

The Worship Service at Congregation Beth El

Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County
8215 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

*This booklet is for members and guests of Congregation Beth El.
It explains what you see, what you hear, and what you do at a
Beth El religious service.*

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This booklet is dedicated to the memory of

David Goldman

whose love and knowledge of liturgy
and prayer contributed so much
to make this booklet possible.

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Page numbers mentioned in this booklet correspond to those
in *Siddur Sim Shalom* for Shabbat and Festivals
(the smaller of the two books at your seat)

Welcome to **CONGREGATION BETH EL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY**, a Conservative egalitarian congregation where both men and women participate in the rituals of the service. Everyone, regardless of religious affiliation, is always welcome at a synagogue service. The following guidelines have been prepared to help you feel more comfortable in the synagogue.

1. THE JEWISH RELIGION AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

A Jew acknowledges that, either by ancestry or by conscious choice, he or she is part of a long tradition (nearly 4,000 years old) that teaches a *DEREKH ERETZ* (way of life) that is contained in the divine constitution called the *TORAH* (first five books of the Bible, the most fundamental collection of Jewish teachings). That way of life was best summed up two millenia ago by the great scholar Hillel as “What is hateful to you, do not do to others.”

Judaism is a civilization defined by shared experiences, history, customs, foods, folkways, language, artistic expression, music, laws, dress, social conventions, and religion, all of which have been influenced by the peoples among whom the Jewish people have lived. A Jew, regardless of the extent of his or her observance and beliefs, is someone who belongs to the Jewish people and is part of a Jewish civilization.

The Jewish religion consists of seven interrelated threads: “(1) a doctrine concerning God, the universe, and the human being; (2) a code of morality for the individual and society; (3) a regimen of rite, custom, and ceremony; (4) a body of law; (5) a sacred literature; (6) institutions through which the foregoing find expression; (7) the people Israel—the central strand out of which and about which the others are spun” (Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism*).

Jewish tradition has evolved through the centuries and has been molded by unique religious and historical experiences, customs, and beliefs. These experiences began with Abraham’s belief in a single God and continued through slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai, and the settlement of a free people in Canaan, which was followed by destruction and exile. Then came the development of unique Jewish communities in many nations, some of which later expelled their Jewish residents, and the relatively recent establishment of the State of Israel after nearly 2000 years of exile.

Jewish tradition became formalized after the Jewish people accepted God’s offer of the Torah following the Exodus from Egypt. By following the Torah and its 613 *MITZVOT* (commandments; singular, *MITZVAH*), the Jewish people were agreeing to live according to God’s way. The monotheism that began with Abraham and his followers and descendants then became the religion of a people and a free nation and ultimately evolved into the concept of a universal God. A formal *BRIT* (covenant) was reached between God and the Jewish people to signify their acceptance of the Torah and its commandments. The ritual of circumcision is the physical symbol of

the covenant, accepted by parents on behalf of their newborn son or by the male convert accepting the precepts of Judaism.

Along with the Torah, writings from the Jewish prophets and other theological, philosophical, and poetic writings constitute the canon of Judaism. Collectively, these writings are called the *Tanakh* (Bible). The Bible required interpretation so that its principles could address life in a changing world. In addition, customs diverged between Jewish communities that returned to Israel after the exile and those that remained in Babylonia and Egypt. The processes of commentary and reinterpretation continued with the last of the prophets, scribes, members of the Great Assembly, and various rabbis. At the beginning of the third century CE, new and revised laws were compiled. Known as the *Mishnah* (teaching), the compilation included oral traditions said to have been received by Moses from God along with the written Torah. The *Mishnah* received widespread endorsement as the key statement of Jewish practice. Subsequently, a set of books called the *Gemara* (completion) appeared four centuries later. It contained interpretations of the rabbis and incorporated earlier discussions of the materials summarized in the *Mishnah*. Together, the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* are called the *Talmud*, or the Oral Law. The legal code found in the *Talmud* is referred to as HALAKHAH, and the portion containing legends and stories is known as AGGADAH.

The *Siddur* (order; plural: SIDDURIM), or prayer book, is a collection of prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and supplication to God. Prayer books were developed as synagogues became the primary place for communal expression of the acceptance of the covenant, replacing the Temple in Jerusalem and its sacrificial service. As collections of personal and communal prayers, siddurim touched worshippers' hearts more than the Bible or the *Talmud*.

By the early Middle Ages, the basic tenets of belief stated in the Torah and elaborated in the *Talmud* were widely accepted by Jews. The tragic expulsions of Jews from western Europe and the massacres of Jews in eastern Europe did not alter the Jew's view of life as defined by Torah and by the Talmudic edicts interpreted by the rabbis. Judaism provided the Jew with a way to function in a Christian or Moslem world. Jewish culture, however, changed drastically in the Age of Enlightenment, with its appeal to reason. Jews exposed to the values of secular scholarship and offered emancipation from the ghetto enthusiastically embraced the new ideas. Some prominent Jews were assimilated into secular society, while others reexamined Jewish beliefs in the light of rational thought. This led, by the early 19th century, to the development of Reform Judaism, which emphasized Judaism's ethical principles while deemphasizing the obligation to follow Jewish ritual or tradition strictly.

At the end of the 19th century in the United States, in reaction to both the Reform movement's elimination of the most visible manifestations of Jewish practice and the more strict (or Orthodox) adherence to tradition, a new religious movement appeared in Judaism. The leaders of this new "Conservative" branch of Judaism

sought to conserve the best of traditional Judaism while reinterpreting halakhah in the light of modern scholarship.

The Conservative liturgy reflects this synthesis of tradition and change in many ways, in particular the egalitarian content in the service.

2. THE SANCTUARY AT BETH EL

Jewish tradition requires that, whenever possible, all participants in a religious service face east, toward Jerusalem. At the front of the sanctuary is the BIMAH (raised platform), where leaders of the service sit. In the center of the bimah is the ARON KODESH (Ark) that holds the Torah scrolls. The Ark also serves as the focus for prayer. Above the Ark, hangs the NER TAMID (perpetual light), recalling the eternal light in the Tabernacle as described in the Torah.

Ark. Etched on the three glass panels surrounding the wood-framed Ark are nine quotations from the Bible that refer to the Torah and to Beth El:

“Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 29:2

“The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.” Psalm 19:8

“How full of awe is this place! This is none other than the house of God (BETH EL in Hebrew), and this is the gate of heaven.” Genesis 28:17

“And he called the name of that place Beth-El.” Genesis 28:19

“And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.” Deuteronomy 4:44

“And let them make me a sanctuary.” Exodus 25:8

“Moses commanded us a law.” Deuteronomy 33:4

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is a light.” Proverbs 6:23

“For out of Zion shall go forth the law.” Isaiah 2:3

The letters near the base of the Ark suggest bricks of Jerusalem; the letters rise toward heaven in the shape of clouds. The lettering was designed by Jeanette Kuvin Oren.

