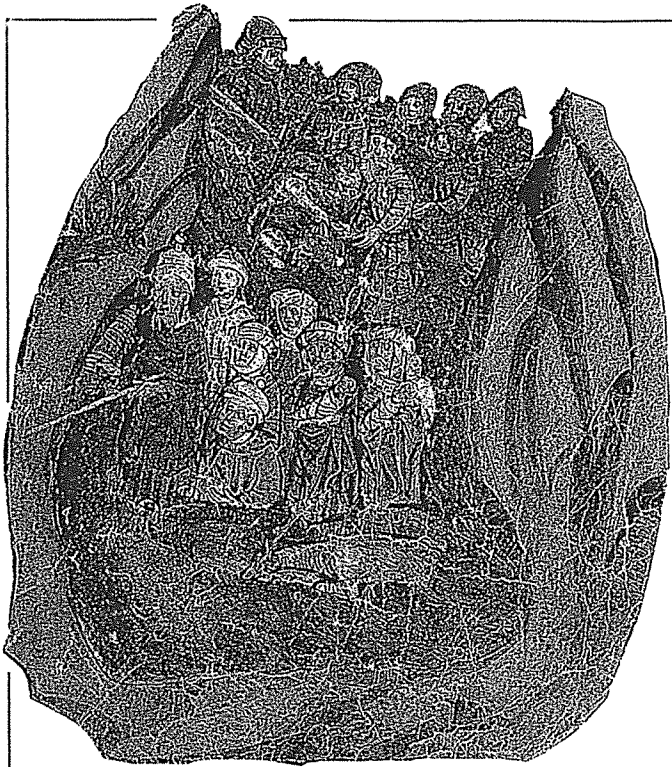


The Jewish nation



CROSSING THE RED SEA

According to the Bible, the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons, the twelve tribes of Israel, became slaves in Egypt. Eventually, God called Moses to lead them out of slavery. God had to set ten plagues on Egypt before Pharaoh would let them go. Even then, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to trap them by the Red Sea. God parted the sea for the Israelites. When the Egyptians tried to cross, the sea closed over them. This is one of the events commemorated at the Passover ceremonial dinner. The history of the Jewish people is kept alive in their holidays, and the lessons it has taught them about God are remembered.

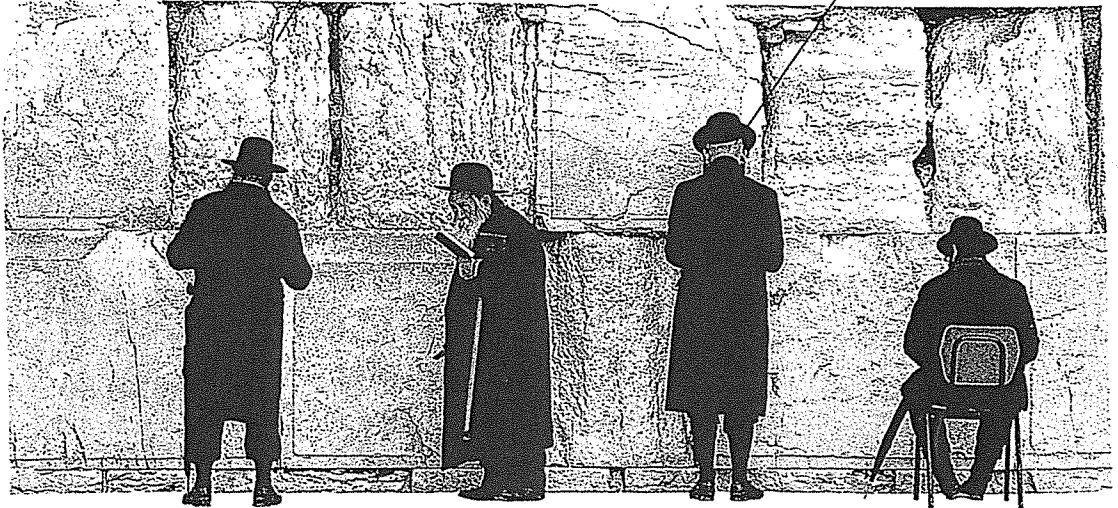
THE JEWISH PEOPLE trace their ancestry back to three ancient leaders known as the patriarchs: Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob. In their daily prayers, Jews still call themselves "children of Abraham." They call their nation Israel, the name God gave to Jacob. Their story began when Abraham left what is now Iraq about 1800 B.C.E. to settle in Canaan, the "Promised Land," now known as Palestine or Israel. Later, Jacob's sons went to Egypt. Around 1250 B.C.E., their descendants, the Hebrews, were led out by Moses, in the journey known as the Exodus. On the way, the God of the patriarchs appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and made a covenant (agreement) with Israel. It was enshrined in the Ten Commandments and later in the rest of the Torah, the "Law of Moses." Ever since, this God-given religious law has been at the heart of Israel's identity as a people. Jews see God as both the God of Israel, his "chosen people," and as the Creator and Ruler of all that is, the God who controls history, all-powerful and all-loving.

