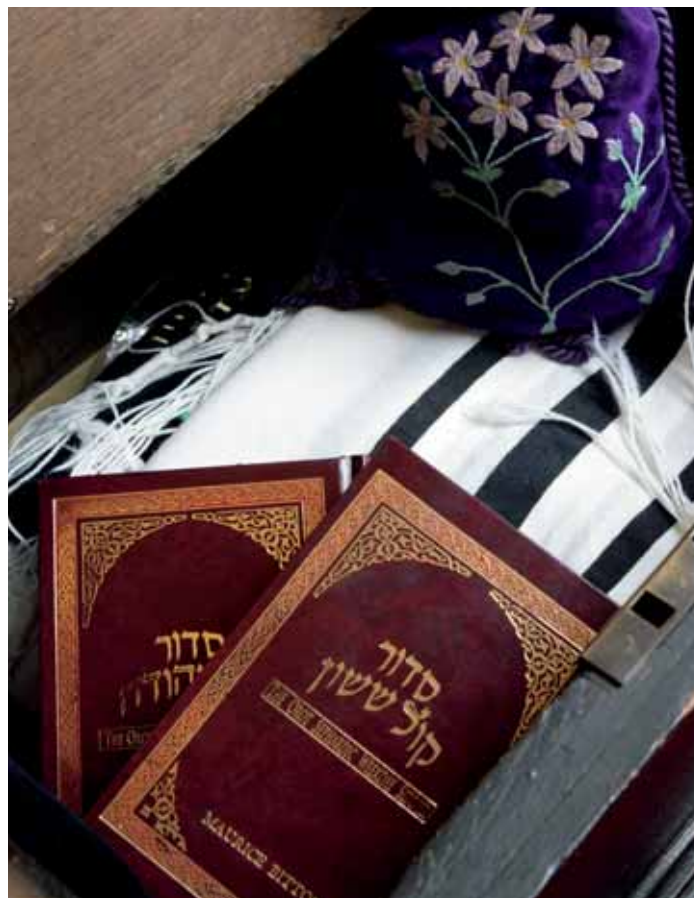


Curriculum Visions

Jewish faith and practice



Teacher's Guide in PDF format for printing

Lisa Magloff

Curriculum Visions

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Unit 1: What it means to be Jewish

Children may have some difficulty understanding what is meant by the term 'Jewish nation'. Unlike other religions, where membership is based on practice of the faith, Judaism is considered both a religion and an ethnicity. In fact, there are many secular Jews, who do not follow the faith of Judaism, but consider themselves part of the Jewish nation.

Jews believe that God made a covenant, or agreement, with certain people over time. The first of these was Abraham, who agreed to worship only God. In exchange, God promised to make Abraham the father of a great nation. So, you could call Abraham the father of the Jewish nation. Abraham, his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, known as the patriarchs, are the physical and spiritual ancestors of Judaism. Their descendants are the Jewish people.

It is actually incorrect to refer to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Jews, because the terms "Jew" and "Judaism" were not used until hundreds of years after their time. In the Bible, the descendants of Abraham were called Israelites (from the name Israel, the name God gave to Abraham's grandson Jacob).

The word "Jew" (in Hebrew, "Yehudi") is derived from the name Judah, which was the name of one of Jacob's twelve sons. Judah founded one of the tribes of Israel, which was named after him. Originally, the term Jew referred only to members of the tribe of Judah. However, after the death of King Solomon, the nation of Israel was split into two kingdoms: the kingdom of Judea and the kingdom of Israel (you can find the story in I Kings 12 and II Chronicles 10 of the Old Testament).

In 587 BCE, the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar captured the kingdom of Israel, destroyed the Temple and took all the people into captivity in Babylon. The people of Judea were left behind, so after this time the Israelites were all referred to as Jews.

It is also important to realise that Judaism has changed dramatically since its beginnings. In the time of ancient Israel, Jews worshipped only at home and at the Temple in Jerusalem. Worship involved prayer and also making daily offerings and sacrifices (of animals) to God. The only people allowed to make offerings were the hereditary members of the priestly class.

During the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites were allowed to continue their religion, but without the Temple, new ideas about worship evolved. These

involved a greater role for learned men, called rabbis, to interpret Jewish Law and also substituted daily prayer for the daily sacrifices in the Temple.

Eventually, the Israelites were released, returned to Israel and rebuilt the Temple. When the Romans destroyed the second Temple in 70 CE, Jews once again turned to a system of worship that centred on daily prayer and the rabbis.

There are three major branches of Judaism: Reform, Conservative and Orthodox.

Orthodoxy is actually made up of several different groups. It includes the modern Orthodox, who have largely integrated into modern society while maintaining strict observance of Jewish Law; and the Chasidim, who live separately and dress distinctively (they are commonly referred to as “ultra-Orthodox” and dress in the clothing worn when their movement was founded in 18th century in eastern Europe). The Orthodox movements all believe that God gave Moses both the written and oral Torah at Mount Sinai. They believe that the Torah is the true word of God and that all Jews must follow the 613 commandments, or mitzvot, in the Torah. Most Jews in the UK are modern Orthodox.