Table covers. Using deep teal-green Thai silk, congregant N. Amanda Ford created the quilted reading-table cover. Mauve silk in reverse applique was used to execute the abstract Hebrew calligraphy reading “Beth El.” The same motif was repeated in the design of a smaller piece used to cover the Torah scroll during the ALIYOT (when congregants are given the honor of going up to the bimah to recite a blessing during the Torah Service).

The Beth El tapestries. Designed by congregant Tamar Fishman and woven in England by Patricia Johns, the large tapestries flanking the bimah are inspired by two episodes in the life of the patriarch Jacob from the book of Genesis. The names of the tapestries, “Beth El” (right) and “Israel” (left), reflect their themes. “Beth El” depicts Jacob’s dream of angels ascending to and descending from heaven on a ladder. God assures Jacob that he will inherit the land and father a great and numerous people. When Jacob wakes from his dream, he anoints with oil the stone on which he rested his head, and he names the place where he slept Beth El (House of God).

The tapestry “Israel” recalls the night before Jacob is reunited with his twin brother Esau after a 14-year estrangement. Jacob is alone, having sent his family and belongings ahead. He wrestles until dawn with a nameless being, from whom he demands a blessing as the price of release. The angel blesses Jacob and changes his name to Israel, meaning “one who wrestles with God.”

Upper windows. The four letters of the DREYDL (a four-sided top used during HANUKKAH) are etched into the upper windows surrounding the sanctuary. The Hebrew letters of the dreidl, NUN, GIMEL, HEY, and SHIN, are an acronym for “A great miracle happened there.” The letters symbolically float up to heaven. Like the inscriptions on the Ark, the letters imply that God’s words touch us on earth as our prayers ascend to Heaven.

Lower windows. Inscribed within one brick on each of the 12 lower windows is a symbol of one of the 12 tribes of Israel (the 12 sons of Jacob), beginning with Reuben and proceeding around the sanctuary. The tribes represent all Jews. The symbols for the tribes were designed by Jeanette Kuvin Oren. The trees in the windows represent the Tree of Life.

Yahrzeit plaques and lights. In an alcove adjacent to the sanctuary, in the small chapel, and in other areas throughout Beth El are plaques bearing the names of deceased relatives of members of the congregation. It is customary in Judaism to commemorate people’s YAHRZEIT (anniversary of death) rather than their birthday because individuals’ contributions and accomplishments are not entirely known until their life story is complete. It is traditional to make a donation to the synagogue by purchasing a plaque bearing the name of a deceased loved one. This plaque usually contains the person’s name and the date of death according to both the Hebrew and Gregorian calendars. It is also traditional to mount a light next to the plaque and to turn on the light each year on the anniversary of the person’s death. Four times every year, there is a special synagogue service called YIZKOR (remembrance) during which we remember our deceased loved ones. The lights at the plaques are customarily turned on during Yizkor services.

3. DECORUM AND GUIDELINES FOR THE SYNAGOGUE

Head covering. Wearing a head covering in the sanctuary is required of **all** men and boys during services. The head covering is the accepted way of showing respect for God in a Jewish house of worship. The typical head covering, also called a skull cap, is a KIPPAH (plural: KIPPOT) or YARMULKA. Women are not required to wear a head covering unless they participate in the service by going up on the bimah. A woman's head covering can be a kippah, a hat, or a small lace circle. Both kippot and lace head coverings can be found outside the sanctuary.

Prayer shawl. A TALLIT (prayer shawl; plural: TALLITOT) is worn only by Jewish men and women. Tallitot are available at stands outside the sanctuary and the chapel. Tallitot should not be taken into the rest rooms but left on the hooks provided outside the rest room doors. At the end of the Service, tallitot should be returned to the stands.

Standing. As a mark of respect, we ask that everyone present stand whenever the Ark is open and whenever the Torah is carried through the synagogue. Other times when we stand during the service will be indicated by the rabbi.

Prayer books. The *Siddur* (the prayer book used at every service) is in the holder in front of each seat as is the *Chumash* [book containing the Torah and HAFTAROT (readings from the Prophets, singular: HAFTARAH)]. If you do not understand or read Hebrew, you are encouraged to follow the service using the English translations printed on the left-hand pages (*Siddur*) or left columns (*Chumash*).

It is **forbidden to handle money or write** during SHABBAT (the Jewish Sabbath) and Jewish holy days. While you are in the synagogue on Shabbat, please do not use the pay telephone, display money, or write. A non-pay telephone is available for use in emergencies; one of the ushers can show you where it is. Other restrictions are simply the standards for decorum that all religious services require: modest dress; no eating, drinking, or chewing gum; and no loud talking.

The use of photographic, electronic, or recording devices of any kind is also not permitted on Shabbat and other Jewish holy days. We ask that you please refrain from their use inside the synagogue or on the grounds.

Entering and leaving the service. Due to the length of the service, people may need to walk in or out of the sanctuary. This informality is perfectly acceptable. There are, however, designated times when it is best not to interrupt prayers or the service by entering the sanctuary. The ushers will indicate the proper times to enter while the service is in progress.

Additional services. In addition to the main service in the sanctuary, additional services may also be conducted elsewhere in the building. These are listed on the announcement sheets that are distributed at the entrance to the sanctuary. Usually a youth service is conducted in the Chapel.

Babysitting is provided in the school wing of the synagogue for children two to six. Children of any age may accompany an adult to services. You may bring a book for them to read, but please do not allow children to draw or color. Out of respect for the service and for other worshippers, please remove a child who is crying or becoming disruptive from the sanctuary. A room is available at the rear of the sanctuary on the rabbi's side where parents can attend to children and still hear the service. Of course, you are welcome to return to the service when appropriate.

Applause is not permitted at any time during the service.

Please feel free to ask your neighbor for help or information (page numbers, which book to use, when to exit the sanctuary, etc.).

4. THE JEWISH WORSHIP SERVICE

As Abraham Millgram wrote in *Jewish Worship*, “The institution of congregational worship is one of the great Jewish contributions to mankind.” While a Jew can pray individually, Jewish congregational prayer is communal, including oral and silent worship, with a representative of the congregation leading the service.

Jewish services take place in a building called a synagogue (from the Greek word for assembly place) or BEIT KNESSET (House of Assembly). A public worship service, however, can take place anywhere a MINYAN (at least 10 Jews age 13 or older) congregate. Sometimes the synagogue is known by its Yiddish word SHUL or the English word “temple.” The sanctuary of a synagogue contains one or more Torah scrolls, the Ark, and the Ner Tamid.

The synagogue is sanctified by virtue of what goes on inside. Anyone regardless of religion may enter and pray. The synagogue staff, schools, and programs are supported by membership dues and contributions. Because of the commandment to sanctify the Shabbat, donations are not collected on that day. On other days, charitable donations can be placed in a TZEDAKAH (charity) box, which is kept at the rear of the small chapel at Beth El.

