

Glossary of Terms

Adonai – This is the Hebrew* word for Lord. It is sometimes used as a substitute for the word 'God,' a way of not accidentally misusing the divine name.

Atheist – This is the belief that there is no God either in the universe or beyond it. Many Jewish people may be culturally Jewish but atheist in their beliefs.

Bar / Bat Mitzvah – This is the Jewish 'coming of age' religious ceremony. For boys it takes place at age 13 and for girls at age 12. It literally means a 'son / daughter of the commandment,' since they are now responsible for keeping the Torah themselves. See video 4.2 For more information.

Believer – Rather than using the term Christian, which was given as a label to believers in Jesus (see Acts 11:26), the Bible uses the term 'believer' for those that follow Jesus (e.g. Acts 4:32, 15:1, 16:1). This is a good term to use in Jewish evangelism as it disassociates from historical antisemitic misuses of the term 'Christian.'

Brit Hadashah – This is the Hebrew word for the 'New Testament' or more specifically 'New Covenant.' It is found in Jeremiah 31:31.

Brit Milah – The brit milah, or 'bris' is a ritual circumcision performed on eight-day old Jewish sons. It was commanded by God (Leviticus 12:2) after the pattern of Abraham (Genesis 17:7). It is a covenant* symbol etched in the physical body, a sign that God's covenant can never end or be forgotten.

Conservative / Masorti – A branch of Judaism which upholds Jewish tradition yet also emphasises a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the Torah.* It is the blend of traditional observance with modern open-mindedness.

Covenant / Brit – A covenant is a promise between two or more parties to perform certain actions. It is a solemn promise. God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12 for example. See Video 2.1 for more information.

Dor v dor – *L'dor v'dor* means 'from generation to generation' (embodied in Deuteronomy 11:19). It is all about making connections between generations such as through stories, testimonies, recipes, photos, memories. It is about never forgetting. It is important in Judaism. See Video 3.1 for more information.

Dreidel – A small four-sided spinning top with a Hebrew* letter on each side, used in a game traditionally played at the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

Frum – A Yiddish* word which means religiously observant.

G-d – A way of spelling the divine name that avoids accidentally dishonouring it.

Goy / Goyim / Gentile – A non-Jewish person.

Ha Shem – A substitute for the word God. This is often said aloud when יהוה (YHWH) or the Tetragrammaton is used.

Hanukkah – A minor Jewish festival, lasting eight days from the 25th day of Kislev (in December) and commemorating the rededication of the Temple in 165 BC by the Maccabees after its desecration by the Syrians. It is marked by the successive kindling of eight lights.

Hanukkiah – A nine-branched menorah* used at Hanukkah.* Its eight branches correspond to the eight nights of Hanukkah. One branch is for the servant candle, the candle with which you light the other candles on each respective night.

Haredi / Haredim – A branch of Orthodox* Judaism. Also known as Ultra-Orthodox Judaism. This is the fastest growing form of Judaism characterized by a strict adherence to Talmudic* laws and traditions. The Haredim would consider themselves as those who tremble at God's Word (the word 'tremble,' or *haredim* in Hebrew,* appears in Isaiah 66:5). They are in opposition to modern values and practices.

Hebrew – This is the language that the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is written in. For example, the previous sentence looks like this in Hebrew: זו השפה שבה כתוב התנ"ך העברי (הברית הישנה). It is read from right to left, so the front of a Tanakh,* or Hebrew Bible, seems like the back to the English reader.

Holocaust – The Holocaust was the systematic murder of Europe's Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Second World War.

Judaica – Items pertaining to Jewish life and customs, especially when of a historical, literary, or artistic nature, such as books or ceremonial objects.

Latkes – These are a type of potato fritter in Ashkenazi Jewish cuisine that are traditionally prepared to celebrate Hanukkah. Recipes [here!](#)

Mashiach / Messiah – The Hebrew* word for messiah. The word messiah in English means a saviour or a 'hoped-for deliverer.' Different concepts of this exist in Judaism. Sometimes the view is not so much of a person but more of an expected age.

Menorah – This is the seven-branched candlestick often synonymous with Judaism.

Messianic Fellowship / Messianic Congregations – Faith communities that stress the Jewish context of the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah. They often employ Jewish forms of worship, use Hebrew in their liturgy and stress the connection of Messiah to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Messianic Jews – Jewish followers of Jesus who are keen to maintain their Jewish identity.

Mitzvah / Mitzvot – Religious commandment / commands to be performed as a religious duty out of respect and worship to God.

Moedim – These are the ‘appointed times’, as initially found in Leviticus 23. Full description [here](#).

Mourners Kaddish – A Jewish prayer recited from the Siddur* at the synagogue and by mourners at public services after the death of a close relative.

Moyel – A religiously trained circumciser who performs the procedure and also has a religious function. See Brit Milah* above.