Interestingly, although Orthodox Judaism is the only branch that is recognised in Israel, more than half of all Israelis identify themselves as secular Jews. These people may follow some observances, such as lighting candles on Shabbat and not eating pork, but they do not identify with a particular branch of Judaism and do not believe that all mitzvot must be followed.

Reform Judaism does not believe that the Torah was written by God, but by humans who were devising a system of belief and ethics. Reform Jews do not believe in observance of the 613 commandments as a defining feature of their faith, but they retain the values and ethics of Judaism, along with the practices and the culture. About half of the Jews in the US and 20% of the Jews in the UK are Reform.

Conservative Judaism grew out of the tension between Orthodoxy and Reform. Conservative Judaism maintains that the truths found in Jewish scriptures and other Jewish writings come from God, but were transmitted by humans and contain a human component. Conservative Judaism generally accepts Jewish Law, but is flexible, believing that the law should change and adapt, absorbing aspects of the predominant culture while remaining true to Judaism’s values.

Unit 2: Jewish roots

The idea of a covenant, or contract, with God is central to Judaism. This idea states that the Jewish people have certain obligations to God, and God has certain obligations to the Jewish people. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation and subjected him to ten tests of faith to prove his worthiness. Leaving his home is one of these trials.

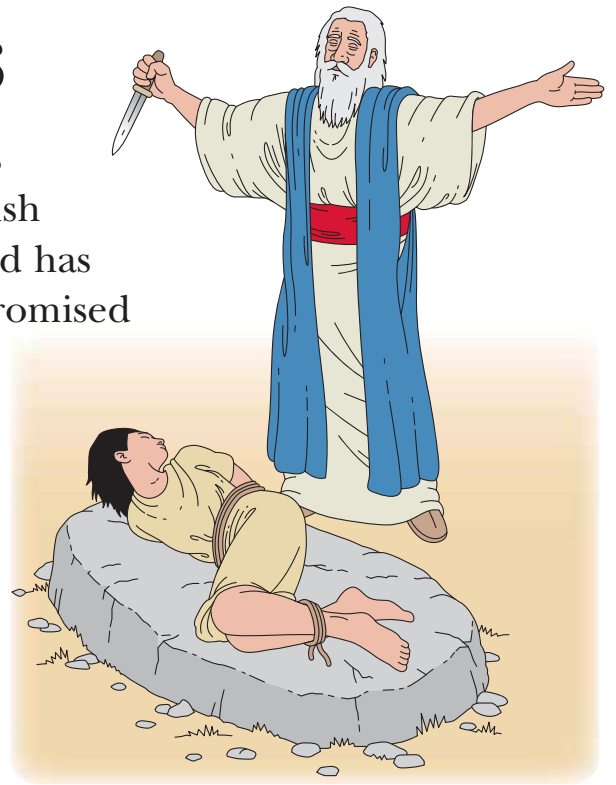
You may notice when you study Islam that the Jewish and Muslim versions of the story of Abraham's sacrifice name different sons. Abraham actually had two sons. The oldest, Ishmael, was the child of Abraham and Hagar (Sarah's maidservant). According to both Muslim and Jewish tradition, Ishmael is the ancestor of the Arabs.

However, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90, God promised Abraham a son by Sarah. When Sarah heard this she burst out laughing at the idea, but she had a son, Isaac, whose name means "laughter". Isaac was the ancestor of the Jewish people.

According to Muslim teachings, God asked Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael, and so it is Ishmael's descendants, the Arabs, who were favoured by God to be saved. According to Jewish teachings, Isaac was the one chosen to be sacrificed and so Isaac's descendants, the Jews, were chosen by God to be saved. This is a major difference between Islam and Judaism, and the cause of much of the historic enmity between the religions. You may need to deal with this sensitively if it comes up in class.

You may also like to compare the founders of different religions and discuss some qualities that they shared. For example, Abraham was an ordinary person, and he lived in a place where the people believed in many gods. But Abraham had an unshakable faith in one God, and this is why God chose him to make a covenant with. Similarly, in the region Mohammed came from, most people believed in many gods, but Mohammed believed in one God, so God chose him for the same reason.

Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak, and the other nine Gurus who were the founders of Sikhism, were also ordinary people chosen and inspired by God to



teach the messages of Sikhism. The Buddha was not chosen, but discovered for himself how to achieve enlightenment. Hinduism is different, in that it has no one founder, but Hindus believe that many people throughout time have been inspired by God, through the gods and goddesses, to teach the messages of Hinduism. Christians believe that Jesus was actually a part of God, sent to earth to teach Christian values, and so everything Jesus did or said was holy.

In all religions, the founders share the qualities of faith, honesty, strength of spirit and perseverance against hardship.

The Exodus

After the time of Abraham, God made another covenant, or agreement, with the Jewish people. This was what was given to Moses at Mount Sinai. The children may already be familiar with this part of the story of the Jewish people, so you may like to read some of the Bible book of Exodus, which describes the Jewish exodus from slavery in Egypt and the wandering in the desert.