When you enter the sanctuary, you will see several people on the bimah. Congregation Beth El has two rabbis (teachers) as well as a HAZZAN (cantor) who is the SHELIACH TZIBBUR (emissary of the congregation). Usually, only one rabbi will be present on the bimah. The rabbi (to your left on the bimah) is first and foremost a teacher. He or she will generally direct the service, lead English readings, comment on the Torah reading, and deliver a sermon. The hazzan (to your right) leads the congregation in prayer. He or she is expected to be familiar with the prayers, to pronounce the words correctly, to chant each prayer with the appropriate traditional melody, and to inspire the congregation to worship. Officers and board members of the congregation have the honor of sitting on the bimah during the service. (Typically, an officer of the congregation sits next to the rabbi and a member of the board sits next to the hazzan.)

Several lay people participate in the service, particularly the Torah Service (see Section 8b). Some read from the Torah; others recite blessings; still others raise the Torah or dress it and open or close the Ark. A BAT MITZVAH or BAR MITZVAH (see Section 9 for a full explanation) will, for the first time, have the opportunity to recite blessings over the Torah and perhaps perform other functions as well. In Judaism, the activities of the professional religious leadership do not by themselves constitute the worship service. It is considered an honor to lead or participate in a Jewish service. Consequently, the service is designed so that many people can participate in it. Any Jew with an adequate knowledge of Hebrew who is familiar with the prayers and the traditional melodies can lead a service. All those attending the service are obligated to pray as well as they are able.

TEFILLAH (prayer) at its highest and most sincere level is a “service of the heart” and is only one of the many ways by which the love of God may be expressed. One must prepare for prayer before

entering the synagogue by getting into the proper frame of mind and putting on the appropriate ritual garments: a kippah, a tallit, and, when appropriate, TEFILLIN (phylacteries, which are described more fully in Section 5). While prayer can be spontaneous and heartfelt, Jews have also prized formal services and ritual. Formal prayers have been composed since the Jewish priests sang psalms in the Temple in Jerusalem; the most significant have been incorporated into *Siddur*.

The institutions of the synagogue and formalized prayer began even before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Eventually, the prayer service became the accepted substitute for the Temple offerings. Prayer demands active participation; it does not mean watching a service being performed while others pray. That is why even saying “amen” at the end of a B’RAKHAH (blessing; plural, B'RAKHOT) constitutes prayer. To ensure that prayer is meaningful, conditions must be conducive to KAVANAH (concentration). Kavanah requires purity of thought and an atmosphere of sanctity, tranquility, and decorum.

On a special festive occasion, such as a baby naming, an AUFRUF (a bride and groom being called to the Torah before their wedding), or a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the congregation joins in singing and clapping to a joyous tune. Sometimes, the congregation will throw candy onto the bimah to shower the honorees with sweetness. Immediately afterward, young children will run up the steps to collect the candy.

5. GARMENTS OF PRAYER

At Beth El, worshippers use several traditional garments during prayer and worship.

Kippah. Although the Bible does not mandate that men cover their heads with a kippah during prayer, the Babylonian *Talmud* states, “Cover your head, so that the reverence of heaven be upon you.” Wearing a kippah has become a widely accepted MINHAG (custom) of Jewish life as a sign of respect for God’s nearness, and it is **required** of all men (regardless of their religion) when they are in the synagogue. Many women will wear either a kippah or lace head cover, although neither is mandatory except for women on the bimah.

Tallit. The tallit is a square or oblong fringed garment that may be made of wool, linen, silk, or rayon. Only Jews may wear the tallit. It is traditionally worn by men after the age of 13, but women may choose to wear one and are required to wear one at Beth El if they read from the Torah. A tallit is worn at all morning services on weekdays, Shabbat, and festivals.

The TZITZIT (fringes) attached to the corners of the tallit are a visible reminder of God’s mitzvot; a reference to tzitzit is found in Numbers 15: 37–41, read as the third paragraph of the SH’MA prayer (p. 113): “Look upon these tzitzit and you will be reminded of all the mitzvot of ADONAI and fulfill them...”

When a tallit is donned, it is opened with the neckband facing upward. A blessing is said (p. 62): "Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, instilling in us the holiness of mitzvot by commanding us to wrap ourselves in tzitzit." Some wearers enclose their head briefly in the tallit before placing it on their shoulders. Some keep the tallit wrapped around their head during parts of the service.

Tefillin. Tefillin (phylacteries) consist of two black leather BATIM (boxes; singular: BAYIT), each containing verses from the Torah written on parchment: the first two paragraphs of the Sh’ma, which refer to the mitzvah of tefillin (Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21), and two other selections (Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16), calling tefillin “a sign” and “a memorial” of the Jewish people’s redemption from slavery at the Exodus. The batim are connected to black leather straps; one set of bayit and strap is worn around the left arm (or right arm if the person is left-handed) next to the skin, and one is worn on the forehead.

Tefillin are worn at morning prayers to fulfill the commandment to “bind them as a sign upon your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead” (Deuteronomy 6:8). They are not worn on Shabbat mornings or festival days. Tefillin are usually worn after a Jew reaches the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. They are donned immediately after putting on the tallit.

6. THE MUSIC OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The Jewish service is filled with music. The melodies of the synagogue are as varied as the history of the Jewish people and have been influenced by the traditions and cultures of the many peoples among whom Jews have dwelled.

Although the texts of many prayers have survived for thousands of years most, if not all, of the ancient music of our people has been lost because the Jewish musical tradition was an oral one, passed down by memory from generation to generation.

An important innovation came during the early 17th century when composer Salomoni Rossi became the first composer to transcribe Jewish music into standardized Western musical notation and to write original music for the synagogue. In the 18th century, Cantor Salomon Sulzer gathered the melodies of the worship service into a coherent format, much of which is still in use in synagogues around the world. His great contribution, besides his many compositions, was to make the music fit the meaning of the Hebrew words more closely than they had before. Since Sulzer's time, a flood of music has been written for the synagogue—for choral singing, for congregational responsa, and to showcase the virtuosity and art of the hazzan. Music intended especially for cantorial singing is known as HAZZANUT; it is used not only for services but also in concerts given in Jewish communities.

At Beth El, the music of the Torah Service (pp. 139–154) is largely Sulzer's music. You will hear hazzanut during the MUSAF KEDUSHAH (p. 157 or 167). ASHKENAZIC (Jews primarily from eastern, central, or western Europe) or SEPHARDIC (Jews primarily from Spain) melodies may be used when the Torah scrolls are returned to the Ark, when L'KHA DODI (pp. 21–22) is sung on Friday night, or when EL ADON (p. 108), EIN KELOHEINU (p. 182), and ADON OLAM (Lord of the Universe; p. 187) are sung on Saturday mornings.