THE WESTERN WALL

The Western Wall is all that remains of the second Temple, built by King Herod, which stood in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, when Jerusalem was the capital of the ancient Jewish kingdom. The Temple was the center of Jewish worship until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E., after which the Jews were scattered and did not have their own state for 1,900 years. The wall is a symbol of the Temple and a memorial of its destruction. It is the holiest site for Jews in Jerusalem.

The Western Wall was called the Wailing Wall because it was associated with crying for the destruction of the temple

Jewish people come from all over the world to pray at the Wall



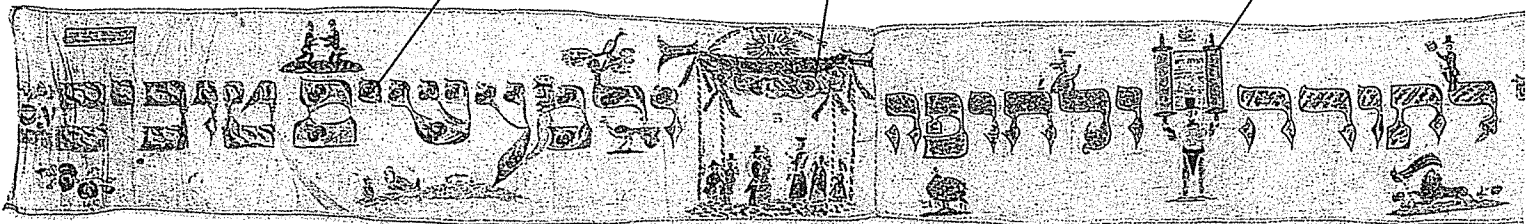
A BABY BOY

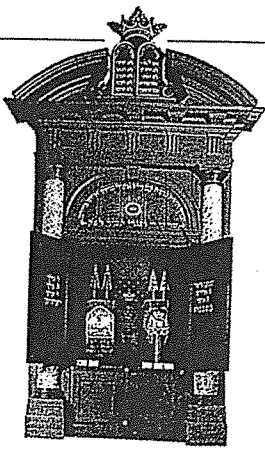
When God made a covenant with Abraham, he commanded that all boys born of Abraham's people should be circumcised as a sign of God's choice of Israel as his chosen people. They are still, to this day, eight days after birth. This is a cloth made for a baby boy.

The Hebrew reads "May he live for the Torah, the huppah, and good deeds"

The huppah, or wedding canopy, the indispensable covering for the bridal pair during the marriage ceremony

