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The Building Blocks of Jewish Living

The Brit

Shabbat

Life cycle:
The Covenant - Brit Milah
Bar/ Bat Mitzvah
Wedding
Mourning

(The essence, the diversity)

Yearly cycle:
High holidays
The three pilgrim festivals
Historical events' festivals (including memorial days)
Zionist festivals

Social covenant
Family relations
Social conduct
Human ethics
Environmental awareness

The Building Blocks of Jewish Living

Essential value: Pluralism, unified but not uniform

"Pluralism is committed, despite the 'antibodies' that religious world views on the one hand, and nationalist world views on the other hand, encompass. The way is open for us to achieve stormy, provocative, confrontational pluralism, full of tension and clashes, and yet completely stable, inspiring ongoing creativity." Eliezer Schweid

A pluralistic view of the Jewish life cycle will be displayed on the first floor. The traditional bulwarks of the Jewish way of life will be showcased, as well as the many and varied ways in which contemporary Jews express a Jewish life style.

The exhibition will highlight the unifying essence that connects Jews whoever and wherever they are, as well as the distinguishing features characteristic of different places and different periods. While we can see at a glance what is done by everyone , we will also be able to look deeper and see how different ethnic groups do things differently from each other.

Conceptual visual image: a table

"On the table" – thoughts about a table

(Order Kodashim, Tractate Menakhot page 97-A in the Gemarra)
"…before the Lord. [The verse] begins with an alter and ends with a table.' Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Eleazar both explained: While the Temple still stood the altar used to make atonement for a man, but now that the Temple no longer stands a man's table makes atonement for him."

"As long as the Temple existed, the alter atoned for Israel, and now a man's table atones for him."

In Judaism, there is an exegetic concept that a dining table is a symbolic substitute for the alter that was in the Temple. This is hinted at by the title of the exhibit, which quotes a sentence that appears in several sources, such as the Babylonian Talmud, Order Moed-Tractate Hagiga, Chapt. 3: "The altar was wood three cubits high and two cubits long, and its corners, and its length and its walls were wood. And he spoke to me, "This is the table that is before the Lord"

(Ezekiel 41:22). What is meant when it is said that the dining table is a symbolic substitute for the alter? – In the Temple, a sinner brought a sacrifice to atone for his sins. At the table, a man atones for his sins in different ways: through blessing the food, speaking words of Torah or showing hospitality by inviting guests.

The legal code known as the Shulkhan Arukh (Set Table), compiled by the great Sephardic rabbi Joseph Caro in the mid -1500s, is still the standard legal code of Judaism. When rabbis, particularly if they are Orthodox, are asked to rule on a question of Jewish law, the first volume they consult generally is the Shulkhan Arukh. A major reason for its universal acceptance is that it was the first code to list the differing customs and laws of both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewry. This unique feature was not intended by Joseph Caro, but came about through a happy coincidence. At the very time that Caro was compiling his code, a similahr undertaking was being planned by Rabbi Moses Isserles of Poland. Isserles, known in Jewish life as the Rama, was thrown into some despair when he first heard about Caro's work, for he knew Caro to be a greater scholar than himself. Nonetheless, he soon realized that both Caro's legal code and his own would not by themselves meet the needs of all Jews. Thus, the Shulkhan Arukh was published with Caro's rulings listed first, and Isserles's dissents and addenda included in italics.
5 core themes for the building blocks:

1) **Brit / covenant**
   This section will summarize the ideological framework of the covenant between the Jewish people and Godas the foundation of the Jewish people, predating Torah and mitzvahs. The brit in Judaism is mutual but in no way equal. The brit will be presented as a dynamic foundation encompassing the four fundamental covenants that Godmade with the people, indicating that the concept of the brit is eternal and yet dynamic.

2) **Shabbat**
   The Sabbath will be presented as the basis for the Jewish way of life. Shabbat has its own rhythm. It highlights the polarities (holy/profane; work days/day of rest) between which daily life flows. It unites all the affinities within the individual Jew as well as the bonds between the individual and his family, his

community, his people, and gives them rich and vital expression.

3) **Life cycle (Brit Milah, Bar/ Bat Mitzvah, Wedding, Mourning)**
This section will present the individual Jew's life from birth to death, through four milestones: brit milah (ritual circumcision), bar/bat mitzvah, wedding and mourning. Each one of these milestones represents the unchanging as well as the dynamic foundations of Jewish ritual.

4) **Yearly cycle (High Holidays, pilgrim festivals, historical festivals, Zionist festivals)**
This section will present the Jewish holidays, festivals and memorial days and demonstrate the way in which the Jewish calendar serves as a means to create a national memory and a vehicle that perpetually connects the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

5) **Social Covenant (Family relations, Social conduct, Human ethics, caring for the environment)**
This section will present community belonging as a fundamental element of Jewish life. The Jewish social convention that includes family relations, community relations, mutual responsibility, universal moral and human principles, and responsibility for the environment will be displayed.

1) The Covenant (Brit)

Judaism talks about four covenants that Godmade with man: the covenant of Noah (symbolized by the rainbow); the covenant of Abraham (circumcision); the covenant of the parts (brit bein habetarim); the covenant with Israel (Shabbat – the Sabbath); and the covenant of the sons of Aharon (the priesthood).

The word brit is a Hebraization of a term from the ancient East that describes the contract between the ruler of an empire and the small vassal kingdoms – a contract that was mutual but not at all equal. Just so is the brit in Judaism – mutual but not equal. The innovation in Judaism is that the brit is not made between a great, strong king

and small, weak kings, but between Godand his people. Related to this is the "aron habrit" (the Ark of the Covenant), referring to the ark in which the contract between Godand the Jewish people is kept.

The concept of the brit will be the central feature of the first-floor exhibit. It will start with the brit between Godand the Jewish people: "And I have also established my covenant with them…and I have remembered my covenant…And I will take you to Me for a people and I will be to you a God(Exodus 6:4-7). This speech that Goddelivers to Moshe summarizes the essence of the Jewish people as a collective based on a covenant.

The brit in Jewish history

1. The covenant with our forefather Abraham.
2. The covenant with the children of Israel, the "Covenant of the Basins" [Ex.24-6] at
   Mt. Sinai. This experience was central in terms of national significance.
3. The covenant with Moshe/Joshua at the moment of entering the land of Israel –
   this added territorial significance to the brit.
4. The covenant with the house of David and the promise of eternal kingship –
   parallel to the covenant of priesthood with Pinhas, the grandson of Aharon the
   priest.