While some congregations have both musical instruments and choirs, Beth El does not allow instrumental music at our religious services, a tradition that commemorates the destruction of the Temple. Instruments may be used for weddings and other special occasions, however. During services, we rely primarily on the hazzan to lead the congregation in prayer, with special modes and melodies fitted to the various parts of the service and used for different holidays. Fitting the music to the meaning of the words of the prayers is called NUSACH (tradition) and is the particular responsibility of the hazzan. During the SHACHARIT AMIDAH (p. 116, line 4), for example, the words "In thundering chorus, majestic voices resound..." appear; even if you do not know Hebrew, you will hear the hazzan's voice rise in a powerful and clarion call. Music chanted by the hazzan or the congregation can be inspiring. Some NIGGUNIM (melodies; singular, NIGGUN) have no words. These are intended to inspire D'VEYKUT (a spiritual link to God).

The Torah, Haftarah, and the MEGILLOT (five additional scrolls of the Bible that are read during certain holidays; singular, MEGILLAH)

use one system of musical notation called TE'AMIM (cantillations, or trope). The melodies for each kind of text are different, however. In the *Chumash*, these notations are printed sometimes above and sometimes below the Hebrew letters. A reader needs special instruction to be able to chant the passages correctly because neither the vowels nor te'amim appear in the parchment scrolls. Those chanting from the Torah or Haftarah, whether volunteers or Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebrants, have accepted the additional challenge of participating fully in the service.

If you have been in other synagogues, you have probably heard other melodies and prayers or observed different practices. Although most Conservative synagogues follow the same basic order of prayer, individual congregational customs will vary. Listen and watch carefully and you will experience the MINHAGIM (customs; singular, MINHAG) of Congregation Beth El.

7. THE FRIDAY EVENING SERVICE

Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath), which begins 18 minutes before sundown on Friday and lasts until the following evening, honors the seventh day of Creation when God rested from His work. Observing Shabbat is mandated in the Ten Commandments. Observance is also associated with the deliverance of Israel from the slavery of ancient Egypt; it is intended to free humankind from the slavery of routine work.

In this section, only prayers unique to the Friday Evening Service are explained. Prayers that are found in both the Evening and Morning Services are explained in Section 8.

The first part of the Friday Evening Service is called KABBALAT SHABBAT (Welcoming Shabbat). Kabbalat Shabbat is a fairly recent addition to the Friday Evening Service; it was introduced by the kabbalists (mystics) of Safed, Palestine, in the 16th century. The core of the service consists of a number of psalms and hymns.

Usually the service begins with the singing of SHALOM ALEIKHEM (We wish you peace; p. 13), a hymn dating from the 17th century. Psalms 95 to 99 and 29, are recited (pp. 15–20), representing the six secular days of the week. The theme of each psalm is God's sovereignty.

The congregation then sings L'kha Dodi (Come, my beloved; p. 21). This hymn was composed by Rabbi Shlomo Halevy Alkabetz, one of the 16th century kabbalists of Safed. The introductory line, which is repeated throughout, personifies Shabbat as a bride and queen; the community longs for her arrival. The hymn's nine verses reflect Jewish hopes for redemption, the restoration of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah. Just before the last verse is sung, the congregation rises and faces the back of the synagogue to greet the Shabbat as if it were a bride entering the sanctuary on her wedding day.

The final psalms in the Kabbalat Shabbat service are Psalms 92 and 93 (pp. 23–24). Psalm 92 is subtitled "A Song for Shabbat." It was recited by the Levites when the Shabbat sacrifice was offered in the Temple in Jerusalem. There is no specific mention of Shabbat in this psalm; instead, the theme is one of reward and punishment. Despite this somewhat puzzling emphasis, the psalm has come to symbolize the start of Shabbat. The final psalm in the service is Psalm 93 (p. 24), which attests to God's preeminence in the universe. This psalm is also said on Friday morning and was added to the evening service during the Middle Ages.

Kabbalat Shabbat concludes with KADDISH YATOM (Mourner's Kaddish; p. 24). For a full explanation of Mourner's Kaddish, see Section 8a.

MA'ARIV (Evening Service; p. 28) begins with the formal call to prayer, the BAR'CHU (Praised; see Section 8a).

The K'RIAT SH'MA (Reading of the Sh'ma; pp. 30–31) proclaims the unity of God—the central Jewish belief. For a complete description of the Sh'ma and the prayers that precede and follow it, see Section 8a.

The AMIDAH (standing; pp. 35b–39) is traditionally read silently in private reflection while worshippers stand and face the Ark. The Amidah also provides an opportunity for meditation and personal prayer (pp. 39–40).

MAGEN AVOT (Shield of our ancestors; p. 47), a summary of the Amidah, was introduced in Babylon during Talmudic times so that those who worked up to the last possible moment before Shabbat and might have missed saying the Amidah would have a substitute prayer to recite.

KADDISH SHALEM (p. 48), a full Kaddish recited by the hazzan, separates the Amidah portion from the concluding prayers.

KIDDUSH (Consecration; p. 49), the blessing over wine after the lighting of candles, introduces the Shabbat meal. It was introduced in the synagogue service during Talmudic times to accommodate travelers who might be lodging at the synagogue for Shabbat.

ALEINU (We rise to our duty; p. 51) concludes this and all other prayer services (see Section 8c).

Kaddish Yatom (p. 52) is a repeat of the Kaddish said by mourners.

YIGDAL (Exalted; p. 53), a poem chanted by the Congregation composed in 14th century Italy and based on Maimonides' 13 articles of faith is a joyous transition between synagogue and home.

8. THE SHABBAT AND/OR FESTIVAL MORNING SERVICE

a. *Shacharit* (pp. 65-138)

The Shabbat morning service is divided into two parts, SHACHARIT and MUSAF. Shacharit, the part before the Torah reading, is derived from SHACHAR, the Hebrew word for the morning star. The second portion of the Sabbath service, Musaf, takes its name from the Hebrew word meaning “additional.”

The Shabbat Shacharit service is composed of prayers, psalms, and biblical passages. It is similar to the weekday service, with special prayers to underscore the distinctive quality of Shabbat. The service and *Siddur* follow Ashkenazic practice in which congregational worship takes the form of private reading of prayers with an oral reprise by the hazzan. Community reading or chanting of selected prayers may be added at points in the service.

The 14 B'rakhot (p. 65), originally part of private devotions, praise the Eternal for His gifts to humanity. The congregation responds to each b'rakah with the word *amen* (it is truth).

SH'MA YISRAEL (“Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai alone;” p. 66) from Deuteronomy 6:4 proclaims the unity of the Eternal. The Sh'ma is repeated four times during the service. The Sh'ma was incorporated into the service at this point to commemorate the persecution of the Jews in Persia (5th to 7th century CE), when public recital of the Sh'ma was forbidden.

