TaNaKh</i>.</p>		

<p>Activity 3: Read <i>Genesis</i> 12, 1-9. Then show a YouTube animated version of this story (be sure to check that it is suitable first). Explain that this is an example of Jewish ‘sacred history’, i.e. the idea that God called Abraham (at that point he was called Abram) to follow him. It is also the foundation of the Jewish belief that they were granted the land now known as Israel. The centrality of the land of Israel to Jewish identity, belief and practice should be stressed.</p>	<p>One example of an animated version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3rK_PcEMfA</p>
<p>Activity 4: Explain that, according to the Hebrew bible and Jewish belief, when Abram was 99 years old God changed his name to Abraham (‘a father of many nations’). He was also told that henceforth all of the Jewish men should be circumcised as a <i>sign</i> of God’s covenant with them. This ‘sacred history’ is reflected and remembered in the Jewish rite of circumcision known as <i>brit milah</i>. Jewish sacred history is also remembered in the Pesach/Passover rituals, which will be discussed in a later lesson. (If the children have already studied the unit on signs and symbols you might want to refer back to this. If there are Muslim pupils in the class you can also make links between <i>brit milah</i> and the Islamic circumcision practice <i>tahara</i>.)</p>	<p>Notes on Muslim circumcision: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religion/islam/islamethics/malecircumcision.shtml</p>
<p>Activity 5: Point out that Abraham is also an important figure in Christianity and especially Islam. If there are Muslim children in the class, ask them to say what they have been taught about Abraham, known as Ibrahim. Ask if any of the children (or staff) have been on the hajj. If they have, ask about the rituals which honour Ibrahim. Point out that both Judaism and Islam credit Ibrahim for the belief that there is only one god.</p>	
<p>Plenary: Review the concept of ‘sacred history’. Remind children that something that happens to them in their lifetime might be so central to their identity that it becomes ‘sacred’ to them. Usually an individual’s ‘sacred’ history isn’t perceived as such by others, unless they, too, have shared the experience. Allow class to discuss the idea that perhaps what makes a history ‘sacred’ is the measure to which it gives life meaning. End the lesson with the reminder that the figure of Abraham is so important in both Judaism and Islam he is honoured in important rituals.</p>	

<i>Jewish worship</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn about how Jewish people worship at home and in the synagogue; explore the symbolism of the Mezuzah.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore how Jewish people worship.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Show short films of Jewish worship in the home (e.g. welcoming the Sabbath) and in the synagogue. Ask children to volunteer differences from the way they or members of their family worship.</p>		<p>Shabbat at home and at the synagogue: https://content.lgfl.org.uk/secure/faiths/primary_uk_sa/sa_item663310_2/subject/module/video_index/item649715/grade2/index.html</p> <p>(You will need your LGfL login)</p> <p>A mezuzah.</p>
<p>Activity 1: If possible, have a Jewish visitor in to demonstrate various aspects of Jewish worship and to answer questions. Alternatively you might visit a local synagogue (see background information) and arrange for a member of the synagogue to give a tour and answer questions.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: If it wasn't covered in the videos shown in the starter, show a short video about the mezuzah and the Shema. Look at some examples of mezuzah designs. Read the words of the Shema and recall ways in which Jews put this prayer in practice.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Ask class to suggest other times when people might have to repeat a statement of belief aloud (e.g. making a scout or guide promise). Unpack the things that are being asked of Jews in the Shema (e.g. teach the Torah to children, repeat the Shema twice daily, post a mezuzah beside the door).</p>		
<p>Activity 4: Together decide on something that is important to everyone in the class. Make a 'mezuzah' to contain a written statement of this value, and place it by the classroom door as a reminder.</p>		
<p>Plenary: Have an open discussion about when it might be hard to say what you believe, for instance, when talking with parents or other adult relatives—or even siblings or peers—that don't share your beliefs. Point out that in the UK we are lucky to have freedom of speech, but sadly this isn't true in many parts of the world. Discuss the ethical complexities around having free speech yet preventing expressions of hatred, such as racist comments or comments directed against any particular religious or belief group (e.g. explain how it can be dangerous—or even fatal—in some countries for people who do not believe in a god to openly express this).</p>		

