Dedicated to:
The Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson,
of blessed memory, for his constant inspiration and leadership.

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Citations to Jewish Law

Citations to Jewish law throughout this volume are to Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, CODE OF JEWISH LAW: KITZUR [ABRIDGED] SHULHAN ARUKH, A COMPILATION OF JEWISH LAWS AND CUSTOMS (translated by Hyman E. Goldin, LL.B., annotated revised edition, Hebrew Publishing Company 1993) (“C.J.L.”), a copy of which can be ordered through The Aleph Institute or from any Jewish bookstore.

Jewish law frowns upon the use of the actual word representing the Creator’s name. Accordingly, references in this volume to the Creator are indicated as “G-d.”
# Table of Contents

1. **Introduction - Basic Jewish Concepts and Beliefs.** .................................................. 1-1
   - Who is a Jew? ................................................................. 1-3
   - Messianic Jews. .............................................................. 1-5
   - Levels of Observance. .................................................... 1-6

2. **Daily Religious Requirements.** ........................................... 2-1

### Upon Awakening.

- Prayers. ............................................................................. 2-2
  - Phylacteries (“Tefillin”). .................................................. 2-4
  - The “Tallit” (Prayer Shawl). ........................................... 2-6

- Blessings Before and After Eating. .................................. 2-7
- The Study of Torah. .......................................................... 2-8
- Upon Retiring. ................................................................. 2-9

### Clothing:

- Religious Laws Governing Clothing and Modesty. .................. 2-10
  - The “Yarmulke” or “Kippah”. ........................................ 2-11
  - The “Tzitzit” or “Tallit Katan”. .................................... 2-12

- Religious Laws Prohibiting the Mixture of Certain Fabrics (“Shatnez”). .................. 2-13

- Religious Laws Governing Contact Between Men and Women. .... 2-14

- Grooming. ........................................................................ 2-15
  - Religious Laws Governing Shaving. ................................. 2-15
  - Religious Laws Governing Ritual Baths. .......................... 2-16
Kosher Food

Derived From a Religiously-Acceptable Source........ 2-22
Prepared and Served in a Religiously-Acceptable Way................................................................. 2-23
Religious Laws Governing Meat and Dairy Products. 2-24
“Pareve” Products................................................................. 2-26
“Non-Kosher” Foods.............................................................. 2-26
Ingredients. ........................................................................ 2-27
Foods That Are Not Kosher For Passover................. 2-30
Kosher Food In Institutional Environments.............. 2-34

Ritual Items Generally Required

Ritual Items Not Generally Required in
Institutional Environments........................................ 2-34

3. The Torah/Hebrew Calendar. ................................. 3-2
“Rosh Chodesh”: The “Head of the Month”. .......... 3-3
The Time Of Commencement And Conclusion Of The
Sabbath, Jewish Holidays And Fast Days............... 3-3

4. The Holy Sabbath .................................................. 4-1
Preparing For the Sabbath.............................................. 4-2
Candle-Lighting at the Start of the Sabbath............ 4-3
The Sabbath Prayers......................................................... 4-4
“Work” Proscriptions On the Sabbath....................... 4-4
The “Kiddush” ................................................................. 4-7
Sabbath Meals. .............................................................. 4-8
The “Havdalah” Service At the Conclusion Of the
Sabbath. ..................................................................... 4-9

Ritual Items Generally Required For
Sabbath ........................................................................ 4-11
5. **Holy Days and Festivals**

Work Proscriptions On Biblically-Mandated Holidays. .................................................. 5-3

Work Proscriptions On Intermediate Days of Biblically-Mandated Holidays. .............. 5-5

**RITUAL ITEMS GENERALLY REQUIRED FOR HOLY DAYS 5-6**

6. **Biblically Mandated Festivals**

Rosh Hashanah - Tishrei 1-2. ................................................................. 6-2
  Additional Ritual Items. ................................................................. 6-2
  30-Day Period Leading Up to Rosh Hashanah. ........................................ 6-2
  Rosh Hashanah Itself. ................................................................. 6-3

Yom Kippur - Tishrei 10. ................................................................. 6-5
  Additional Ritual Items. ................................................................. 6-5
  Preparing For Yom Kippur .......................................................... 6-5
  General Prohibitions On Yom Kippur ............................................. 6-7
  Prayer Services. .............................................................................. 6-7

Sukkot - Tishrei 15-16. ................................................................. 6-9
  Additional Ritual Items. ................................................................. 6-9
  Prayer Services. .............................................................................. 6-11

Hoshanah Rabbah - The Seventh Day of Sukkot. ................................................. 6-12
  Additional Ritual Items. ................................................................. 6-12
  Prayer Services. .............................................................................. 6-12

Shemini Atzeret - Tishrei 22. .................................................................. 6-13
  Prayer Services. .............................................................................. 6-13

Simchat Torah - Tishrei 23. .................................................................. 6-14
  Prayer Services. .............................................................................. 6-14

Passover (“Pesach”) - Nissan 14 - 22. .................................................... 6-15
  Additional Ritual Items. ................................................................. 6-15
  The Significance of Matzo .......................................................... 6-17
  The Day Before Passover .......................................................... 6-18
  The Passover Holiday Itself ....................................................... 6-19
  The “Seder” ................................................................................. 6-20
Prayer Services .......................................................... 6-22
Shavuot - Sivan 6-7 .................................................... 6-23
Prayer Services .......................................................... 6-23

7. RABBINICALLY-MANDATED JEWISH
FESTIVALS 7-1
Chanukah - Eight Days beginning Kislev 25. ............ 7-2
Special Ritual Items .................................................. 7-2
Other Chanukah Traditions ........................................ 7-4
Purim - Adar 14 ....................................................... 7-6
Special Ritual Items .................................................. 7-6

8. FAST DAYS 8-1
Yom Kippur - Tishrei 10 ........................................... 8-2
Fast Days Commemorating the Destruction of the
Temples In Jerusalem ............................................... 8-3
Prayer Services .......................................................... 8-3
Fast of 10th of Tevet ................................................. 8-4
Fast of 17th of Tammuz .............................................. 8-5
Fast of 9th of Av ("Tisha B'Av") .................................. 8-6
Fast of Gedaliah - Tishrei 3 ....................................... 8-8
Fast of Esther - Adar 13 ............................................. 8-9
Prayer Services .......................................................... 8-9
Fast of the Firstborn - Nissan 14 .............................. 8-10

9. MISCELLANEOUS HOLY DAYS AND
OBSERVANCES 9-1
Tu B'Shevat - Shevat 15 ............................................. 9-1
The Spiritual Significance of Tu B'Shevat ................. 9-1
Sefirat Ha'Omer (The Counting of the Omer) ........... 9-5
"Lag Ba'Omer" .......................................................... 9-6
The "Three Weeks" ................................................... 9-7
The Weekly Reading of "Ethics of Our Fathers" ... 9-8
10. Life Cycle Events 10-1

Religious Rituals Surrounding Birth ....................... 10-2
If the newborn is a boy .................................. 10-2
“Brit Milah”: The “Covenant of Circumcision” .......... 10-2
“Pidyon Ha-ben”: The “Redemption of the Son” ....... 10-3
If the newborn is a girl .................................. 10-3
Naming the Daughter ...................................... 10-3
Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah ............................. 10-4
Religious Rituals Surrounding Weddings .............. 10-5
Religious Rituals Surrounding Divorces ............... 10-6
Religious Rituals Surrounding Deaths ................. 10-6
  Religious Laws Governing the Deceased .............. 10-7
  Religious Laws Governing the Mourners .............. 10-8

11. Resource Section 11-1

Sponsors: Religious Books and Supplies ............... 11-3
Sponsors: Kosher Food Supplies .......................... 11-4

12. Index 12-1
What This Handbook Can Do For You

In 1978, and on many additional occasions, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, called for attention to the Jewish population in prisons. He spoke publicly and publicized entire treatises dedicated to the moral, ethical, spiritual and educational needs for Jewish men and women in those environments and other institutional environments. For example, a person going through prison with meaning and growth—though very difficult—leaves as a better, more productive and balanced citizen. Thus the creation of the Aleph Institute and the publication of this handbook.

Since 1981, the Aleph Institute has provided valuable services to assist chaplains and institutional staff in meeting the legitimate religious needs of Jewish men and women in their care. The Aleph Institute provides answers to questions about mandated religious practices and ritual materials for daily and holiday observances. Aleph’s staff and affiliated Rabbis also provide visitation to Jews in institutional environments around the country.

In June, 1995, pursuant to a written request from Peter Carlson, then Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (“B.O.P.”), The Aleph Institute delivered a memorandum to Kathleen M. Hawk, Director of the
B.O.P., identifying the Holy days of the Jewish faith tradition and the religious practices associated with those Holy days that are absolutely mandated by that tradition. A copy of that memorandum also was distributed to all B.O.P. wardens as part of a presentation on the Religious Issues panel at the Federal Bureau of Prisons 1995 Wardens Meeting on June 14, 1995, in Phoenix, Arizona.

Reverend Bryn Carlson, then Chief of Chaplaincy Services for the B.O.P., also requested that Aleph prepare a supplementary memorandum identifying the mandated daily religious requirements of the Jewish faith tradition and the religious practices associated with those requirements.

Recognizing that there was a limited amount of material available to chaplains and institutional staff with respect to the Code of Jewish Law, Aleph adapted those outlines of the mandated religious practices and organized the information in a format designed to provide institutional staff with an easy-to-read introduction to the basic religious requirements of Jewish residents in institutional environments.

This Handbook does not presume to encompass laws governing every facet of a Jew’s daily life, e.g., laws governing moral conduct and demeanor, nor is it designed to provide Jewish practitioners with a reference to guide their own observance. Instead, this Handbook is designed to provide chaplains and institutional staff with a general, yet comprehensive, outline of the minimum daily ritual observances absolutely mandated by Jewish law and an overview of Jewish Holidays and their mandated ritual observances. Moreover, we have solicited real-life
experiences and implementation strategies from Rabbis
and Chaplains out in the field, providing advice on how to
implement religious practices in a variety of institutional
environments such as prisons, hospitals and the military.

That is the dual purpose of this Handbook — to give you
an understanding of the religious needs of Jewish residents
in your institution and practical advice on how to meet
those needs consistent with restraints presented by your
particular circumstance.

We hope that this information will assist you in
establishing procedures: (1) attentive to the Constitutional
mandate governing free exercise of religion; and (2)
consistent with the oft-stated institutional philosophy of
offering the greatest amount of latitude for the practice of
religious beliefs within the constraints of the institutional
environment.

The Aleph Institute has had a long history of working with
state and federal officials to minister to residents of the
Jewish faith, and we are willing and available to assist in
any additional ways to resolve issues that may arise in
implementing such procedures.

With respect to ritual items required for religious
observances, we first set forth the preferred practice. In
some instances, alternatives are provided by Jewish law to
meet less-than-ideal circumstances. For example, Sabbath
and holiday meals require blessings to be made over wine
and two loaves of bread, see pp. 4-8. When wine is not
available or permitted (such as in an institutional setting
like a prison), Jewish law provides that grape juice may be
used. Similarly, braided bread known as “challah”
traditionally is used for the blessing over bread, but the requirement also may be satisfied by using two kosher dinner rolls or whole matzot (matzot may not be used on the day prior to Passover, and some have the custom not to eat matzot during the 30-day period prior to this Holiday). Competent Rabbinic authorities always should be consulted when questions of substitutions arise.

We plan to issue supplements to this volume as the need arises, and welcome your comments and suggestions.
Introduction - Basic

Jewish Concepts and Beliefs

Judaism is the oldest of the Western monotheistic religions. The underlying premise and essential belief of Judaism is the existence of one indivisible, omniscient and omnipotent G-d, who is the creator and ruler of the universe and who revealed the law, the “Torah,” which is eternal and of utmost importance to the Jewish people, and who has established an eternal World-to-Come.

The essence of the Jewish faith is contained in a prayer that is recited every morning and evening, the “Shema”:

“Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart…” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6).

Observant Jews follow 613 commandments found in the five books of Moses (The Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) seven laws established by the Great Rabbis and derivative precepts expounded in the Oral Law (contained in writings such as the Talmud, the Code of Jewish Law (“Shulchan Arukh”) and later Rabbinic rulings) (collectively, the “Mitzvot” or “Halacha”). Since the destruction of the Temple — and
the exile that followed — not all 613 commandments are applicable, since many involved services in the Temple.

The eternal nature of the Torah is expressed in the belief that no religious law may be abrogated, eliminated or compromised. For the observant Jew, the original precepts and ancillary rules remain in force even in modern times and circumstances.

Jewish sages generally refer to the Torah as a “yoke.” See, e.g., Ethics of Our Fathers 3:5; Rashi, Talmud Tractate Rosh Hashanah 28a (“The mitzvot were not given to Israel so that their observance be a pleasure, but were given to be a yoke on their necks.”); Cf. Rashi, Talmud Tractate Megillah 25a (“Decrees of the King, to impose upon us His yoke, to make known that we are His servants and keepers of His commandments.”).

That yoke confines and restricts, but also uplifts and emancipates, and connects the performer with G-d:

It gives its adherents direction so that they should not flounder in the arbitrary ways of humanism, or fall in the morass of hedonism and moral obtuseness. It raises man from being a creature of animal instincts alone, to a rational human being who reflects upon the consequences of his conduct. The Halacha endows those who observe its precepts with a sense of purpose, giving their life both meaning and sanctity. It therefore embraces every aspect of human activity; both interpersonal relationships... between man and his fellow man—as well as purely ritualistic duties and ceremonials... between man and God, both equally

The Jew who accepts the authority of the “Halacha” will turn to it for guidance in every undertaking. Indeed, Jewish law imposes a duty to insure that all actions, including eating, drinking, talking, walking, sitting, transacting business, lying down and rising up, are all performed in a manner mandated by Jewish law for the sake of, and in a manner worthy of, serving the Creator. C.J.L. ch. 31.

In Judaism, faith and belief alone do not provide salvation. Faith cannot be separated from particular practices. Although faith is the ultimate basis for much of Halacha, the major emphasis of Halacha is on the performance of mitzvot, the performance of deeds.

**Who is a Jew?**

The Jewish tradition does not teach that one has to be Jewish to achieve salvation. All of the nations of the world are encouraged to follow the Seven Noahide Laws, involving a faith in G-d and moral and ethical conduct. Jewish tradition teaches that, by following these rules, all people are assured a place in the World-to-Come. (An exposition of the Seven Noachide Laws is beyond the scope of this publication, but study materials are available from Aleph.)

Traditional religious law defines a “Jew” as one who is born of a Jewish mother or one who has properly been converted to Judaism according to Halacha. Conversion is
a difficult process and requires a fundamental commitment to Jewishness, including all of its laws and customs, together with lengthy study of Torah, religious circumcision for conversion purposes (for males), immersion in a ritual bath (for both men and women) and confirmation by a Rabbinical court. Jews do not proselytize and conversion generally is discouraged.

Although most institutional systems allow residents to simply designate their own religious status, the Orthodox Jewish community recognizes only those who meet the above criteria and, accordingly, it would be highly unlikely for a person to be properly converted to Judaism while in an institutional environment (e.g., inmates in prison; persons in healthcare facilities).

One must recognize, however, that previously non-observant Jews may, through self-reflection, study and/or serious discussion with clergy or fellow residents, reach a sincere commitment to become more observant in their individual religious practice. Accordingly, we have attempted to identify all of the significant rituals followed by observant Jews on a daily basis.