Orthodox – A major branch within Judaism. It holds firmly to traditional observances. It is more theologically conservative. It teaches adherence to the rabbinical interpretations of Jewish law and the Torah.*

Passover meal / Seder – A religious meal served in Jewish homes on the 15th and 16th of the month of the Jewish month of Nisan to commence the festival of Passover (Pesach).

Pesach / Passover – The major Jewish spring festival which commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Lasting seven or eight days, it includes a seder* meal and, throughout that time, foods containing yeast are not eaten.

Pogrom – An organized massacre of a particular ethnic group, in particular that of Jewish People in Russia or eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Purim – A minor Jewish festival held in the spring (on the 14th or 15th day of the Jewish month of Adar) to commemorate the defeat of Haman's plot to massacre the Jews as recorded in the book of Esther.

Purim Speil – An informal theatrical production of the story of Esther. Held at the time of Purim, it is with costumed participants, often including children.

Reform – A major branch within Judaism that is more progressive and modern. Initiated in Germany by the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), it set out to reform or abandon aspects of Orthodox Jewish worship. Today the goal is the same, to adapt to modern social, political, and cultural changes. Therefore, Reform Jewish people often agree with transgender and LGBTQ+ ideology.

Religious / Frum – Jewish people who are religiously observant, adhering to Jewish laws.

Replacement Theology / Supersessionism – A Christian theology which insists that the Church has superseded the Jewish people, replacing them and claiming the blessings whilst relegating Jewish people. More [here](#).

Rosh HaShannah – The Jewish New Year festival, held on the first (and sometimes the second) day of the Jewish month of Tishri (in September). It is marked by the blowing of the shofar* and begins the ten days of penitence culminating in Yom Kippur.

Scapegoat – A goat sent into the wilderness after the Chief Priest had symbolically laid the sins of the people upon it. See [Leviticus 16](#) for a full description.

Secular – Jewish people who are non-religious. They maybe atheist.* Although non-practicing, they may still often claim Judaism as their religion.

Seder Plate – A special plate containing symbolic foods eaten or displayed at the Passover Seder.

Shanah Tovah – The new year / Rosh HaShanna* greeting. It is Hebrew for ‘Have a good year.’

Shavuot / Pentecost – A major Jewish festival held fifty days after Passover. It was originally a harvest festival, but now also commemorates the giving of the Torah. It corresponds to the Christian festival of Pentecost. See [Acts 2](#).

Shema – The central statement of Jewish belief from Deuteronomy 6:4. See [here](#) for more information.

Shofar – A ram's-horn trumpet usually blown at Rosh HaShanna.*

Shomer Shabbat – In Judaism, a person who is shomer Shabbat or shomer Shabbos is a person who observes the mitzvot* associated with Judaism's Shabbat, or Sabbath.

Shulchan Aruch – The most widely consulted of the various religious / legal codes in Judaism.

Siddur – The Jewish prayer book containing prayers and other information relevant to the daily liturgy.

Sukkah – A temporary shelter covered in natural materials, used especially for meals during the Jewish festival of Succoth.

Sukkot / Tabernacles – Sukkot is a weeklong Jewish holiday five days after Yom Kippur. Sukkot celebrates the gathering of the harvest and commemorates the miraculous protection of Israel when they left Egypt. It is celebrated by dwelling in foliage-covered booths called sukkahs.*

Talmud – From the Hebrew term ‘study’, the Talmud is a compilation of ancient teachings regarded as sacred and prescriptive by religious Jewish people. It is composed of a written Oral law called the Mishnah and the Gemara which is an elucidation of the Mishnah and related writings. It is a huge work of many volumes. Jewish people who study the daily double-spread page of the Talmud will complete it in a cycle of seven years.

Tanakh (T-N-K) / Old Testament / Hebrew Bible – The sacred writings of Judaism, called the Old Testament by Christians. It is composed of Torah (the first five books), Nevi'im (the Prophets) and the Ketuvim (the writings) which spells Tanakh (T-N-K). See the traditional Jewish order of the Scriptures [here](#).

Torah – The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or the Five Books of Moses. Torah can also refer broadly to the whole Bible / revelation of God.

Yeshua – The Hebrew name for Jesus. It looks like this in Hebrew ישוע. It means salvation. See [Matthew 1:21](#).

YHWH – Also known as the Tetragrammaton. This is the Holy Name of God used in the Hebrew* Bible and in Jewish prayers. In Hebrew* it looks like this יהוה (YHWH). It is never pronounced, but usually the word Adonai* or Ha Shem* is said instead. In English this may be rendered as ‘Lord’ or ‘God’ or ‘G-d.’*

Yiddish – A language used by Jewish people in central and eastern Europe before the Holocaust. It was originally a German dialect with words from Hebrew and several modern languages. It still has some 200,000 speakers, mainly in the US, Israel, and Russia.

Yom Kippur – This is the most solemn religious fast of the Jewish year. It focuses on atonement and repentance and it is a day of full fasting. It is the last of the ten days of penitence that begin with Rosh Hashanna (the Jewish New Year).

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