Moses was not a patriarch or a Messiah, but a prophet. He was someone who God worked through and spoke to. In fact, according to tradition, his grave was left unmarked to prevent his being worshipped by future generations. Jews believe that God gave Moses the books of Jewish Law, the Torah. According to Jewish tradition, Moses spent much of his life writing these books, essentially taking dictation from God.

It may also be interesting to note that Moses had many human failings and weaknesses, even though God chose him to be a prophet. In fact, God did not permit Moses to enter the Promised Land – he died in sight of the river Jordan, but never crossed it – because of a transgression (the story is told in Deut. 32:48–52). Moses was told to speak to a rock to get water from it, but instead he struck the rock repeatedly with a rod, showing improper anger and a lack of faith (see also Num. 20:7–13).

The history of ancient Israel could easily fill another book, so we do not go into it in detail here. But the most important event, as far as modern Jews are concerned, is the destruction of the second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. This was actually a very brutal event, because the Romans also killed many Jews and forbade the rest from living in Jerusalem. This was the start of what Jews call the Diaspora. This is also the time that the Jewish religion changed to focus on community worship, where everyone participates, rather than worship in the Temple by hereditary priests. As Jews settled around the world, they adopted the culture of the places where they lived.

Unit 3: Jewish holy books



Jewish scripture may be a bit confusing for children because it actually consists of two different sets of scripture: written Torah and oral Torah. Some Jews believe that God gave both sets of scripture to Moses.

The oral Torah can be thought of as a tradition explaining what the written Torah means and how to interpret and apply the teachings found in it. Orthodox Jews believe God taught the oral Torah to Moses, and he then taught it to others, who also passed it on. In about the 2nd century CE the oral Torah was written down. So today when we say oral Torah, we are referring to the books that these teachings are written in.

If you can get a copy of the Talmud (most libraries should have it in book form) it might be interesting to show children how it is written. The original writing is a small square of text in the middle of the page. This is surrounded by commentaries that have been added by various scholars over time. You can contrast this with the Tanakh or Torah (also available in book form, or you could simply use an Old Testament), which has no commentaries because it is never added to or changed.

There are also many other Jewish writings that are not holy scripture, but are used to interpret the scriptures. For example, the midrashim are stories expanding on incidents in the Bible to teach moral lessons. The story about Abraham smashing his father's idols is one of these. Some of these stories fill in gaps in the Bible.

Here is an excerpt from the Talmud. It is a discussion about the lawful way to light the Sabbath candles. You can see that it begins with a question, and then many different opinions are given about how to answer the questions.

MISHNA: What shall and what shall not be used for lighting the Sabbath candle? The light shall not be made with (wicks of) cedar, raw flax, silk fibre, weeds growing upon the water, and ship-moss. Nor shall pitch, wax, cottonseed oil, oil of rejected heave-offerings, fat from the tail of a sheep, and tallow be used.

Nahum the Modait says melted tallow may be used for lighting; the schoolmen, however, prohibit melted and raw tallow alike.

The rabbis taught: All that which was prohibited for the Sabbath lamp may be used in fires that are kept up for heat or even for constant light, whether (such fires are built) upon the ground or in the hearth; as the materials are prohibited only for use as wicks for the Sabbath lamp.

Rabba said: The wicks which the rabbis forbade the use of in the Sabbath lamp are prohibited because they give a flickering light. The oily substances were prohibited because they do not adhere to the wick.

Abayi questioned Rabba: Would it be permitted to mix oil with these prohibited fats and then use them for the Sabbath lamp? Or is even that prohibited as a precaution lest one use those fats without the addition of oil? Rabba answered: It is prohibited. Why so? Because they do not give a right light.

Rabbi Huna said: The wicks and fats which the sages have prohibited for the Sabbath lamp cannot be used for the Hanukah lamp either on the Sabbath night or on weeknights. Said Rabba: The reason of Rabbi Huna's theory is because he holds that if the (Hanukah lamp) is extinguished (by accident) it must be relighted, and also that its light may be used to work by. Rabbi Hisda, however, maintains that it can be fed (with these fats) on week-nights, but not on the Sabbath night. Because he holds that if it is extinguished, one is not in duty bound (to light it again), and as long as it burns it may be used to work by.

Rabbi Zera said: The wicks and fats which the sages prohibited for the Sabbath lamp may be used for the Hanukah lamp, both during the week and on the Sabbath night.

Unit 4: Judaism in everyday life

Jewish Law, called Halakhah in Hebrew, plays a large part in everyday life. You may like to explain that Judaism, in common with other religions, is not just about believing in God and worshipping on the Shabbat. It is a whole way of life. Jewish Law describes that way of life, just as Islamic Law describes how Muslims should live their lives. Jewish Law is made up of mitzvot from the Torah as well as laws instituted by the rabbis and long-standing customs.

At the heart of Jewish Law are the 613 mitzvot (commandments) that are found in the Torah and which many Jews believe come directly from God. Many of these 613 mitzvot cannot be observed today for various reasons. For example, a large portion of the laws relate to sacrifices and offerings, which can only be made in the Temple, and the Temple no longer exists. In addition, some laws do not apply to all people or places. For example, agricultural laws only apply within the state of Israel. Some of the mitzvot are positive (thou shalt...) and some are negative (thou shalt not...)