The Torah, scroll of the Law



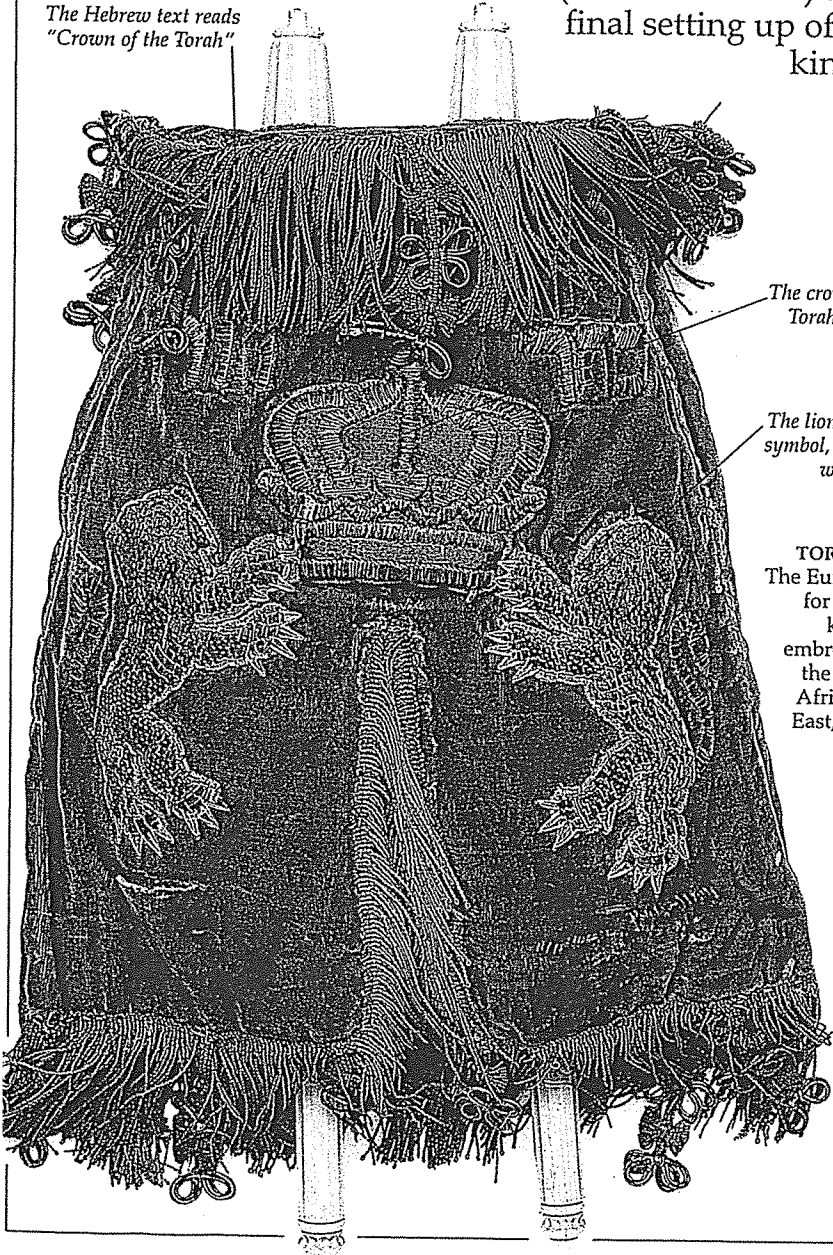


ARK OF THE COVENANT
The ark of the Law holds the scrolls of the Torah in a synagogue. It sits behind a curtain; facing it, one faces toward Jerusalem. The original Ark of the Covenant held the Ten Commandments while Israel journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land.

People of the Torah

AT THE HEART of the Jewish religion is the Torah, "the Law," written in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Torah not only means "law" but also "teaching" and "guidance." In the Torah, God has given teachings about himself, his purposes, and how he wishes his people to obey him in every part of their lives. For a religious Jew, to obey the Torah is to follow God's guidance. The reading of the Torah is a major part of worship in the synagogue (assembly). People also respond to God by communicating with him in prayer. Jewish people believe they have a special role in God's plans for humanity, since it was to them that God revealed the Torah. They look forward to a time when God will send his Messiah ("anointed one") to announce the final setting up of God's rule, or kingdom, on earth.

The Hebrew text reads "Crown of the Torah"

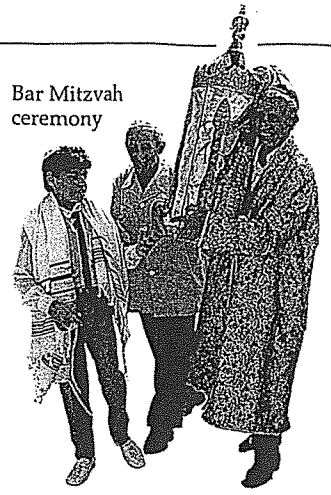


The crown is a symbol of the Torah because the Torah is seen as the crowning glory of Jewish life