The concept of the brit in the sources:

1. An almost reciprocal covenant between Godand the people: "And it shall come to pass, because you hearken to these ordinances and keep and do them, that the Lord your Godshall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers" (Deut. 7:12). There appears to be reciprocity here, the kind to which human perception is accustomed in the case of a covenant between two peoples, whether they are equal, or almost equal, to each other. But, in fact – "the concept of covenant in the sense with which we are familiar from human history does not apply, nor could it apply, to the kind of

relationship that exists between God and man" (Tsofia Maller, The One-Sided Covenant).

2. A covenant that precedes Torah and mitzvah: The brit is the pillar of the Jewish people and our sages claim that it preceded the laws and the mitzvahs: " Pelimo says: He must mention the covenant before the Torah, since the latter was given with three covenants" (Babylonian Talmud, Brakhot, page 48-B).

3. A covenant as a dynamic foundation: The Midrash states that the three fundamental covenants that Godmade with the people show that the concept of brit is at once eternal and dynamic: "One when they left Egypt, and one at Horev, and one here" (Yalkut Shimoni, Nitzavim). The covenant made "here" is the one that every generation makes with God.

4. Rabbi Soloveitchik (in his article The Voice Of My Beloved Calls) talks about two covenants of the Jewish people. The first he calls a covenant of destiny, which is the covenant of history and circumstances. This is the brit of Egypt, a people of slaves who go forth to freedom before they have the ability to choose freedom. The second he calls a covenant of purpose. This is the covenant of choice, commitment and responsibility – the covenant of Sinai, when the people choose its future (this part of the exhibit connects with "a common purpose" on the third floor).

The covenant as a basic element of Jewish life

1) Brit milah: "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant between Me and you" (Genesis 16:11). The covenant here is at once physical and spiritual. The community (parents, godfather, mohel) usher the individual into the Jewish people by means of physical circumcision and the bestowing of a name (spiritual aspect). In a related ceremony, "zeved habat", a name is bestowed on a girl infant who, of course, does not experience an accompanying physical act.

2) Bar mitzvah: When a boy becomes bar mitzvah, he becomes "a man" as in the Scriptures: "each man his sword" (Genesis 34:25). Rabbi Elazar said: They were 13 years old (Breishit Rabah) and therefore considered to be part of the people, or, as Rashi commented, "a man from the children of Israel". In other words, one who takes part in the covenant and as such is counted in a minyan (quorum of 10 men) and is obligated to keep the Torah and the mitzvahs (ordinances). Liberal Judaism applies this equally to a "woman" (a 12-year-old girl is bat mitzvah).

3) The covenant of marriage (=wedding): This brit, a covenant of choice between two people who decide to spend their lives together, is based on the verse: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Like the "flesh" that was separated in the brit milahh, here the two separate themselves from their parents and form "one flesh" – a married couple.

The eternal covenant – Shabbat

"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16). "Every Sabbath day he shall set it in order before the Lord continually; it is from the children of Israel, an everlasting covenant" (Leviticus 24:8).

Symbolically, the Sabbath has two central meanings. The first is connected with the creation of the world – the Sabbath as a weekly witness to the creation. The second meaning is connected to the exodus from Egypt – the release from slavery to freedom. The Sabbath, in both its meanings, is a sign of the covenant between Godand the children of Israel. The special content and essence of the Sabbath is clarified by the comparison to the weekdays. On the one hand, Shabbat is "the release from the yoke of the profane and its worries," a release that allows man to be refreshed, refilled, renewed. Its purpose is so that man will be able to work with increased energy and drive during the week. And, on the other hand, Shabbat is not a day that serves the weekdays. On the contrary, "Shabbat is the peak

of the weekdays…and the weekdays serve [the Sabbath day] and lead up to it" (Rabbi Aharon Lichtenshtein).

The role of the covenant in the Jewish yearly cycle

As a rule, the festivals that were given to the people in the desert are a practical expression of the covenant of Egypt as well as the covenant of Sinai. Later festivals express the dimension of a "covenant of destiny" (enemies try to destroy the Jews at Purim or Hanukah) as well as a "covenant of purpose" (the Jewish people take responsibility for its future: Mordecai and Esther at Purim, the Hasmoneans and the Maccabees at Hanukah).

2) The Sabbath

"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16).
"The Sabbath is the foundation of Jewish life. Shabbat has its own rhythm. It highlights the polarities (holy/profane; work days/day of rest) between which daily life flows. It unites all the affinities within the individual Jew as well as the bonds between the individual and his family, his community, his people, and gives them rich and vital expression.

"Shabbat embodies past memory and future vision as a contemporary experience and, at the same time, Shabbat is a pillar that exists in Jewish society in Israel among all its sectors and camps. Not only are the devout orthodox faithful to it, but even Jews who have gone completely away from halakhah (Jewish law)" (Eliezer Schweid).

The Shabbat exhibit is an opportunity for expanding beyond traditions and rituals, and connects the exhibit to different individuals and communities, Jews and non-Jews.

The Sabbath as a symbol of the Jewish home: An exhibit showcasing the variety of Jewish traditions connected with its observance, past and present. The focus of the exhibit will enable the women's

narrative, in private life and as part of the Jewish community, to be strengthened. Sabbath customs in different communities, religious and secular, will be highlighted. Some of the subjects to be included are listed below:

• Friday night dinner (seudah) – a family get-together
• The Jewish mother – a humorous look
• Traditional foods – a clear influence of the environment
• Changing roles of men and women – from the traditional up to the present
• The Sabbath among liberal and secular sectors

Objects that represent the Sabbath – candlesticks, Kiddush cup, hallah, embroidered hallah cover, Havdalah spices, myrtle, etc.

Shabbat is one of the prominent symbols of the Jewish people. It is unchangeable and not dependent on any human action. The Sabbath day was fixed already from the seven days of creation, after Godrested on the seventh day from his labor, and is independent of human beings. In contrast, the times of the other festivals are set only by man, who sanctifies the month by determining the exact time of the new moon. Already in the Torah the Sabbath contains two different meanings. The first is social, and the second is theological, a kind of "Imitatio Dei" – imitation of G-d.

The social dimension of Shabbat – (this will be tied in with the Social Covenant)
"Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, just as the Lord your God has commanded you. For six days you are to work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. On that day you must not do any work, you, your son, your daughter, your male slave, your female slave, your ox, your donkey, any other animal, or the foreigner who lives with you, so that your male and female slaves, like yourself, may have rest. Recall that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. That is why the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:12-15).

These verses are taken from the "Ten Commandments" that appear in Deuteronomy. Attention should be paid to the detailed description of who should rest on the Sabbath and the reason given: "Recall that you were slaves in the land of Egypt". Here should be emphasized the entrance of Shabbat, with items on display that represent Shabbat: the Sabbath candles, the ceremony of Kabalat Shabbat (receiving the Sabbath), Kiddush, and the two breads (lehem mishneh).