Jewish Law also includes some laws that do not come from the Torah. A tanakh is a law that was begun by rabbis. For example, the “mitzvah” to light candles on Chanukkah, a holiday that is not included in the Torah, is a tanakh.

A minhag is a custom that evolved for religious reasons and has continued long enough to become a binding religious practice. These often change from community to community. For example, it may be the minhag in one synagogue to stand while reciting a certain prayer, while in another synagogue it is the minhag to sit during that prayer.

The concept of Jewish Law may be difficult for children to understand and you may like to begin by comparing it to rules of behaviour used in your school or classroom, or in other religions. All religions have guidelines or rules for how to behave. You may like to read a few of the religious laws or guidelines from each religion to compare them. You may wish to use the excerpts given in Unit 2 of *Muslim faith and practice* on this CD.

Kosher food

You may also like to compare Muslim halal law (see *Muslim faith and practice* on this CD) with Jewish kosher laws. They are very similar. It may also be interesting for children to make a list of what they eat each day or each week and decide if it can be eaten under kosher or halal rules. Similarly, you could review the food laws of other religions. For example, Sikhs do not serve meat

in the gurdwara because everyone must be able to eat the food there, and if a Muslim, Buddhist or Jew visited they would not be able to eat meat. Similarly, many Hindus are vegetarian or do not eat certain foods, such as beef. Many Buddhists are vegetarian because of their belief in not harming living beings.

Some kosher rules:

- ▶ No pork, camel or hare
- ▶ No shellfish
- ▶ No birds of prey
- ▶ Only seafood that has fins and scales
- ▶ No winged insects, vermin, reptiles or amphibians
- ▶ No blood
- ▶ All animals must be killed according to Jewish Law
- ▶ Meat and dairy (including eggs and all milk products) cannot be cooked, prepared or eaten together (for example, if you eat a hamburger, you must wait six hours before you can eat ice cream, according to strict kosher law). You cannot use the same pot or utensil for cooking meat and dairy products.
- ▶ No grape products (i.e. wine and grape juice) that was prepared by non-Jews.



Unit 5: Prayer

The oldest daily prayer in Judaism is the Shema. This consists of Deut. 6:4–9, Deut. 11:13–21, and Num. 15:37–41 and has been recited since ancient times. Many Jews recite this prayer at home in the morning and at night. During the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century BCE (when the people of Israel had been carried into captivity by the Assyrians) people began to use prayer as a substitute for sacrifice at the Temple. People got together to pray three times a day, corresponding to the three daily sacrifices that had taken place at the Temple in Jerusalem, and there was an additional prayer service on Shabbat and certain holidays, to correspond to the additional sacrifices of those days.

After the Exile, Jews rebuilt the Temple, but these daily prayer services continued. In the 5th century BCE, the Amidah (or Shemoneh Esrei) prayer was written.

In addition to group prayers in the synagogue there are many individual prayers or blessings that may be said throughout the day. You may like to compare the Jewish grace after meals prayer with a prayer for grace used in another religion. Keep in mind that while the Jewish prayer has a set form, most religions use a huge variety of ‘grace’ prayers.

The Jewish grace after meals is called Birkat haMazon. Here is the first paragraph:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, the One Who feeds the entire world in His goodness; with grace, kindness, and mercy He gives bread to all flesh, for His kindness is eternal. And with His great goodness that is with us constantly, food is not lacking for us, nor should it be lacking for us, forever and ever. It is for the sake of His great Name, for He – God – feeds and nourishes all, and does good to all, and prepares food for all His creations that He has made, as it is said, “You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of all life.” Blessed are You, Lord, the One who feeds all.

Christian

An example of a common grace before meals:

Bless us, oh Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive through thy bounty. Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.



Buddhist

An example of a grace before meals:

(recite while serving the food)

In this food I see clearly
the presence of the entire universe
supporting my existence.

(recite while looking at the plate of food)

All living beings are struggling for life.
May they all have enough food to eat today.

(recite just before eating)

The plate is filled with food.
I am aware that each morsel
is the fruit of much hard work
by those who produced it.

With the first taste, I promise
to practise loving kindness.
With the second, I promise
to relieve the suffering of others.
With the third,
I promise to see others' joy as my own.
With the fourth,
I promise to learn the way of nonattachment
and equanimity.

(recite after the meal)

The plate is empty.
My hunger is satisfied.
I vow to live for the benefit
of all living beings.

Islamic

A simple grace before meals, this phrase
may also be used before any undertaking:

In the name of
the compassionate
and beneficent God.

Hindu

An example of a grace before meals:

To my body:
I recognise you are the temple in which
my spirit and creative energy dwell.
I have created you from my need to
have my spirit on earth so that I may
have this time to learn and grow.
I offer you this food so that you may
continue to sustain my creative energy,
my spirit, my soul.
I offer this food to you with love,
and a sincere desire for you to remain
free from disease and disharmony.
I accept you as my own creation.
I need you.
I love you.