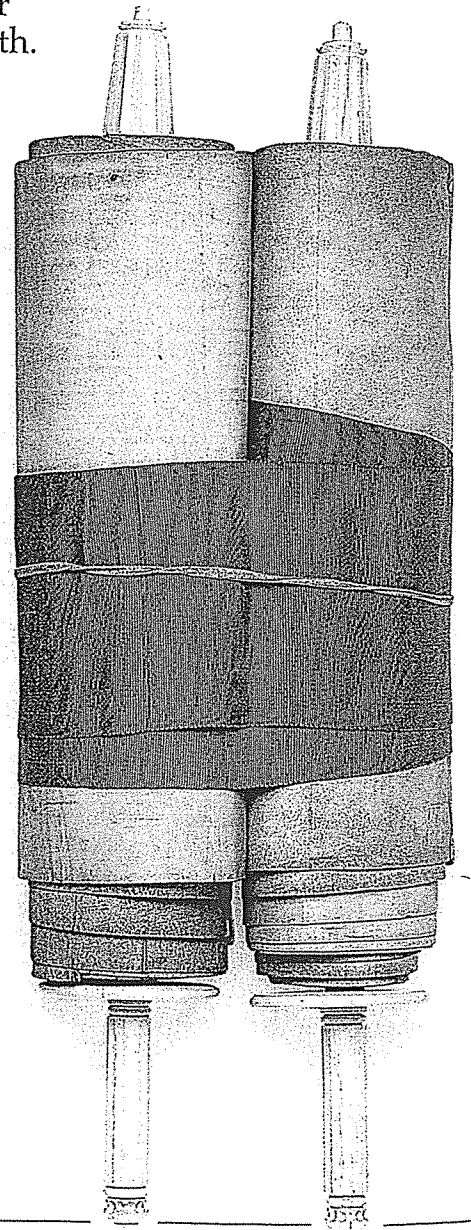
The lion is a common Jewish symbol, originally associated with the tribe of Judah

TORAH AND MANTLE
The European tradition is for Torah scrolls to be kept covered by an embroidered mantle. In the tradition of North Africa and the Middle East, they are kept in a rigid container.

Bar Mitzvah ceremony



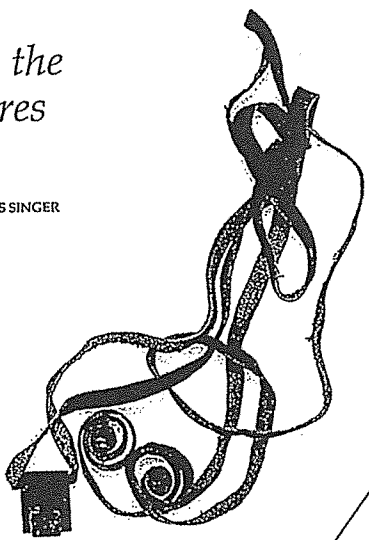
COMING OF AGE
When a Jewish boy reaches thirteen, he becomes Bar Mitzvah, "a son of the commandments." He is then considered to be a responsible adult and is expected to follow all the commandments of the Law. For a girl the age of responsibility is twelve.



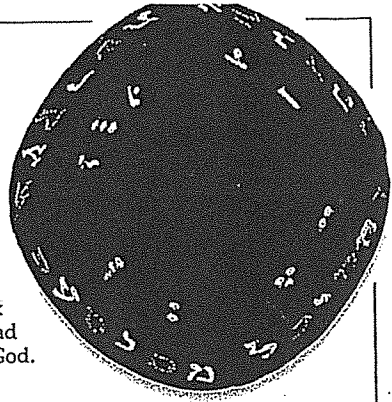
the deeper you dig into the Torah, the more treasures you uncover.

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

WEARING THE TORAH
During their daily prayers, Jewish men wear a pair of small black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah strapped to the upper left arm and above the forehead. These boxes are called phylacteries, or tefillin.