The Sabbath table

The family Shabbat meal is a common denominator that ties together most of the diverse Jewish population. The 'Shabbat tables' will reflect the diverse aspects and variations of Shabbat in contemporary Jewish society.

Shabbat – the sanctity of separateness

"The heavens and the earth were completed with everything that was in them. By the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day all the work that He had been doing. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it He ceased all the work that He had been doing in creation" (Gen.2:1-3).

“Remember the Sabbath day to set it apart as holy. For six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your cattle, or the resident foreigner who is in your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy" (Ex. 20:7-10).

The fact that Shabbat is set apart in time creates holiness. Godcreated the world in six days and on the seventh day He set the Sabbath apart from the other days, thereby turning it into a holy day. Shabbat is an imitation of G-d; just as Godworked six days and ceased on the seventh day, so man works six days and rests on the

seventh. This is why at the end of Shabbat there is a havdalah (separation) ceremony that marks the transition from holy to profane.

Havdalah – a transition ceremony that includes a series of blessings that are said at the end of the Sabbath or a holiday in which melakhah ("labor") is forbidden, and marks the transition from Shabbat to a weekday. The havdalah ceremony includes blessings over wine, fragrant spices and fire (which according to the tradition was created at the end of the first Shabbat) and, of course, a blessing over the separation between holy and profane.

3) Life Cycle

The cycle of life has four "stations": brit milah, bar mitzvah, wedding, and mourning.

The exhibit will emphasize the unifying essence that is expressed in the sources of the ceremonies and the differences (the variety) in the way different Jewish communities perform the ceremonies or customs. Different approaches and styles in performing the ceremonies will be described – those that represent the traditional views as well as liberal, innovative or modern approaches.

Brit milah (ritual circumcision)

1. The unifying essence of the circumcision ceremony includes the special prayers that are recited and the people who have a role in the ceremony: the father, who reads the prayer passages; the sandak (godfather) who sits on the chair of Elijah and holds the baby on his lap; the mohel who bends over the newborn and performs the circumcision; and the "kvater" (who takes the baby from the mother and hands it over to the mohel). In addition to the people, ritual objects are also involved in the ceremony – the pillow, Elijah's chair, an embroidered diaper, the mohel's instruments, circumcision knives from different periods, a wine goblet.

2. The variety is based on a description of circumcision practices of different communities. Here the brit milah ceremonies will be displayed, with their halakhic sources and the accompanying

customs that are unique to the various Jewish communities. The exhibit will also expand on the different brit customs practiced in Jewish communities past and present, such as the traditional celebration for a girl, simchat habat or zeved habat, the more modern brita, and secular ceremonies.

Background

The origin of brit milah is in God's command to Abraham to circumcise his son Isaac: "This is my covenant that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised" (Gen.17:10). The description of the Biblical covenant is mutual: Godpromises to increase Abraham's descendants, to be his G-d, and to give him the land of Canaan (ibid:6-8). The command of circumcision did not apply only to Isaac; it applies to all the descendants of Abraham throughout all generations. Indeed, the Torah describes other brit milah events: when Abraham circumcised himself and his son Ishmael; when the men of Shechem were circumcised; when the son of Moshe Rabbenu was circumcised by his mother, Zippora; and when Joshua ben Nun circumcised all of the males before they entered the Land of Israel.

The people of Israel, in every land to which they were dispersed, continued to keep this commandment and to circumcise their sons. Over the years, brit milah became the central expression of the connection between the Jewish people and G-d. During the period of the Hasmoneans (2nd century BCE), brit milah became a symbol of the uniqueness of the Jews compared to the rest of the nations and was established as one of the central elements of the conversion process. During the same period, additional laws pertaining to circumcision were defined and the rules that dictated the proceedings of the ceremony were set, including establishing that the naming of the baby would occur at the brit. Contemporary evidence also indicates that performance of the circumcision by a professional mohel began to replace the original custom of the father circumcising his infant son.

Starting in ancient times with the decrees of the Greeks, and on into the Middle Ages, the Jews were forced to fight for the right to continue the customs of their forefathers, in the face of prohibitions and decrees by regimes antagonistic to brit milah and to other

symbols of the Jewish people. Indeed, throughout the ages many Jews have given their lives for observing brit milah as a symbol of Jewish solidarity and as a sign of adherence to the ancient covenant.

In modern times, especially in the 19th century in Ashkenaz (Germany), controversies arose within the Jewish world concerning the way to perform the halakhic requirements of brit milah in the face of developments in medical and physiological knowledge. The main discussion concerned the required procedure of drawing some blood from the place of the brit (the action known as metzitza). The consequences of this debate continue to have an influence to this day.

Sources:

1. The command, G-d's covenant with Abraham:

   "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep the covenantal requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised. You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not one of your descendants. They must indeed be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money. The sign of my covenant will be visible in your flesh as a permanent reminder. Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin will be cut off from his people – he has failed to carry out my requirement'" (Gen.17: 9-14).

   Yitzhak was the first to be circumcised: "Abraham named his son – whom Sarah bore to him – Isaac. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him just as God had commanded him to do. Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, 'God has made me laugh. Everyone who hears about this will laugh with

me.' She went on to say, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have given birth to a son for him in his old age!' The child grew and was weaned. Abraham prepared a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned" (Gen.21:4).

2. Laws of purity concerning a woman after giving birth (Priestly laws): “Tell the Israelites, ‘When a woman produces offspring and bears a male child, she will be unclean seven days, as she is unclean during the days of her menstruation. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin must be circumcised. Then she will remain thirty-three days in the blood of purification. She must not touch anything holy and she must not enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled’” (Lev.12:2-4).

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Bar is an Aramaic work meaning "son". Girls at the age of 12 and boys at the age of 13 celebrate their arrival at the age of mitzvahs – reaching maturity and being counted as part of the community and responsible for their own actions. This important event is connected to the social circle in all the Jewish communities in the world. It is common practice to celebrate this coming of age of the boy or girl, but the character of the celebration varies from place to place. Sometimes the emphasis is on being called up to read from the Torah (aliyah); other times a festive meal is held. And sometimes the bar or bat mitzvah is expected to perform some task that demonstrates their entry into the world of responsibility and maturity.

The beginnings of the bar mitzvah ceremony were in the Middle Ages. The ceremony does not appear in the Bible and is not one of the core ceremonies in Judaism. Its meaning comes from the words of the sages in the Mishnaic period. In contrast to brit milah or marriage, in which the ceremony gives validity to the change in personal status of the individuals, the bar mitzvah ceremony does not cause the change that has occurred in the boy's or girl's personal status but merely reinforces it.