Kaddish Yatom (p. 82) is a form of the kaddish prayer said by mourners. Mourner's Kaddish must be said daily for 11 months after the death of a parent, daily for 30 days after the death of a spouse, child, or close relative (although some individuals decide to say kaddish for 11 months in these instances as well), and yearly thereafter.

P'SUKEI D'ZIMRA (Verses of Song; pp. 83–106) are introductory prayers that prepare the individual for a deeper form of prayer later in the service. They form a special section of the Shacharit service, consisting principally of passages from the Psalms and other biblical texts that extol the glory of the Eternal. Within this section is the ASHREI (Blessed, p. 96), which consists of excerpts from Psalms 145, 144, 84, and 115. The recitation of the psalms recalls the preparation for a service during rabbinic times, when psalms were read privately.

Beginning with SHOKHEIN AD (Eternal Presence; p. 105), it is customary for the hazzan to officiate. Variations on the melody used here will be repeated throughout the remainder of Shacharit.

HATZI KADDISH (Half Kaddish; p. 106) is a shortened version of the Kaddish chanted by the hazzan to mark the end of the preliminary portion of Shacharit.

Bar'chu (Praised; p. 107) reminds us of the call to worship by the KOHANIM (priests; singular, KOHEN) during the time of the Second Temple. It is customary to bend at the waist toward the Ark as a sign of respect and devotion while the hazzan chants this verse and the congregation responds.

Each of the 22 verses of El Adon (p. 108) begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in alphabetical order. El Adon is one of the liturgical poems that were added to the service to counteract religious oppression in Palestine under Byzantine rule (4th to 7th centuries CE), when teaching the Jewish religion was forbidden. These prayers were a form of instruction in Jewish belief, were composed over the centuries, and remain part of the service today.

To attain greater concentration, congregants frequently cover their eyes while they recite the first line of K'riat Sh'ma (Reading of the Sh'ma; pp. 112–113). Consisting of three passages from the Torah, this prayer was already firmly fixed in the liturgy by the 1st century CE. The first paragraph (Deuteronomy 6:4–9) proclaims the central Jewish belief in the unity of God: “Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai alone” and “You shall love Adonai your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” The remaining verses direct that these words should be taught to one’s children. The customs of putting on tefillin (phylacteries) on the arm and head each weekday morning and of placing MEZZUZOT (doorposts; singular, MEZZUZAH) on the door frames of a Jewish house are based on this passage. Both tefillin and mezzuzot contain verses from the Sh'ma written on parchment.

The second paragraph, from Deuteronomy 11:13–21, affirms the theological doctrine of reward and punishment, namely, that following God’s commandments will result in long life and bountiful harvests.

The third paragraph, from Numbers 15:37–41, is a succinct statement of Jewish belief: that to obtain holiness, it is necessary to fulfill God’s commandments. Placing tzitzit at the four corners of a garment is a reminder to follow God’s commandments and not go astray. Wearing the tallit with its four fringes during the morning service fulfills this instruction. It is customary to kiss the four fringes when the word tzitzit is said during this portion of the prayer.

Shacharit Amidah for Shabbat (pp. 115–120). The Amidah is traditionally read silently to improve concentration while the congregation stands and faces the Ark. The Amidah is one of the earliest prayers, dating to Persian times (6th to 4th centuries BCE); the *Talmud* called the Amidah simply HATEFILLAH (The Prayer). In its weekday version, the Amidah consists of 18 b'rakhot (a 19th was added in Talmudic times), and thus it is often called SHEMONEH ESREI (18). Personal offerings and supplications were not accepted in the Temple on Shabbat or holidays, and so 12 intermediate b'rakhot in the weekday Amidah were replaced by a single b'rakhah and prayers describing the holiness of Shabbat and praising the Eternal for sanctifying Shabbat. This makes a total of seven b'rachot in the Shabbat Amidah, in keeping with the theme of seven for this day. Moreover, the holiness of Shabbat was felt to reduce the need for more b'rakhot.

The Amidah begins with three introductory b'rakhot praising God who remembers our ancestors’ deeds, protects the living, and is the master of life and death. Two versions of the introductory b'rakhot

are in the *Siddur*; the one on page 115b names God as “the God of our ancestors,” who include the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, and the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

After the congregation concludes the silent Amidah, the hazzan begins the communal repetition. After the third b’rakhah, the congregation recites the KEDUSHAH (sanctification; p. 116), which is not said during the silent prayer. The Kedushah grew out of studies of mysticism in Babylonia during Talmudic and later times, studies that were concerned with physical descriptions of the manifestations of God. The Kedushah uses verses from Isaiah 6:3, Ezekiel 3:12, and the Psalms 146:10 for a refrain. The concluding b’rakhah of the Amidah (pp. 118–120) had their origins in the Temple service.

The Amidah also offers an opportunity for self-reflection and personal prayer (pp. 120-122).

Amidah for Festivals (pp. 123–128). When a festival falls on Shabbat, a different version of the Amidah is recited. It contains the same opening and concluding b’rakhah that all versions of the Amidah include. The intermediate b’rakhah, however, concludes with “...who sanctifies Israel and the Festivals” and is preceded by prayers mentioning the festivals by name. When a festival falls on Shabbat, specific mention of Shabbat is incorporated.

During the holiday of SUKKOT (Tabernacles), Jews are commanded to take the LULAV and ETROG (p. 131) and “rejoice before God.” The lulav is made up of branches of palm, willow, and myrtle trees, all of which should be fresh and green; the etrog (citron) must be of uniform (usually yellow) color and shape, with intact skin and straight stem. During certain prayers, when HALLEL (praise) is chanted, and during the processional march around the sanctuary on HOSHANA RABBAH (the seventh day of Sukkot), the lulav and etrog are held and waved in all directions.

HALLEL, the chanting of Psalms 113 to 118 (pp. 133-137), comes after the Amidah in the Shacharit portion on the following festival days: Sukkot, SIMCHAT TORAH (autumn holiday on which annual cycle of Torah readings is completed and begun again), PESACH (Passover; spring festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt), SHAVUOT (spring festival commemorating the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai), ROSH HODESH (Jewish New Month), Hanukkah (midwinter holiday commemorating the Maccabean victory, circa 165 BCE, over the Syrians and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem), YOM HAATZMA’UT (Israeli Independence Day), and YOM YERUSHALAYIM (Jerusalem Independence Day). According to rabbinic tradition, these psalms of praise should be recited on occasions commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from great danger. Today, Hallel is recited while the congregation stands, with beautiful melodies underscoring its air of praise and celebration.