While many so-called “denominations” have arisen in modern Jewish life (e.g., Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, etc.), we have provided information from a traditional, Orthodox perspective. Chaplains or other personnel who have a firm understanding of the traditional orthodox observant Jewish practices should have no trouble accommodating other denominations.
Messianic Jews

So called “messianic Jews” are invariably not Jews at all, but rather Christian missionaries trying to infiltrate the Jewish community in order to proselytize and convert Jews to their own faith. Institutional staff should be aware of this subterfuge and avoid recognizing such individuals as a subset of the Jewish population for purposes of services or programming. The belief that Jesus—or anyone else—was the “son of G-d” or a “risen Messiah” is contrary to all Jewish beliefs.

Levels of Observance

Under Jewish law, every religious imperative stands separate and apart from one another. A Jew who does not observe one precept properly (e.g., rules of Sabbath) is not absolved from observing other religious rules. Accordingly, the fact that a Jew does not appear to observe all religious commandments (or does not appear to observe those commandments consistently) is not grounds to deny that person the opportunity to observe other precepts, e.g., Sabbath prayer, eating kosher food.

In the same vein, a Jew who violates a particular religious precept is still obligated to satisfy that precept the next time the opportunity presents itself. Accordingly, a Jewish resident who “strays” to the mainline food line should not be precluded from fulfilling the religious obligation to eat kosher food the next time. See, e.g., Young v. Lane, 733 F. Supp. 1205 (N.D. Ill. 1990), rev’d on other grounds, 922 F.2d 370 (7th Cir. 1991). The opportunity to obtain kosher food
is a right, not a privilege. See, e.g., Ashelman v. Wawrzaszek, 111 F.3d 676 (9th Cir. 1997).

Moreover, what might appear to the uninitiated to be a “violation” of kosher laws may not, in fact, be a violation at all. For example, a resident who participates in the mainline food line—for purposes of obtaining more variety, for example—by selecting kosher-labeled products and whole fresh fruits or vegetables—is not violating Jewish law at all.

On the other side, the ability to observe one precept does not absolve the Jew from following other precepts. Accordingly, the fact that a Jewish resident may be permitted to pray and wear a yarmulke does not mean that person has been given “enough” opportunity to practice religion and then be denied other religious practices.

Living Jewishly is a process: One observes whatever precepts one is able—and hopefully one proceeds on a path of spiritual growth, observing more and more. As a practical matter, individual religious observances vary greatly. For purposes of this Handbook, we have attempted to outline the requirements of a person who has a sincerely held belief and has chosen to observe Jewish law to the fullest extent.

Finally, the process of identifying and punishing kosher food “violators” seems likely to lead to abuses. From the hundreds of letters we receive every month, it appears that situations arise at specific institutions where staff appear motivated to “violate” and remove persons from Common Fare or Kosher food lines, often as a way of limiting the number of people on those food lines.
It does not appear appropriate for chaplains or administrative staff—or any government employee—to act in the capacity of “religious police,” essentially monitoring another person’s daily religious observances. See e.g., Reed v. Faulkner, 842 F.2d 960, 963 (7th Cir. 1988).
2. Jewish Daily

Religious Requirements

Jewish daily religious requirements generally fall under one of four categories:

(1) daily mandated ritual observance;

(2) clothing;

(3) grooming; and

(4) kosher food.
Upon Awakening

Upon rising from sleep in the morning, every person is considered a newborn creature, insofar as the worship of the Creator is concerned. Accordingly, an observant Jew immediately says a short prayer upon awakening, thanking Almighty G-d for returning the soul, and is required to wash each hand with clean water in a ritually prescribed manner and to make the appropriate blessings. Additionally, observant Jews may not walk more than approximately six feet from their beds unless they have washed their hands, except in cases of extreme necessity. C.J.L. ch. 2 §1. A cup with water and a basin is often kept near the bed.

Prayers

Jewish males are required to pray three times daily: in the morning (the “Shacharit” service), before sundown (the “Mincha” service) and at night (the “Maariv” service). Prayers missed due to forgetting or emergency can only be made up during the services that immediately follows (e.g., missed afternoon prayers can be made up only at the immediately-following evening service). C.J.L. ch. 21 §3.

One must keep away from an open lavatory when praying, even though it is enclosed by partitions and does not contain any unclean matter. C.J.L. ch. 5 §12.
One should wear decent garments during prayer. C.J.L. ch. 12 §1.

One must make a serious effort to join his prayer with a congregation. C.J.L. ch. 12 §7. It is highly meritorious to pray in a synagogue or in a House of Study, as these are sacred places. Even when there is no minyan (a quorum of ten male adults) available for prayer, it is nevertheless meritorious to pray in a group. If absolutely necessary, one should pray even if alone. C.J.L. ch. 12 §9.

During certain morning and afternoon prayers, portions of the Pentateuch (the Five Books of Moses) are read from a Torah scroll. When there is no formal Torah scroll available from which to read the required portion during prayers, someone should read aloud the appropriate portion from a “Chumash” (printed volume of the Pentateuch) and the congregation should follow along, so that the practice of reading the Torah not be forgotten. C.J.L. ch. 12 §29.

If a quorum of ten pray and they have no Torah scroll, one should be brought to them for the purpose of reading out of it only if they have prepared an ark or a reading desk a day or two before, so that they have prepared a fixed place for the scroll. C.J.L. ch. 12 §30.

The time for morning prayer services begins as early as when the day dawns; that is, when the first light of the sun is seen in the East and continues through the day. Observant Jews may not begin any kind of work, transact business or start a journey until after morning prayers. C.J.L. ch. 8 §1.
An observant Jew may not interrupt certain portions of these prayer services to speak, even when spoken to.

During one particular prayer recited at each of the three prayer services (the “Sh’monah Es’rai,” or “Eighteen Blessings”), observant Jews may not step from the place they are standing until they complete the prayer, even if jostled or ordered to move.

Observant Jews attempt to pronounce at least one hundred benedictions daily. On the Sabbath, festivals and fast days, when the number of benedictions during prayers is reduced, the number may be increased by blessings over extra foods. C.J.L. ch. 6 §7.

**Phylacteries (“Tefillin”)**

Jewish males are required to don phylacteries (the “Tefillin”) once daily (except on the Sabbath and certain Holy days), usually during the morning prayer service. There are divergent customs as to whether it is necessary to don the tefillin at morning services during Chol Hamoed (the intermediate days of the Passover and Sukkot festivals). C.J.L. ch. 10 §25. See Section 6.

An observant Jewish male who is denied the opportunity to don his Tefillin *every* day is being denied the opportunity to observe a cornerstone of his faith. Jewish males who
were raised in observant homes generally will have donned Tefillin each and every weekday morning — without fail — since their thirteenth birthday.

Tefillin consist of two sealed leather-covered boxes that contain several texts of the Torah handwritten on small parchment scrolls. One box is affixed to the forehead and the other to one arm, both with thin leather straps. Some observant Jews own and don two pairs, one after the other (each of the two pairs are constructed in a particular way and contain the scrolls in a unique order).

The appropriate time to put on the tefillin begins from that hour of morning when there is sufficient daylight for a person to recognize a slight acquaintance at a distance of four cubits (approximately six feet), C.J.L. ch. 10 §2, and continues until nightfall.

Nothing must intervene between the flesh and the tefillin of either the hand or head (e.g., cap or sleeve). C.J.L. ch. 10 §6.

The obligation to don the tefillin of the hand and of the head are two separate and distinct precepts, and the inability to observe one does not bar the observance of the other. Therefore, if a person has only one half of the set available (head or hand) or, for whatever reason, can put
on only one, he is bound to put that one on. C.J.L. ch. 10 §11.

One must keep one’s body clean while wearing the tefillin; therefore one should be careful not to do anything unseemly while having them on. C.J.L. ch. 10 §23.

**The “Tallit”**  
*(Prayer Shawl)*

During morning prayer services, Jewish adult males (generally, those who are or were married) wear a “Tallit,” a large four-cornered fringed prayer shawl. Observant Jewish males wear a smaller version (the “Tzitzit”) all day, generally beneath their outer clothing. See p. 2-11.

**Blessings Before and After Eating**

Observant Jews always will make a blessing before and after consuming any food or drink.
Before eating bread or bread products upon which the benediction Hamotzi ("who bringeth forth") is said, one must first wash one’s hands in the ritually prescribed manner. C.J.L. ch. 40 §1.

The water used for washing the hands must be poured out of a vessel that is perfect, having neither a hole nor a crack. It must also be even at the top without any indents or projecting parts. C.J.L. ch. 40 §2.

Observant Jews may not leave their seats at the table before saying Grace after the meal; nor will they go into another room to finish a meal. C.J.L. ch. 42 §19.

The Study of Torah

Jews are Biblically-mandated not only to observe Jewish law, but also to study it daily at every opportunity. C.J.L. ch. 27 §2. This obligation may be satisfied through the study of Torah, the Code of Jewish Law, and other Jewish texts that discuss the Torah and its precepts.

The Code of Jewish Law has an entire chapter devoted to the critical importance of the study of Torah to Jewish life. C.J.L. ch.27. Jewish law views the spiritual wealth gained by Torah study as more highly prized than the accumulation of material wealth.
If one cannot understand the original text, he may use a translation he understands. The Talmud explains that Onkolos the proselyte translated the Bible into Aramaic, the common language spoken at that time, so that everyone should be able to understand the Torah.

Torah study includes volumes as diverse as the Bible, the Mishna, the Talmud, the Code of Jewish Law, Prayer Books, and various ethical and Chassidic writings.

The study of Torah should not be viewed as an “all or nothing” proposition where one must study Torah as a full-time endeavor in order to derive spiritual enlightenment. In the best of all possible worlds, such study would be undertaken by each and every Jew. However, the realities of the modern world, and in particular the realities of an institutional environment, often do not facilitate this kind of time commitment. Nevertheless, while full-time Torah study may not be feasible, Jewish law teaches us that every person should strive to study the Torah by himself, be it ever so little, every day and every night.

If one cannot study the Torah because of his inability to learn or by reason of life’s many distractions, he should set a goal to learn Torah each day, be it ever so little, and support others who devote themselves to study.
**Upon Retiring**

Observant Jews recite the “Shema” and certain Psalms before going to sleep. After saying the benediction “Hamapil” (the last prayer before sleep), observant Jews generally will neither eat, drink nor speak until after falling asleep for some period of time. C.J.L. ch. 71 §4.
Clothing:

Certain articles of clothing are mandated by Jewish law. Other religious laws governing clothing relate to Biblically-enjoined mixtures of fabrics and religious standards of modesty and dress.

Religious Laws
Governing Clothing
and Modesty

A Jew must dress and act modestly.

Observant Jewish females will not wear shorts, pants or sleeveless tops as they always endeavor to keep their knees and elbows covered. Observant Jewish males generally will not wear shorts or cutoff shirts.

A married Jewish female must keep her hair covered at all times. Observant females often satisfy this requirement by wearing hats, a wig or cloth head-covering.

There are no religious articles of clothing that women are required to wear.

Some segments of the Jewish community have adopted the dress of their Rabbis and nobles of the particular European or Mid-Eastern community from which they derive their
traditions (typically, black jackets or caftans and hats). Traditionally, they will wear these special clothing especially on the Sabbath and Holy Days.

A male is forbidden to wear any garments designed for women, even though he can be recognized as a male by his other garments. A woman is likewise forbidden to wear even a single garment designed for men. C.J.L. ch. 171 §1.

**The “Yarmulke” or “Kippah”**

Jewish males are required to wear a head-covering at all times, in order to remind them that Almighty G-d is above them. Observant Jewish males must not walk even as much as four cubits (approximately six feet) or utter a single holy word (e.g., prayer or Torah study), while being bareheaded. C.J.L. ch. 3 §6. Some more observant Jews will sleep with their head covered, too.

Acceptable head coverings include any type of hat or cap, or a small circular traditional cloth cap (commonly referred to as the “yarmulke” or “kippah”).
The “Tzitzit” or “Tallit Katan”

The precept to wear a four-cornered, fringed garment (commonly referred to as the “Tzitzit” or “Tallit Katan”) is of great importance, and observant Jewish males wear one all day. C.J.L. ch. 9 §1. During daylight hours, observant Jews may not walk even as much as four cubits (approximately six feet) without wearing one. C.J.L. ch. 2 §2. Observant males generally wear this religious item under their outer garments. Some more observant Jews will sleep with the garment on, too.

Jewish male adults also wear a large fringed prayer shawl (the “Tallit”) during morning prayer services. C.J.L. ch. 9 §1.
Religious Laws
Prohibiting the Mixture of Certain Fabrics ("Shatnez")

It is forbidden to wear a garment that contains both wool and linen. C.J.L. ch. 176 §1 (citing Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11). Such a forbidden combination is called “Shatnez.” Even if the woolen garment has been sewn to the linen garment with silk or hemp thread, or vice versa, or if a linen thread was tied to woolen thread or braided together, all these are forbidden as Shatnez. C.J.L. ch. 176 §1.
Religious Laws
Governing Contact
Between Men
and Women

Highly-observant men and women will not have any physical contact with the opposite sex (including handshakes) unless they are married to each other.

Highly-observant Jewish men will make every effort not to pass between two women. C.J.L. ch. 4 §1.

Highly-observant men and women will avoid any circumstance where they are left alone with a member of the opposite sex in a closed room without the presence of a spouse. Observant Jewish men and women do not socialize, dance or sing together. Indeed, most observant Jews are separated from members of the opposite sex (except family members) from an early age, attending single-sex elementary and high schools.

Institutional staff should not view lack of eye contact by observant Jewish persons of the opposite sex as antagonistic. In reality, it is often a reflection of embarrassment felt by people who are suddenly confronted by members of the opposite sex, especially in light of their religious upbringing limiting such contact.
Grooming

Jewish law mandates how and when a Jew may shave or take haircuts and when immersion in a ritual bath is required.

Religious Laws

Governing Shaving

Religious law mandates that Jews not use a razor to shave certain parts of their head and face. Electric shavers may be acceptable if their cutting mechanism complies with Jewish law (i.e., cutting via a scissor-like motion rather than a razor). It is forbidden to shave off the hair of the temples on both sides of the head at their juncture with the cheeks at the ears. According to some authorities, it is forbidden to cut them even with scissors, close to the skin, as with a razor. C.J.L. ch. 170 §1.

The Torah has also forbidden Jews to shave the “corners” of their beard with a razor. The beard has five “corners” and there are many opinions as to where they are. Therefore, observant Jews will not use a razor to shave any part of the beard. C.J.L. ch. 170 §2.

Certain segments of the Jewish community do not shave or cut their beards or earlocks at all; some may trim beards or earlocks but not shave them off altogether.

Jewish law mandates certain periods of the year (e.g., the Sabbath, certain Holy days, mourning periods or fast days, sefirah period), when shaves or haircuts may not be taken.
See Chapter 6 (religious holidays) and Chapter 8 (fast days).

**Religious Laws**

**Governing Ritual Baths**

The religious laws governing the construction of a proper ritual bath are beyond the scope of this Handbook. Ritual baths may be found in synagogues or other structures in any properly organized Jewish community. Under certain circumstances, natural bodies of water, such as oceans, rivers and lakes, may be suitable for ritual immersion.

Observant Jewish females must immerse themselves monthly in a ritual bath, one week after the completion of their menstrual cycle, before having any sexual contact with their husbands.