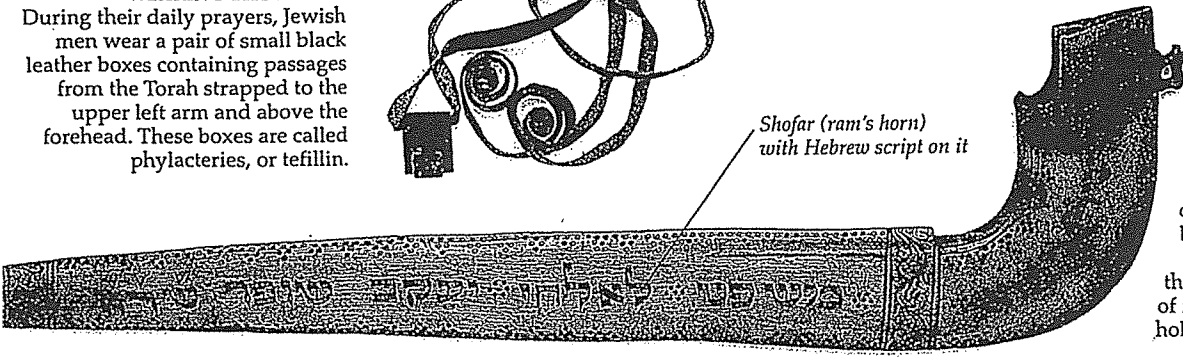


SIGN OF RESPECT
A strictly religious Jewish man prays three times a day, in the morning, afternoon, and evening, either at home or in the synagogue. When he prays, he covers his head with a hat or with a skull-cap, known as a yarmulke or kippah. When he goes out, an Orthodox Jew may continue to cover his head as a sign of respect for God.