Sikh

Here are a few lines from the Guru Granth Sahib that are often used as a grace before meals:

Bear in mind the Master,
By whose favour you enjoy so many kinds of dainty dishes,
And apply sweet-smelling perfumes to your body;
Think of Him, and your life will bloom to its fruition.
Let your mind always dwell on Him, whose kindness provides you
with a comfortable house to live in.
Let your tongue ply day and night in praise of Him, who enables
you to live happily with your family. It is His mercy that allows
you indulgences of the body and mind.
He alone is worthy of all your devotion: constantly worship Him.

Unit 6: Shabbat

Many religions have days of rest. In Christianity the Sabbath is Sunday. In Islam the day of congregational prayer is Friday and in many Muslim countries midday Friday to midday Saturday is also a day of rest. In Judaism, the day of rest is sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Sikhs, Buddhists and Hindus do not have a specified day of rest. In the UK, they often have group worship on Sunday, because this is the day most people do not go to work.

The Jewish day begins and ends at sunset. This comes from the book of Genesis: “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” Because the word evening appears first, Jews take this to mean that the day began in the evening, at sunset.

You may like to begin your study of this unit by comparing days of rest in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. You should note that all of these involve prayer and also a meal with the family. So, the day of rest is not only a time of worship, but also a time to rekindle family ties.

Shabbat actually involves two interrelated commandments: to remember Shabbat, and to observe Shabbat. Shabbat is a reminder of how God rested after creating the earth. But it is also a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt. In Deuteronomy 5:15, Moses says: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord, your God brought you forth from there with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.” So, resting on Shabbat was also a reminder of freedom – slaves do not have days off.

The second commandment of Shabbat is to observe. The Shabbat is observed by not doing work. However, for many Jews, this does not just mean not going to the office. Jewish Law actually specifies many types of work that are not permitted on Shabbat. Essentially, this is any work that is creative, or that exercises control or dominion over your environment. This is not discussed in the text, but it may come up during class, especially if any children are Jewish.

Activities that are prohibited include: sowing, ploughing, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, tying, untying, sewing two stitches, tearing, writing two letters, erasing two letters, extinguishing a fire, kindling a fire, taking an object from a private place to a public place, or transporting an object in a public place. Also prohibited are travel, using a car, buying and selling, and the use of electricity (it serves the same function as fire). Of course, any activity is permitted if it is necessary to save a life or to prevent harm.

You can see that observing Shabbat strictly would mean no cooking (meals can be prepared in advance and heated in ovens left on), no turning on or off lights (timers are used), only walking, not carrying any objects, etc. Today, most Jews do not observe these laws strictly. But you may like to point out the things that are permitted on Shabbat, such as spending time with family and friends, discussion, playing games, taking walks, reading, and studying.



Unit 7: Rabbis and chazans

Most religions have a clergy or a person who leads prayer. In Judaism that person is the rabbi. Unlike in Catholicism, where the priest is considered a holy person, the position of rabbi is more like a job. Of course, the rabbi must have a great deal of faith and a calling to help others, but rabbis also live normal lives. They marry and have children, and they are paid well for their work as rabbi. Rabbis train very hard at rabbinical colleges in order to learn everything they can about Jewish Law and scripture. The rabbi must not only be knowledgeable, but must also be a caring person and a good orator.

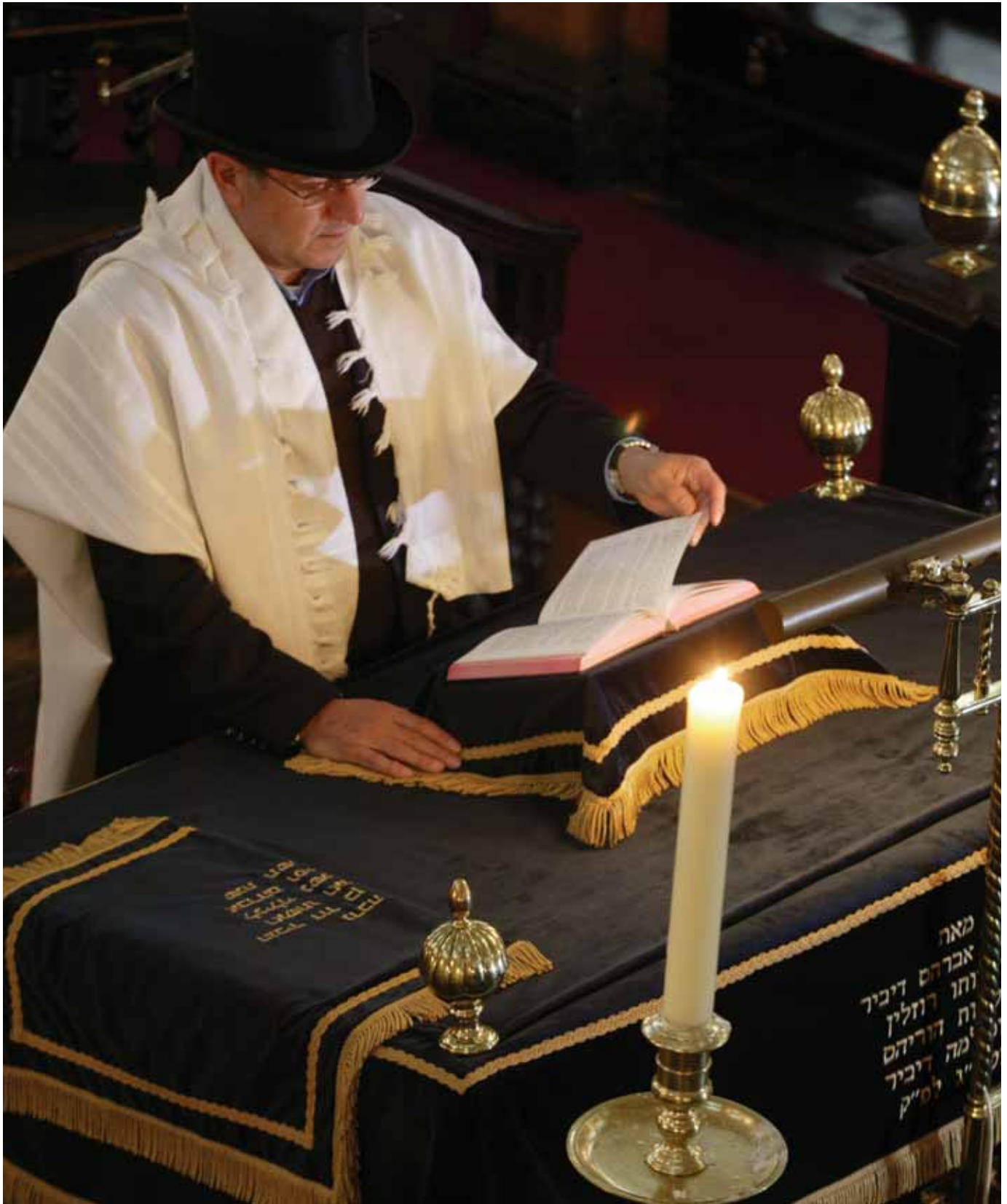
You may like to point out that in many small Jewish communities there is no rabbi. Instead, an adult (anyone over 13) who knows how leads the service.