<i>Jewish beliefs about God</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn that Jews believe in one god, who they believe created everything; they will understand that many of the Jewish beliefs about God are contained in the Torah.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore the Jewish concept of deity.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Show class a Hebrew Bible, making sure to demonstrate that Hebrew, like Arabic, is read from right to left. Then, show images of a Torah scroll, impressing on the class that rather than a book like the kind that most of us are familiar with the Torah kept in a synagogue is a parchment scroll handwritten by a specially trained scribe.</p>		Hebrew Bible; images of Torah scroll.
<p>Activity 1: Unpack the word <i>Torah</i>, pointing out that this word can refer to 1) the first five books of the Bible 2) the whole of the Hebrew Bible and 3) sometimes to the entire body of Jewish religious literature, law and teaching as contained chiefly in the Jewish bible and Talmud. Explain that both Christians and Jews consider the Hebrew Bible sacred. For Christians, the word 'Bible' refers to the Old Testament (written in Hebrew) and the New Testament (originally written in Greek).</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Introduce the word 'covenant' to describe an agreement between two or more parties. Point out that the Jewish people believe that they have a covenant with God (the terms of which are set out in the Torah), which demands a standard of behaviour that sets for Jews the goal of being a 'light unto the nations' (<i>Isaiah 49:6</i>). Remind pupils of the first lesson, where Abraham's experience of being called by God was discussed, and where Abraham believed that God made an agreement with him and with his people.</p>		Note: Some children might have heard the phrase "the chosen people", which is often misinterpreted. Explain that it means chosen to be a 'light unto the nations', hence the high standards required.
<p>Activity 3: Make a list of the various 'names' applied to God in the Hebrew Bible, e.g. <i>Elohim</i> – creator, life-giver (<i>Genesis 1 and 2 and esp. Genesis 2:4</i>); <i>Rohi</i> – God the Shepherd (<i>Psalms 23</i>); <i>m'kaddesh</i> – holy (<i>Leviticus 20:8</i>); <i>jireh</i> – God will provide (<i>Genesis 22:1-19</i>). Discuss how these names actually describe qualities, and that each quality refers to something that Jewish people believe is in the nature of deity. For instance, "God the Shepherd": does this mean that Jews believe that God literally looks after sheep, or does it mean that they believe God cares for the needs of people in a way similar to a shepherd looking after their flock?</p>		

<p>Activity 4: Compare this to the Muslim concept of 99 names for Allah, emphasising that even if there are many names, both Jews and Muslims believe that there is only one God.</p>	<p>Simchat Torah: http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/Oct/Simchat%20Torah.htm</p>
<p>Plenary: Show a video of Jews celebrating Simchat Torah in the synagogue. Point out that this is a demonstration of the joy and importance Jews experience around the revelation of the Torah from God. Explain that there is a similar festival in Islam, The Night of Power, which is celebrated during Ramadan and refers to the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad.</p>	<p>Night of Power: http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/Oct/Lailat-ul-Qadr.htm</p>

<i>Jewish identity</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	understand the importance of cultural and historical tradition to Jews and how this is reflected in a variety of festivals; learn that there are Jewish humanists, i.e. people whose identity is Jewish but who do not believe in a god.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore the importance of cultural identity in Judaism	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Remind pupils of the importance of Abraham to Jews, emphasising that most Jews believe that their tradition starts with Abraham’s covenant with God. Explain that Jewish history goes back thousands of years, and that various events in this history as described in the Torah are remembered and commemorated in several important Jewish days of observance.</p>		<p>“Humanistic Judaism embraces a human-centered philosophy that combines rational thinking with a deep connection to the Jewish people and its culture. Humanistic Jews value their Jewish identity and the aspects of Judaism that offer a genuine expression of their contemporary way of life. Humanistic Jews celebrate Jewish holidays and life cycle events (such as weddings and bar and bat mitzvah) with inspirational ceremonies that draw upon but go beyond traditional symbols and liturgy.”</p> <p>http://www.shj.org/humanistic-judaism/what-is-humanistic-judaism/</p>
<p>Activity 1: Explain that there are Jews who are Jewish by <i>cultural identity</i>, rather than by belief in a god. These are known as Jewish humanists. Look at some of the Jewish humanist beliefs (see link at right). Although it is possible to draw a comparison to cultural Christians in the UK, these Christians wouldn’t typically observe Christian holidays apart from Christmas. A better comparison might be to US Thanksgiving, which can be observed as a day of thankfulness by non-religious Americans, as well as a time to remember a significant period of American history.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Look at the Jewish festival of Passover, which commemorates events recounted in the Biblical book of Exodus. Examine a <i>seder</i> plate (or picture of one), pointing out how each item that appears on the plate has symbolic significance. Discuss with the children how the festival of Passover (Pesach) reminds Jews of their relationship with Jewish history and their hopes for the future. Note as a point of interest that Jesus was a Jew, and that the ‘last supper’ before Jesus’ crucifixion was the celebration of Passover.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Now look at the way that Jewish Humanists have adapted the festival of Passover, viewing the Exodus story as one of the most powerful myths of the Jewish people, a tale that relates the courage and determination of a people fleeing slavery for freedom. Explain that Humanistic Jews see Passover as a time to celebrate the modern, as well as the ancient, quest for freedom. (http://www.shj.org/humanistic-jewish-life/about-the-holidays/passover/).</p>		