Kaddish Shalem (p. 138) recited by the hazzan separates the Amidah from the next major portion of the service, the reading of the Torah. Before the start of the Torah Service, the Psalm for Shabbat (Psalm 92) is recited, followed by Mourner's Kaddish. For a month

before the High Holy Days until the end of Sukkot, an additional penitential prayer (Psalm 27) is also recited at this point.

b. *The Torah Scroll and the Torah Service (pp. 139–154)*

Torah scroll. The Torah scroll contains the Five Books of Moses. BERESHIT (Genesis) describes the creation of the world and the history of Israel’s patriarchal families. SHEMOT (Exodus) describes God’s deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments to them, and the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land. VAYYIKRA (Leviticus) sets out laws largely concerned with priestly duties. BEMIDBAR (Numbers) describes the Israelites’ wanderings and ends just before their entry into Israel. DEVARIM (Deuteronomy) recapitulates Israel’s history from Moses’ perspective.

The Torah scroll is the holiest ritual object in Jewish tradition; we revere and stand in awe of a Torah every time it is raised or carried. A Torah scroll is written by a specially trained scribe, using a feather quill, specially prepared black ink, and carefully prepared parchment from the skin of a kosher animal. Every Torah contains 248 columns of text, with 42 lines per column, and up to 30 letters per line. A Torah is rolled around two wooden rods, called the ATZEI CHAIM (trees of life). Because the Torah is written in a stylized Hebrew script without vowels, punctuation, or musical symbols, training is required to read and chant from it.

Each Torah is adorned with a decorative cover, or mantle. The covers of seven of the Torahs in the Ark at Beth El depict the seven days of creation. Other decorative items adorning the Torah include either the silver crown on top of the Torah, which emphasizes that the “Torah is a crown for Israel” or the RIMONIM (finials) on the tops of the rods; the silver shield hanging over the front of the Torah (reminiscent of the breastplate of the Temple’s High Priest); and the YAD (hand-shaped pointer) used as a guide during the Torah reading because readers are not permitted to touch the parchment with a finger.

Torah Service. Study is central to Judaism. The Torah reading, therefore, occupies a central position in the service. During the Torah service, the *Chumash* is used. (The *Chumash* is the larger book in the seat pocket.)

The Torah is divided into 54 portions, each called a PARASHAH, corresponding to the maximum number of weeks in a lunar year. A selection from a different parashah is read every Shabbat. We complete the reading from the last parashah of the Torah every year at Simchat Torah. We then immediately start to read the Torah from the beginning again. At Congregation Beth El, we complete the reading of the entire Torah every three years, corresponding to the original triennial cycle for reading the Torah in the synagogue in ancient Palestine. A shorter portion of the weekly parashah is read Monday and Thursday mornings as well as on Saturday afternoons.

The Torah scrolls are kept in the Ark. During the Torah service, the Torah is removed from the Ark, a portion is read to the congregation, and the Torah is returned to the Ark. We recite prayers when we remove the Torah (pp. 139–141) and when we return it (pp. 153–154). Generally, we read from only one Torah scroll. On New Moons, Festivals, and certain other occasions, however, we will read from two scrolls or even three.

The Torah service is an important part of worship. Members of the congregation join the rabbi and hazzan in opening the Ark when the Torah is removed, carried around the synagogue, placed on the table, and unwrapped in preparation for reading. When the Torah is carried through the congregation, it is customary, as a sign of reverence, to touch the Torah covering with a tallit or *Siddur* and then bring the object to the lips. Congregants are expected to turn their bodies and visually follow the Torah as it is carried throughout the sanctuary.

On most Saturday mornings, before the reading of the Torah, the Rabbi delivers a D'VAR TORAH (sermon). This sermon will frequently discuss the parashah and its contemporary relevance.

Several people come up to the bimah to chant the weekly Torah reading. Others will be called by a GABBAI (sexton) for an ALIYAH (ascend). Those receiving an aliyah honor recite a blessing before and after the portion of the Torah is read. After the aliyah, the gabbai asks God to bless the individual who has been called up to the Torah.

The Torah service provides an opportunity to recognize individuals in the congregation. A bride and groom will receive an aliyah within the week before their wedding. The naming of a baby girl takes place after an aliyah is given to her parents. Other individuals may be called for an aliyah in celebration of a festive occasion, such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, a birthday, or an anniversary or in commemoration of the anniversary of a death. During the Torah service, there is an opportunity for congregants to say a MI SHEBAYRACH, a prayer for the recovery of those who are ill.

Those called to the Torah walk up to the bimah just before their scheduled part of the service, perform their assigned part, and then return to their seats. Other worshippers will frequently greet them and shake their hands with the words YASHER KOACH (may your strength increase) for men and YASHER KOCHACHE for women, in recognition of their having completed their assigned part. The formal response to this greeting is BARUCH TI'HIYEH (may you be blessed). It is a great honor to be called to the Torah.

The number of portions read from the Torah and the corresponding aliyot vary. On Mondays and Thursdays, three portions are read. On Shabbat, there are usually seven aliyot, but more may be added if a large number of people are being honored. On YOM KIPPUR, there are six aliyot; on festivals that do not fall on the Shabbat, five; and on the New Moon, four. After the short Kaddish prayer (p. 146), an additional portion of the Torah, the Maftir, is read on Shabbat and holidays.

If there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the child will usually have the honor of the Maftir aliyah (the last aliyah). Frequently, a Bar or Bat Mitzvah will also elect to read one or more portions from the Torah.

Dressing of the Torah. At the conclusion of the Torah reading, the MAGBEAH lifts the Torah and holds it aloft before carrying it to a seat to be dressed. The GOLLEL rerolls the Torah and replaces the mantle and adornments. A belt, or wimple, holds the scroll closed when it is not in use. After the Torah is tied and covered, someone—usually a young child—sits with it until it is returned to the Ark.

The Haftarah (a reading from the Prophets) immediately follows the dressing of the Torah on Shabbat and festivals. It is preceded by two b'rakhot (p. 146) and concluded with four (p. 147). The b'rakhot and Haftarah are chanted with a different melody from that used for the Torah reading. It is considered a special honor to read the Haftarah.

After the readings, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah offers his or her own d'var Torah, and the rabbi responds to it.

New month blessings. There are 12 months in the Jewish year and 13 months in a leap year, which occurs seven times in a 19-year cycle. The new month begins with the appearance of the new moon in Jerusalem. To announce the dates and name of the upcoming Rosh Hodesh (new month), a special prayer is said on the Shabbat immediately preceding the appearance of the new moon. This prayer, BIRKAT HAHODESH, is said after the Haftarah. The entire congregation stands as the hazzan, with someone beside him holding the Torah, recites the prayers for the upcoming month. The purpose of this announcement is to consecrate the new month. In ancient days, before calendars, runners were dispatched to communities to make this announcement. Blessings are read on Shabbat because that is when the largest number of people are together.