Highly-observant Jewish males customarily immerse themselves in a ritual bath in preparing for the Sabbath and Holy days. Observant Jewish males immerse themselves in a ritual bath (the “Mikvah”) on the day before Yom Kippur, to cleanse themselves spiritually and as a prerequisite to repentance, just as a convert to Judaism is required to immerse in that ritual bath. C.J.L. ch. 131 §6.

Certain segments of the Jewish community immerse themselves daily.

Ritual baths are also used to immerse new cooking and eating utensils of glass and metal before their first use.
Kosher Food

“Kosher” means much more than just “non-pork.”

Throughout history, observant Jews have practically starved themselves rather than consume any food or drink that was not “kosher” (the word means “proper” or “fit”). A Jew’s obligation to consume only kosher food is a Biblically-mandated precept as elaborated by principles set forth by Rabbis and Sages thousands of years ago, and applied today. Observant Jews believe that the slightest morsel of forbidden food taints not only the body, but the soul itself. Accordingly, the availability of nutritionally-sufficient kosher food for a Jew is not a luxury accommodation; it is an essential provision to allow that person to live.

All food and their components are divided into four categories:

1. Meat

2. Dairy

3. Pareve (neutral)

4. Non-Kosher (which includes mixtures of meat and dairy, and mixtures of meat and fish).

Observant Jews will eat most food products only when they know that highly-competent skilled and learned Jews have supervised the entire process: the source, preparation and service of the product. Many common products and
national brands are labeled with symbols signifying that they have been prepared under Rabbinical supervision and comply with kosher dietary requirements.

Ingredients listed on food packaging are not a reliable indicator as to whether the product is kosher. Many ingredients do not list their components (e.g., “Gelatin” does not indicate whether it was derived from animal products or vegetable matter; “Flavorings” does not indicate source) and ingredients used in minute amounts are not necessarily listed.

The letter “K” alone printed on a food package has no meaning unless one personally knows the supervising Rabbi to be scrupulous in his adherence of the rules of kosher, since the “K” is a generic letter that may be placed on most anything, and does not indicate that any reputable kosher certifying organization has provided any oversight at all.

The decision to accept the credentials of a particular supervising person or food-certifying organization is a highly-personal choice, often dictated by the personal level of the individual’s observance and the community in which one was raised or resides. Note that only certain symbols would be acceptable to those Jews who are most observant. There are nearly two hundred kosher symbols and agencies certifying packaged foods in the United States. *Kashrus Magazine*, a magazine for kosher consumers, publishes lists of products and manufacturers preparing kosher food, and news and updates five times per year. One issue per year contains an extensive listing of the names, addresses and symbols used by all kosher certifying agencies. Subscriptions are $18 per year; $33/2 yrs, $45/3
years, and may be obtained from Kashrus Magazine, POB 204, Brooklyn, NY 11204. Tel: (718) 336-8544.

The six most-commonly accepted kosher certification symbols, and the organizations behind them, are as follows:

**O-U...**

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations
333 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Tel.: (212) 563-4000
Fax: (212) 564-9058
Publication: The “OU” Kashrus Directory

**O-K...**

The Organized Kashrus Laboratories
1372 Carroll Street
Brooklyn, NY 11213

Tel: (718) 756-7500
Fax: (718) 756-7503
Publication: The Jewish Homemaker
Star-K...
Star K Kosher Certification
11 Warren Road
Baltimore, MD 21208-5234
Tel.: (410) 484-4110
Fax: (410) 653-9294
Publication: Kashrus Kurrents

KOF-K...
Kof-K Kosher Certification
1444 Queen Anne Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666
Tel.: (201) 837-0500
Fax: (201) 837-0126
Publication: The Kosher Outlook

CRC...
The intricate laws regarding the selection and preparation of religiously-acceptable kosher food is beyond the scope of this treatise. For purposes of this outline, we have identified the three essential qualities of kosher food:

1- it must be derived from a religiously-acceptable source;

2- it must be prepared and served in a religiously-acceptable way; and

3- meat and dairy products may not be mixed.
**Derived From a Religiously-Acceptable Source**

All agricultural products (whole fruits and vegetables) are kosher. Cut fruits and vegetables must be prepared with kosher utensils (*see below*).

Only certain Biblically-defined animals are kosher (*e.g.*, no pork products or shellfish); only certain portions of those animals may be consumed.

Kosher land animals generally are limited to ruminants with split hooves (generally cows, sheep, goat and deer), and poultry (generally, chicken, turkey, duck, goose and pigeon). Only fish with scales and fins are kosher. Accordingly, no shellfish are kosher. Shark, eel, catfish and whale are also forbidden.

Dairy products must be derived from kosher animals. Accordingly, milk products from a pig, camel, or other non-kosher animal are not kosher. Many observant Jews will not consume milk and dairy products unless they have a high level of Rabbinical supervision during processing (“Cholov Yisroel”).

Eggs should be examined before using them in the preparation of food, as any blood spots found in them renders the eggs non-kosher. C.J.L. ch. 46 §1.

Some observant Jews only eat bread made by Jews. In some communities, they do buy bread of a non-Jewish
baker where the ingredients are certified as kosher. C.J.L. ch. 28 §1.

**Prepared and Served in a Religiously-Acceptable Way**

Animals must be slaughtered in a religiously-mandated humane way by skilled and learned Jews.

Meats must be soaked and salted in a religiously-mandated way observed by skilled and learned people.

Care must always be taken that kosher foods are prepared and served with appropriate utensils (*e.g.*, utensils that have not been used for non-kosher foods or washed together with non-kosher utensils, and are not used both for meat and dairy products, *see below*).

Glass and metal utensils bought for culinary purposes, even when new, may not be used before they are immersed in a mikvah (ritual bath) and the proper benediction made. C.J.L. ch. 37 §1.

In order to be fit for ritual drinking, kosher wine must be certified kosher and “Mevushal” (cooked) C.J.L. ch. 47 §3.
Religious Laws
Governing Meat
and Dairy Products

Meat and dairy products may not be cooked or eaten together, C.J.L. ch. 46 §5, nor may a Jew derive any benefit from such mixed foods, id. Dishes, cutlery or cooking utensils used for milk cannot be used for meat, and vice versa.

Accordingly, two separate sets of cooking utensils, dishes and cutlery are required: one for meat products and one for dairy foods. Id. §8.

It is customary to mark all utensils used for dairy foods, so that they might not be interchanged with those used for meat. C.J.L. ch. 46 §8.

Even a very small amount of meat or dairy (or their derivatives) in a product renders that product “meat” or “dairy.”

Observant Jews will not eat meat at the same table at which dairy products are simultaneously consumed, or vice versa. C.J.L. ch. 46 §6. A loaf of bread used at a dairy meal may not be consumed at a later meat meal, or vice versa. C.J.L. ch. 46 §7.

Kitchen and food service administrators should be made aware that, with respect to meal schedules, observant Jews generally will have to wait a certain period of time after consuming meat before they will eat dairy products. The
waiting period usually is determined by tradition. Jews who hail from certain Eastern European countries may wait as long as six (6) hours after eating meat products before eating or drinking dairy products. C.J.L. §46:9. Other traditions dictate shorter waiting periods, e.g., three hours under German tradition. Accordingly, a late meat lunch may prevent a Jewish resident from eating a dairy dinner. Generally, only a short waiting period is required after eating dairy products before meat products may be consumed. Id. §11 (generally 1/2 hour; some wait as long as one hour). However, one who eats hard cheese is required to wait the same amount of time before eating meat as if he had eaten meat and now wanted to eat dairy.

**“Pareve” Products**

Everything kosher that does not fall under the categories of meat or dairy is called “paerve” (“neutral”). Included are eggs, kosher fish and agricultural products (fruits and vegetables). Pareve products may be eaten with either meat or dairy products, with one exception: fish may not be mixed with meat in a single dish.

It is forbidden to eat fish together with meat. Observant Jews will not even roast meat and bake fish at the same time in a small oven, unless either one or the other is covered. There is no prohibition against roasting the two together in separate utensils in a large oven. C.J.L. ch. 23 §1.
“Non-Kosher” Foods

Certain foods are intrinsically non-kosher:

♦ animals that do not chew their cud, and those that do not have split hooves

♦ most birds except poultry

♦ all animals that have not been slaughtered, soaked, salted and inspected according to Jewish law

♦ all shellfish

♦ all insects and rodents

♦ all grape juice products not supervised by a Rabbi

♦ all hard cheese products not supervised by a Rabbi

♦ all mixtures of meat and fish

♦ all mixtures of meat and dairy

Other foods may be non-kosher as a result of processing:

♦ spray-dried products

♦ reacted flavors

♦ some canned foods

♦ food prepared with equipment previously
Ingredients

The overwhelming majority of basic ingredients may or may not be kosher depending on their origin or processing history. Accordingly, they require Rabbinical supervision to insure that their origin is from a kosher product, and to determine whether they are meat, dairy or pareve.

Ingredients that can never be Kosher:

♦ civet
♦ castoreum
♦ carmine
♦ ambergris

Ingredients presently not available in Kosher form:

♦ musk
♦ natural cognac oil
♦ animal gelatin
♦ enocianina (grape skin extract)
**Ingredients requiring Rabbinical supervision:**

**Products that may be derived from an animal source:**

- all oil and fats
- natural fatty acids their esters and especially palmatic, stearic, oleic and pelargonic acids
- fatty alcohols, hydrolyzed proteins
- glycerol and esters
- enzymes
- enzyme-modified
- aldehydes and ketones
- lactones
- polysorbates, sorbitans and all emulsifiers
- amino acids and products
- whey (arising from enzyme action)
- vitamins

**Products that have or may have a grape juice origin:**

- juices
- wine
- enocianina
- natural cognac oil
- natural valeric acid
- ethyl alcohol
- natural ethyl esters
- natural acetaldehyde
♦ fusel oil  ♦ vinegar

♦ amyl alcohol and esters

**Products that are dairy or may have a dairy origin and will cause a product to be “dairy”:**

♦ milk solids  ♦ cream and derivatives

♦ lactose, casein and derivatives  ♦ starter distillates or cheese: butyric, caproic, propionic and myristic acids

♦ whey and chemicals produced from its fermentation  ♦ fatty acids from butter
Foods That Are Not Kosher For Passover

In addition to all of the above, the following products and their derivatives may not be used during the Jewish eight-day holiday of Passover:

- wheat (except properly supervised Matzah)
- rye
- spelt
- barley
- oats
- mustard except in Sephardic (Middle Eastern) communities
- alcohol (whiskey and liquors)
- beer
- corn
- legumes (soy, peanut, etc. (except in Sephardic communities))
- rice (except in Sephardic communities)
- dextrose (from wheat or corn)
- sorbitol (except in Sephardic communities)

As a general rule, Passover products may not be manufactured with, cooked or served in utensils that were previously used with non-Passover foods. See also pg. 6-15.
All products that require Passover certification must be manufactured under Rabbinical supervision.

Products that contain kosher certification all year still require special certification for Passover. Most certifying agencies provide special symbols for Passover-acceptable products. For example, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations usually adds the letter “P” to its certifying symbol around Passover time to indicate products that may be consumed on Passover.
Ritual Items Generally Required Daily

The following items are required for Jews to observe basic daily (non-holiday) religious requirements (females do not require items 5 through 7):

(1) *Prayer Book* (the “Siddur”): generally contains all prayer services;

(2) *Bible* (the “Tanach”): The Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, which contains the daily Torah readings for the week and is also generally used for religious study, plus other volumes containing Jewish legal, moral and ethical teachings to continue spiritual development (e.g., Talmud, Tanya, Midrash and other Rabbinic writings);

(3) *Kosher Food*: food that complies with essential religious requirements;

(4) *Code of Jewish Law*: used as a study tool and reference to research simple questions that arise regarding religious observances (more complicated questions may require Rabbinical consultation);

(5) *Skullcap* (the “yarmulke” or “kippah”): worn
by males at all prayer services, and at all times by more observant Jews. Highly observant women keep their hair covered at all times, usually by a wig or other head-covering;

(6) *Prayer Shawl* (the “Tallit”): a garment with fringes on each of the four corners, worn by males at morning prayer services, a smaller one is also worn at all times under outer garments by more observant Jews.

(7) *Phylacteries* (the “Tefillin”): a pair of leather-covered boxes that contain several texts of the Torah handwritten on small parchment scrolls. They are worn by men during non-holiday morning prayers and are affixed to the forehead and one arm with thin leather straps. Some observant Jews don two pairs, one following the other (the second is constructed following a different form, and contains the scrolls in a different order).

More-observant Jews will also require a basin and cup for ritual washing of the hands upon awakening.

Each of these items (with the possible exception of large quantities of kosher food) are readily available from Jewish book stores and distributors throughout the country, local synagogues, Jewish community organizations or the Aleph Institute.
Kosher Food In
Institutional
Environments

Kosher food can be made available to Jews in institutional environments by: (1) preparing it on site with proper kitchen facilities under the direction of a qualified kosher food supervisor; (2) obtaining pre-packaged meals from Kosher food vendors around the country (e.g., sealed airline dinners or shelf stable packaging); (3) Selecting commercially available products containing appropriate kosher certification labels; or (4) obtaining fresh products through retail outlets and kosher food purveyors.

The use of disposable plastic or paper goods is an easy, cost-effective and religiously-acceptable alternative when providing Kosher food in an institution.

Ritual Items Not Generally Required in Institutional Environments

The “Mezuzah”

The “mezuzah” is a small parchment scroll encased in a box that is Biblically-mandated to be affixed to the doorways of Jewish homes. The text is handwritten by a scribe and consists of paragraphs from the Bible.
Dwelling places that are exempt from a mezuzah are homes that are not owned or rented by Jews. C.J.L. ch. 11 §19. Accordingly, Jews residing in long-term-care residences, hospitals, prisons and other “public” institutional environments do not require mezuzahs to be affixed to their doorposts.

The reason for the above exemptions is that a house which is used as a temporary residence does not require a mezuzah. (Therefore, the sukkah erected for the Feast of Tabernacles also does not requires a mezuzah during the days of the feast. C.J.L. ch. 11 §14.)
3. The Torah/Hebrew Calendar

Dates of Jewish holidays and fast days are governed by the Torah/Hebrew calendar, which is based on the lunar cycle, unlike the Gregorian solar calendar used by most of the world. Each year is comprised of twelve months of either 29 or 30 days. Leap years are comprised of thirteen months. Since times differ corresponding to one’s geographic location, it is important to obtain a calendar for your particular locale.

The Aleph Institute publishes and distributes a calendar that may be used by chaplains and institutional staff, which lists both Gregorian and Torah/Hebrew dates. Similar calendars may be obtained from Jewish synagogues and community centers around the country. A chart listing all major Jewish Holy days and their corresponding secular calendar dates for 1998-2005 is annexed in the resource section of this handbook.
“Rosh Chodesh”:
The “Head of the Month”

The start of each month is called “Rosh Chodesh” (the “head of the month”) and is celebrated with the recital of certain extra prayers. Work is permissible on Rosh Chodesh but some observant women customarily refrain from sewing, weaving, and laundry on that day. C.J.L. ch. 97 §3.

The Time Of Commencement And Conclusion Of The Sabbath, Jewish Holidays And Fast Days

Sabbath and Jewish Holy days generally begin 18 minutes before sunset on the preceding day and end approximately one hour after sunset of the day of the Holy day. Most fast days begin from daybreak of the fast day itself (over two hours before sunrise). But see Yom Kippur and the Ninth Day of Av (fasting begins the prior evening).
4. The Holy Sabbath

The Sabbath ("Shabbat") is considered the most important of all Jewish Holy days. The Sabbath is considered as a sign to bear witness that, “In six days G-d made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day.” See Exodus 20:11. This belief, that G-d is the creator of the universe, is the foundation of the Jewish faith. C.J.L. ch. 72 §1.