1. The traditional familiar situation in this ceremony is: father, son and rabbi stand on the podium of the synagogue, and the boy reads from the Torah. Ritual articles: tallis, tefillin, Torah scroll, book of haftorahs, invitation to the bar mitzvah ceremony, yad (pointer) of a Torah scroll, and a pile of toffees.

2. The variety of the bar mitzvah ceremonies is great. Customs were and still are different in various Jewish communities. The exhibit will stress the accepted bar/bat mitzvah customs, their halakhic origins, and the accompanying customs unique to the various Jewish communities. Next to them will be displayed bar/bat mitzvah customs from the reform, conservative and secular communities.

   Keeping commandments (mitzvahs) – The 613 commandments are derived from the written Torah which, according to the sages and the oral tradition, were given to Moshe at Mt. Sinai. Children do not wait until the age of thirteen to begin keeping mitzvahs. If they are able, they keep them sooner. For example, from an early age, both boys and girls say a blessing over bread, fruit, etc. Girls often light candles in honor of the Sabbath. However, at the age of bar/bat mitzvah, the responsibility for keeping the commandments falls on the child.

   Bar/bat mitzvah customs: Among the customs that took root in all of the Jewish communities are laying tefillin [for the first time] and aliyah – going up to the podium to read from the Torah scroll. The reading is done in public, with the participation of the congregation, and demands a high degree of accuracy. The custom of reading from the Torah is intended to maintain knowledge of the Torah, so that it can be passed on from generation to generation.

   Drasha – the word "drasha" is derived from "beit midrash" (study house). A drasha is not necessarily delivered when the children become b'nei mitzvah, but it has become a tradition that the bar mitzvah boy expounds before the congregation. Party and presents – As mentioned, bar mitzvah ceremonies were not traditionally held. This changed during the Reform period and today it is common to have a party to celebrate a

bar mitzvah.

Chosen verse: "At thirteen years old [the age is reached] for mitzvahs" (Avot 5, 25)

Explanation: The many differences in the development and maturation process of people brought the sages to minimize the fluctuating interval of time of the age of entry into different mitzvahs, and to strive as much as possible to set a uniform age for the obligation to do all of the mitzvahs mentioned in the Torah. There was a trend to unify the age of entry into mitzvahs. When the practice of checking for physical signs of maturity (a widespread practice in ancient times) was discontinued, the age of thirteen for a boy and twelve for a girl was seen as the transition age from childhood to maturity for the purpose of obligation as well as punishment. This trend, which transferred the emphasis in testing maturity from a biological test to an intellectual one, reached a peak in the Talmudic period with the words of the Rash (Rabeinu Asher ben Yihiel 1250-1327), who in his Responsa (Klal 16, A) writes that the law of "thirteen for mitzvahs" is a halakha given to Moshe at Sinai. Eventually the verse in Avot was adopted as a defining and obligating statement. "He used to say: age 5 to the Torah, age 10 to the Mishneh, age 13 to mitzvahs, age 15 to the Gomorra, age 18 to the hupah (wedding), age 20 to chase…" This saying penetrated the nation's consciousness and became halakha for every generation.

Sources

There was a good custom in Jerusalem, to educate the young boys and girls on a fast day, age eleven until midday, age twelve to complete (the fast), and afterwards he was brought to each elder to bless him and encourage him and pray for him that he would merit Torah and good deeds. And everyone who was greater than him in the city would leave his place and walk before him and prostrate himself and pray for him; to teach you that they are fair and their deeds are fair, and their heart is towards heaven. And they didn't leave their young sons behind, but brought them to the synagogues, in order to educate them

to mitzvahs" (Tractate Sofrim).

"And the boys grew…" [Jacob and Esau]: Rabbi Levy said, 'This is a parable – like the myrtle (hadas) and the butcher's broom (itzbonit; also called Jew's myrtle – a plant superficially similar to the myrtle) that grew next to each other; as they matured and flowered, one gave fragrance and the other thorns. Thus, for 13 years both of them when to school and both of them came from school. After 13 years, one went to the study house and the other went to pagan temples."

Rabbi Elazar said, "A man must take care of his son for 13 years; after that, he should say "Blessed be He who has freed me from the responsibility for this child."

Articles used in ceremonies

Tefillin: Tefillin are black boxes strapped by Jews to the arms and the forehead. The practice started in ancient times and continues to this day. One box contains "tefillin shel yad" and is strapped on the arm during morning prayers. The other box, "tefillin shel rosh" is strapped to the forehead. Inside each box is a rolled piece of parchment, on which is written in ink four passages from the Torah describing the connection between Israel and Godand the commandment of laying tefillin (in the tefillin for the arm is one parchment with all of the passages, and in the tefillin for the head are four pieces of parchment).

Tallis: The tallis, which looks like a shawl, is usually made of white wool with stripes of blue or black. It has four corners, and fringes are tied to each corner, using special, symbolic knots. These fringes are called "tzitzis". (The tallis katan – a kind of undershirt with tzitzis attached to the corners which is worn under clothes at all times – should be distinguished from the tallis gadol, which is worn over the clothing during prayer.) According to the Torah, at least one of the strings of the tzitzis should be light blue in color. The dye for this color was apparently produced in ancient times from a snail. Today, when it is not clear how to produce the color, most of the public uses white tzitzis. The source for the mitzvah of tzitzis in the Torah is in Numbers 15:38-39: “Speak to the Israelites

and tell them to make tassels for themselves on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and put a blue thread on the tassel of the corners." And also in Deuteronomy 22:12: "You shall make yourselves tassels for the four corners of the clothing you wear." The tallis in Jewish tradition acts as a reminder to those wearing it to keep the Torah's commandments, due to the specially tied fringes and the way it wraps the entire body in mitzvahs. The tallis also gives a feeling of protection and embrace "under the wings of the Shechina".

Over the years the tallis has become one of the most prominent symbols of Judaism and Jewish prayer. The appearance of the white tallis with the blue fringe served as the inspiration for the Israeli flag – white with blue stripes.

Torah scroll: The portion of the week is read at the synagogue from a Torah scroll made from klaf (parchment). The text is copied by a special artist-scribe called a sofer stam (ST"M is an abbreviation that stands for Sefer Torah, Tefillin and Mezuza, all of which are written by the scribe). The letters of the Torah scroll are written in a special graphic style with a quill or reed pen dipped in ink. The scrolls are kept in a special cabinet (aron) in the synagogue called the "aron kodesh", which is covered with a curtain called a "parokhet". When the scrolls are brought out for reading, the congregation honors them by standing, kissing the outer covering of the scrolls, and singing psalms and Biblical verses.