<p>Activity 4: Ask as an open question: why would Jews who don't believe in a god want to celebrate the Jewish holidays? How do these holidays help them create a sense of community and define their identity?</p>	
<p>Plenary: As a class, discuss a range of symbols and/or symbolic actions that might represent important events in their life at home or at school. How many of these can be shared by people with different beliefs? How could these shared symbols or symbolic action help unite people from different backgrounds into one community?</p>	

<i>Sukkot</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn about the Jewish festival of Sukkot; consider how building a Sukkah helps to create a special space for remembrance.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore one of the important Jewish days of observance.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Ask pupils to suggest names of holidays that include remembrance of important historical or religious events (e.g. Easter is the day where Christians remember the resurrection of Jesus). Explain that the Hebrew words <i>Yom Tov</i> means 'Good Day'. Note that this particular phrase is used for the days described in the Hebrew Bible when 'work' is prohibited.</p>		<p>Espresso video on Sukkot: https://content.lgfl.org.uk/secure/faiths/primary_uk_sa/sa_item663310_2/subject/module/video/item339384/grade2/module649715/index.html</p> <p>(You will need your LGfL log-in)</p> <p>Materials for making a class sukkah, or several small models.</p>
<p>Activity 1: Discuss the origins of the festival of Sukkot, quoting the two passages from Leviticus 23 (see background information) which relates how and why Jews are to observe this day. Be sure and discuss the symbolism of the 'four species' and how the rituals associated with the <i>lulav</i> are used to show that religious Jews believe that God is everywhere.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Ask if anyone in the class has ever been camping. Talk about how people who are travelling need to find or make temporary shelter. Discuss tents and other forms of shelter that can be easily erected. Show class a video of a Jewish family making and using a Sukkah.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: If there is room, create and decorate a Sukkah. If there isn't room, divide the class into groups and allow them to create small Sukkahs using shoe boxes.</p>		
<p>Activity 4: Introduce the concept of 'sacred space'. You might be able to illustrate this if you have a 'reflective' corner in the classroom or in the school. Discuss how a person's mood changes when they step from 'everyday' space into this kind of special space. As an open question discuss how making a sukkah creates a special space for families to share food and remember the stories of their ancestors.</p>		
<p>Plenary: Discuss why it is important to remember and learn from our history. Remind class that there are Humanistic Jews who, although they don't believe in a god, still value Jewish tradition. Describe the ways that these Jewish humanists find meaning in the observance of Sukkot (see background information).</p>		

Hanukkah	Pupils will	learn about the historical events remembered in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah; reflect on the fact that we can be inspired by a story at the same time as not necessarily sharing the beliefs behind it.
Aim: to explore the origins, meanings and rituals around the Jewish festival of lights.	SEN	
	Gifted	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Remind class of the origins of the Jewish observance of Passover and Sukkah in both history and biblical <i>mitzvot</i> (commandments). Also remind them of the fact that people who are Jews by virtue of their cultural identity rather than a belief in a god are also able to find meaning in these traditional observances. What can we conclude from that? Could there possibly be a human need to celebrate and remember certain things?</p>		<p>Note: In Hebrew, the language from which the Jewish festival originates, the word for <i>Hanukkah</i> is not easily transliterated into English. This accounts for why there are so many spelling variants. But Hanukkah and Chanukah are the two versions that are most widely used and accepted.</p> <p><i>Judah who always said 'No'</i>, Harriet Feder. (Note: There are some used paperback versions available on Amazon, however the hardbacks are going for crazy prices. If you don't already have a copy of the book you can play the YouTube video of Lizzie Fagen reading the story and explaining the origin of the Hanukkah menorah. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8cmtg8QX4Q)</p> <p>http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/hanukkah</p>
<p>Activity 1: Explain that in this lesson you will be looking at a Jewish festival that celebrates another historical event as well as the value of bravery. Tell the story of Judah Macabee, for instance the one recounted in "Judah who always said 'No'".</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Describe the Hanukkah 'miracle' (see article on www.history.com, link at right). The perception that the keeping of the light going in the synagogue for eight days when there was only enough oil to last one is perceived as 'miraculous' in the Talmud version, whereas the story recounted in the Book of Maccabees does not contain this element. Have an open discussion about the possibilities of miracles. Is it possible to see a metaphorical meaning to this story, e.g. that there can be times in our lives when we don't feel we have the strength to carry on, but somehow we manage?</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Brainstorm different meanings that can be taken from the story. For instance the rights people should have to worship and live their lives the way they want. Also the sometimes miraculous way that a 'light' (real or symbolic) can last even when all hope is apparently lost. Point out that even though they don't believe in a god or in miracles, Jewish humanists are able to draw inspiration from the Hanukkah story. (See background information).</p>		