The Sabbath begins 18 minutes before sunset on Friday night and ends approximately one hour after sunset on Saturday night. C.J.L. chs. 75; 96.
Preparing For the Sabbath

It is a prevailing custom among Jews to bake some loaves of bread specifically in honor of the Sabbath. Even a person who eats bread baked by a non-Jew on weekdays often makes it a point to eat Jewish bread on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 72 §6.

Observant Jews are mandated to procure meat, fish, dainties, and good wine (or grape juice, as necessary) for the Sabbath, in accordance with one’s means. It is proper to eat fish at every Sabbath meal. C.J.L. ch. 72 §7.

No regular work should be done from late afternoon on Friday. Casual work is permitted until the advent of the Sabbath (approximately 18 minutes before sunset). C.J.L. ch. 72 §9.

On Friday, observant Jews will bathe in preparation for the Sabbath, preferably in warm water. C.J.L. ch. 72 §12.

One should try to wear their finest clothes on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 72 §16.
Candle-Lighting at the Start of the Sabbath

The Sabbath (and all Biblically-mandated festivals) is sanctified by the lighting of candles at its start and end. C.J.L. chs. 75 (start of Sabbath); 96 (end of Sabbath).

Observant Jews must put all work aside and light the Sabbath candles at least one-half hour before the stars emerge, *i.e.*, eighteen minutes prior to sunset. C.J.L. ch. 75 §1.

In no event should less than two candles be lit. The candles should be large enough to burn at least until after the evening Sabbath meal. C.J.L. ch. 75 §2.

Generally, the women in the household light the Sabbath Candles. Men are equally obliged to light Sabbath candles when there are no women in the household to light them. C.J.L. ch. 75 §5.

The Sabbath candles should preferably be lit in the room where the meals are served, in order to indicate that they are lit in honor of the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 75 §8.
The Sabbath Prayers

Religious prayer services commence on Friday evening before sunset and also are held on Saturday morning, afternoon and evening. C.J.L. ch. 76. A portion of the Torah is read at each prayer service held on Saturday morning and afternoon. C.J.L. ch. 78.

The prayer services held on Friday night and Saturday morning are far longer than on weekdays, containing as they do special additional prayers for the Sabbath.

Once per month, an additional prayer sanctifying the New Moon is said outdoors at the Saturday evening prayers (weather permitting — otherwise it is said during the weekdays). This short additional prayer service consists of reciting certain paragraphs and greeting other congregants with blessings and good wishes.

“Work” Proscriptions On the Sabbath

The specific prohibitions of the Sabbath are numerous, complex and beyond the scope of this treatise. They are comprised of 39 major categories of forbidden activities and hundreds of derivative activities. See, e.g., C.J.L. chs. 80 (listing some of the generally-unknown forbidden activities); 88 (objects forbidden to be handled on the Sabbath).

Institutional staff should develop an awareness that, for the
observant Jew, weekday pursuits such as work, travel, smoking, shaving and the use of writing instruments, fire or electrical appliances (lights, cooking equipment, elevators, automobiles, radio/tv, telephones, machinery, etc.) are forbidden on the Sabbath.

It is forbidden to write or draw a picture on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 80 §62.

It is forbidden to sweep floors, even if they are made of stone or wood. C.J.L. ch. 80 §73.

It is forbidden to make a “tent” (i.e., a roof that shelters even from only the sun or from rain) on the Sabbath, even if it is only a temporary tent. C.J.L. ch. 80 §77.

There are many divergent views regarding the folding of clothing on the Sabbath, and it is best not to fold them. C.J.L. ch. 80 §91.

One is not permitted to make a bed on the Sabbath to be used at the conclusion of the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 80 §93.

In a public area, it is forbidden to carry, throw or hand over any object for a distance of more than four cubits (approximately 6 feet). C.J.L. ch. 82 §1.

It is forbidden to carry, throw or hand over any object from a private to a public domain (e.g., from inside a building to the street or courtyard). C.J.L. ch. 82 §2.

One who is fettered with chains (e.g., handcuffs or leg irons) may walk out with them on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 84 §6.
It is forbidden to handle anything that is unfit for any use on the Sabbath, such as money, writing instruments, electronic items, wood, feathers, skins, wool, flax, living animals (even those that are domesticated), the shells of nuts and eggs, and fragments of broken vessels that are not fit for any further use. All these and similar things are called “Muktzeh” and may not be handled on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 88 §2.

There are certain things forbidden on the Sabbath although they neither have any resemblance to “work” nor do they in any way lead to the performance of work. For example, the manner of walking on the Sabbath should not be the same as on a weekday. Therefore, it is forbidden to run on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 90 §1.

On the Sabbath or on a festival, one is forbidden to walk from the place where one spends the Sabbath or festival a greater distance than approximately three thousand feet. But, for purposes of this rule, if one is in a city the entire city is considered one’s “abode,” and one may not travel approximately 3,000 feet from the city’s boundaries. C.J.L. ch. 95 §1.
The “Kiddush”

The Sabbath meal on Friday evening is ushered in with the recital of Kiddush (the sanctification blessing). It is meritorious to say the Kiddush over aged and perfect wine, but grape juice is acceptable in the institutional setting. An effort should be made to procure wine that is red. C.J.L. ch. 77 §3. When wine or grape juice are unavailable, the Kiddush may be recited over two loaves of bread or whole matzot.

Women, too, are obligated to say the Kiddush. C.J.L. ch. 77 §4.

The Kiddush should also be recited over a cup of wine or grape juice at the start of the Sabbath morning meal. C.J.L. ch. 77 §13.

The Kiddush may be recited by one person for all present. All who hear the blessing respond: “Amen.”

Sabbath Meals

Every Jew is duty-bound to eat three meals on the Sabbath, one on Sabbath eve and two during the day. C.J.L. ch. 77 §16.
According to Jewish law, a "meal" consists of wine (or grape juice), bread, fish and meat. *Id.* Blessings must be recited over wine (or grape juice) (the "Kiddush") at the Friday night and Sabbath morning meals, *see* C.J.L. ch. 77 §§1-14, and over two loaves of bread (the "ha-Motzi") at each of the three Sabbath meals. *Id.* §§17-18. Blessings must be made over two loaves of bread (or whole matzot or dinner rolls) at every meal, even if many meals are eaten during the day. C.J.L. ch. 77 §17.

It is forbidden to abstain from food on the Sabbath, even for the purpose of fasting. *Id.* §20. Fast days that fall on the Sabbath are usually observed on the preceding Thursday, or the following Sunday, depending on the fast day involved. *See section 8; see also* C.J.L. ch. 121 §6. The only exception to the no-fasting-on-Sabbath rule is Yom Kippur. When Yom Kippur falls on the Sabbath, the fast is observed even on the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 133.

To comply with Jewish law, meal plans for Friday evening and Saturday’s lunch should provide for kosher grape juice, two whole loaves of bread (or matzo/roll), fish and meat. Fish and meat are not required for the third Sabbath meal. C.J.L. ch. 77 §16.

Observant Jews may not eat foods that are cooked on the Sabbath, or even reheated by Jews on the Sabbath. *See, e.g.,* C.J.L. chs. 80 (listing some of the generally-unknown forbidden activities on the Sabbath); 88 (objects forbidden to be handled on the Sabbath). Accordingly, work schedules may need to be rearranged to insure that no
Jewish residents (or staff) actually even reheat any pre-cooked foods (e.g., instant grits, hot cereal, beef or chicken entrees) on the Sabbath.

The “Havdalah” Service
At the Conclusion of the Sabbath

Just as it is mandatory to sanctify the Sabbath when it is ushered in, so is it mandatory to sanctify its departure by performing the “Havdalah” ritual. This ritual is a solemnization of the Sabbath’s parting by a blessing over wine or grape juice, the sniffing of cloves or other aromatic incense and the lighting of a twined, multi-wicked candle or two flames from any source brought together to form a single “torch” for the duration of the ceremony. C.J.L. ch. 77 §1.

When wine cannot be procured, the Havdalah may be recited over other beverages, including grape juice, beer, or a beverage that is a national drink, except water and soda. C.J.L. ch. 96 §3.

One person may recite the Havdalah on behalf of the group present. All who hear the blessings say “Amen” at the appropriate places. Women, too, must recite the
Havdalah when there are no men to recite it for them.

As soon as the sun sets on the Sabbath, it is forbidden to eat or drink anything before reciting the Havdalah. C.J.L. ch. 96 §4.

No work may be done before the Havdalah is recited. C.J.L. ch. 96 §5.

Preferably, the Havdalah candle should be of wax and consist of several strands twisted together so as to form a torch. But if one does not have a Havdalah candle made of paraffin, one should use two ordinary candles, holding them close together so that both flames merge in one like a torch. C.J.L. ch. 96 §9. In extreme circumstances, two matches may be used. The flame is required to burn only for the duration of the blessing, and is extinguished afterwards.

If possible, one should partake of bread and warm food in the “Melaveh Malkah” feast held on Saturday night, after the Havdalah service. One should set a good table in honor of the departure of the Sabbath, and one who is unable to partake of bread should at least eat some cake or fruit. C.J.L. ch. 96 §13.

**Ritual Items Generally Required For Sabbath**

The following items are required for Jews to observe the Sabbath (females do not require the last two items):
(1) **Prayer Book** (the “Siddur”): generally contains all prayer services for the Sabbath;

(2) **Bible** (the “Tanach”): The Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, which contains the Torah readings for the Sabbath and is also generally used for religious study;

(3) **Calendar** (the “Luach”): identifies the precise times of the start and end of the Sabbath observance;

(2) **Candles**: used to sanctify the arrival and departure of the Sabbath;

(3) **Kosher Wine** (or kosher grape juice): used to sanctify the Sabbath through blessings made before each meal on the eve and day of the Sabbath;

(6) **Bread** (usually “Challah” (braided bread)): used to sanctify the Sabbath (except on Passover) through blessings made over two loaves (or other kosher rolls or matzot) at each Sabbath meal;

(7) **Kosher Food**: food that complies with three essential religious requirements: (1) if the food contains any animal products, those products must derive from a religiously-acceptable animal (*e.g.*, no pork products or shellfish); (2) all food must be prepared in a religiously-acceptable way (*e.g.*, meat ritually slaughtered) and with religiously-acceptable utensils (*e.g.*, utensils used for non-kosher food may not be used); and (3) meat and dairy products
may not be consumed together or prepared with the same utensils. See Chapter 4, (Jewish Daily Religious Requirements: Food).

(8) Skullcap (the “yarmulke”): worn by males at all prayer services (and at all times by more observant Jews); and

(9) Prayer Shawl (the “Tallit”): a garment with fringes on each of the four corners, worn by males at morning prayer services (a smaller version is worn at all times under outer garments by more observant Jews).

All ritual items listed here (with the possible exception of large quantities of kosher food) are readily available from Jewish book stores, local synagogues, Jewish community organizations or the Aleph Institute.
Holy Days and Festivals

Jewish Holy days other than the Sabbath generally fall under one of three categories:

(1) Festivals set forth in the Bible itself, during which work proscriptions apply that are generally similar to the Sabbath;

(2) Festivals mandated by Rabbinic decree, during which work generally is not proscribed in the same manner as on the Sabbath; and

(3) Fast days, during which work generally is not proscribed. But see Yom Kippur, below (a holiday and fast day during which work is absolutely proscribed) and the Ninth Day of Av, below (work and business generally proscribed in the morning hours).

It is a Jew’s religious duty to honor all the festivals and take delight in them, just as to honor and take delight in the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 103 §1.

What is considered honor? On the day before the festival, observant Jews cut their hair, in order not to usher in the festival in an untidy appearance. Jews also are required to bathe in warm water, wash their heads and pare their nails on the day before the festival, even as they do on the day
before the Sabbath. Jews traditionally also bake Challah (braided white loaves of bread) in honor of the festival. C.J.L. ch. 103 §2.

What is meant by delight? On each day of a festival, observant Jews must eat at least two meals, one at night and one during the day (no third meal is required as on the Sabbath). The Kiddush is recited over a cup of wine or grape juice before the meal, and a benediction uttered over two Challahs, or two matzot or other whole rolls. One should be as lavish with meat, wine, and dainties as means permit. C.J.L. ch. 103 §3.

Each Biblically-mandated festival is sanctified by the lighting of two candles on the eve of each Holy day and the Havdalah is recited at the conclusion of the work-proscribed holiday. C.J.L. chs. 75; 103 §4.
Work Proscriptions On Biblically-Mandated Holidays

Work proscriptions for Biblically-mandated festivals are generally the same as for the Sabbath, except for more lenient rules governing the use of fire and the preparation of food. C.J.L. ch. 98. See generally id. chs. 98-99, 101-102. The specific prohibitions of festivals and their differences from the Sabbath are beyond the scope of this volume. Competent Rabbinic authorities should be consulted with individual questions.

Generally, any work that is forbidden on the Sabbath is also forbidden on a Biblically-mandated festival. The festival differs from the Sabbath only with regard to the preparation of food, as it is written: “Only that which is eaten by any soul, this alone may be prepared by you” (Exodus 12:16). Thus, kneading, baking, and cooking are permitted on a festival.

Carrying objects from one place to another and kindling a fire from an existing flame are also permitted on a festival, even when not needed for cooking but for some other purpose. C.J.L. ch. 98 §1. One may not strike a match or use a lighter to begin a new flame on the festival, but one may transfer a flame from one place to another.

One may also not extinguish a flame, but must let a flame burn out of its own accord. Accordingly, one may smoke a cigarette on a holiday, if it is lit from an existing flame (e.g.,
another cigarette or candle) and is not snuffed out when completed.

The law concerning the washing of dishes on the Sabbath also applies to a festival. It is forbidden to wash dishes on the first day of the festival to be used on the second day of the festival. C.J.L. ch. 98 §28.

To comply with Jewish law, meal plans for Holiday eves and lunch on the Holiday itself should provide for kosher grape juice, two whole loaves of bread (or matzo), fish and meat. C.J.L. ch. 103.

Moreover, observant Jews may not eat foods that are not prepared in accordance with special rules governing cooking on Biblically-mandated Holidays. Accordingly, work schedules may need to be rearranged so that foods can be properly reheated by Jewish residents or staff on Jewish Holidays.