The objects and implements connected to the Torah scrolls have special names: me-il (mantle), keter (crown), etzba or yad (lit. finger/hand; a pointer), rimonim (decorations usually of copper or silver), hagura (belt) or avnet (sash; also part of the priests' clothing). These objects are usually made of expensive materials such as gold or silver and velvet, demonstrating the importance of the Torah scrolls to the congregation.

Torah scroll decorations and the etzba (pointer): The covering in which the Torah scrolls are kept varies according to custom. The communities of North Africa and the Middle East (edot hamizrakh) place the scrolls, which are rolled around two wooden

rods or rollers (etz haim -"trees of life"), inside a decorated round hard case that opens like a door; the parchment is rolled from one part to the other when reading. The Ashkenazi and Italian communities also roll the parchment on two wooden rollers and cover it with an embroidered velvet cover or mantle. The Torah scrolls are accompanied by decorations and implements such as rimonim, magen (shield, breastplate), and etzba to point to the text during the reading.

Bat Mitzvah: "[A girl] twelve years and one day old, [a boy] thirteen years and one day old, indeed they are as adults for all the mitzvahs" (Rambam – Rabbi Moses ben Maimon – Hilkhot Shvitat Asor Ch.2:11).

From that day on, a girl is obligated to do all 613 commandments, positive as well as negative. However, there is no Jewish tradition, ancient or common, of bat mitzvah parties. Only in the last hundred years, influenced by the growing demand for equality between the sexes, and out of a desire to strengthen the connection to Judaism among girls, Jews began to celebrate the day when a girl reached the age of mitzvahs. The bat mitzvah celebration was accepted by many populations as an important milestone in the maturation process of a young woman.

In many orthodox communities, girls celebrate their bat mitzvah with a festive meal for family and friends. At the party, the girl reads a drasha about the weekly Torah portion and about the importance of keeping the mitzvahs. In some places, mothers and daughters participate in a joint study program for bat mitzvah girls and their mothers on subjects relating to women and Judaism. Some orthodox communities organize a special women's prayer service in which the bat mitzvah girl reads from the Torah.

Among secular and traditional non-orthodox families, the bat mitzvah celebration expresses their joy at the adolescent girl's growing up and accepting responsibility. Traditional and secular families often have parties and invite family and friends, or classmates and members of the girl's youth movement.

Adding activities to the bar/bat mitzvah experience beyond or instead of the ceremony.

Today, maturity is perceived not as a single transition event, but as a process occurring over a long period of time, culminating in a ceremony. This period can become a challenging family experience involving identity formation, study, questioning and contact with Jewish heritage past and present. In this way, the maturation experience is filled with historical and cultural significance and a feeling of joining as another link in the chain of generations.

Family journey: Before the bat/bar mitzvah ceremony, some families embark on a fascinating family journey to the physical, ideological and moral milestones in the family and national history. In this way the family narrative and [Jewish] legacy is passed on.

Year of missions: In the first decades of the state of Israel, many kibbutzim had a special bar/bat mitzvah year in which the whole seventh grade was devoted to the entry of the children to the age of mitzvahs. The children were given 13 assignments, one for each year (on the kibbutz, girls also celebrated bat mitzvah at age 13). The assignments required that they prove their responsibility as adults. Some of the tasks involved study, research and volunteer work, things that are relevant also in towns, and some of them were tailored specifically to kibbutz life. For example, the young kibbutzniks were required to work during the day in an adult job (the cow shed, sheep pen or in the fields), to do guard duty at night and learn about weapons. They were also sent to the big city, to work in the post office, a commercial center or a bank.

"Roots" projects: In recent years, researching one's roots or preparing a family tree has become common, usually at school. This provides an opportunity for quality time with grandparents, deepening the child's bond with them. Sometimes this includes also learning to read from the Torah (learning the cantillation notes – taamei hamikra), getting an aliyah (saying the blessing over the reading), or laying tefillin in preparation for the ceremony in the synagogue, and writing a drasha – speech – to say at the synagogue or at the party. Many schools mark the completion of

the roots projects with a party for the seventh grade students and their families.

In fact, on this subject the imagination of the family is the only limit – tens and hundreds of ways, religious and secular, can be found to celebrate the bar mitzvah year. And the market is flooded with up-to-date suggestions.

The wedding:

The narrative and origins of the event

In each one of the ceremonies described so far – brit milah and bar mitzvah – texts exist that claim that this is the most important ceremony for every Jew. However, the wedding is undoubtedly the leading ceremony in importance, due to the traditional significance of establishing a Jewish household as well as the fact that, in this case, the matter depends on a personal decision.

The wedding will be the focus of the Life Cycle, as it is a custom that, in one way or another, everyone observes.

In all Jewish communities, wedding ceremonies are held according to the same halakhic rules. The main feature of the ceremony is the bridegroom sanctifying his bride with a ring and saying to her, "You are hereby sanctified to me with this ring according to the law of Moshe and Israel." However, in addition to the similarity among the various communities, each one has its special customs. This is the most complex and complicated custom among those that have been described above, because it had, and still has, economic and legal ramifications. Aside from the change in personal status, the traditional ceremony marks a change in the economic status of the woman – she leaves the "patronage" of her father and enters that of her husband. In Biblical times, there was a type of legal agreement between the husband and the woman/her father, although an actual wedding ceremony was not yet the custom. The custom of holding a wedding ceremony began in the Mishnaic period and, at the beginning, was totally one-sided – the man "bought" the woman, and the woman was "purchased" by the man.

Representative verse

The chosen verse: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife, and they become as one" (Gen.2:24).

Additional sources: "If a man marries a woman and she does not please him because he has found impropriety in her, then he may draw up a divorce document, give it to her, and evict her from his house. When she has left him she may go and become someone else's wife" (Deut.24:1-2).

Hupa – Bridal Canopy

The Rema (Rabbi Moshe Isserles, 1520-1572) decreed: "The custom today is to make the hupa by spreading a sheet of cloth on poles and placing the bride (kalla) and groom (hatan) under it." The hupa, which is made of a sheet of cloth fixed to four poles, symbolizes the home established by the couple. The groom stands under the hupa and waits for his bride to join him in their new home. The Ashkenazi custom is to hold the hupa ceremony outdoors, under the star-filled sky, symbolizing the blessings of plenty and having descendants as plentiful as the stars in the heavens.

The ring: According to Jewish tradition, the bridegroom sanctifies his bride with a ring that he places on her finger and gives her as a present. This present could also be a coin, a cup or any other valuable object (shaveh-pruta – worth a certain minimum). In most places, it is customary to use a ring. A ring has additional symbolism – of a crown and the honor of kingdom, and tying the bonds of couplehood.

