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JUDAISM H233

Torah Scroll and Cover



Torah is a Hebrew word meaning 'teaching', 'instruction' or 'law'. It is the central and most important document of Judaism. Torah primarily refers to the first section of the Tanakh - the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, referred to as the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The term Torah is sometimes used in the general sense to include the whole body of Jewish law and teachings.

The scriptures that are used in services are painstakingly hand written in a special script by highly qualified scribes on specially prepared parchment scrolls. The scrolls are kept in a cabinet in the synagogue called an ark, which means a 'holy cabinet'. This scroll is a printed miniature copy of the Torah, which would be used for private worship. Torah scrolls are covered with a mantel, meaning cloak. The mantel is an ornate covering that both protects and beautifies the Torah, typically made of velvet and embroidered with golden thread, silk, and ornamental beads.

Yad (pointer)



It is forbidden to touch the parchment of the Torah as it is sacred. Instead, you follow the text with a pointer, called a yad. Yad means 'hand' in Hebrew, and the pointer is usually in the shape of a hand with a pointing index finger. A yad can be made of any number of materials, but silver is the most common.

Shabbat Candle Holders

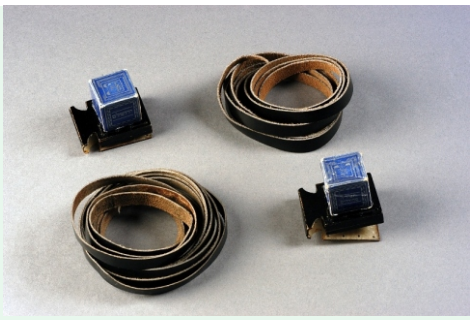


This metal opens up to make two candle holders. Candle holders are primarily used on the eve of Shabbat (Jewish day of rest) and other holidays. It is customary for the mother of a family to light the Shabbat candles while the rest of the family recite the appropriate prayer. Shabbat candlesticks always come in pairs.

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Tefillin



Tefillin are two black leather cubes (boxes) that are worn by many Jewish men while at morning prayer. One of the cubes is called 'Shel Rosh' and is placed on the forehead. The second is termed 'Shel Yad', and is worn on the upper left arm. The cubes have long straps of leather attached to them, which enables the man to wrap the tefillin on his head and arm. The straps of the shel yad are wound seven times down the arm and three times down the middle finger. Within the cubes are four sections of the Torah written on parchment. In the head tefillin they are written on four separate pieces of parchment, which fit into the four compartments while in the arm tefillin they are all on one piece. These sections declare the existence and unity of God and recall the liberation from Egypt. Once a man has had his Bar Mitzvah, he may wear the tefillin during weekday prayers. Tefillin are not worn on the Shabbat or on Jewish holidays. The putting on of tefillin is like a ceremony in itself, for as the man puts on his tefillin, he recites a prayer. The use of tefillin stems from the Biblical commandment:

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes (Deut. 6:8).

Yarmulke



It is an ancient practice for Jews to cover their heads during prayer. This probably derives from the fact that in Eastern cultures, it is a sign of respect to cover the head (the custom in Western cultures is the opposite - it is a sign of respect for a man to remove his hat in a church). Thus, in some religions, by covering the head during prayer, one shows respect to God and acknowledges the belief that god is above them.

Tallit (prayer shawl)



A Tallit is a prayer shawl worn by Jewish men and boys. It is worn over the head and shoulders during prayer. The prayer shawl may be made of silk, wool, or other fabric. A new prayer shawl may be given to a thirteen year old boy at his Bar Mitzvah.

Tallit Katan



In the Torah, there is a commandment to wear fringes on the corners of garments. That is, all garments of a certain size or larger, which have at least four corners, must have strings known as tzitzit attached. Since the normal clothing in our time does not have four square corners, traditional Jews wear a garment that is specifically made to have four corners so that the commandment can be fulfilled. This is known as the tallit katan or tzitzit and is usually worn under the shirt. Some people wear them with the tzitzit showing, others conceal them. The tzitzit allude to the 613 instructions of the Torah, as in Judaism the numerical equivalent of the word Tzitzit is 600. If you add to this the number of threads in each tassel (8) and the number of knots (5), the total is 613.

Mezuzah

In Judaism, a mezuzah (meaning doorpost in Hebrew) is a small case affixed to the doorposts and gates of Jewish homes, synagogues, and businesses. The case generally features the Hebrew letter shin on the exterior. Inside it contains a parchment containing the shema, a prayer that is fundamental to the Jewish faith. The prayer, which is recited twice daily, includes the commandment to post a mezuzah. The commandment is found in Deuteronomy 6:9, 11:20:



And you shall speak of them [the Torah's Laws] when you lie down and when you rise up...and you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and your gates.

Shank bone (Zeroah)
Zeroah means 'arm' or 'wing' in Hebrew, as in the arm or wing of an animal. This is a cooked shank bone, thigh, or neck of a chicken or whatever animal the family is eating. It symbolises the first sacrificial lamb offering.
Sweet herbs (Charoset)
A mixture of chopped walnuts, wine, cinnamon and apples that represents the mortar the Jewish slaves used to assemble the Pharaoh's bricks.
Lettuce (Chazeret)
A second, different bitter vegetable such as lettuce, radish or cu**cumber.**
Parsley (Karpas)
Symbolising Springtime, it is dipped in salt water and eaten to remind of the tears of the Jewish slaves.