On a two-day festival whose first day occurs on Thursday or Friday, it is forbidden to bake or to cook on the first day of the Holiday for the Sabbath (the second day) unless an “Eruv Tavshilin” ceremony (combination of dishes) is performed on the afternoon preceding the festival. This rite is carried out as follows: We take some bread and some cooked or roasted food that is commonly eaten with bread (e.g., a whole matzo and a hard-boiled egg), and pronounce a benediction. Then we say “By virtue of this Eruv be it permitted to us to bake, cook, keep the food warm, light the candles, and do all work that is necessary on a festival for the Sabbath.” C.J.L. ch. 102 §1. The foods are then eaten during the Sabbath.
Work Proscriptions On Intermediate Days of Biblically-Mandated Holidays

On the intermediate days of Biblically-mandated festivals (“Chol Hamoed”) (during Sukkot and Passover), certain labors may be performed while others may not. For instance, we may perform all work essential to the preparation of food for those days and for the festival, as well as any work that will prevent sustaining a loss; that is, if by not doing it, a loss will be sustained, then it may be done. However great care should be taken not to perform any work that is forbidden on Chol Hamoed, for our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said (Pesachim 118a): “He who profanes the festival, is considered as though he had worshipped idols.” C.J.L. ch. 104 §1.
**Ritual Items Generally Required For Holy Days**

The following items are required for Jews to observe the Holy Days and Festivals (females do not require the last two items):

1. *Prayer Book* (the “Siddur”): generally contains all prayer services for all Jewish Holy days. A special prayer book (the “machzor”) containing expanded prayer services is used for the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays;

2. *Bible* (the “Tanach”): The Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, which contains the Torah readings for all Jewish Holy days and is also generally used for religious study;

3. *Calendar* (the “Luach”): identifies the dates of Holy days and the precise times of the start and end of their observance;

4. *Candles*: used to sanctify the arrival and departure of each day of Biblical-mandated festivals, and used in the essential ritual of candlelighting on each night of Chanukah;

5. *Kosher Wine* (or kosher grape juice): used to sanctify the Biblical-mandated festivals through blessings made before each meal on the eve and day of each day of festivals;

6. *Bread* (usually “Challah” (braided bread)): used to
sanctify the Biblically-mandated festivals (except Passover) through blessings made over two loaves (or other kosher rolls or matzot) at each festival meal;

(7) **Kosher Food**: food that complies with three essential religious requirements: (1) if the food contains any animal products, those products must derive from a religiously-acceptable animal (e.g., no pork products or shellfish); (2) all food must be prepared in a religiously-acceptable way (e.g., meat ritually slaughtered) and with religiously-acceptable utensils (e.g., utensils used for non-kosher food may not be used); and (3) meat and dairy products may not be consumed together or prepared with the same utensils. See Chapter 4, *Jewish Daily Religious Requirements: Food*.

(8) **Skullcap** (the “yarmulke”): worn by males at all prayer services (and at all times by more observant Jews); and

(9) **Prayer Shawl** (the “Tallit”): a garment with fringes on each of the four corners, worn by males at morning prayer services (a smaller version is worn at all times under outer garments by more observant Jews).

Special ritual items required to observe a particular Holy Day (e.g., the “Shofar” (ram’s horn) required for Rosh Hashanah) are enumerated under the heading for that particular Holy Day.

All ritual items listed here (with the possible exception of
large quantities of kosher food) are readily available from Jewish book stores, local synagogues, Jewish community organizations or the Aleph Institute.
6. **Biblically Mandated Jewish Festivals**

The following are Festivals set forth in the Bible itself, during which work proscriptions apply that are generally similar to the Sabbath.
**Rosh Hashanah - (Tishrei 1-2)**

**Additional Ritual Items:**

- Machzor (special prayer book)
- Shofar (ram’s horn blown at and throughout the afternoon prayer services)
- Apples and Honey

This holiday, the Jewish spiritual New Year, is characterized by prayer, repentance and the blowing of a complicated series of blasts on the shofar at and throughout the morning/afternoon prayer service. C.J.L. ch. 129 §§13-20. The primary purpose of blowing the shofar is to exhort people to repentance. *Id.* §15.

Substantial prayers for this holiday not commonly found in the regular prayer book are contained in a special prayer book called a “machzor.” Special sections of the Torah are read at morning and late-afternoon services. Indeed, the Rosh Hashanah prayer service is one of the longest of the year.
30-Day Period Leading
Up to Rosh Hashanah

The period of time from the start of the preceding month of Elul (generally, during August-September) until after Yom Kippur is a propitious time. Although Jews believe that Almighty G-d accepts repentance all year long, these days are considered more appropriate and suited for repentance, inasmuch as they are days of mercy and good will. C.J.L. ch. 128 §1.

It is customary to blow a short series of blasts on the Shofar daily during this month, beginning the second day of Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of the Hebrew month) and continuing daily after the morning service until the day before Rosh Hashanah. The sound of the Shofar is considered to have a quality to stir the heart and inspire love of G-d. C.J.L. ch. 128 §2.

Beginning on the Saturday evening before Rosh Hashanah, many observant Jews rise early for the daily prayer services of “Selichos” (supplications for forgiveness). The Selichos prayers are said early on each morning, except the first, when they are generally recited Saturday evening after midnight. If Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Monday or Tuesday, one begins saying the Selichos from the Sunday (actually, Saturday night after midnight) of the preceding week. C.J.L. ch. 128 §5.
Rosh Hashanah Itself

At the meal on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, it is customary to perform certain rituals as omens for a good year. For example, portions of Challah and sweet apple are dipped into honey (in hopes of a “sweet” year). It is also customary to eat the head of some animal or fish, preferably the head of a sheep (which also serves as a reminder of the ram substituted for the sacrifice of Isaac, see Genesis 22:13). Certain vegetables are eaten, the names of which have the connotation of good fortune, like carrots, (called “meren” in Yiddish (meaning “increase”)). It is also meritorious to procure fish for this occasion, which symbolizes fertility. C.J.L. ch. 129 §9.

During the morning prayers all Jews must hear the blowing of a series of blasts on the shofar, C.J.L. ch. 129 §§13-20. The primary purpose of blowing the shofar is to exhort people to repentance. Id. §15. After the afternoon Mincha service on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, it is customary to go to a body of living water (e.g., stream, lake, ocean, or river) for a prayer service called “Tashlich,” (the casting away of our transgressions). Preferably, such river should be outside the city limits, and should contain fish as a reminder that we are compared to the fish who are caught in a net. We, too, are caught in the net of negative urges and judgment, and thus one will be moved to think of repentance. If, however, there is no stream containing fish available, one must go to any river
or to a well. If the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on the Sabbath, Jews perform the Tashlich prayer service on the second day of Rosh Hashanah (Sunday). C.J.L. ch. 129 §31.

**Yom Kippur - (Tishrei 10)**

**Additional Ritual Items:**

- **Machzor**  
  (special prayer book)

- **Shofar**  
  (ram’s horn blown at conclusion of prayer services at end of fast)

- **“Kittel”**  
  (white robes worn during prayer)

The day of atonement. The holiest and most solemn day of the Jewish year, it is the only Biblically-mandated holiday that is also a fast day. Its central theme is repentance, atonement and reconciliation, and the day customarily is fully occupied with prayer. One must not only settle one’s affairs with G-d; one must ask forgiveness from those people one has wronged or hurt over the year, and, in turn, grant forgiveness to all those people who have committed wrongs.
Preparing For

Yom Kippur

On the day before Yom Kippur, it is customary to perform the ceremony of “Kapparot” at dawn, for the attribute of mercy is considered predominant at that time. Men select roosters and women select hens, while a pregnant woman takes both a rooster and two hens. C.J.L. ch. 131 §1. The animal is held over one’s head, and a prayer recited to the effect that the animal should go to the slaughter while the supplicant should be blessed with a healthy year. If live animals are not available, one may perform the ceremony with money, which is then given to charity.

It is mandatory to feast sumptuously on the day before Yom Kippur, and it is customary to eat fish at the first meal that day. C.J.L. ch. 131 §3.

Observant Jewish males immerse themselves in a ritual bath (the “Mikvah”) on the day before Yom Kippur, to cleanse themselves spiritually and as a prerequisite to repentance, just as one who is naturalized to Judaism is required to immerse in that ritual bath, symbolizing the starting of life in a renewed manner. C.J.L. ch. 131 §6.

It is customary for every householder to prepare one or two 24-hour candles: One candle for the living (symbolizing the Torah and the light of the soul), and, if necessary, a second candle for the souls of a departed father or mother. The candle(s) lit should burn until the following night, and are used for the Havdalah light at the conclusion of Yom Kippur. C.J.L. ch. 131 §7.
Towards late afternoon — well before sunset — the final meal before the fast is eaten, at which it is customary to dip a piece of Challah in honey and to consume it together with some fish and chicken. Only food that is easily digestible should be eaten at this meal. C.J.L. ch. 131 §12.

**General Prohibitions**

**On Yom Kippur**

Eating, drinking, smoking, bathing, shaving, the wearing of leather shoes, conjugal relations and any form of labor are all prohibited. C.J.L. ch. 133 §1. It is also forbidden to do any sort of manual labor, nor should one carry anything from one place to another, even as on the Sabbath. Inasmuch as it is necessary to add from the profane to the sacred, all of the above are forbidden on the day before Yom Kippur while it is still day, a short time before twilight, until the end of Yom Kippur, a short time after the stars become visible. C.J.L. ch. 133 §1.

Fasting begins at sundown the eve before, and ends after nightfall the following day (a total of approximately 26 hours). C.J.L. ch. 133 §1. No food or liquids are consumed.

**Prayer Services**

Substantial prayers for this holiday not commonly found in the regular prayer book are contained in a special prayer book called a “machzor.” Special sections of the Torah are read at morning and late-afternoon services.

It is customary for men to wear a white robe (the “Kittel”),
which resembles a shroud, during all of the day’s prayers. It is calculated to humble the arrogant heart. C.J.L. ch. 131 §15.

On Yom Kippur eve, it is customary to put on the Tallit prayer shawl for the evening services, too. C.J.L. ch. 131 §17.

Yom Kippur comes to an end with the blowing of a single blast on the shofar, which marks the conclusion of the fast. *Id.* §26. The “Havdalah” service is recited as at the conclusion of the Sabbath and other Biblically-mandated holidays. In the Havdalah service of Yom Kippur night, the benediction for light must be said over a candle that had been kindled before Yom Kippur. C.J.L. ch. 133 §28.

It is customary to recite the prayer service sanctifying the New Moon after the evening prayers at the conclusion of the fast.
Sukkot - (Tishrei 15-16)

Additional Ritual Items:

Sukkah

(temporary structure covered
with branches, leaves or
reeds
in which all meals are eaten).

Lulav & Etrog

(special palm frond (bound
with myrtle and willow)
and
citron used
during prayer services).

Sukkot is a seven-day festival also known as The Feast of Tabernacles. The first two days are observed as full holidays and work proscriptions apply. The following five days are known as “Hol Hamo'ed” -- weekdays that retain some aspects of the festival, but during which some forms of work are permitted. C.J.L. chs. 104-106. The seventh day (fifth of the intermediate days) is Hoshanah Rabbah -- which has a special observance of its own. C.J.L. ch. 138 §1-3.

Sukkot commemorates the Divine protection offered to the Israelites in the desert during their journey to the promised land. During this holiday, Jews are required to eat their meals in a temporary structure (the “sukkah”) covered with branches, leaves or reeds. See generally C.J.L. chs. 134-135.
The Bible states (Leviticus 23:42): “Basukot Teshvu Shivas Yomim” (in booths ye shall dwell seven days), which means that one should dwell in the Sukkah seven days even as one dwells in a house during the whole year. Ideally, one should make the Sukkah the principal abode, and there one should eat, drink and study. If one prays privately, one should likewise pray in the Sukkah. C.J.L. ch. 135 §1.

The religious laws governing the construction of the sukkah are beyond the scope of this Handbook. It is designed to be a temporary booth, usually constructed from wood panels or canvas supported by posts. Its roof usually consists of dry branches, shrubs, bamboo stalks or slats of wood. The roof must be sufficiently dense to generate more shade than sunlight, but not so dense as to prevent rain from entering. Fortunately, a host of vendors and Hebrew book stores supply easy-to-assemble, ritually-acceptable prefabricated Sukkahs, complete with walls and roofs (bamboo or slats).

Jews also are required to make blessings over four special species of fruits and plants on each of the seven days of the holiday (except for the Sabbath), as Sukkot is also an agricultural holiday. See generally C.J.L. ch. 136. The four species of plants used to celebrate the holiday are: (1) the lulav (palm branch); (2) the etrog (a lemon-like citron); (3) myrtle (3
branches); and (4) willow (2 branches). \textit{Id.} The etrog is handled separately while the other three species are bound together, and are collectively referred to as the “lulav.” \textit{Id.} §8. Certain special prayers are said each day with the four species in hand. C.J.L. ch. 137. Competent Rabbinic authority must be consulted when purchasing these four items. C.J.L. ch. 136 §§1-6. There are also specific religious rules governing the way the species are bound together. \textit{See, e.g., id.} §8.

\textbf{Prayer Services}

Prayer services are similar to those of the Sabbath, with certain modifications and additions. Special sections of the Torah are read at morning services.
Hoshanah Rabbah -  
(The Seventh Day of Sukkot)  

Additional Ritual Items:  

Lulav & Etrog  
(special palm frond (bound 
with myrtle and willow) 
and 
citron used 
during prayer 
services) 

“Hoshannas”  
(5 willow branches apart from 
those bound in the 
Lulav) 

This day closes the period of repentance that began on Rosh Hashanah. Tradition has made this day into a sequel to the Days of Awe (the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), thereby lengthening the period of penitence and postponing the day when final sentence is to be rendered.
Prayer Services

Prayer services are shorter than those of the Sabbath and holidays, although special sections of the Torah are read and special prayers are said at morning services. Five willow branches separate from the two bound in the lulav are traditionally used during the morning prayer services and are beaten against the ground. See generally C.J.L. ch. 138 §§1-3.
**Shemini Atzeret - (Tishrei 22)**

The “eighth” day of Sukkot. In the Talmud it is written that “the eighth day [of Sukkot] is a separate festival,” so Sukkot is really observed as seven days, and Shemini Atzeret is observed as a separate holiday. It marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel.

Shemini Atzeret is the last day that Jews are required to eat in the sukkah. C.J.L. ch. 138 §5. It and the following day, Simchat Torah, are Biblically-mandated holidays and work proscriptions apply.

**Prayer Services**

Prayer services are similar to those of the Sabbath, with certain modifications and additions. Special sections of the Torah are read at morning services. It is traditional to make seven “hakafot” (processions) carrying the scrolls of the Torah amid dancing and rejoicing around the Synagogue. C.J.L. ch. 138.
**Simchat Torah - (Tishrei 23)**

“Simchat Torah” literally means “Rejoicing with the Torah,” and the holiday celebrates the conclusion and beginning of the yearly cycle of weekly readings from the Five Books of Moses. C.J.L. ch. 138 §7.

**Prayer Services**

Prayer services are similar to those of the Sabbath, with certain modifications and additions. The last portion of the Torah scroll is read on this day. Immediately afterwards, the Torah is read again from the beginning of Bereshit (Genesis).

Festivities begin on the prior evening at prayer services. *Id.* It is traditional to make seven “hakafot” (processions) carrying the scrolls of the Torah while singing and dancing around the Synagogue, both during the evening and the next morning’s services. *Id.* Prayer services are unconventionally joyous, and every Jewish male, including children, is called up to make a blessing over the Torah. *Id.* §§8-9.
Passover ("Pesach") –
(Nissan 14 – 22)

Additional Ritual Items:

Matzo (Unleavened bread consumed at two Seder rituals on first two eves and throughout the 8-day holiday)

Marror (bitter herbs consumed at each of the two Seder rituals)

Wine (or grape juice, sufficient to drink four cups at each of the two Seder rituals)

“Haggadah” (book of prayers, songs and text recounting the story of the Exodus and recited at each of the two Seder rituals)

Salt Water (used for dipping during the Seder)

Seder Plate (used during the Seder ritual and contains:

1) “Zeroah” (piece of roasted meat or chicken neckbone);

2) “Betza” (hard-boiled egg);
(3) “Marror” (bitter herbs, usually sliced raw horseradish roots);

(4) “Charoses” (a mixture of apples, nuts and wine (or grape juice));

(5) “Karpas” (non-bitter root vegetable (usually, boiled potato or raw onion) that is dipped in salt water); and

(6) “Chazeres” (romaine lettuce or grated horseradish).

Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. There are a host of universally-accepted religious laws regarding the proper observance of Passover, which may be grouped in three general categories:

1. The proscription against eating or possessing or working with any leavened foods during the entire eight-day holiday, see, e.g., C.J.L. chs. 112, 114. All utensils (pots, pans, dishes, flatware) used with leavened food throughout the year may not be used during Passover;

2. The obligation to eat Matzo (specially-prepared unleavened bread) on the first two evenings of the holiday, see C.J.L. ch. 119 §§4-6; and

3. The obligation to participate in two “Seder” rituals, events that require participants to: (1) recount the story of the Exodus (the prayers and text are found in a book called the
“Haggadah”); (2) drink four cups of wine (or grape juice, as circumstances permit); (3) ingest certain ritual foods (e.g., Matzo and “Marror” (bitter herbs)); and (4) eat a festive meal. See, e.g., C.J.L. chs. 118-119.

Because of the complex nature of the proscriptions and rituals associated with this holiday, a “how-to” video and accompanying literature is available from the Aleph Institute.

**The Significance of Matzo**

As noted above, Jews have a twofold obligation on Passover: (1) not to eat or use leavened products; and (2) to consume Matzo on the first two days of Passover.

The Bible states that, when the Jews left Egypt during the Exodus, they did not have time to let the dough in their bread rise. Instead, they baked it immediately and it became “Matzo.” The spiritual lesson of Matzo, however, is far deeper — and is the foundation of the entire Passover holiday.

Matzo is a flat, humble bread that is contrasted to “Chometz” (leavened (or yeasted) bread and food products), which is inflated, attractive and tasty.
The “Chometz” in food products is compared to similar qualities in ourselves. The lightness and attractive tastiness of chometz-type food is the result of the leaven that fills the food with air. Similarly, Jews are obligated to search for the “Chometz” within themselves, and recognize how the chometz-like qualities of self-love, vanity and arrogance are also essentially empty.

**The Day Before Passover**

Inasmuch as Jews are not permitted to own any leaven during the Passover holiday, Jews traditionally enter into contracts to sell their leavened products (including kitchen supplies, etc.) before the holiday. An agent or proxy may be appointed to sell one’s leaven on one’s behalf. Forms used for these sales are available from the Aleph Institute.

On the eve of the day before Passover, Jews conduct a “search” for leaven in their dwellings. All rooms, lockers, drawers and shelves must be searched, to insure that no leaven remains in possession or in view. Traditionally, ten (10) crumbs of bread are first placed around the room before the search, to insure that a thorough search is made for them and that some leaven is found.

The search is traditionally conducted using a single candle (to light the way), a feather (to sweep up all leaven), and a paper or cloth napkin (to hold the found ten pieces).
The ten crumbs and any other leaven found the evening before (and the tools used in the search) are traditionally destroyed the following morning (the day before Passover), usually by burning.

Firstborn Jewish males are mandated to fast on the day before Passover. See Section 8 (Fast Days: Fast of the Firstborn).

**The Passover Holiday Itself**

The first two and the last two days of Passover are observed as full holidays and work proscriptions similar to the Sabbath apply.

A central tenet of religious law requires Jews to eat only specially-prepared foods that are clearly labeled “Kosher for Passover” (or whole, uncooked fruits and vegetables) during the entire eight days of Passover. Matzo available year-round is generally leavened and is not kosher for Passover.
The “Seder”

The two Passover Seders are not simply “meals” — they are religious rituals that require certain foods as part of their proper observance. Observant Jews are obligated to partake in two Seders on Passover, on the first two eves of the holiday.

During the Seder, the “Haggadah” is recited. The Haggadah is a collection of prayers, songs and text recounting the Exodus from Egypt.

Matzo, bitter herbs and wine (or grape juice), “Charoses” (see below), a chicken neck or other piece of roasted meat, horseradish and romaine lettuce, potatoes, onions, salt water and a hard-boiled whole egg are religious items that are required to complete the Seder rituals, as are the other foods comprising a religious meal.

Among other rituals, Jews are mandated to drink four cups of wine at each of the two Seders. It is meritorious to acquire choice kosher wine to satisfy the precept of drinking “the four cups” at the Seder. C.J.L. ch. 118 §1. If, however, for health or other reasons, wine is unavailable, kosher grape juice may be used instead.

The leader of the Seder (and, in many communities, all of the participants) uses a ceremonial
plate known as the “Ka’arah,” with certain ritual objects during the recital of the Haggadah:

“Zeroah” A piece of roasted meat or chicken neck represents the Pascal lamb that was sacrificed on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt. It is referred to in the Haggadah, but the Zeroah is not eaten.

“Betza” A hard-boiled egg represents the Passover holiday sacrifice offered during the days of the Temple in Jerusalem. Eggs are traditionally dipped in salt water and eaten just before the meal.

“Marror” Bitter herbs (generally, raw horseradish root) used during the Seder ritual to remind the participants of the bitterness of slavery. Marror is consumed in the latter part of the Seder ritual, after the recital of most of the Haggadah.

Marror is generally dipped in “Charoses” (see below) before it is consumed, and later eaten together with Matzo.

“Charoses” A mixture of apples, nuts and wine (or grape juice) designed to resemble the
mortar and brick made by the Jews in slavery in Egypt. As part of the Seder ritual, Marror is dipped in Charoses before it is consumed.

“Karpas” A non-bitter root vegetable (usually boiled potato or raw onion) that alludes to the back-breaking work of the Jews as slaves in Egypt. Dipped in salt water and consumed before the recital of the Haggadah.

“Chazeres” Additional bitter herbs (usually Romaine lettuce or grated horseradish root) used in conjunction with the Marror.

Prayer Services

Prayer services are similar to those of the Sabbath, with certain modifications and additions. A special portion of the Torah scroll is read on each day of the holiday.
Shavuot - (Sivan 6-7)

Seven weeks after the second day of Passover, Jews celebrate the two-day religious holiday of Shavuot (literally translated as “Weeks”). The holiday commemorates and celebrates Almighty G-d’s gift of the Torah to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. See Exodus 19:1-20:26. Both days of Shavuot are observed as full holidays and work proscriptions similar to the Sabbath apply.

It is customary to eat dairy food on the first day of Shavuot in addition to the required meals of wine (or grape juice), bread, fish and meat. (Obviously, all religious laws apply against mixing or eating meat and dairy together.) See. C.J.L. ch. 103 §§ 3, 7.

Many Jews observe a tradition of remaining awake all night on the first night of the holiday to engage in the study of Torah.

Prayer Services

Prayer services are similar to those of the Sabbath, with certain modifications and additions. The proper observance of the Shavuot holiday entails the recitation of certain special prayers specific to the holiday, the reading of special hymns, and the reading of the Ten Commandments on the first day, and other portions of the Torah. C.J.L. ch. 103 §2.
There are two major Jewish festivals that were instituted by Rabbinic decree: Chanukah and Purim. Unlike festivals mandated by the Bible, there is no absolute work proscription similar to the Sabbath on these two holidays.
Chanukah - Eight Days
(beginning Kislev 25)

Special Ritual Items:

“Chanukiah” Also referred to as the “menorah,” a candelabrum to hold oil or candles.

Supply of oil and wicks or 44 candles (1 for first night, 2 for second, 3 for third, etc. plus one extra for each night to light the others.)

This holiday marks the defeat of Assyrian forces who had tried to prevent Israel from practicing Judaism during the existence of the second Temple (approximately 160 B.C.E.). Judah Maccabee and his brothers destroyed the overwhelming forces, and rededicated the Temple. C.J.L. ch. 139 §1.

After the Jews prevailed over their enemies, they entered the Temple on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, and found only a small cruse of pure oil bearing the seal of the High Priest. The oil was sufficient for only one day, but when they lit the Menorah (candelabrum) with it, the Menorah burned for eight days. For this reason, the Sages of that generation decreed that eight days, which begin on the
twenty-fifth of Kislev, be set aside as days of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Every night during these eight days, lights (oil or candles) are lit towards evening in a conspicuous place, to proclaim the miracle. C.J.L. ch. 139 §1. The kindling of lights each evening start with the eve of the first day, just after dark. C.J.L. ch. 139 §10. One candle is lit the first night, two the second, three the third, and so on for eight nights. C.J.L. ch. 139 §11.

Although electric Menorahs have become commonplace as decorative fixtures, the religious obligation to kindle a flame is not satisfied with electric candles. While all kinds of oil are valid for the Chanukah lights, olive oil is the most preferred, for the miracle of the Temple was wrought with olive oil. If olive oil cannot be obtained, one may chose any other oil which gives a clear and bright flame, or wax candles may be used, for their light is also clear. All kinds of wicks are valid for the use of Chanukah lights, but the most preferred are the ones made of cotton. C.J.L. ch. 139 §4.

Candles are typically lit indoors. They should be lit near the door or a window facing the public place. C.J.L. ch. 139 §7.

The time to kindle the Chanukah lights is immediately after the stars come out, and one should not put it off. It is forbidden to do anything, even to study the Torah, before lighting the Chanukah lamp. Candles for the Chanukah lamp must be large enough to burn at least half an hour.
One person may light the menorah on behalf of the assembled group. All say “Amen” after the blessing. Women are obligated to light the Chanukah candles too. C.J.L. ch. 139 §16.

On Friday night, the Chanukah lamp must be lit before the Sabbath candles. The Chanukah candles should be large enough to last approximately one and one-half hours on Friday night. C.J.L. ch. 139 §17.

There is no requirement of work proscription during this eight-day holiday, although it is customary for women to refrain from work such as sewing, weaving, and laundry while the Chanukah lights are burning. C.J.L. ch. 139 §3.

Other Chanukah Traditions

Because the holiday of Chanukah is based on a miracle that involved oil, certain foods fried in oil are traditionally consumed, such as fried potato “latkes” (pancakes) and jelly donuts (commonly fried in oil).

During the period that Assyrian forces prevented Israel from practicing Judaism, Jewish children were not permitted to study the Torah. When Assyrian troops would watch, children would play with little tops, to appear as if they were only playing. To commemorate this situation, games are played on the holiday with little tops...
four-sided tops (called a “dreidel”).

In order to excite children to observe the holiday, a tradition developed to give children small prizes of coins (called Chanukah “gelt”) or small presents throughout the holiday.
Purim - (Adar 14)

Special Ritual Items:

Megillah (parchment scroll containing Book of Esther)

At Least Two Pennies (for charity)

Two Foods (Readily edible for gift-giving)

Purim is the most joyous of all Jewish holidays, as joyous as Yom Kippur is somber. See generally C.J.L. ch. 141. The festival commemorates the events found in the Book of Esther, celebrating the nullification of a decree seeking the death of the Jews in Persia approximately 2,500 years ago. See generally C.J.L. ch. 141 §2.

Purim is a holiday mandated by Rabbinic decree and the stringent rules of the Sabbath do not apply. C.J.L. ch. 141 §8.

Before the holiday commences, it is customary to donate half of the unit coin current in the country to charity (one-half dollar in the United States). Id. §5. The holiday itself is celebrated through four rituals:

1. Megillah Readings: The Book of Esther (written on a scroll called the “Megillah”) is read at services on the eve and morning of Purim, C.J.L. ch. 141 §§7-22. One person generally recites the Megillah on behalf of the assembled group, and
both men and women are obligated to hear the Megillah on the eve of Purim and in the morning of the holiday. C.J.L. ch. 141 §7;

2. *Gifts of Food to Friends* ("Mish 'Loach Manot"): A gift of two ready-to-eat foods is given to at least one friend, C.J.L. ch. 142 §§1-2;

3. *Charity to the Poor* ("Matanot L'Evyonim"): At least one penny (and usually more) is given to each of at least two poor people (can be satisfied by proxy), C.J.L. ch. 141 §3. Everybody, even the poorest who are themselves dependant on charity, is obligated to give at least one gift each to two poor persons. *Id.*; and

4. *A Festive Meal* ("Se 'Udat Purim"): A festive meal is eaten the afternoon of the holiday, C.J.L. ch. 141 §5. Purim must be celebrated by eating, drinking, and making merry. The obligation of feasting on Purim is not fulfilled by a feast that is made on the night before the day of Purim; the principal Purim feast is to be held in the day of Purim itself. C.J.L. ch. 142 §5.
While most Jewish holidays celebrate happy occasions, there are several tragedies that are commemorated by fasting and mourning. The object of fasting is to stir the heart to repentance. See generally C.J.L. ch. 121.

Eating and drinking are prohibited on a fast day (health permitting) from 1 hour prior to daybreak until approximately one hour after sunset. But see Yom Kippur, supra (fasting begins the evening before); Fast of the Ninth Day of Av, infra (same).

Institutional staff should be aware that Jews may not be able to eat dinner at its regularly-scheduled time on the eve of certain fast days, and should be permitted to eat well before sundown. With respect to all fast days, staff should be made aware that Jews may need to wait to consume any food or drink until one hour after sundown on the fast day itself, and, if dinner is scheduled before then, those individuals should be given the opportunity to eat at a later, more religiously appropriate, time.
Yom Kippur - (Tishrei 10)

Yom Kippur is the most important fast day in the Jewish tradition. A description of the day’s significance and religious laws pertaining to it are enumerated in Section 6, *Biblically-Mandated Jewish Festivals: Yom Kippur.*
**Fast Days**

**Commemorating the**

**Destruction of the**

**Temples In Jerusalem**

Four fast days commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem and the two Temples that once stood there. If any of these fast days falls on a Saturday (the Sabbath), the fast is observed the following day, Sunday. C.J.L. ch. 121 §6.

**Prayer Services**

Prayer services are similar to those of regular weekdays, with minor modifications and additions. A special portion of the Torah is read both at morning and afternoon services.
Fast of 10th of Tevet

This fast day commemorates the start of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the time of the First Temple. C.J.L. ch. 121 §3. If the Tenth of Tevet falls on a Friday, the fast is observed that day. C.J.L. ch. 121 §6.
**Fast of 17th of Tammuz**

This date was selected by Rabbinic authorities to commemorate the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem at the time of both the First and Second Temples. (The walls of Jerusalem were actually breached on the 9th of Tammuz during the time of the First Temple, but one day was selected to commemorate both events.) C.J.L. ch. 121 §4. A number of other tragedies befell the Jewish people on this date, too.
Fast of 9th of Av ("Tisha B'Av")

The saddest day of the Jewish calendar. On this day both the First and Second Temples were destroyed (587 B.C.E. and 70 C.E.). C.J.L. ch. 121 §5. Throughout history, other tragedies befell the Jewish people on this date, too. Id. On this day in 1290, King Edward I signed the edict compelling the Jews to leave England. The Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492 also occurred on this day. Tisha B'Av also marked the outbreak of World War I.

Unlike other fast days, the fast of Tisha B'Av begins the night before, at sunset on the evening of Av 8. C.J.L. ch. 121 §8; ch. 124. On the day preceding the ninth of Av, the custom is to eat a regular meal before the afternoon Mincha service. C.J.L. ch. 123 §3. Just before sunset, one eats a special “meal” of a small piece of bread and/or a cold, hard-boiled egg -- either or both of which are dipped in ashes. Id. This special “mourners” meal commemorates the destruction of the Temples and puts us in the proper mindset for the fast day itself.

During the evening service, the Book of Lamentations is read. All congregates sit on the floor or on low benches in the fashion of mourners.

On the fast day itself, work is forbidden until noon, and the general custom is to abstain from work or business.
entire day. C.J.L. ch. 124 §15.