Special festival readings and prayers. In addition to the special readings from the Torah and Haftarah, during the three pilgrimage Festivals, we read and chant additional prayers and megillot (scrolls) as follows: on Sukkot, KOHELET (Ecclesiastes) and GESHEM (the prayer for rain) p. 218; on Pesach, SHIR HASHIRIM (the Song of Songs) and TAL (the prayer for dew) p. 219; and on Shavuot, the Book of Ruth. We count every day during the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot. We call this counting the OMER (a measure of barley; pp. 55-60). In Temple days, the grain harvest began with a special offering of barley on the second day of Passover and lasted 49 days until Shavuot.

Ashrei (p. 151). The final prayer in the Torah Service is recited responsively, frequently led by a youth. The Ashrei consists primarily of Psalm 145, "A psalm of praise by David." Beginning with the third verse, the initials of the psalm's verses follow the order of the ALEPH-BET, the Hebrew alphabet. There is a Talmudic saying that those who

recite the Ashrei three times a day are assured a place in the world to come.

Return of the Torah to the Ark (p. 153). A procession is formed to return the Torah to the Ark. The hazzan leads the congregation in singing two verses, followed by Psalm 29 on Shabbat or Psalm 24 on Festival days. The ceremony concludes with the singing of UV'NUCHO YOMAR (Whenever the Ark; p. 154), composed of passages from the Bible.

c. The Musaf Service (pp. 156–187)

The Musaf (additional) portion of the service follows the Torah service on Shabbat, Festivals, the High Holy Days, and Rosh Hodesh. It has its precedent in the additional sacrificial offering in the Temple on Shabbat and Festivals.

As in Shacharit, the Amidah (pp. 156–161) is recited with all congregants standing. The Kedushah (p. 157) here is somewhat longer compared to its earlier version; a fourth verse that includes the Sh'ma has been added. According to one explanation for the addition, during persecutions of Jews in the 6th century CE, saying the Sh'ma was forbidden. Censors watching services stayed only through Shacharit, when the Sh'ma was usually recited, to make sure the prayer was not said. The Sh'ma was inserted into the Kedushah later in the service because by then the censors had left. The congregation recites the first four blessings together (p. 156b) as well as the Kedushah (p. 157). The remainder of the Amidah is said silently, with congregants sitting down after they have finished. This portion of the service also provides an opportunity for reflection and personal prayers (pp. 162–165). On Festivals and Rosh Hodesh, the Amidah (pp. 162–165) is recited similarly.

Musaf contains many of the prayers found in Shacharit. One addition is the reverse alphabetical acrostic PIYYUT (poem) known as TIKANTA SHABBAT (You have established Shabbat; p. 158). A later portion of this prayer recalls the Musaf offering in the Temple and urges the reinstatement of the sacrificial service in Israel. In the Conservative liturgy, the explicit call for the renewal of the sacrificial service has been removed. Although references to the sacrifices remain in our prayer, the Tikanta Shabbat is a reminder of past practice only.

After the Musaf Amidah, the Kaddish Shalem (p. 181) is recited. This Kaddish, which marks the approaching conclusion of the Shabbat and Festival service, is distinguished from other forms of the Kaddish by a verse including the word TITKABAL (let it be accepted), asking God to accept the “prayers and pleas of all the people Israel.”

Prayers for rain and dew. We were once an agricultural nation, dependent upon the vagaries of nature. In the Middle East, autumn was and is the rainy season; a drought in autumn meant a sparse harvest. In the dry season of spring and summer, when it rarely rained, dew was collected and used for irrigation and even drinking.

We recall these parts of our past with prayers for rain in autumn and dew in the spring. A special prayer acknowledging God's power over wind and rain is added to the Amidah (pp. 115b, 156b, 166b) between SH'MINI ATZERET and Pesach.

Ein Kelohenu (p. 182) is a popular and well-known hymn sung, in the Ashkenazic tradition, at the end of Shabbat and Festival services. At Beth El, it also marks the moment when the children in the congregation join the rabbi and hazzan on the bimah. The hymn celebrates God as ELOHIM (God), ADON (master), MELEKH (king), and MOSHIAH (deliverer). Its opening line (None compare to our God, to our Ruler) may come from Hannah's prayer (I Samuel 2:2) after her son Samuel was born.

Aleinu (We rise to our duty, p. 183) is an ancient prayer thought to date to the 3rd century CE. It was originally said only during the Musaf Amidah on Rosh Hashanah (and is still recited then). Sometime in the 13th century, however, the Aleinu also became the closing prayer in every service, throughout the year. The change in custom has been attributed to the persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages, in particular to the martyrdom in Blois, France, in 1171, of 51 Jews who refused to be baptized and died chanting the Aleinu. The Aleinu has two parts: the first part celebrates God as the Master of all and recognizes Israel's unique role and destiny in serving God. The second part addresses God directly and looks to the prophesied future when idolatry will cease, the wicked shall reform, and "all humanity will invoke Your Name." The congregation stands to recite the Aleinu, and worshippers bow at the words VA'ANACHNU KOR'IM (We bend the knee).

After a repetition of the Mourner's Kaddish (p. 184), AN'IM Z'MIROT (Songs I Sweetly Sing; known also as SHIR HAKAVOD, Hymn of Glory; p. 185) is sometimes sung at Beth El. Some congregations recite it every Shabbat and on all Festivals, but over the centuries, many variations in usage have sprung up. The variety of customs may be attributed to the concerns of rabbinic authorities, who felt that it was too lofty for weekday services. During the singing of this hymn, the Ark is opened.

After Kiddush and MOTZI (see Section 8d), Adon Olam (p. 187) closes the Shabbat service. This hymn is thought to have been written by Solomon ibn Gabirol, a poet and philosopher who lived in 11th century Spain. Its ten lines compactly express a Jewish concept of God—as Creator, eternal, ruler of the universe—with a picture of how people relate to God. The final words of Adon Olam, "God is with me; I have no fear," come from Psalm 118:6; they are also found in the Hallel (p. 136).

d. *The Kiddush and Motzi (Blessings over wine and bread)*

Kiddush is the traditional blessing recited before drinking wine on Shabbat and on other festive occasions. On Shabbat, the Kiddush contains a passage emphasizing the holiness of Shabbat. We thank God for giving us a day to rest body and soul, and we are reminded of the seventh day, when God rested from the work of creation. In more

recent years, Kiddush has also come to refer to the meal or light snack served in the synagogue social hall following the morning Shabbat service.

Motzi is the blessing recited before eating bread. The blessing acknowledges God as the preeminent One in the universe who brings forth bread from the earth. Other blessings may be recited before eating other types of food. Judaism teaches us to thank God before and after we partake of any nourishment.

9. BAR MITZVAH AND BAT MITZVAH CEREMONIES

The term and the ceremony associated with a Jewish boy's becoming a Bar Mitzvah (son of the commandment) on reaching the age of 13 does not appear until the 14th century. In the 20th century, this formal recognition and celebration was extended to girls in the Bat Mitzvah (daughter of the commandment) ceremony. This is a very important milestone in the life of a Jewish boy or girl. On the day after the child's 13th birthday, according to Jewish tradition, he or she is considered an adult within the Jewish community, is responsible for observing the commandments, can participate fully in a prayer service, and can be counted as part of a minyan (the minimum ten people required for community prayer).