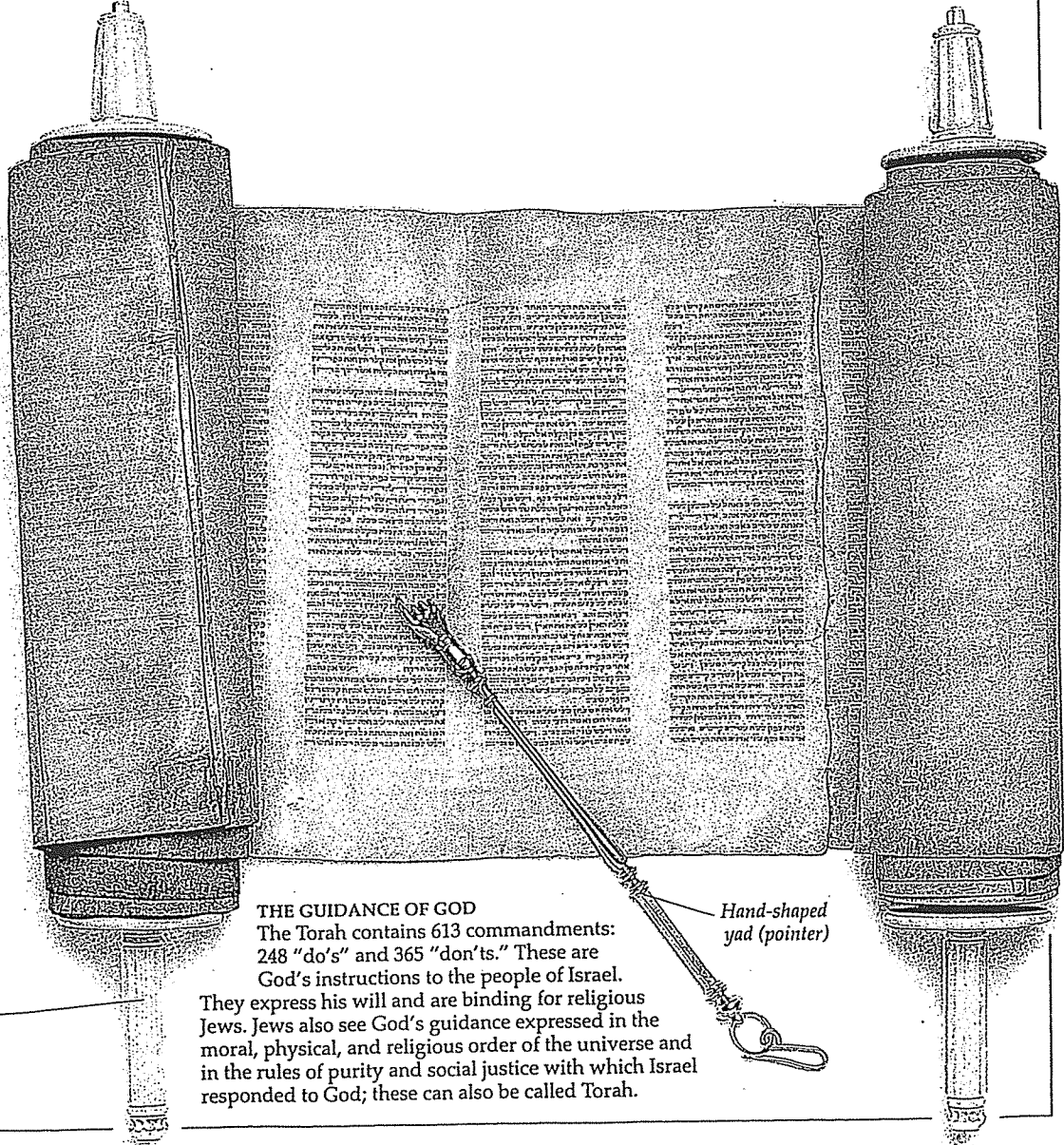


CALL TO REPENTANCE
At Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) the shofar, or ram's horn, is blown to call Jewish people to repentance (to ask God to forgive all the wrong things they have done in the past year). This begins the ten solemn days leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting and repentance, the holiest day of the Jewish year.

Shofar (ram's horn) with Hebrew script on it



SON OF THE TORAH
When a Jewish boy becomes Bar mitzvah, the family and community celebrate. They attend the synagogue, and during a Sabbath service the boy will exercise his full adult rights for the first time by putting on the tallit and reading in public from the Law (the Torah) and the Prophets. The tallit is a prayer shawl with tassels at both ends worn by Jewish men at morning prayer and on Yom Kippur. Some, but not all, synagogues also have parallel Bat Mitzvah coming-of-age ceremonies for girls.



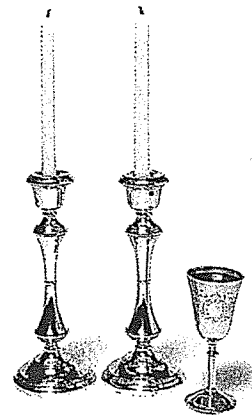
THE GUIDANCE OF GOD
The Torah contains 613 commandments: 248 "do's" and 365 "don'ts." These are God's instructions to the people of Israel. They express his will and are binding for religious Jews. Jews also see God's guidance expressed in the moral, physical, and religious order of the universe and in the rules of purity and social justice with which Israel responded to God; these can also be called Torah.

Hand-shaped yad (pointer)

The Torah scroll is too sacred to touch, so it is held by handles and a pointer is used to keep the place

Family and community

THE CENTER OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE is the home. Great emphasis is placed on the family and its relationships. The Jewish year contains many festivals, which give a pattern and a rhythm to the community's life. Many of them are not only religious but family festivals too. These festivals bind the community together. They also make the continuing story of Israel's relationship with God a living part of people's lives. The most important is the weekly Shabbat (Sabbath), a day of rest when Jews do no work and recall the completion of creation. At the center of public worship and of social life is the synagogue, or "assembly." On Friday evenings and on Saturday mornings the Jewish community gathers there for Sabbath services.



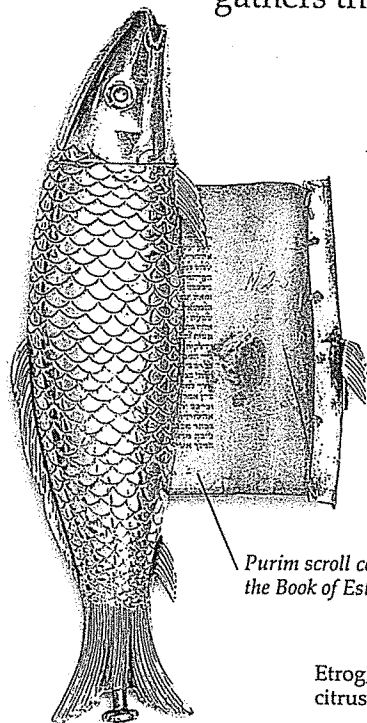
CUP OF BLESSING
Most Jewish homes have a wine goblet called a Kiddush cup. The name comes from the blessing spoken over the wine and bread during the Sabbath and Passover.



