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JUDAISM H233/A

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 also 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.



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Shabbat Candle Holders



This circular metal container unscrews and can be turned into 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 others recite the appropriate prayer. Shabbat candlesticks always come in pairs.

Kiddush Cup

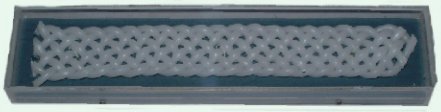


A Kiddush cup is a small goblet, which is filled with wine or grape juice and used at many Jewish festivals, including Shabbat. The word Kiddush actually refers to the blessing, which is recited over the wine before the meal begins. After Kiddush has been made, everyone present shares the wine. The goblet may be used again at the Havdalah ceremony at the end of the Shabbat. A Kiddush cup is sometimes made of a precious metal, such as silver, and beautifully decorated. Many people give Kiddush cups as gifts for special occasions such as Bar Mitzvah.

Spice Box and Braided Candle



Spice boxes are used for a service at the end of the Shabbat called Havdalah, meaning 'separation'. The spices represent the richness of the Shabbat. Their scent enlivens the spirit and carries the soul through into the next Shabbat, which starts at dusk on Friday evening. A twisted candle, symbolising unity, is also lit during the Havdalah service, and sweet wine is drunk. Since spices were dried in towers in medieval times, the boxes often take the form of a tower.



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Chanukah Candle Holder



The Menorah, one of Judaism's 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, a candle is lit each evening 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.

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 enable 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 paper. 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 of the Jewish people 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. 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 a frontlets between thine eyes (Deuteronomy. 6:8).

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Shofar



The Shofar is a horn, which is blown like a trumpet. It is used on Judaism's high holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The Shofar can be made from the horn of any kosher animal, except that of a cow or calf, although they are usually made from a ram's horn. Shofar are sometimes decorated with carvings. This one is decorated with the star of David a recognised symbol of Judaism and Jewish identity.

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 four cornered garments. Since 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 and it is usually worn under the shirt. Attached to each corner of the Tallit Katan are strings known as Tzitzit. 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 this to the number of threads in each tassel (8) and the number of knots (5), the total is 613.



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 as a reminder of the bitter life of the enslaved Israelites.

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 such as lettuce, radish or cucumber.

Parsley (Karpas)

Symbolising Springtime, it is dipped in salt water and eaten as a reminder of the tears of the Jewish slaves.

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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 inside the 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. Challah is a special type of 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.

Afikomen Bag



During the Passover Seder one of three pieces of unleavened bread called Matzah, is broken in half and wrapped in a napkin or placed in a special bag like this one. This is hidden, and later retrieved to be served as the last piece of food eaten at the end of the feast. This bit of unleavened bread is called the Afikomen. It symbolises the Passover lamb. For Jewish children, the Afikomen is used to hold their attention until the end of the Seder. In some families the children 'steal' the Matzah and are paid a ransom in order to get it back to the table. In other families it is hidden and the children search for it and are rewarded.

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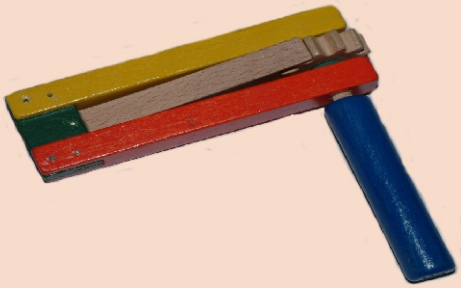
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Dreidel



One of the best known symbols of Chanukah festival is the Dreidel. A Dreidel is a four sided spinning 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 a bit different in that the 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.

Purim Rattle



The Feast of Lots (Purim) celebrates the escape of the Jews of Persia from the threat of destruction over two thousand years ago. The story is told in the biblical book of Esther, which is read in synagogues from a scroll. It was in the days of King Ahasuerus that Haman, the Persian king's chief advisor, cast lots (Purim) to set a date for the destruction of the Jews. Esther, the king's Jewish wife, managed to prevent the disaster. Haman remains a symbol of evil and the threat of destruction. The deliverance is celebrated noisily during the reading of the book of Esther, when people use rattles like this one to drown out the sound of Haman's name whenever it is read out.

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 outer exterior. Inside it contains a parchment containing the Shema, a prayer that is fundamental in 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.

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Kosher Food Label



When a food is labelled 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. One of the rules is that meat and dairy products must be kept separate. Therefore many kosher food products label the food with the word 'Parev' to indicate that they may be used with either milk or meat dishes.

Jewish Greeting Cards



In Judaism, as in many other religions, greetings cards are sent to celebrate significant events. Two of these cards would be sent to someone 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 children, who are no longer children in the eyes of Jewish law become responsible for their own deeds, spiritually, ethically, and morally. The other card celebrates the birth of a baby girl.

Passover Handbooks



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

Book on Yiddish



This book is a guide to Yiddish vocabulary. Yiddish (Jiddisch) is a Germanic language spoken by about four million Jews throughout the world. The name Yiddish itself means Jewish and is originally short for Yiddish Daytsh, or Jewish German, an older term in English is Judaeo-German. The language originated in central Europe between the ninth and twelfth centuries as mixture of some German dialects and Hebrew words.