The ring must be made of only one material, not a mixture of metals, either gold or silver. This is so that it will be comfortable to wear. On the outer surface it is permissible to have engraving and other decoration.

By the way, the round shape of the ring symbolizes the cycle of life. As such it joins the veil, the hupa, and the circling of the bride

around the groom; symbolically, the ring encircles the bride.

Ketuba – Marriage Contract: The ketuba originally served as a promissory note signed at the time of marriage to ensure the financial support of the woman in case she would be divorced or widowed. The ketuba states the commitments the man accepts vis-à-vis his wife during the marriage: to respect and honor her, to provide for her needs, support and give her clothes, and to satisfy her physical needs. The ketuba was instituted in a period when the burden of providing a livelihood was on the man and the property that a bride brought with her, as well as the fruits of her labor, were usually transferred to the husband. Without the ketuba, a woman was liable to lose all of her property in the case of separation or death. In the past, the ketuba was written in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the time, and referred to silver coins and wedding customs of former times. Over the generations, ketubas became a giant repository of Jewish art that dealt with motifs connected to marriage. Today, many ketubas are written in Hebrew [or other languages] and with variations on the text.

Remembering the destruction at weddings (breaking a glass, ashes, etc.): Because there is no joyous occasion among the Jewish people without remembering the destruction of the Temple, the bridegroom repeats the oath sworn by the exiles of the first Temple's destruction, in Babylonia: "If I forget thee, oh Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember thee not, if I don't elevate Jerusalem above my happiness." Then he breaks a glass.

Sometimes this part of the ceremony is done not at the end of the ceremony, but before the reading of the ketuba, in order that the reminder of the destruction will not be immediately followed by the burst of joy that always comes at the end of the ceremony.

Over the years other meanings have been added to breaking the glass. The breaking of the glass is a kind of time-out in the middle of the joy, a reminder that, although the private home of the couple is being built, there is still destruction and evil in the world and the joy is incomplete. Already in the period of the sages, breaking the glass symbolized the sorrow of death and the temporariness of

life, and the specific mourning over the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. According to Jewish tradition, it is the combination of celebration and remembrance that gives the world balance. The traditional connection between marriage and destruction is also a connection of opposites, as the sages said, "Everyone who builds a home is as if he rebuilt part of the ruins of Jerusalem."

Secular marriage ceremony: The secular marriage ceremony was born from the need of young non-religious Jews who weren't interested in getting married through the rabbinate but nevertheless wanted a Jewish ceremony that included traditional symbols and blessings. This type of ceremony is not recognized for the purposes of marriage registration in the State of Israel and because of this it is sometimes held in addition to a civil marriage ceremony conducted abroad, or as an agreement between the couple to share their lives.

The ceremony is conducted by a professional officiator who is knowledgeable in Judaism and involved in social action in Israel. Before the ceremony, the couple meets several times with the officiator, who explains to them about the traditional wedding and its development up to today. At the meetings, the couple plans the ceremony, integrating songs and modern texts and blessings into the traditional wedding structure.

The secular wedding ceremony preserves most of the traditional Jewish symbols and includes hupa, kiddush over wine, exchange of rings (including a ring for the man), ketuba, breaking a glass and sheva brachot (the seven blessings). However, each one of these elements is given a modern secular interpretation and the blessings are modernized as well to give meaning to life as secular Jews, with an emphasis on the equal status of the couple.

Ceremonies of this type are common among Jews in the Diaspora, where they like to mix Jewish tradition with a personal angle that the couple brings to the ceremony. It is common for the bride and groom to read personal vows to each other and during the hupa friends and family members will come up and bless the couple. Sometimes the ceremony itself will be conducted by a friend and

not by a rabbi; in not a few cases, the officiator is a woman.

Mourning: In contrast to the three previous ceremonies (brit milah, bar/bat mitzvah and wedding), in which it is clear when the peak moment comes, in mourning there is no "peak" but rather a process that includes several stages. The halakha wisely divided the mourning period into a series of ceremonies that take place on the day of burial, the first week, the first month, and the first year.

Funeral and burial – the narrative and origins of custom: Judaism calls the funeral also "hessed shel emet" (true kindness). As a sign of mourning, the mourner makes a symbolic tear in his shirt. It is customary to eulogize the departed and to praise his good qualities and character (the names of three consecutive Torah portions are put together into a saying: "After the death [of the]/ holy/ Speak…"). During the funeral, the mourners say "the Mourners' Kaddish" and place the body of the departed in the ground wrapped in white shrouds (the same is done to a Torah scroll that has become invalid).

The burial ceremony is very ancient. As opposed to other ancient customs that are almost not mentioned in the Bible, in the case of burial, the Bible takes the trouble to tell us where practically every one of the kings is buried. The book of Kings, for instance, tells us very little about some of the kings except for their burial place. The Bible also speaks about the prohibition to leave the dead unburied overnight. Several solutions are presented in the Bible itself for treatment of the dead, such as cremation, embalming, etc. However, the only system that survived over the generations is the system of burial in a permanent place. Since a dead body defiles more than anything else, and since priests are not allowed to go near a corpse, the burial place was always outside the city.

Burial is defined as placing a dead body in the ground, as was said to the first man, Adam: "For dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen.3:19). The burial ceremony is conducted generally in public, with the family, friends and admirers of the deceased escorting him on his last journey.

The Jewish ceremony, performed by Jews in all the lands of the

Diaspora, has a long tradition, based on unique theological, social and psychological viewpoints. At the core of the Jewish burial and mourning rituals is respect for the deceased, ascent of the soul, and respect for the bereaved family left behind. The Kitzur Shulham Arukh (Code of Jewish laws and customs) states, "The period of mourning begins as soon as the deceased is buried and the grave is filled with earth."

Halakhic sources:
Chosen verse: "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the earth, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust shall you return" (Gen.3:19).

Sources:
Time of burial: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall surely bury him the same day" (Deut.21:23).

Jewish tradition dictates burial on the day of death (Sanhedrin 44-71) because delayed burial disgraces the deceased and pollutes the environment (this was true of the hot, humid climate of Israel). The dead body is not to be left alone until burial.

Shrouds: Rabban Gamliel instituted the custom of equality concerning the burial clothes in order to avoid waste and shame. "At first, the rich were carried on a dargash (bed of the rich) and the poor on a kliva (bed of the poor, similahr to a stretcher) and the poor were embarrassed. It was decided that everyone would be carried on a kliva out of respect for the poor (Babylonian Talmud, Moed Katan 27).

Pallbearers: The bier (lit. bed - mitah) is carried by pallbearers – nosei hamitah (Brakhot 3-1) or sovlei hamitah or haketefayim. The pallbearers remove their shoes at the funeral, and the relatives of the deceased remove them only when they return from the burial. Not wearing [leather] shoes is a mourning custom, and the pallbearers follow it out of respect for the dead.