Today, not many synagogues have full-time cantors, or chazan. Professional cantor is a very difficult job because it requires a person to be trained as a professional singer and musician, plus almost as much training in Jewish Law and scripture as a rabbi. Today, instead of a cantor, many congregations chant the Torah readings as a group, or use a member of the congregation, or the rabbi will do this job.

Wardens, or gabbais, are usually used in small synagogues where there may not be a rabbi. The warden makes sure the service runs smoothly and organises who will do the readings.

The ancient priestly classes, the Kohanim and Levites, do still exist and may play a role in some services. The Kohanim are the descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother, who were chosen by God at the time of the incident with the Golden Calf to perform certain sacred work in connection with the animal sacrifices and the rituals related to the Temple. They were the hereditary priesthood in ancient Israel. After the destruction of the Temple, the role of the Kohanim was reduced and the rabbis led worship instead. However, some roles in synagogue, such as taking the first reading from the Torah, are still reserved for Kohanim (if any are present) and Jews continue to keep track of the Kohanim lineage. Interestingly, recent genetic evidence shows that a majority of people who claim to be Kohanim are in fact distantly related.

You may like to have the children make a list of the types of clergy in each religion and the jobs they do.



Unit 8: Jewish symbols in everyday life

Many of the symbols we associate with Judaism, like the Star of David, are in fact relatively modern.

You may like to begin this section by asking children to describe some symbols used in everyday life. Some common symbols might include smileys in text messages, plus and minus signs in maths, school ties and football strips.

Most religions use symbols. These serve many purposes. Some symbols help to teach people about the religion and its beliefs; other symbols serve as an outwards sign that a person belongs to a particular faith; and some symbols are worn as a sign of faith. Christianity uses a huge number of symbols. Some of these are from the early days of Christianity, when Christians had to worship in secret and used symbols to identify each other. Many Christian symbols stand for different beliefs or teachings. You can find a huge number of Christian symbols and what they stand for at:

<http://home.att.net/~wegast/symbols/symbols.htm>

There are not as many symbols in Islam, largely because of the prohibition on worshipping images. But some common ones are the colour green, the Half Moon and star, and even Arabic words from the Qur'an. All of these are reminders of Islam and of Mohammed – green was said to be Mohammed's favourite colour; the Crescent Moon is a reminder of the desert of Arabia, where Islam began; words in Arabic are a reminder of the holy Qur'an, and also teach about Islam.

There are several important symbols of the Sikh faith, five of these start with the letter K and are called the five K's. They are kara (steel bracelet), kesh (uncut hair), khanga (comb), kaacha (special underwear) and kirpan (a sword). All of these stand for important duties of the Sikh. Sikhs also wear turbans as a symbol and as an outwards sign of their faith.

In Buddhism, many symbols are used for teaching. For example, statues of the Buddha are made in different positions. Each position stands for a different teaching of the Buddha. In Tibetan Buddhism, paintings and drawings that stand for different Buddhist teachings are found in temples and homes. Buildings called stupas are shrines for the Buddha, and each part of the stupa has a different meaning.

Hinduism uses statues of the gods and goddesses to teach about different parts of God. Each statue holds different objects in its hands and is dressed in a different way.

