



## SAMS Roots Glossary of terms

**Aliyah** immigration to Israel; also the calling of a member of the congregation to the bimah (lectern) for the honour of participating in the blessings before and after a Torah reading.

**Ark** ornamental closet, which contains each synagogue's Torah scrolls. The Torah is the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures.

**Ashkenazi** a Jew of central or eastern European descent. More than 80 per cent of Jews today are Ashkenazim.

**Bat Chayil** (in some congregations) a ceremony of confirmation for a girl of at least Bat Mitzvah age.

**Bar Mitzvah** the initiation ceremony of a Jewish boy who has reached the age of 13 and is regarded as ready to observe religious precepts and eligible to take part in public worship.

**Bat Mitzvah** the initiation ceremony of a Jewish girl who has reached the age of at least 12 and is regarded as ready to observe religious precepts and eligible to take part in public worship.

**Bench** to recite a blessing. It usually refers to the Grace after Meals.

**Bereshit** Hebrew for 'in the beginning' and is the first weekly Torah portion in the annual Jewish cycle of Torah reading, Genesis 1:1–6:8.

**Beth Din** a Jewish court of law composed of three rabbinic judges, responsible for matters of Jewish religious law and the settlement of civil disputes between Jews.

**Bimah** a platform in a synagogue holding the reading table used when chanting or reading portions of the Torah and the Prophets.

**Bnei Akivah** the largest religious Zionist youth movement.

**Bracha (s) / brachot (pl)** blessing or thanksgiving.

**Broyges** angry or annoyed.

**Bubbe Maiseh** literally grandmother's tale, old wives' tale.

**Challah** a plaited loaf of white leavened bread, traditionally baked to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath.

**Chalutzim** pioneers in the building of the State of Israel.

**Chazan** Jewish clergy trained particularly in the vocal arts, who helps teach and lead the congregation in songful prayer.

**Cheder** a school for Jewish children in which Hebrew and religious knowledge are taught.

**Chevra Kadisha** organization of Jewish men and women who see to it that the bodies of deceased Jews are prepared for burial according to Jewish tradition.

**Chumash** Torah in printed form as opposed to a Torah scroll.

**Chuppah** a canopy used in Jewish weddings.

**Clobiosh** a card game known by many variations of the name, e.g.: Clob, Clobby, Klabberjass and so on, of possibly German origin and widely played in Jewish communities.

**Dayan** a religious judge, in particular one in a rabbinic court.

**Drasha** sermon; learned address.

**D'var Torah** also known as a Drasha in Ashkenazi communities; a talk on topics relating to a section (parashah) of the **Torah** (typically relating to the weekly **Torah** portion).

**Frum / frummer** someone who is *frum* or devout is known as a *frum Jew*, a *frummer* (Yiddish meaning 'pious one').

**Gabbai** also known as a shamash, who assists in the running and organization of synagogue services.

**Habonim** international youth movement affiliated with the Israel Labour party and stressing Hebrew language, culture and settlement in Israel, and with strong ties to the kibbutz movement.

**Haddasah** the name of the Women's Zionist Organization of America, the largest Jewish women's organization in the United States.

**Haftorah** a short reading from the Prophets, which follows the reading from the Torah in a Jewish synagogue.

**Hagbah and Gelilah** '*hagbah*' is the term for raising the Torah; '*gelilah*' is the word for rolling up and tying the Torah scroll and replacing its cover and ornaments.

**JSoc** Jewish Society, found at many UK universities.

**Kaddish** an ancient Jewish prayer sequence regularly recited in the synagogue service, including thanksgiving and praise and concluding with a prayer for universal peace; a form of the Kaddish is recited for the dead.

**Kanada Commando** the division of Auschwitz where prisoners sorted clothes.

**Kapos** concentration camp prisoners appointed to supervise other inmates.

**Kashrus / kashrut** kosher.

**Ketubah** Jewish marriage contract.

**Kiddush** refreshments served after a service; also, the blessings recited over wine.

**Kindertransport** (Children's Transport) was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts that brought thousands of refugee Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1940.