Eating, drinking, bathing, shaving, the wearing of leather shoes and conjugal relations are prohibited from sunset on the evening of Av 8 until after dark on Av 9 (a period of approximately 25 hours), *id.* §11, and it is customary not to sit on a bench or chair until noon, but rather, to sit on the floor or on a low stool in the fashion of mourners. *Id.* §16.
Fast of Gedaliah - (Tishrei 3)

After the First Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C.E., a remnant of the Jewish people remained in Israel under the leadership of Gedaliah. All hope of imminent redemption was lost when Gedaliah was murdered and a fast day was decreed to commemorate his death. C.J.L. ch. 121 §2.
Fast of Esther - (Adar 13)

This fast day, the day before the holiday of Purim, commemorates Esther’s three-day fast before appealing to King Achashveros to abolish Haman’s evil decree against the Jews of Persia. See Book of Esther. If the Fast of Esther falls on the Sabbath, the fast is observed the preceding Thursday, inasmuch as one cannot fast the next day (Sunday) because of the Purim holiday, and one does not generally fast on Friday before the Sabbath. C.J.L. ch. 141 §3. However, if one forgot to fast on Thursday, one must fast on Friday. Id.

Prayer Services

Prayer services are similar to those of regular weekdays, with minor modifications and additions. A special portion of the Torah is read both at morning and afternoon services.
Fast of the Firstborn - (Nissan 14)

Jewish firstborn males are required to fast from 1 hour prior to sunrise to sunset on the day before Passover in commemoration of the Tenth Plague visited upon the firstborn of the Egyptians before the Exodus from Egypt. Firstborns fast as an act of contrition that the firstborn living during the time of the Exodus were worthy for Almighty G-d to “pass over” their homes and spare them. One may obviate the need to fast by having a “sendat mitzva” (a meal connected with the celebration of the fulfillment of a positive command) as the first meal, usually upon completing the study of an entire tractate of the Talmud. Many firstborns opt for this alternative, and may satisfy this rule by reading an entire tractate of Talmud before eating the first meal that day.

If the Fast of the Firstborn falls on a Saturday, one cannot fast on the next day (which is the first day of Passover). In such circumstances, the fast is observed on the preceding Thursday.
Miscellaneous Holy Days and Observances

Tu B’Shevat - (Shevat 15)

The new year for trees. It is customary to partake of a new fruit (one which has not been consumed in the previous year and traditionally, one of the fruits for which the Holy Land is noted, e.g., dates, figs, pomegranates, grapes, or carobs) and to recite the “Shehecheyanu” blessing (“Blessed are you, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion.”). C.J.L. ch. 59 §14.

The Spiritual Significance of Tu B’Shevat

There are many important and relevant lessons that the Jewish tradition learns from the tree. The Torah states: “For man is as the tree of the field” (Deuteronomy 20:19).

Among the various commentaries on this verse, there are those that interpret these words to mean that there are direct parallels to be made between the nature of man and
that of the tree:

1) The (concealed) roots, whose function is to support the tree and enable it to resist all kinds of inclement weather. The roots act as the foundation without which the tree would collapse. They also provide the tree with its main source of nourishment from the elements of the soil.

2) The (revealed) body of the tree, which encompasses the trunk, branches and leaves — the major bulk of the tree. When the word “tree” is mentioned, the trunk comes to mind. It is where growth takes place and where age is discerned through the number of rings, and so forth.

3) The fruits are the products of the tree, and its ultimate purpose. It is for them that one initially plants a (fruit) tree. Within the fruit, moreover, the seed for reproduction is found.

Each of these components possesses certain qualities that the other does not. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that each one is needed to complete the tree.

These components are also found in the “tree” that is Mankind:

1) The root: The spiritual root of the Jew is the intrinsic connection that penetrates to his very essence. To such a degree that it is likened to the connection binding a child and parent: “Children are you to Hashem, your G-d” (Deuteronomy 14:01). This connection transcends reason and therefore finds expression through “emunah” (faith), which transcends logic and reason.
This essential connection and attachment provides the soul with spiritual nourishment, constituting the essence of one's spiritual structure. Without a foundation to hold it up, the edifice, no matter how strong, stands the chance of collapsing under pressure. Much as the tree’s roots are hidden deep in the earth, this deep attachment and faith are sometimes concealed deep within the recesses of one’s heart. Appearances can be deceiving: a tree weak in appearance can, in fact, rest on wholesome deep roots, while a solid-looking tree may rest on very weak roots and be in danger of collapsing.

2) The body: The aspect of a person’s life that corresponds to the body of the tree (trunk, branches, and leaves) is the revealed and complex structure of daily Torah and Mitzvot observance. This activity constitutes the bulk of a person’s efforts at self development and self growth. And just as the tree’s rings reveal its age, so do people’s development in the area of Torah and Mitzvot reflect the extent to which they have grown from year to year, from month to month, and even from day to day. It is this gradual spiritual development that defines the true age of a person. As the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, once said, “One’s age is not determined by the date of birth written on one’s passport.”

In addition to the various details of the tree, including its numerous leaves (which correspond to the many details of Torah and Mitzvot observance), there is also the tree’s overall element of beauty, which is conveyed by the sum total of all its parts. Similarly, the Jew who strives and labors in Torah and Mitzvot not only accumulates “ring upon ring” of individual spiritual achievement, but also develops an overall elevation, and an encompassing
spiritual beauty.

3) Fruits: The “fruits” of man are the results of the beneficial influence he exerts on his environment, wherewith he also illuminates the path of others, showing them their true calling and mission in life. This activates a chain reaction whereby those he influences will, in turn, influence others, thus creating “fruits of fruits.” It is, furthermore, in the fruit that the seed for the next generation is located.

When can one generation of trees expect to reproduce a next generation that is as solid and staunch as the preceding one? How can continuity and perpetuity be assured? Only when the preceding generation is not only concerned about its own development and its own beauty, but also has “fruits.” Only an attitude oriented to the “fruits” of the future holds within itself the seed of future salvation.
Sefirat Ha’Omer
(The Counting of the Omer)

Also known simply as The “Omer”, this 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot is defined by the Torah as the period to bring special offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem, to make physical the spiritual connection between Passover and Shavuot. See generally Leviticus 23:15. Passover marks the Jews’ liberation as they left Egypt, and Shavuot marks the receiving of the Torah. The counting begins the second night of Passover. See generally C.J.L. ch. 120.

The Sefirah is a time of sadness. Because approximately 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiva died in a plague during thirty-three of these days, Jews traditionally observe certain rites of mourning during this period, music is not played or listen to, no marriages are permitted and no shaves or haircuts are taken. C.J.L. ch. 120 §6.

There is a divergence of customs as to which period of mourning is observed. Some communities observe the first 33 days of the Omer. Others observe the period from the first day of the month of Iyar. Those who observe the latter period of mourning nevertheless take haircuts on the day before the holiday so as not to usher in the festival in an untidy appearance. See C.J.L. ch. 103 §2; 120 §7.

Some traditions observe both periods, thus fulfilling the requirements of both.
“Lag Ba’Omer”

Under either custom, the thirty-third day of the Omer is observed as a special holiday (work is permitted) celebrating the end of the plague and commemorating the passing of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of the Zohar, the central text of the Kabbalah. Haircutting is permitted that day and festivities such as weddings may be celebrated.
The “Three Weeks”

Because the catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple began on the seventeenth of Tammuz, it is customary to observe some rules of mourning from that day until the ninth of Av (a period of three weeks). C.J.L. ch. 122 §1.

Shaving, taking haircuts and listening to music are prohibited during the entire three-week period. C.J.L. ch. 122 §§1-8.

During the last nine days of this period (between the 1st and 9th of Av), observant Jews do not drink wine or eat meat at all (except on the Sabbath or certain special occasions, e.g., feasts celebrating circumcision or the completion of study of a Talmudic tractate). Id. §8. For those who request it, reasonable accommodation may be made by making tuna fish or other non-meat products available during that nine-day period.

During that same nine-day period, observant Jews do not launder their old clothes, not even a garment that one does not intend to wear until after the fast day of the Ninth of Av. C.J.L. ch. 122 §9.
The Weekly Reading of “Ethics of Our Fathers”

One of the six chapters of the “Pirke Avot” (commonly translated as “Ethics of Our Fathers”) traditionally is studied on each of the six Sabbaths between Passover and Shavuot. This rich collection of aphorisms from the Mishna focuses on ethical conduct, and may be found in any Jewish prayer book after the Sabbath afternoon service. In many communities, this weekly cycle of readings is repeated every Sabbath throughout the summer until Rosh Hashanah.
Jewish law contains a host of religious laws governing major life cycle events such as births and deaths. For example, fathers have a host of religiously-mandated obligations to perform certain rituals upon the birth of a son.

Upon the death of certain relatives, Jews are obligated to follow certain religiously-mandated practices with respect to mourning.

In every case, institutional staff would be well advised to communicate with a qualified Rabbi to discuss issues surrounding life-cycle observances.
Religious Rituals

Surrounding Birth

Fathers, in particular, have a host of religiously-mandated obligations with respect to certain rituals to be performed upon the birth of a son.

If the newborn is a boy

If a newborn child is a boy, the child’s father has certain obligations mandated by Jewish law.

“Brit Milah”: The “Covenant of Circumcision”

A Jewish baby boy is circumcised when he is eight days old (health permitting).

With the exception of the surgical procedure itself, the father of the child conducts most of the ceremony, with a Rabbi and family members in attendance.

By tradition, the father formally “names” the child at the circumcision, and a celebratory meal is consumed afterward.
“Pidyon Ha-ben”: The “Redemption of the Son”

If the baby boy is a firstborn to the mother and the father is not a Kohein or a Levite, nor is the mother the daughter of a Kohein or Levite, the father must participate in a ceremony in which he “redeems” his son. The father plays a critical role, reciting different blessings and essentially conducting the entire ceremony.

If the newborn is a girl

Naming the Daughter

If a newborn child is a girl, the father formally “names” the child and recites certain blessings (“Mi Shebayrach…””) during the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, followed by a celebratory meal with the family in attendance.

Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah

When a Jewish boy reaches the age of thirteen (“Bar Mitzvah”) and a Jewish girl reaches the age of twelve (“Bat Mitzvah”), they are considered to be “adults” for purposes of Jewish law and are obligated to follow all precepts. Boys are called “Bar Mitzvah” (“son of the commandment”), and girls are called “Bat Mitzvah” (“daughter of the commandment”).
The father of the child recites a special blessing ("Boruch She-pitranee...") at the reading of the Torah scroll in the synagogue, the youth traditionally makes a speech discussing the Torah or points of Jewish law, and a celebratory meal is consumed with friends and family present.
Religious Rituals

Surrounding Weddings

Weddings are possibly the most tradition-rich events in Jewish life.

Jewish parents traditionally bless the bride and groom on the day of their weddings, and many other customs are performed by parents and extended families.
Religious Rituals

Surrounding Divorces

Under Jewish law, a married woman remains “married” until she has obtained a formally-drafted decree of divorce (a “Get”) from her husband.

A Get is a complicated document that should be drafted and reviewed by competent Rabbinic authorities.

Moreover, the technical religious requirements involved in properly delivering a Get to a to-be-divorced woman requires the assistance of a learned Rabbi.
Religious Rituals

Surrounding Deaths

Religious Laws

Governing the Deceased

Jewish law is particularly complex with respect to the proper care and burial of the deceased. There are three primary components: the “watching over” the body until burial (the “Sh’mira”); the spiritual cleansing and thorough immersion in a mikvah, or water flow, of the body (the “Tahara”); and the burial itself (the “K’vurah”).

A qualified Rabbi should immediately be contacted upon the death of a Jew. That Rabbi will typically contact a qualified Jewish burial society (commonly known as the “Chevra Kaddisha” (“the society of the holy”) to handle all of the intricate details.

Until qualified personnel can respond, institutional staff must be aware of the following:

Under Jewish law, the deceased may not be embalmed or cremated.

Post-mortem examinations (autopsies) are forbidden, except where a reasonable likelihood exists that such an examination will contribute to saving the life of another patient at hand, or where an autopsy is required by civil law (e.g., where death resulted from foul play). Competent Rabbinic authorities should always be
consulted in the case of a “required” autopsy.

Burial should take place as soon as possible after death.

**Religious Laws**

**Governing the Mourners**

There are seven next-of-kin upon whose death one must observe the period of mourning: father, mother, son, daughter, brother and sister (whether from father’s side or mother’s side), wife and husband. C.J.L. ch. 203 §1.

A rent in one’s garments must be made for the loss of a relative for whom one is required to observe a period of mourning. C.J.L. ch. 195 §1.

Any person who lost a relative for whom he is bound to observe the mourning period is called an “Onen” between the time of death until after the interment. An Onen must avoid all kinds of levity. C.J.L. ch. 196 §1.

It is the custom to observe a partial period of mourning even for other relatives during the first week until the Sabbath. This period includes refraining from bathing in warm water. C.J.L. ch. 203 §2.

The period of mourning begins as soon as the decedent is buried and the grave filled with earth. The mourner removes his shoes at the cemetery. C.J.L. ch. 204 §1.

On the first day of mourning, mourners are forbidden to
eat self-prepared food at the first meal. It is, therefore, the duty of neighbors to send food for that first meal, which is known as the “meal of condolence.” That meal traditionally should begin with eggs or lentils and a bagel, which are round and have no mouth (dent), just as the mourner presumably has no mouth (i.e., the grief is so great that one cannot yet vocalize the loss). C.J.L. ch. 205 §1.

During the first seven days of mourning (the “Shiva”), a mourner is forbidden to perform any work, bathe, wear shoes, have sexual intercourse, study the Torah (except laws of mourning and sad Torah subjects), offer greetings, wear freshly washed garments, cut hair, or be present at any festivity. C.J.L. ch. 208 §1. Mourners are obligated to recite a special prayer for the dead — the “Kaddish” — three times daily. Such recitals must take place in the presence of a prayer quorum of ten adult Jewish males (a “minyan”).

During those seven days of mourning, a mourner is forbidden to sit on a regular chair or bench. C.J.L. ch. 211 §1.

Mourners are not permitted to cut their hair during the next thirty days of mourning (the “Shloshim”), whether the hair of the head, the beard, or any part of the body. A mourner for a father or mother waits 3-4 months before cutting any hair. C.J.L. ch. 211 §12.

The Kaddish is recited by the mourners three times daily for a period of eleven months in the first year after the decedent’s death.
If a person learns of the death of a relative, he begins to count the period of mourning from the day he becomes aware of the death. C.J.L. ch. 204 §5.

If one heard of the death of a relative for whom he is required to observe the rites of mourning within thirty days of the death, even on the thirtieth day, the tidings are “timely” and the mourner must rend garments and observe the seven days of mourning (counting them from the day the news is received). Such mourners must also observe the thirty days of mourning, counting them from that same day. The day when the news reaches him is governed by the same rules as apply on the day of burial. C.J.L. ch. 206 §1.

If a potential mourner hears of the death more than thirty days after the death, it is considered “delayed news” and the mourner need not observe the seven-day “Shiva” mourning for more than one hour. C.J.L. ch. 206 §2.
# Jewish Holidays and Fast Days – 1998/2005

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<th>Holiday</th>
<th>98</th>
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<td><strong>Sukkot, Shemini Atzeres, Simchas</strong></td>
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The following is a list of providers of religious goods and supplies that have sponsored this handbook. For additional information call the Aleph Institute at (305) 864-5553.