Activity 4: Show a video of children playing the dreidel game at Hannukah. The Hebrew word for dreidel is *sevivon*, which means “to turn around.” Hannukah dreidels have four Hebrew letters on them, and they stand for the saying, *Nes gadol haya sham*, meaning ‘A great miracle occurred there’. In Israel, instead of the fourth letter *shin*, there is a *peh*, which means the saying is *Nes gadol haya po*, ‘a great miracle occurred here’. There have been various ‘ideas’ put forth as regards why it is traditional to play the dreidel game during Hanukkah, but it seems likely that these explanations are all inventions. The dreidel game originally had nothing to do with Hanukkah, but rather had been played by various people in a variety of languages for many centuries.

Plenary: Look at some of the food traditionally eaten over Hanukkah, e.g. potato latkes and donuts. Discuss the reason these foods are associated with the holiday (i.e. cooked in oil). Tie this in with the key stage 1 unit “Special foods.” Allow pupils to offer accounts of various tastes that remind them of special occasions or even something that is unique to them. Referring back to the previous lesson discuss how both building the Sukkah and eating meals in it helps to elicit empathy in the participants for the experience of their ancestors.

Key words	Cantor, rabbi, yad, yarmulke, bimah, tefillin, tallit, Torah, Shabbat, Passover, Seder, Elohim, Hashem, kosher, mitzvah, ark, sukkah, sukkot, Hanukkah/Chanukah, menorah, hanukkiah
Points to note	Although the names in the lesson on Jewish beliefs about God can be found in the Hebrew Bible, most Jews do not use them most of the time. They never use the vocalisation 'Jehovah': there is no 'j' sound in Hebrew, so all words in English which are Hebrew in origin—like Judah, Joshua—are pronounced with a 'y' sound in Hebrew, i.e. Yehudah, Yehoshua. The most common term for God among many Jews is <i>Hashem</i> , which simply means 'the name'.
Expected outcomes	
<p>At the end of this unit, pupils are working at an <i>emerging</i> level if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand that most Jewish people believe in one god; ▪ understand that they worship their god at home and in a synagogue; ▪ are able to name one or two Jewish festivals. <p>They are working at an <i>expected</i> level if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand that most Jewish people believe in one god, and can name a few ways that Jews describe their experience of deity; ▪ can recount elements of Jewish worship in a synagogue and at home; ▪ are able to describe elements of a Jewish festival and how it reflects Jewish belief or history; ▪ understand there are Jews who embrace and celebrate their cultural identity but who do not believe in a god. <p>They are <i>exceeding</i> expected progress if they know all of the above. In addition they will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand the significance of Abraham to Jewish identity; ▪ understand that Jews believe that their covenant with God requires them to maintain a certain standard of behaviour; ▪ describe an important symbol or symbolic food or ritual and explain the belief behind it. 	

Background information



Ealing Synagogue
15 Grange Road,
London W5 5QB 020 8579-4894

<http://ealingsynagogue.org.uk/>

For tours of the synagogue or talks in schools,
contact Basil Mann, 0208 568 3779.