**Kol Nidre** the commencement of Yom Kippur; takes place from sundown the evening before.

**Kommandant** concentration camp commander.

**Kotel** also known as the **Western Wall** or Wailing Wall; an ancient limestone wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, traditionally believed to be the remains of the western wall of Herod's temple, destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

**Krank** to irk or irritate.

**Leichenkommando** the division of Auschwitz where prisoners worked with corpses.

**Leyn** read from the Torah.

**Litvak** a Jew from Lithuania or the surrounding region.

**Maccabi** Zionist youth movement.

**Machzor** a Jewish prayer book for use at festivals.

**Magen David** Star of David.

**Masorti** the Masorti, or Conservative, movement is a denomination that has been described as traditional Judaism for modern Jews.

**Mechitza** partition or division, particularly one that is used to separate men and women in orthodox synagogues.

**Megillah** the scroll containing the biblical narrative of the book of Esther, traditionally read in synagogues to celebrate the festival of Purim.

**Minhag** a custom or practice, especially one which has taken on the force of law.

**Minyan** a quorum of ten adults (over the age of 13) required for traditional Jewish public worship.

**Moshav** a cooperative association of Israeli smallholders.

**Musaf Amidah** the Musaf prayer is an *Amidah* (standing prayer).

**Oy vey** exclamation indicating dismay or grief (used mainly by Yiddish speakers).

**Pale of Settlement** a western region of Imperial Russia in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish permanent residency was generally prohibited.

**Parsha** the weekly Torah portion; the parashah, parshah or parsha, also known as a sidra or sedra, is a section of the Torah (Hebrew Bible).

**Pesach** Hebrew term for the Passover festival.

**Pogrom** an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group, in particular that of Jews in Russia or eastern Europe.

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

**Rebbetzin** the wife of a rabbi.

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

**Schlep / schlepping** to carry or move slowly.

**Schmatter** Yiddish for clothes, especially the clothing manufacturing industry.

**Seder** a Jewish ritual service and ceremonial dinner for the first night or first two nights of Passover.

**Sefer Torah** a book of Hebrew religious literature; a scroll containing the Torah or Pentateuch.

**Sephardi** a Jew of Spanish or Portuguese descent. Sephardic Jews have retained their own distinctive dialect of Spanish (Ladino), customs and rituals, preserving Babylonian Jewish traditions rather than the Palestinian ones of the Ashkenazim.

**Shabbat / Shabbas** the Jewish Sabbath, which begins at sundown on Friday, continuing to after sunset on Saturday.

**Shacharit** (Shacharis in Ashkenazi Hebrew) the daily morning prayer .

**Shaliach** a member of the Chabad Hasidic movement who is sent out to promulgate Judaism and Hasidism in locations around the world; also, an emissary from Israel sent to teach about Israel, Zionism and Judaism in other countries

**Shamash** also known as a *gabbai*, who assists in the running and organization of synagogue services.

**Shidduch** a Jewish arranged marriage.

**Shiur** a Talmudic study session, usually led by a rabbi.

**Shochet** a person officially certified as competent to kill cattle and poultry in the manner prescribed by Jewish law.

**Shtetl** a small Jewish town or village in eastern Europe.

**Shul** a synagogue.

**Smicha** rabbinical ordination.

**Stolpersteine** literally 'stumbling stone'; is a type of monument created by artist Gunter Demnig to commemorate victims of Nazi oppression, including the Holocaust.

**Tanach** the Jewish scriptures, which consist of three divisions: the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings.

**Torah** the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures (the Pentateuch).

**Tzedakah** charitable giving, typically seen as a moral obligation.

**Ulpan** an institute or school for the intensive study of Hebrew.

**Workmen's Circle** a centre combining Jewish cultural heritage and social justice activism, promoting the learning of, among other things, Yiddish.

**Yeshiva** an Orthodox Jewish college or seminary.

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

**Yiddishkeit** the quality of being Jewish; the Jewish way of life or its customs and practices.

**YomTov (s) / YomTovim (pl)** holidays observed in Judaism and by Jews throughout the Hebrew calendar.

**Yom Kippur** one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar; the Day of Atonement.

**Zemirot** Jewish hymns, usually sung in the Hebrew or Aramaic languages, but sometimes also in Yiddish or Ladino.