Kippah

It is an ancient practice for Jews to cover their heads during prayer. This is a custom (not a commandment) that came about over time and for various reasons. It may have come 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 to remove one's hat). In addition, in ancient Rome, servants were required to cover their heads while free men did not; thus, Jews in Roman times adopted the custom of covering their heads to show that they were servants of God.



Magen David

The Magen David (shield of David, or Star of David) is the symbol most commonly associated with Judaism today, but it is actually a relatively new Jewish symbol.

There are various interpretations for the symbol. For example, that the top triangle strives upwards, towards God, while the lower triangle strives downwards, towards the real world; or that the intertwining makes the triangles inseparable, like the Jewish people. Or that the three sides represent the three types of Jews: Kohanim, Levites and Israeli or that there are actually 12 sides (3 exterior and 3 interior on each triangle), representing the 12 tribes of Israel.



Unit 9: Israel: The Promised Land



This unit may be the most contentious. Many children will be aware of the conflict in the Middle East, so you should treat this with sensitivity. Both the history of modern Israel and the Holocaust will be addressed in later years in the history curriculum, but they are mentioned here in the context of understanding the importance of Israel to Jews.

Although many Jews consider Israel to be the Promised Land, Israel as it exists today is a modern creation. The idea of a Jewish state actually began at the turn of the 20th century, in response to the pogroms of eastern Europe. Many locations were actually considered for this homeland before Jewish leaders settled on the idea of the Middle East. Most countries (including England, who held the UN mandate over the land of Palestine) were reluctant to endorse the idea of a Jewish state until the end of WWII, when the knowledge of the Holocaust created sympathy for the movement.

The modern state of Israel does not actually occupy the exact same area as the ancient kingdom of Israel (when it was created it did not even include the part of Jerusalem where the Temple once stood), but it is important as a homeland and a symbol of freedom.

You may like to put Israel into context by pointing out the importance of other sacred places in other religions. For example, Mecca is important to Muslims as the place where Adam built the first shrine to God (later rebuilt by Abraham, according to Muslim scripture). The site of the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem, is also holy to Muslims, as the place where Mohammed ascended to Heaven to speak with God. Many sites in Jerusalem are also holy to Christians, such as the Holy Sepulchre, which is said to be Jesus' tomb before he was resurrected. Christians have many other holy sites as well, such as places where miracles are said to have taken place, or the burial places of saints.

For Sikhs, the holiest place is Amritsar, in Punjab, India. This is the site of Sikhism holiest shrine, the Golden Temple. Buddhists revere the place where the Buddha became enlightened, Bodhi Gaya, and where he gave his first sermon, the deer park in Sarnath.

Hindus have many holy places in India and Pakistan. These are often places associated with the lives on earth of various gods and goddesses. The holiest Hindu place is the city of Varanasi (Benares) on the banks of the Ganges River in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Varanasi is the site of the holy shrine of Lord Kashi Vishwanatha (a form of Lord Shiva).

Unit 10: The Jewish calendar

Judaism uses a lunar calendar that adjusts for the difference in length between the lunar year and the solar year. So, Jewish holidays move around a bit each year, but do not move from season to season. You can compare this to calendars used in other religions.

The Muslim calendar is lunar, but is not adjusted to bring it into line with the solar calendar. The Muslim lunar year is 11 days shorter than the solar year, so all dates on the Muslim calendar move backwards 11 days each year. This means that Muslim holidays move through the seasons over time.

Some dates on the Christian calendar, such as Easter, are calculated using a lunar calendar, so these holidays also move around a bit. Because the events of the first Easter occurred according to the Jewish calendar (the Last Supper was Passover, for example), and the Jewish calendar is lunar, the dates of Easter change every year. Easter is always the first Sunday after the Full Moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox on March 21.

There are several lunar Buddhist calendars, depending on which country people are living in. These calendars also make adjustments so that the holidays do not move around too much. The Hindu calendar is also essentially lunar, but also uses the position in the sky of the sun and planets to calculate the length of months.

Holidays

There are a large number of Jewish holidays throughout the year, in addition to the ones mentioned in the student book. Some of these holidays are commandments in the Jewish Bible; others are celebrations of historical events not in the Bible. Here is some additional information you might like to use when teaching about Jewish holidays.