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12. Index

Akivah, Rabbi........................................................................................................ 9-5
Animals That Are Kosher.............................................................................. 2-22
Apples, Ritual for Rosh Hashanah............................................................ 6-4
Atonement, Day of.................................................................................. 6-5
Autopsies, Prohibited.............................................................................. 10-7
Awakening................................................................................................. 2-2
Bar Mitzvah.............................................................................................. 10-4
Bareheaded.............................................................................................. 2-11
Basin and Cup.......................................................................................... 2-33
Bat Mitzvah.............................................................................................. 10-4
Betza........................................................................................................... 6-21
Bible............................................................................................................ 2-32
Biblically-Defined Animals................................................................... 2-22
Birth
  religious rituals.................................................................................... 10-2
Bitter Herbs.............................................................................................. 6-21
Blessings
  before and after eating......................................................................... 2-7
Brit Milah.................................................................................................... 10-2
Book of Esther.......................................................................................... 7-6, 7-7
Book of Lamentations............................................................................... 8-6
Bread, Blessing on.................................................................................... 8-6
  Sabbath..................................................................................................... 4-8
Burial........................................................................................................... 10-7
Calendar..................................................................................................... 3-2
Candles
  for Chanukah....................................................................................... 7-3, 7-4
for holidays. ................................................................. 5-2
for Havdalah. ............................................................... 4-10
for Sabbath. .................................................................. 4-3
to search for leaven. ...................................................... 6-19
Yom Kippur. ........................................................................ 6-6
Carrying Objects on Sabbath. ........................................ 4-5
Chanukah. ........................................................................ 7-2
Chanukah Gifts for Children........................................... 7-5
Chanukiah. ................................................................. 7-2
Charity on Purim. ......................................................... 7-6, 7-7
Charoses. ........................................................................... 6-20
Chazeres. ........................................................................... 6-22
Chevra Kaddisha ........................................................... 10-7
Chol Hamoed. ............................................................... 5-5
Chometz. ......................................................................... 6-16, 6-18
searching for. .................................................................. 6-18
selling ............................................................................ 6-18
Chumash. ........................................................................... 2-3
Circumcision ..................................................................... 10-2
required for conversion .................................................. 1-4
Clothing
for women. ....................................................................... 2-10
generally. ................................................................. 2-10
men's and women's. ....................................................... 2-11
Shatnez ............................................................................ 2-13
Tzitzit ................................................................................. 2-12
Yarmulka or Kippah. ...................................................... 2-11
Code of Jewish Law. ...................................................... 2-32
Commandments. .......................................................... 1-1
Commencement of
Sabbath. ......................................................................... 3-3
Holy Days. ................................................................. 3-3
fast days. ................................................................. 3-3
Conjugal Relations
prohibited on Ninth of Av. .............................................. 8-7
prohibited on Yom Kippur......................................................... 6-7
Conversion..................................................................................... 1-4
Conclusion of
Sabbath. ..................................................................................... 3-3
Holy Days. ..................................................................................... 3-3
fast days. ..................................................................................... 3-3
Conservative Jews.......................................................................... 1-5
Cooking, Prohibited on Sabbath................................................... 4-8
Counting of the Omer. ............................................................... 9-5
Cremation, Prohibition. ............................................................. 10-7
Daily Observances
  prayers........................................................................................ 2-2
  upon awakening. ........................................................................ 2-2
  upon retiring. ............................................................................ 2-9
Dairy Products. ............................................................................ 2-23
Days of Awe. ............................................................................... 6-12
Death............................................................................................ 10-7
  autopsies. .................................................................................. 10-7
  burial. ....................................................................................... 10-7
Chevra Kaddisha......................................................................... 10-7
cremation. ................................................................................ 10-7
embalming. ............................................................................... 10-7
Kaddish..................................................................................... 10-9
K’vurah.................................................................................... 10-7
mourners. ............................................................................... 10-8
Sh’mira. ................................................................................... 10-7
Shiva. ....................................................................................... 10-9
Tahara. ..................................................................................... 10-7
Deeds. ..................................................................................... 1-3
Denominations In Jewish Community. .......................................... 1-5
Divorces....................................................................................... 10-6
Dreidel. ........................................................................................ 7-5
Eruv Tavshilin. ............................................................................ 5-4
Etrog. ......................................................................................... 6-10
Earlocks. ................................................................................... 2-15
Eggs. ........................................................................................................ 2-23
consumed at Passover Seder. .......................................................... 6-20
consumed by mourners. .............................................................. 10-8
Elul, Month of. .................................................................................. 6-3
Ethics of Our Fathers. ......................................................................... 9-8
Faith ........................................................................................................ 1-3
Fast Days. .......................................................................................... 8-1
fast of 10th of Teves. ................................................................. 8-4
fast of 17th of Tammuz ............................................................... 8-5
fast of 9th of Av ........................................................................... 8-6
fast of Esther .................................................................................. 8-9
fast of Gedaliah ............................................................................ 8-8
fast of the First Born ...................................................................... 8-10
Yom Kippur. ....................................................................................... 6-5, 6-7, 8-2
Fasting, prohibited on Sabbath .......................................................... 4-8
Feast of Tabernacles. ........................................................................... 6-9
Feasts
on day before Yom Kippur. .......................................................... 6-6
on Purim day .................................................................................. 7-7
Festivals
work proscriptions. ........................................................................ 5-3
Fire
prohibition on Sabbath .................................................................. 4-5
leniency on Biblically-Mandated Festivals. ................................. 5-3
Food........................................................................................................ 2-26
non-kosher. ................................................................................... 2-26
"Four Cups" ..................................................................................... 6-20
"Four Species" ................................................................................ 6-10
Forbidden Food. .............................................................................. 2-18
Fringes on Clothing. .......................................................................... 2-12
Gedaliah. ......................................................................................... 8-8
Get (Bill of Divorce) ........................................................................ 10-6
Grace After Meals. ............................................................................ 2-7
Grape Juice (As Replacement for Wine) ........................................ 4-7, 5-6
Grooming
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ritual baths</td>
<td>2-16</td>
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<td>shaving</td>
<td>2-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haggadah</td>
<td>6-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakafof</td>
<td>6-13, 6-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halacha</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamapil</td>
<td>2-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hand Washing</td>
<td>2-2, 2-7</td>
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<td>Havdalah</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>at conclusion of Sabbath</td>
<td>4-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at conclusion of Biblically-mandated festivals</td>
<td>5-2</td>
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<td>Head Covering</td>
<td>2-11</td>
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<td>Holy Days</td>
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<td>5-3</td>
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<td>Hoshanah Rabbah</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey, Ritual on Rosh Hashanah</td>
<td>6-2</td>
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<td>Hoshannas</td>
<td>6-12</td>
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<td>Jerusalem</td>
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<td>siege of</td>
<td>8-4</td>
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<td>walls breached</td>
<td>8-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish Daily Religious Requirements</td>
<td>2-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>1-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ka’arah (Seder Plate)</td>
<td>6-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaballah</td>
<td>9-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaddish</td>
<td>10-9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kapparot</td>
<td>6-5</td>
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<td>Karpas</td>
<td>6-22</td>
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<td>Kiddush</td>
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<td>on Sabbath</td>
<td>4-7</td>
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<td>on Biblically-mandated festivals</td>
<td>5-2</td>
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<td>Kittel</td>
<td>6-8</td>
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<td>Kosher</td>
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<td>agricultural products</td>
<td>2-22</td>
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<td>animals</td>
<td>2-22</td>
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<td>bread</td>
<td>2-23</td>
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<td>certification symbols</td>
<td>2-20, 2-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
credentials................................................................................ 2-19

dairy products. ........................................................................ 2-23

definition.................................................................................. 2-18

eggs. .......................................................................................... 2-23

food preparation ....................................................................... 2-23

for passover.............................................................................. 2-30

ingredients list not reliable....................................................... 2-19

"K" on Packages. ..................................................................... 2-19

magazine concentering. ............................................................. 2-19

marking utensils ....................................................................... 2-24

non-kosher foods. ..................................................................... 2-26

parve. ....................................................................................... 2-26

right, not privilage. ................................................................. 1-6

salting meat .............................................................................. 2-23

supervision............................................................................... 2-18

symbols. .................................................................................... 2-20

utensils. .................................................................................... 2-23

waiting period between foods. ................................................. 2-25

wine. ........................................................................................ 2-24

Kosher Certification Symbols...................................................... 2-20

Kosher for Passover. ................................................................ 6-19

Lag Ba’Omer. .............................................................................. 9-6

Latkes.......................................................................................... 7-4

Laundry........................................................................................ 9-7

Leather Shoes

prohibited on Ninth of Av.......................................................... 8-7

prohibited on Yom Kippur........................................................ 6-7

Leaven

burning..................................................................................... 6-19

prohibition on Passover. ......................................................... 6-16, 6-18

sale before Passover............................................................... 6-18

search before Passover........................................................... 6-18

Levels of Observance by Jews. ................................................. 1-6

Lulav................................................................................... 6-10, 6-12

Maariv...................................................................................... 2-2-
Machzor .......................................................... 6-2, 6-8
Marror .......................................................... 6-21
Matzo
   as substitute for bread. ................................. 4-7, 4-8, 5-4
   required eating on Passover ....................... 6-16, 6-18
   significance on Passover .......................... 6-17
   year-round not kosher for Passover .............. 6-19
Meals
   of condolence ........................................... 10-9
   meat and dairy combinations prohibited ...... 2-24
   special before Yom Kippur ......................... 6-6
   special before Tisha B'Av ......................... 8-6
   waiting between meat and dairy ................. 2-25
Meat, When Prohibited ................................. 9-7
Megillah ..................................................... 7-7
Melaveh Malkah .......................................... 4-10
Menorah ..................................................... 7-2
"Messianic" Jews .......................................... 1-5
Mevushal .................................................... 2-24
Mezuzah ..................................................... 2-34
   exemptions .............................................. 2-35
Midrash ..................................................... 2-32
Mikvah ...................................................... 2-16
   for deceased .......................................... 10-7
   on day before Yom Kippur ....................... 6-6
   required for conversion ......................... 1-4
Mincha ..................................................... 2-2
Minyan ..................................................... 2-3
Mishloach Manot ........................................ 7-7
Mitzvot
   performance of ......................................... 1-3
Modesty
   contact between men and women ............... 2-14
   religious laws regarding ......................... 2-10
Mourning .................................................. 10-8
Muktzeh................................................................. 4-6
Myrtle................................................................. 6-11
Naming a Child.................................................. 10-2, 10-3
New Moon.......................................................... 6-8
New Year............................................................ 6-2
New Year for Trees.......................................... 9-1
Obserrvant Jews............................................... 1-1
Olive Oil............................................................. 7-3
Omer, Counting of............................................ 9-5
Onen................................................................. 10-8
Oral Law............................................................ 1-2
Orthodox Jews.................................................. 1-5
Palm Branch...................................................... 6-10, 6-12
Parve................................................................. 2-26
Passover............................................................ 6-15
Pesach............................................................... 6-15
Phylacteries...................................................... 2-4, 2-33
Physical Contact Between Men and Women...... 2-14
Pidyon Ha-Ben................................................ 2-14
Post-Mortem Examinations.............................. 10-7
Prayer
  attire.................................................................. 2-2
  interruptions.................................................... 2-4
  time for.......................................................... 2-2, 2-4
  with congregation........................................... 2-3
  with or without quorum.................................. 2-3
Prayer Book...................................................... 2-32
Prayer Shawl.................................................... 2-33. See Tallit
Prohibitions on Yom Kippur.............................. 6-7
Passover............................................................ 6-15
Quorum for Prayer......................................... 2-3, 10-9
Reconstructionist Jews.................................... 1-5
Redemption of the Firstborn Son........................ 10-3
Reform Jews.................................................... 1-5
# Retiring

- prayers................................................................. 2-9

- **Ritual Bath.** ......................................................... 2-16
  - on day before Yom Kippur. ........................................ 6-6
  - for deceased. .......................................................... 10-7
  - required for conversion ............................................ 1-4

# Rosh Chodesh

- ................................................................. 3-3

# Rosh Hashanah

- ................................................................. 6-2

# Sabbath

- commencement ....................................................... 3-3
- candle-lighting ....................................................... 4-3
- havdalah ............................................................... 4-9
- kiddush ................................................................. 4-7
- meals ..................................................................... 4-7
- melaveh malkah ...................................................... 4-10
- muktzeh ................................................................. 4-6
- overview ............................................................... 4-1
- prayers ................................................................. 4-4
- preparations .......................................................... 4-2
- ritual items required ............................................... 4-11, 5-6
- Sabbath meal ......................................................... 4-7
- time of commencement .......................................... 3-3
- work proscriptions ................................................ 4-4

# Sabbath & Jewish Holidays

- time of commencement .......................................... 3-3

# Salt Water

- ................................................................. 6-21, 6-22

- **Seder.** ............................................................. 6-16, 6-20
- **Seder Plate.** ..................................................... 6-21
- **Sefirat Ha’Omer.** .............................................. 9-5
- **Selichos Supplications.** ....................................... 6-3
- **Seudat Mitzvah.** ............................................... 8-10
- **Seven Noahide Laws.** ....................................... 1-4
- **Shloshim.** ........................................................ 10-10
- **Sh’mira.** .......................................................... 10-7
- **Shmona Esrei.** ................................................... 2-4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shabbat</td>
<td>See Sabbath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabbos</td>
<td>See Sabbath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shacharit</td>
<td>2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shatnez</td>
<td>2-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaving</td>
<td>2-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shavuot</td>
<td>6-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shehecheyanu Blessing</td>
<td>9-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shema</td>
<td>1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shemini Atzeret</td>
<td>6-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimon Bar Yochai, Rabbi</td>
<td>9-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiva</td>
<td>10-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shloshim</td>
<td>10-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shofar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during month of Elul.</td>
<td>6-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Rosh Hashanah</td>
<td>6-2, 6-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Yom Kippur</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shroud</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shulchan Arukh</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siddur</td>
<td>2-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simchat Torah</td>
<td>6-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skullcap</td>
<td>2-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Torah</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkah</td>
<td>6-9, 6-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkot</td>
<td>6-9, 6-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahara</td>
<td>10-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallit</td>
<td>2-6, 2-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talmud</td>
<td>2-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanach</td>
<td>2-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya</td>
<td>2-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tashlich</td>
<td>6-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tefillin</td>
<td>2-4, 2-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time to don</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple, Commemorating Destruction</td>
<td>8-3, 8-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tisha B'av</td>
<td>8-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three Weeks” ........................................................................................................ 9-7
Torah .................................................................................................................. 1-1
   613 commandments ........................................................................ 1-1
   all night study on Shavuot ................................................................ 6-23
   as a yoke or duty .............................................................................. 1-2
   study ............................................................................................. 2-8
Tu B'Shevat .................................................................................................. 9-1
Using This Handbook .................................................................................. 1-9
Washing Hands ......................................................................................... 2-2, 2-7
Weddings .................................................................................................... 10-5
Who is a Jew? .......................................................................................... 1-3
Willow ........................................................................................................... 6-11
Work Proscriptions
   on the Sabbath .................................................................................. 4-4
   on Biblically-mandated holidays ............................................... 5-3
   on intermediate days of holidays .............................................. 5-5
   for mourner .................................................................................. 10-9
   on Ninth of Av .............................................................................. 5-5
Yarmulke .................................................................................................... 2-33
Yom Kippur .................................................................................................. 6-5
   prohibitions on ........................................................................... 6-7
Zeroah .......................................................................................................... 6-21
Zohar .......................................................................................................... 4-6