Image: <http://ealingsynagogue.org.uk/ealing-synagogue/>



Ealing Liberal Synagogue
Lynton Avenue
London W13 0EB, 020 8997-0528

<http://www.ealingliberalsynagogue.org.uk/>

For school visits contact Arnold Aarons, 0208 567 8521

Image: <https://www.flickr.com/>



Ark containing Torah scrolls

Virtual tour of a synagogue: http://www.chabad.org/generic_cdo/aid/365929/jewish/Synagogue.htm

Cantor: Synagogue official who leads the congregation in prayer; the chief singer of the liturgy.

However, the leading of the service does not require an official and can be done by any capable Jew.

Kippah (also known as **yarmulke**): The skullcap worn by Jewish men. A kippah is worn to symbolize that man exists only from his kippah down; God exists above the kippah.

Bimah (Hebrew, 'elevated place'): A raised platform in the synagogue from which the Torah is read and other parts of the services are led.

Yad (Hebrew, 'hand'): Hand-shaped pointer used while reading from Torah scrolls.

Shofar: ram's horn used as a trumpet, sounded in biblical times as a signal, and in modern times at synagogue services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.



The Shabbat Bride

© Judith Silverman

<https://uk.pinterest.com/>

The most important ritual observance in Judaism is **Shabbat**, the Sabbath, which begins at sunset on Friday when the woman of the house lights the Shabbat candles and recites a blessing. The table should be set with at least two candles (representing the dual commandments to remember and observe the Sabbath), a glass of wine, and at least two loaves of **hallah** (braided bread, also known as challah) in memory of the double portion of manna received by the Israelites in the wilderness. The hallah loaves should be whole, and should be covered with a bread cover, towel or napkin known as a **hallah cover**.

Kiddush is the special blessing said over the wine. The word comes from a root meaning "holy." The Kiddush is one of the ways of fulfilling the mitzvah to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Following the kiddush, hands should be washed in the ritually prescribed manner. When everyone is re-seated, the hallah cover is removed and a blessing is said over the bread. The hallah is then cut or broken, and distributed to each person.

At the end of the Sabbath, just after nightfall on Saturday evening there is another ceremony. This ceremony is called **Havdalah** (Hebrew 'separation'). A special candle with several wicks is lit and a spice box is opened to wish everybody a sweet week until the next Sabbath. The Havdalah ceremony requires a candle, a Kiddush cup and wine, and fragrant spices known as **Basamim**. The parting greeting at the end of the Sabbath is *shavua tov* ("have a good week"); the candle will be dipped in wine to extinguish it.



Mezuzah
www.nccg.org

A *mezuzah* (Hebrew 'doorpost') is a piece of parchment (often contained in a decorative case) inscribed with specified Hebrew verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21). These verses compose the Jewish prayer 'Shema Yisrael', beginning with the phrase: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD (is) our God, the LORD is One." In mainstream (i.e. Rabbinic) Judaism, a *mezuzah* is affixed to the doorframe of Jewish homes to fulfill the *mitzvah* (Biblical commandment) to inscribe the words of the Shema "on the doorposts of your house" (Deuteronomy 6:9).

Some interpret Jewish law to require a *mezuzah* on every doorway in the home apart from bathrooms and closets too small to qualify as rooms. The parchment is prepared by a qualified scribe who has undergone many years of meticulous training, and the verses are written in black indelible ink with a special quill pen. The parchment is then rolled up and placed inside the case.

The commandment to affix a *mezuzah* is widely followed in the Jewish world, even by Jews who are not religiously observant. While the important part of the *mezuzah* is the *klaf*, or the parchment, and not the case itself, designing and producing *mezuzah* cases has been elevated to an art form over the ages. *Mezuzah* cases are produced from a wide variety of materials, from silver and precious metals, to wood, stone, ceramics, pewter, and even polymer clay. Some dealers of *mezuzah* cases will provide or offer for sale a copy of the text that has been photocopied onto paper; this is not a *kosher* (i.e. valid) *mezuzah*, which must be handwritten onto a piece of parchment by a qualified scribe. (Wikipedia)



Seder plate

www.americanhaggadah.com



Mah Nishtanah
Sarajevo Haggadah, 1350
www.oztorah.com

Passover

Sweet mixture: a mixture of apples, nuts, wine and spices. Symbolic of the mortar the Jewish slaves made in their building for the Egyptians.

Roast bone: a shankbone or neck of poultry, roasted. Symbolic of the Paschal lamb offered as the Passover sacrifice in Temple days.

Roast egg: hard-boiled egg. An egg is used because it is a traditional food for mourners, reminding Jews of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Spring vegetable: a vegetable such as parsley, representing spring and growth. Dipped in salt water to represent the tears of the slaves.