Palm frond

Palm, myrtle, and willow are woven together

Lulav, carried in procession at Sukkot

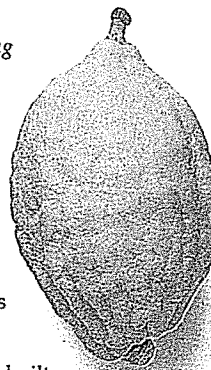


Purim scroll containing the Book of Esther

PURIM

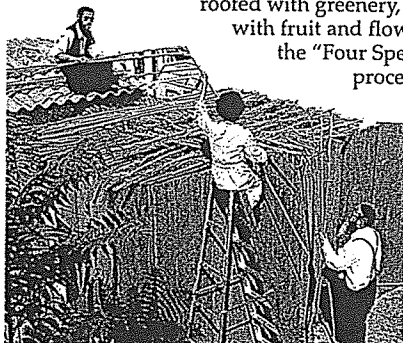
Nearly halfway through the Jewish year (in February or March) comes Purim, which is marked by parties where masks and elaborate costumes are sometimes worn. Purim means "lots." The name refers to a time in the 5th century B.C.E. when an official in the Persian Empire called Haman made a plan to kill all the Jews and drew lots to decide when. During the festival, the Book of Esther from the Bible is read aloud to recall how Esther, the King's wife, helped save her people from slaughter.

Etrog, a citrus fruit

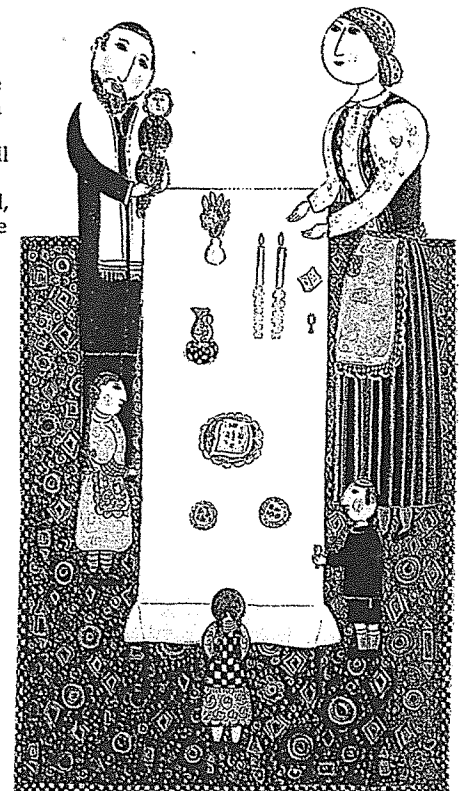


SUKKOT

Sukkot takes place in September or October, at the end of harvest. During this festival, Jews recall how God provided for all their needs when they wandered in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. Festive huts are built, roofed with greenery, and decorated with fruit and flowers. In a ceremony called the "Four Species," a lulav is carried in procession with an etrog while prayers are said.



Sukkot huts are built in gardens or next to a synagogue and, if possible, people eat and sleep in them for the week of the festival