Attending a funeral: The sages instituted the obligation of "accompanying the dead". This is considered an act of loving kindness (gemilut hessed), of the type that has no prescribed

amount or limit (ein lahem shiur). Even a mourner is allowed to attend another's funeral. The custom was to accompany the deceased in the streets of the city, a custom that included men and women alike. Two customs grew up in that respect – minhag Galil (the Galilee custom) and minhag Yehuda (the Judea custom). In the Galilee, the men walked before the bier and the women after it. In Judea, the women walked before and the men after. In both cases, they were careful to avoid contact between the sexes.

Mourning customs: The Code of Law – Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh – states: "The period of mourning begins as soon as the deceased is buried and the grave is filled with earth."

Shiva – After the funeral, the mourners "sit shiva" – seven days in which the mourners sit at home; they are forbidden to go out even to perform a mitzvah. Friends and family come to comfort them and also to help out with the daily household tasks and cooking. During the shiva week, the mourners are forbidden to perform any work, offer greetings, have sexual relations, bathe, shave or cut their hair, read the Torah, wear new clothes, or be present at any festivity. The scrupulous sit on the floor or on a low stool or bench. Some also sleep on a mattress on the floor during the shiva week.

The purpose of the mourning period is to give a person the tools to overcome the trauma of losing a close relative, so that the person doesn't carry the trauma with him throughout his life as a feeling of perpetual bereavement. The mourning process by its nature does not allow repression and a return to routine, but instead brings the pain out into the open. It forces the mourner to work through the bereavement together with others and to be helped by the support of members of the community and the family who come to comfort the mourners. According to the Jewish outlook, talking about the deceased and his/her qualities, memories and other subjects, brings relief to the mourners. Judaism stresses the importance of the mitzvah of comforting mourners: "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting."

The time-out that the mourner takes from his daily life and the ceremonies surrounding the shiva enable the mourner to get through this difficult period, to gradually alleviate the pain and to

return to a normal life. At the end of the shiva week, the mourners visit the grave of the deceased and begin the period of the shloshim (lit. thirty – thirty days, or a month), in which the intensity of the mourning decreases. Mourning a mother or a father is different in Jewish law than mourning any other relative – the mourning period for a parent lasts a year (in the Sefardic custom, 11 months). In subsequent years, it is customary to visit the grave every year on the anniversary of the death.

Mourner's Kaddish: Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity. Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

Alternative burial and mourning customs:

Secular

In recent years it has been possible to hold a secular burial in one of the alternative cemeteries without the services of the Hevra Kadisha (burial society). The bereaved family creates a funeral ceremony according to its understanding, although some basic features are preserved. Also here, eulogies are delivered about the deceased at the entrance to the cemetery, although it is not the religious text that dominates the ceremony. The family decides on a "program" that usually includes musical works that the deceased liked, and poems appropriate to the mourners and the

deceased.

In most of the ceremonies performed at alternative cemeteries, the body is laid in a coffin and the participants cannot see it. After the eulogies at the beginning, the funeral procession proceeds to the grave, where more eulogies are delivered as well as music. The secular mourners decide whether to say Kaddish or the prayer El Maleh Rahamim; often they do.

These funeral ceremonies are reminiscent of those characteristic of the kibbutz movement, except that in many kibbutzim it is not customary to say Kaddish or to pray. Secular families from the city who bury their dead in kibbutzim tend to mix the two styles, taking features from both.

The custom of sitting shiva is also common among the secular population in Israel and abroad, although prayers are not said unless one of the relatives asks for them. Nevertheless, the Jewish principle of shiva, which is connected to the treatment of mourners by their friends and relatives – feeding them, cleaning their house and relieving them of the daily household tasks – is acceptable also among the non-religious population.

Often, the mourners place photo albums of the deceased for visitors to look at, a summary of his/her life as reflected in photographs, stimulating memories of the deceased. In this way, the comforters often learn details about the deceased that they didn't know, and the mourners hear stories and details about their loved ones from the comforters. In secular homes, the custom of lighting a candle for the soul of the departed during the shiva and on the memorial day (yahrzeit) is common today. The headstone is usually placed on the grave on the thirtieth day.

3. **Yearly Cycle**

> "Holidays return the individuals with their society to the original festivals, which established the national culture by means of its temporal cycle…This is a contemporary renewal of memory, or the inserting of memory as an internal dimension into life in the present" (Eliezer Schweid).

General

The Jewish calendar is intended to produce a national-historic memory, and a memory of the annual agricultural structure in the Land of Israel.

The central motif of the exhibit on the festivals is not only an introduction to the Jewish and Israeli holidays. The exhibit aspires to examine the reasons and origins of the holidays, with the aim of demonstrating that the Jewish holidays strengthen and produce memory, and that they have a central role in assimilating Jewish memory. The exhibit will include customs originating in the Jewish sources that are celebrated in all Jewish communities, as well as the great variety and differences in holiday customs and traditions to be found in the various Diaspora communities, past and present. The exhibit will be suitable for Jewish and non-Jewish visitors, who may not be familiar with the Hebrew calendar.

Essence of the holidays

The Jewish calendar is intended to produce a national-historic memory, and a memory of the annual agricultural structure in the Land of Israel. As such, it preserves the central affinities of the Jews – the connection to the people and to faith, and the connection to the historical homeland. The result of the need to strengthen the national bond is that, in contrast to other national cultures, the Jews have a holiday or a festival in almost every one of the months of the year – every month, we remind ourselves of the fact that we are a people, with the exception of the month of Elul, in which the prayers leading up to the Days of Awe begin.

The changes in the Hebrew calendar in the modern age are characterized by a combination of new content imparted to the holidays, together with ancient/original contents that received a new emphasis after they became faded or disappeared in traditional Judaism over the years. For example, the Zionists stressed the agricultural aspects of the Jewish holidays,

especially of the three pilgrimage festivals, and the nationalist-political-military aspects of the struggle for independence in the context of the ancient historical holidays. Reform Judaism also added new forms of religious expression, such as women blowing the shofar.

In Israel, the kibbutz movement, which formulated new-old patterns for the main holidays, represents the alternative shape of the new Jewish annual cycle. In the case of some holidays, it has brought back ancient agricultural motifs; it has given others a new face. This is in order to reinforce the image of the "new Jew", a warrior who works the land, as well as to establish our right to the land by means of constantly remembering our agricultural bond to it. Thus, Succos is the harvest holiday; Hanuka celebrates the national victory of the few against the many (as does Lag B'omer to a certain extent, although a little divorced from the historical facts); Tu Beshvat became a holiday for planting and taking root in the land; Purim became a carnival; Passover is the holiday of Spring and the bringing of the first grain offering; Lag B'omer represents our striving for political independence at any price; and Shavuos (bikurim – first fruits) exemplifies the agricultural aspects of all three pilgrimage festivals.