Rosh Hashanah

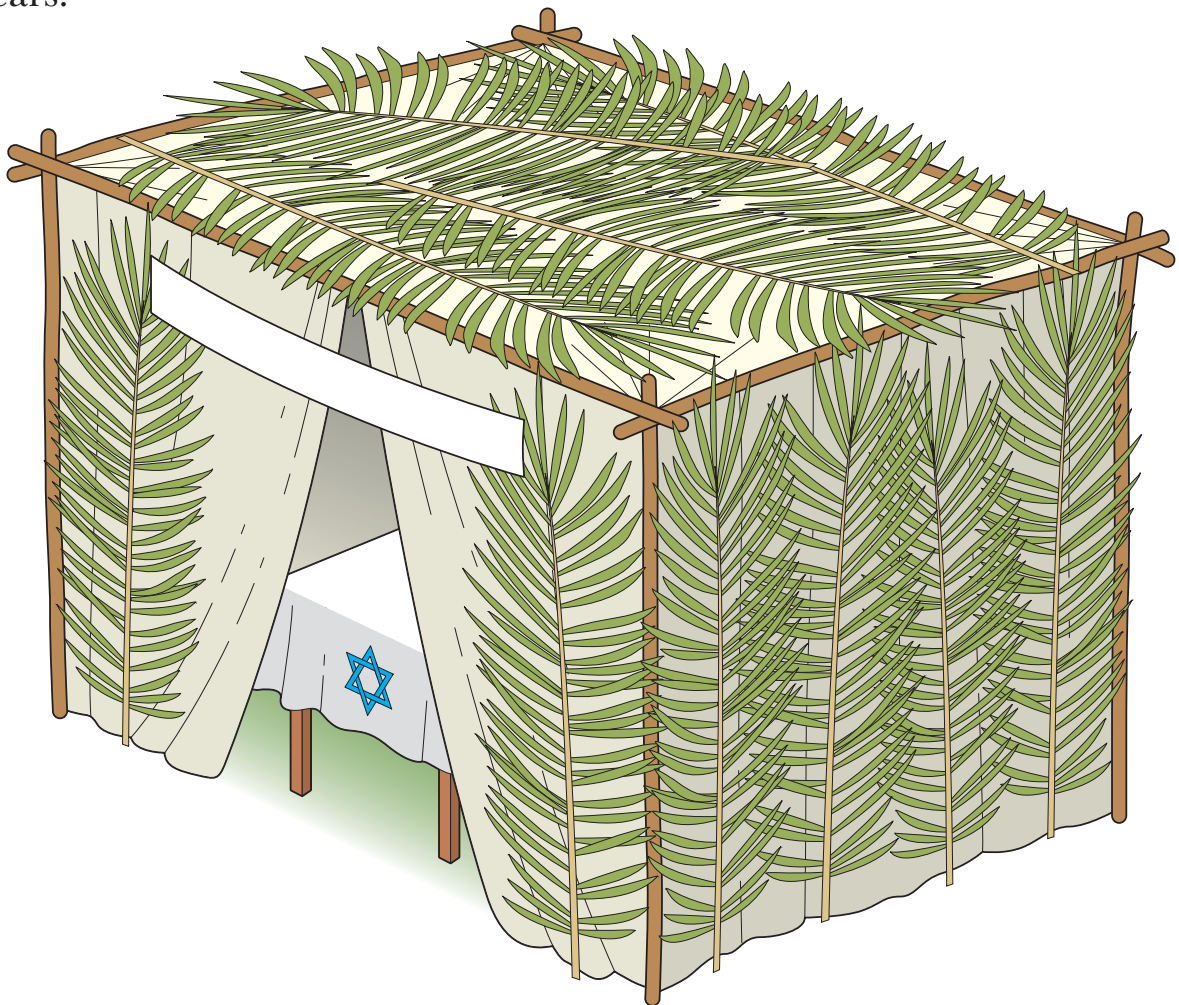
One Rosh Hashanah tradition is to eat sweet foods, such as slices of apple dipped in honey, with family and friends. This is a way to show that we hope everyone's new year will be sweet and full of good things.

Another Rosh Hashanah tradition is called casting off, or tashlich. People put breadcrumbs in their pockets and then go to a lake or river and throw the breadcrumbs in the water. The breadcrumbs stand for anything bad that can happen. So, throwing the breadcrumbs in the water is another way to show that people are hoping for a good year.

Harvest celebrations

There are two Jewish holidays that celebrate the harvest. They are Sukkot and Shavuot.

Sukkot actually celebrates two things. One is the spring harvest in ancient Israel. To celebrate this aspect of Sukkot, special blessings and prayers are said while holding four types of plants that were important in ancient Israel. These are: a type of citrus fruit called an etrog, a date palm branch, a willow branch and a myrtle branch. As discussed in the student book, Sukkot also remembers the time after the Jewish people left Egypt, when they wandered in the desert for 40 years.



The other harvest festival is called Shavuot, or Pentecost. This holiday also celebrates two things. Shavuot celebrates summer harvest in ancient Israel, when there would be plenty of milk for the farmers. So, one Shavuot tradition is to eat dairy foods. Shavuot also celebrates the time when God gave the Jewish Bible to the Jewish people after they had left Egypt. This part of Shavuot is celebrated in the synagogue by reading the Bible story that tells about how God gave the Jewish holy books to Moses on Mt Sinai.

The Purim story

The story of Purim is told in the Biblical book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia during the 5th century, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her. When she was a young adult, Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, the King of Persia, to become part of his harem. Before she left, Mordecai warned Esther not to tell anyone that she was a Jew. King Ahasuerus soon fell in love with Esther and made her queen, but the king did not know that Esther was a Jew.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, saying he would only bow to God. So Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. In a speech, Haman told the king that there were some people in his land who obeyed different laws from the king's laws. Haman urged the king to eliminate these people. The king agreed and gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman, to do as he pleased to them. Haman planned to exterminate all of the Jews.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king to save the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare, and then went into the king. He welcomed her and she told him of Haman's plot against the Jews. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