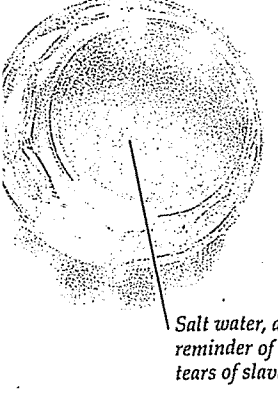
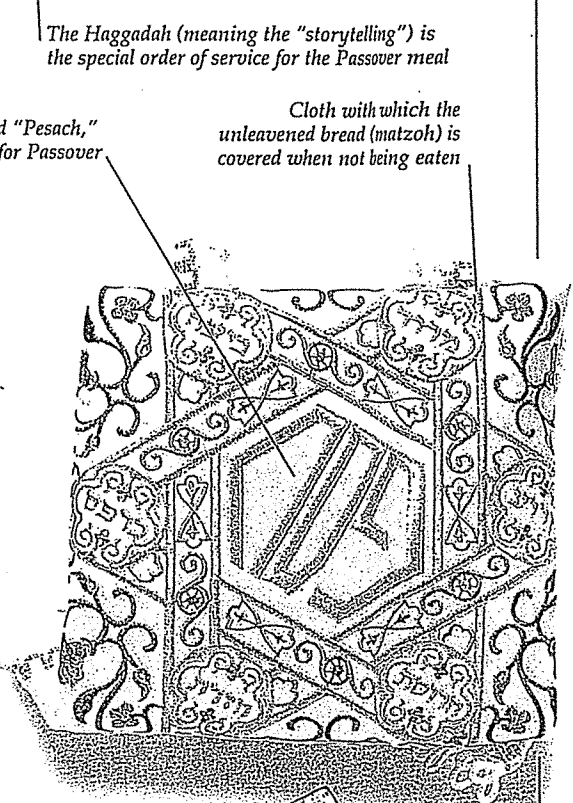
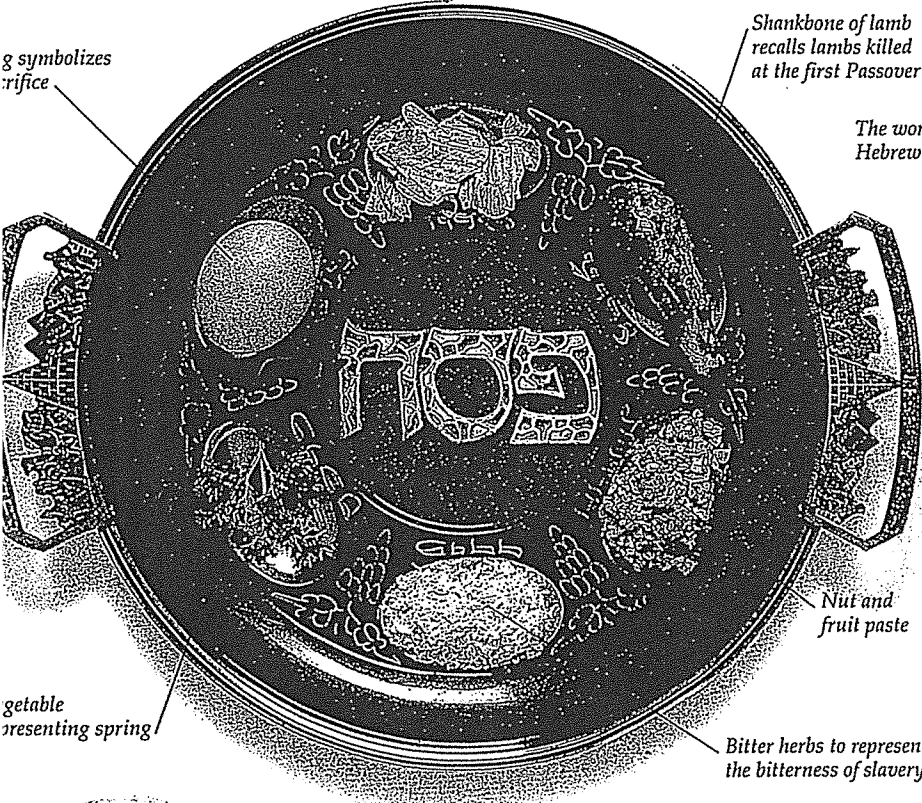


LIGHTING THE SABBATH CANDLES

The Jewish day begins and ends at sunset, so the Sabbath, which falls on a Saturday, begins on Friday evening, when the woman of a Jewish household kindles the "Sabbath Lights" and prays for God's blessing on her work and family. The Sabbath table is then laid with bread and wine. Before the meal, the husband praises his wife and recites scriptures about creation and the Sabbath. Then he blesses the wine and bread and passes them around.

PASSOVER
 A week-long Passover is the most well-known of all Jewish festivals. It commemorates the events described in the Book of Exodus in the Torah. The festival is called Passover because, when God sent a divine punishment to Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let his people go, the Angel of Death "passed over" the Hebrews and spared them. At the Passover meal the youngest child in the family asks why this night is different from all other nights. The father tells the story of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt (the Exodus). He speaks of the harshness of life in Egypt, of Moses who led the Jewish people out of slavery, of how God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and how God redeemed Israel in the desert.

The image shows a page from a Hebrew Haggadah. It features several illustrations: a group of people at a table, a person holding a staff, and a person with a staff. The text is in Hebrew, with some words in bold. The page is titled "הגדה ליל פסח" (Haggadah for the night of Passover). The text describes the Passover story, including the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Ten Commandments. There are also some smaller illustrations and text blocks interspersed throughout the page.



The special meal held in the home on the first two nights of Passover is called the Seder (order); these dishes are placed on the table to teach the Passover story

Matzoh (bread made without yeast) recalls the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt

CONTEMPLATION
 To contemplate is to think about something or to gaze upon an object. Religious people practice quiet reflection and focused prayer, concentrating their minds on God, or on some other reality that transcends (rises above) the self. By this means they can experience oneness, or "union," with the divine.