Maror (bitter herbs): herbs such as horseradish. Represents the bitter life of the Israelites during the time of their enslavement in Egypt.

Bitter vegetable/salt water: a bitter vegetable such as celery or lettuce. Those who do not put such a vegetable on their Seder Plate sometimes put a dish of salt water in its place.

Mah Nishtanah, "why is it different?" At the Passover seder meal, it is up to the youngest person at the table—usually a child—to ask the four traditional questions:

1. Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzoh, but on this night we eat only matzoh?
2. Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night we specially eat bitter herbs?
3. Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night we dip them twice?
4. Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting up or leaning, but on this night we lean when we eat?

Visit <http://kosher4passover.com/4questions.htm> to hear children asking the questions and to also see the answers.

The festival of Sukkot



Sukkah

www.chabad.org/



Etrog and Lulav

www.dayenu.com

On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. Leviticus 23:40

You shall dwell in huts for seven days; all that are home born Jews shall dwell in huts; then shall the generations know that I made the children of Israel dwell in huts when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. Leviticus 23:42-43

The word Sukkot means 'booths,' and refers to the temporary dwellings that Jews are commanded to live in during this holiday in memory of the time the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness.

Of the many symbols associated with this festival the most important are the Four Species: *Etrog* (the citron, similar in appearance to a lemon but with a beautiful perfume), *lulav* (palm branches), *hadas* (myrtle), *aravah* (willow). Together these items make up the **Etrog and Lulav**. The branches are bound together and referred to collectively as the lulav, because the palm branch is by far the largest. The etrog is held separately. A blessing is recited as the etrog and lulav are waved in the six directions (east, south, west, north, up and down), symbolizing the belief that God is everywhere.

For Humanistic Jews, "Sukkot offers an opportunity to work together to build the *sukka*, which then can become the center of an outdoor celebration: a picnic under a roof open to the sun or stars, or a community bonfire that evokes memories of family cookouts or camp overnights.

Three additional themes may reflect the agricultural origins of the holiday. First, building and taking apart the *sukka* may call to mind the transitory nature of human existence and the fleetingness of human experience. Second, the covering of the *sukka* is organic, suggesting human beings' dependence upon nature, as well as their mastery of it. Third, the fullness and beauty of the harvest may focus attention on the abundance of beauty in the world." (www.shj.org)



Synagogue in Portugal with Hanukkah

www.shaveisrael.com



Ceramic Dreidel

www.source4judaica.com

Hanukkah, a Hebrew word meaning “dedication,” is said to refer to the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem by Judah Maccabee and his followers in 161 BCE.

This legend recounts the story of a small band of Jews led by Judah Maccabee and his family who rebelled when the Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes sought to impose Greek culture and religion upon his Syrian empire, which included Judea. Following their recapture of Jerusalem, the victorious Jews rededicated the Temple and decreed an annual celebration of Jewish independence. Some six hundred years after the Maccabean victory, the rabbis, seeking to claim Hanukkah as their own, added the legend of the single flask of oil that miraculously burned for eight days. The Hanukkah celebration revolves around the kindling of a nine-branched menorah, known in Hebrew as the *hanukiah*. On each of the holiday’s eight nights, another candle is added to the menorah after sundown; the ninth candle, called the *shamash* (“helper”), is used to light the others. Jews typically recite blessings during this ritual and display the menorah prominently in a window as a reminder to others of the miracle that inspired the holiday. The flickering Hanukkah lights are a reminder of the struggle, courage, and fragile triumphs of the Jewish people. The flames are a link to the past and a tribute to the dignity of Jews everywhere.

In another allusion to the Hanukkah miracle, traditional Hanukkah foods are fried in oil. Potato pancakes (known as latkes) and jam-filled donuts are particularly popular in many Jewish households. Other Hanukkah customs include playing with four-sided spinning tops called dreidels and exchanging gifts.

“Judah Maccabee was a man who was willing to fight for what he believed, although like his enemy Antiochus Epiphanes, he was a religious zealot who denied freedom of worship to those who opposed him. Despite this, his example of bravery and authenticity motivates us to seize control of our lives and take our future into our own hands. We choose how we shall live, seeking to behave courageously and to preserve our integrity. For Humanistic Jews, Hanukka is an endorsement of human strength and ingenuity, of hope and bravery.” (<http://www.shj.org/humanistic-jewish-life/about-the-holidays/hanukka/>)