In traditional Judaism, the yearly cycle contains three main elements. The first is man vis-à-vis his G-d. The second is the family holiday experience. The third is the communal and national expression. In modern Judaism, new aspects are added. In secular Judaism, the element of man vis-à-vis Godis absent.

The Jewish holidays are divided into 4 groups

Group No. 1 – The Days of Awe

This will include the prayers of the month of Elul, Rosh Hashanah, the ten days of repentance, and Yom Kippur.

The central theme of these holidays is national judgment days and private soul-searching. The motif of judgment day is

central to Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) and connects it to Yom Kippur. The prayers leading up to the days of awe begin in the month of Elul. According to tradition, on Rosh Hashanah, the Lord writes a verdict for every person and signs and seals it on Yom Kippur. There are ten days from the beginning of the "trial" to the end of it; these are called the ten days of repentance.

Group No. 2 – the three pilgrimage festivals

These are Pesach/Passover (including sefirat ha-omer), Shavuos, and Succos (including Simchas Torah).

These holidays have two central meanings: First, holidays that mark stages in the agricultural year. Passover is the beginning of the barley harvest. Between Passover and Shavuos is the time of the wheat harvest. Shavuos signifies the beginning of the period when the first fruits of the harvest were brought [to the Temple]. The produce was brought between Shavuos and Succos. Succos celebrates the end of the harvest in the fall and is also the holiday of water.

In addition, these three holidays – shloshet haregalim – were celebrated in Temple days by going up to Jerusalem. And they also mark seminal events in the history of the Jewish people, during their sojourn in the desert after the exodus from Egypt, up to the time they entered the Land of Israel. Passover celebrates the exodus from Egypt and Succos reminds us of the years in the desert (these meanings are mentioned in the Bible). Shavuos celebrates the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people – the divine revelation at Mt. Sinai (this meaning was attached to Shavuos in the Talmudic period).

These three festivals, more than any other holidays in the Jewish calendar, have been the recipients of new variations in the Israeli Zionist culture, and the non-Orthodox culture in the Diaspora have also filled them with new meanings.

Group No. 3 – Ancient historical holidays

These include Hanukah, Purim, Tisha b'Av and the other fast days. The central theme in all of them is the shaping of the collective memory regarding important events in the existential struggles of the Jewish people. These days mark national triumphs (Hanukah and Purim) or national disasters (Tisha b'Av and the other fasts).

These days have also received new emphases in Israel and the Diaspora in the modern era – Hanukah, for instance, has become a major holiday for non-Orthodox Jews in the Diaspora because it is celebrated in the same season as Christmas. Jews in many countries light big menorahs that can be seen through their windows at the same time that Christmas trees can be seen through their neighbors' windows. In the Zionist ethos, Hanukah assumed major importance in its national aspect as a military victory of the few against the many.

Group No. 4 – The Zionist holidays

These include Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Wars, Independence Day, Tu B'shvat and Lag B'omer.

These days are connected to the rebirth of the Jewish people in the land of Israel and represent the national bond with the land. Aside from Tu B'shvat, which has some halakhic significance, these days do not appear in the sources and are the product of the Zionist movement in Israel. They aim to reinforce the Jewish people's rebirth in its land and hint that the Zionist solution is the correct Jewish way. In this context, it should be noted that Jewish communities in the Diaspora do not always agree. For example, instead of the date set by the State of Israel for Holocaust remembrance, many of the Diaspora communities observe January 27, the international Holocaust Day. Remembrance Day for Israel's Fallen and Independence Day are not necessarily part of the Jewish calendar in the Diaspora, although many communities do celebrate Independence Day in a communal framework, often with a an

Israeli-style parade. Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Wars is not usually observed in Jewish communities in the Diaspora. If it is observed at all, it is by former Israelis, who form a sub-community of their own in the world Jewish communities.

4. **The Social Covenant**

"Jewish identity can be preserved only if the tension of contradictions will persist in a common framework that demands responsibility towards the collective." Eliezer Schweid

The exhibit will emphasize communal life as a basic element in the Jewish way of life. It will be explained that:

• Most Jewish customs require the presence of a community and include an awareness of belonging to a people.
• Jewish identity means belonging to the Jewish collective that observes customs in a communal setting.

A Jew is never alone and is never in the situation of an individual vis-à-vis his Creator. The Jewish individual is always and essentially part of a group – a community/society. Judaism contains principles that organize the life of the individual Jew and arrange his relationship with the environment and the world.

To complement the first-floor exhibit on the Jewish Way of Life, this exhibit will present the social aspect that, although not anchored in set rituals, is nevertheless an integral part of Jewish life. It comprises a collection of normative behaviors expected of every Jew who comes in contact with society in his daily life. These behaviors are, on the one hand, "mitzvahs" and on the other hand flexible and shaped in accordance with complicated social realities.

The social aspect is connected with one of the basic tenets in Jewish life – the idea of the covenant – as it stresses the social covenant in Jewish life, which is based on mutual responsibility in all aspects of life.

1. The family

The value of the family is central to Judaism and, through its fundamental elements – the relations between a husband and wife, the relations between parents and children – strives to create the ideal family unit.

2. The society

Every Jew has obligations towards the people who live in his environment and his immediate neighborhood. It is a supreme moral obligation to take care of the weaker strata of the population and, to accomplish this, an entire economic system has been developed that includes the laws of tithes (trumot and maasrot), and donations to the poor, the orphans and the widows.

3. Attitude towards non-Jews (ger)

The Torah commands us to love the ger and to treat him well. It is forbidden to cheat him or to exploit the fact that he is a stranger in Jewish society. The reason given for this is the historical fact that the Jews were once strangers in Egypt.

4. Attitude towards the environment

Judaism deals extensively with the relationship of man to his natural environment. The underlying principle is that, just as it is forbidden to exploit human beings, it is forbidden to exploit and destroy nature because it is the source of life.

Attitude towards the earth – Man does not own the earth and therefore cannot do with it whatever he wants. Man must take care not to exhaust the earth so that it will continue to produce food (shmita – taking a break from agricultural work).

Fruits of the earth (plants) – Man has an obligation not to wantonly destroy nature. It is forbidden to cut down fruit trees.

The source for this (Deut.20:10) ends with the oft-quoted verse "for is a tree in the field a human being [that you should besiege it]?"

Animals – It is forbidden to abuse them or to exploit them beyond their abilities, for animals, too, are the Lord's creatures.