Matzah Cover

This cloth is also used at the Passover Seder. It would be folded and three pieces of unleavened bread (matzah) would be put in the separate folds. Matzah symbolises the unleavened bread the Israelites had to bake in haste as they fled from slavery to freedom.



Challah Cover

The challah cover is used to cover the challah, which is a special type of braided egg bread that is served at the shabbat dinner and on holidays. Made of cloth, lace or any other material, the challah covering serves several purposes.
Firstly, it is necessary because the bread may not be seen until the Kiddush (prayer over the wine) is said. The second reason for the cover is to provide a sense of dignity for the bread. Since the candles have candlesticks and the wine has a kiddush, it is believed the challah should have a special decoration too.



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Chanukah Candle Holder



The menorah, one of Judaisms oldest symbols, is a seven-branched candelabrum or oil lamp. The menorah was the most important ritual object in the Temple of Jerusalem, but was stolen by the Romans.

According to tradition, during the rededication of the Temple in the second century BC, the lamps of the menorah burned for eight days on one day's worth of oil. To commemorate this, every year an eight-day holiday is celebrated, beginning on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of *Kislev* (November-December). During this festival, known as Chanukah, each evening a candle is lit in a menorah with nine branches. There is one branch for each day of the festival and a central branch for the candle that is used to light the others.

Seder Dish



A dish like this would be used at a seder, a special Jewish ceremonial dinner held on the first evening of the festival of Passover in Israel, and often both the first and second evenings outside Israel. Passover commemorates the story in Exodus of how the Israelites (Jewish slaves) were freed from slavery in Egypt. Seder means 'order' in Hebrew and the ceremonies are arranged in a specific order. Special cups and plates are used which are kept exclusively for Passover. This plate is specially designed to hold the symbolic foods, which are used in the ritual. These items are:

Egg (Beitzah)

A roasted egg or burnt hard boiled egg is placed on the dish (but not eaten) as a symbol of Spring and also to symbolise the first Passover sacrifice of a lamb in biblical times.

Bitter herbs (Maror)

Usually freshly grated horseradish is used. It is eaten in memory of the bitter life of the enslaved Israelites.

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Dreidel



One of the best known symbols of Chanukah is the dreidel. A dreidel is a four sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side. The four letters, shin, hey, gimel, nun, mean 'A Great Miracle Happened There' In Israel the dreidel is different in that their letters mean 'A Miracle Happened here!'. Dreidel is also a popular game played during the Holiday. Players use pennies, nuts, raisins, or chocolate coins (gelt) as tokens or chips. The player spins the dreidel. When the dreidel stops, the letter that is facing up decides the fate. If it is nun, nothing happens and the next player spins the dreidel, if it is gimel, the player takes all tokens in the pot, if it is hey, the player takes half of the pot and if it is shin the player must put one token into the pot.

Kosher Cookbook

This recipe book for kosher meat dishes outlines Jewish dietary laws and contains ideas for mealtimes. When a food is labeled as kosher, it means that the food has been prepared in accordance with the rules of food preparation set forth in the Old Testament of the Bible and formalised in Jewish law.



Meat Tea Towel

Since mixing meat and milk products is forbidden, different crockery, cutlery and tea towels are used when dealing with either. This tea towel is labeled 'meat'. Other than labeled tea towels, it is customary to use red tea towels for meat and blue ones for milk utensils.

Aleph Bet Stencil

The Hebrew and Yiddish languages use a different alphabet than English. This stencil enables you to reproduce letters in Hebrew. Hebrew is written from right to left, rather than left to right as in English, so alef, the first letter of the alphabet appears on the top right hand side. The Hebrew alphabet is often called the 'alefbet', because of its first two letters, 'alef' and 'bet'.



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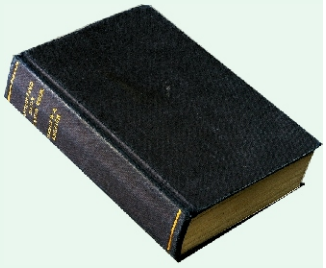
Grace card

This card has the Birkhath Hamozon written in Hebrew on it. This is a Jewish prayer that is said after meals as a thanksgiving.

Two Passover Handbooks

These books are a guide to the Passover ceremony of the Seder and contain details about the rituals involved.

Jewish Prayer Book



The siddur (plural siddurim) is the prayerbook used by Jews the world over, containing a set order of daily prayers. The word siddur derives from the Hebrew root meaning 'order', because the siddur shows the order of prayers. Observant Jews pray in formal worship services three times a day, every day: at evening (*Ma'ariv*), in the morning (*Shacharit*), and in the afternoon (*Minchah*).

Candle



A Yahrzeit Candle is a special memorial candle that burns for 24 hours. Yahrzeit Candles are traditionally lit for deceased relatives during the week of Shiva (mourning), at sundown on the eve of the Yahrzeit (anniversary of the death) and at the onset of Yom Kippur.

Jewish Greeting Cards

In Judaism, as in many other religions, greetings cards are sent to celebrate significant events. Some of these cards would be sent to people celebrating their Bar Mitzvah or their Bat Mitzvah. These occasions mark the cross over from childhood to adulthood.

Judaism deems a boy a 'bar mitzvah' when he turns 13 and a girl becomes 'bat mitzvah' when she turns 12. At that point the child, who is no longer a child in the eyes of Jewish law becomes responsible for his/her own deeds, spiritually, ethically, and morally. Other cards are sent to celebrate events such as births, birthdays and Jewish holidays.