No formal ritual or service is required for the boy or girl to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Because of the importance of this rite of passage in the lives of their children, however, most families arrange for their son or daughter to be called to the Torah for the first time as an adult in a synagogue service, generally on the Shabbat as close as possible to the child's 13th birthday according to the Jewish calendar. Typically, the boy or girl will be given the Maftir Aliyah (final blessing over the Torah) and will read the Haftarah (one of the readings from the prophets) after the Torah portion is read. She or he may lead other parts of the service if able and willing to do so. At the conclusion of the Torah service, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah will address the congregation on a topic of his or her choice that will usually include some reference to the Torah portion that was just read.

10. THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Our knowledge of traditional Jewish marriage practices comes mainly from the *Talmud*, where the laws and customs associated with marriage and family are presented in detail. The *Talmud* says of marriage, “Any man who has no wife lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness.” In contrast to the *Talmud*, the Bible contains few specific references to marriage ceremonies. Jacob’s discovery that Leah had replaced her sister Rachel as a bride is the only indication that a ceremony had occurred.

The *Talmud* tractate of KIDDUSHIN (consecration) describes two stages in the marriage ritual. The first stage, known as ERUSIN (betrothal), was a formal ceremony in which the bride accepted a gift of value from the groom as a symbol of the contract into which the couple was entering. Originally the gift was coins; later it was a plain gold ring. The couple did not live together after the betrothal, but the contract was recognized as binding and could be broken only by a GET (divorce) or the death of one of the individuals. The second stage, known as Kiddushin, was the actual marriage ceremony, after which the marriage would be consummated and married life would begin. Kiddushin took place as much as a year after erusin.

During the Middle Ages, the separate betrothal and marriage ceremonies were combined, a practice that continues to this day. The marriage ceremony frequently begins with the singing or playing of the song MI ADIR, expressing the joyousness of the occasion. The bride and groom take their places under a CHUPPAH (canopy), held aloft by four posts, symbolizing the couple’s union under one roof. The rabbi begins the service with a b’rakhah over the wine, BOREI P’RI HAGAFEN. The next b’rakhah, for the betrothal, is taken from the *Talmud* and praises God for the laws of chastity and the institution of engagement and marriage. The groom places a ring on the bride’s right index finger, or rings are exchanged, and the groom says in Hebrew, “We are consecrated to each other according to the Law of Moses and Israel.”

The reading of the KETUBAH (marriage contract) marks the transition into the second part of the ceremony. Originally, the contract outlining the groom’s obligations to the bride was a private transaction, signed before witnesses and given to the bride before the wedding. It is now signed before the ceremony in the presence of two witnesses who are not related to the groom and later read to the family and guests. The contract is traditionally written in Aramaic with selected passages in Hebrew, and it is translated into English to be read aloud.

Six b’rakhot that have their origin in the *Talmud* are then chanted by the rabbi or hazzan. Together with the first b’rakhah over the wine, they are called SHEVA (Seven) B’RAKHOT. In some traditions, these Sheva B’rakhot are repeated during the BIRKAT HAMAZON (Blessing after the Meal) for the following week, continuing the celebration of the couple’s wedding during meals at friends’ homes. After the recitation of the Sheva B’rakhot, it is traditional for the rabbi or hazzan to say a few words to the couple.

The wedding ceremony concludes with the breaking of a glass, which recalls, even at a time of the greatest joy, the sadness over the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

11. THE FUNERAL SERVICE

In Hebrew, the funeral service is called TZIDDUK HADIN (the Justice of Judgment). It begins the period of mourning, combining the expression of grief with an acceptance of God's will. The prayers selected for the service reflect both the death of the body and the need to commemorate the life of the deceased. Excessive mourning is discouraged through the establishment of prescribed lengths of time for mourning.

In some traditions, where the principle outlined in the *Talmud* is followed closely, a VIDUI (formal confession) may be taken from a person near death. After death, the body is washed and wrapped in a shroud. Care is taken to ensure that no indignities are visited upon the deceased. In keeping with Jewish tradition, Congregation Beth El has a group of volunteers, a CHEVRA KADISHA (Holy Society), which performs these services at the funeral home. Once it is in the shroud, the body is placed in a coffin, traditionally a plain wooden box, which is brought to the synagogue, funeral chapel, or gravesite for the funeral service.

Before accepting condolences and entering the funeral service, the bereaved next of kin will, symbolically or in actuality, rip a portion of an outer garment while saying the b'rakhah, "Praised are you, Adonai, Lord of the universe, the true judge." The KERIAH ribbon (a small piece of ripped black material worn over the heart) symbolizes the rending of a garment and will be worn for the seven days of mourning.

To comfort the mourners during the funeral service, the service leader reads from a selection of TEHILIM (Psalms) or other biblical or rabbinic texts. The service ends with a eulogy, a practice well known by the time of the rabbinic period. David's oration after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in the first book of Samuel is an early and beautiful example of such a eulogy. Members of the family and the congregation may wish to add their words to those of the leader in remembering the deceased. The service leader then chants EL MALEI RACHAMIM (God, full of mercy), entrusting the soul of the departed to the protection of the Divine Presence.

The coffin and the mourners are taken to the cemetery where the grave has already been dug. The pallbearers lower the coffin into the grave and, where possible, earth from ERETZ YISRAEL (the Land of Israel) is placed in the grave. Family members begin to cover the grave with dirt; they are then joined by other mourners. A special Kaddish (mourner's prayer) that refers to eternal life may be recited by the family. On departing the cemetery, those attending the funeral form two rows for the family to pass through while the words "May God comfort you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem" are recited.

The family begins a formal period of mourning in the home lasting seven days and hence known as sitting SHIVAH (seven). If a Festival occurs during the seven-day period, the obligation for sitting is deemed to have been fulfilled. An extended period of mourning of 30 days follows, except for the death of a parent where mourning

continues for 11 months (although some individuals continue the mourning period for other family members for the entire 11 months). Every year, the yahrzeit (anniversary of the death) is marked by lighting a memorial candle and reciting Kaddish in the synagogue. Following a custom that originated at the time of the massacres of Jews by the Crusaders, Yizkor (a prayer to commemorate the dead) is recited on the last day of certain Festivals.

After a relative dies, the phrase ALAV HASHALOM (masculine) or ALEHA HASHALOM (feminine) is used after mentioning their name. This means “peace be to him” or “peace be to her.”

Generally, one year after the funeral (though occasionally sooner), a tombstone or other stone marker will be placed on the grave. This brief ceremony is called the unveiling, or dedication.

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