This volume provides readers with a comprehensive introduction to the most important and interesting historical and contemporary facets of Judaism in America.

Written by twenty-six leading scholars from the fields of religious studies, American history and literature, philosophy, art history, sociology, and musicology, *The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism* adopts an inclusive perspective on Jewish religious experience. Three initial chapters cover the development of Judaism in America from 1654, when Sephardic Jews first landed in New Amsterdam, until today. Subsequent chapters go beyond a presentation of the basic material and include cutting-edge scholarship and original ideas while remaining accessible at an introductory level.

While influenced by Christian patterns of religious life, American Jews have understood the idea of religious identification quite differently from American Christians. Thus, a secondary goal of this volume is to help both its Jewish and non-Jewish readers better understand the more abstract meaning of religion in a Jewish context.

*The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism* will be of interest not only to scholars but also to all readers interested in social and intellectual trends in the modern world.

**Dana Evan Kaplan** is Visiting Research Scholar at the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies and the Cuban and Cuban-American Institute at the University of Miami. He is also rabbi of Congregation B’nai Israel in Albany, Georgia. His previous books include *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction* (2003), *Platforms and Prayerbooks: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism* (2002), and *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism: Conflicting Visions* (2001).
This is a series of companions to major topics and key figures in theology and religious studies. Each volume contains specially commissioned chapters by international scholars that provide an accessible and stimulating introduction to the subject for new readers and nonspecialists.

Other titles in the series

**The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine**
edited by Colin Gunton (1997)
*isbn 0 521 47118 4 hardback  isbn 0 521 47695 8 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation**
edited by John Barton (1998)
*isbn 0 521 48144 9 hardback  isbn 0 521 48593 2 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer**
edited by John de Gruchy (1999)
*isbn 0 521 58258 x hardback  isbn 0 521 58751 6 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology**
edited by Chris Rowland (1999)
*isbn 0 521 46144 8 hardback  isbn 0 521 46707 1 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth**
edited by John Webster (2000)
*isbn 0 521 58476 0 hardback  isbn 0 521 58560 0 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics**
edited by Robin Gill (2001)
*isbn 0 521 77070 x hardback  isbn 0 521 77918 9 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Jesus**
edited by Markus Bockmuehl (2001)
*isbn 0 521 79261 4 hardback  isbn 0 521 79678 4 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology**
edited by Susan Frank Parsons (2002)
*isbn 0 521 66327 x hardback  isbn 0 521 66586 0 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther**
*isbn 0 521 81648 3 hardback  isbn 0 521 01673 8 paperback*

**The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul**
edited by James D. G. Dunn

**The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy**
edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman

**The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology**
edited by David Bagchi and David Steinmetz

**The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin**
edited by Donald K. McKim

**The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar**
edited by Edward Oakes and David Moss

**The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology**
edited by Kevin Vanhoozer
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521822046

© Cambridge University Press 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
The Cambridge companion to American Judaism / edited by Dana Evan Kaplan.
p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to religion)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
isbn 0 521 82204 1 (casebound) – isbn 0 521 52951 4 (pbk.)
1. Judaism – United States. I. Kaplan, Dana Evan. II. Title. III. Series.
b205.c35 2005
296'.0973 – dc22 2004024336
isbn-13 978-0-521-82204-6 hardback
isbn-10 0-521-82204-1 hardback
isbn-13 978-0-521-52951-8 paperback
isbn-10 0-521-52951-4 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this book and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.
Contents

List of contributors  page xi
Chronology  xv
Glossary  xxi
List of abbreviations  xxvi
Introduction  1
DANA EVAN KAPLAN

Part I  Historical overviews

1 Preservation to innovation: Judaism in America, 1654–1880  23
ELI FABER
2 American Judaism, 1880–1945  43
LLOYD P. GARTNER
3 Trends in American Judaism from 1945 to the present  61
DANA EVAN KAPLAN

Part II  Themes and concepts

Section I: Religious Culture and Institutional Practice

4 Jewish religious denominations  81
LAWRENCE GROSSMAN
5 Patterns of American Jewish religious behavior  101
CHAIM I. WAXMAN
6 Thinking Judaism through: Jewish theology in America  117
BYRON L. SHERWIN
7 The essence of American Judaism  133
CHARLES S. LIEBMAN
8 Contemporary Jewish education  145
ISA AKON, MICHAEL ZELDIN, AND SARA S. LEE
## Section 2: Identity and Community

9 The place of Judaism in American Jewish identity 169  
*Debra Renee Kaufman*

10 The Holocaust in American Jewish life 187  
*Lynn Rapaport*

11 Long-distance nationalism: American Jews, Zionism, and Israel 209  
*Steven T. Rosenthal*

12 Life-cycle rituals: Rites of passage in American Judaism 225  
*Rela Mintz Geffen*

13 Choosing lives: Evolving gender roles in American Jewish families 237  
*Sylvia Barack Fishman*

14 The body and sexuality in American Jewish culture 253  
*David Biale*

## Section 3: Living in America

15 The American Jewish urban experience 271  
*Nathan Glazer*

16 “Sacred survival” revisited: American Jewish civil religion in the new millennium 283  
*Jonathan Woocher*

17 Judaism and democracy in America 299  
*Alan Mittleman*

18 The economics of American Judaism 315  
*Carmel U. Chiswick*

19 American Judaism and interfaith dialogue 327  
*Yaakov Ariel*

## Section 4: Jewish Art in America

20 American midrash: Urban Jewish writing and the reclaiming of Judaism 345  
*Murray Baumgarten*

21 Recent trends in new American Jewish music 363  
*Mark Kligman*

22 The visual arts in the American Jewish experience 381  
*Matthew Baigell*
Section 5: The Future

23 American Judaism in the twenty-first century 397
BRUCE PHILLIPS

Afterword: The Study of American Judaism:
A Look Ahead 417
JONATHAN D. SARNA

Further reading 423
Index 433
List of Contributors

Yaakov Ariel is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has several written books and articles on the Jewish-Christian relationship in America.

Isa Aron is Professor of Jewish Education at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles. She was the founding director of the Experiment in Congregational Education, a project of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, now in its twelfth year. She is the senior editor of A Congregation of Learners and the author of Becoming a Congregation of Learners (2000) and The Self-Renewing Congregation (2000).

Matthew Baigell is Professor Emeritus of Art History at Rutgers University. He has written many books and articles on American art, Jewish American art, and Soviet and post-Soviet East European art.

Murray Baumgarten is Director of Jewish Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he holds the Neufeld-Levin Chair in Holocaust Studies with Peter Kenez; he is Professor of English and Comparative Literature. He also edits Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life & Thought, published by the American Jewish Congress.

David Biale is Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Davis. He is the author, most recently, of Eros and the Jews (1997) and the editor of Cultures of the Jews: A New History (2002).

Carmel U. Chiswick is Professor of Economics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is a development economist and a labor economist and serves on the Technical Advisory Committee to the National Jewish Population Study. Her recent work focuses on the economics of religion, especially as it applies to the American Jewish family, to religious observance, and to Jewish communal institutions.

Eli Faber is Professor of History at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and at the University Graduate Center, both of which are part of The City University of New York. He is the editor of American Jewish History, the journal of The American Jewish Historical Society. He is the author of A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820, which is Volume I of the five-volume work, The Jewish
xii Contributors

People in America, he is also the author of Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight.

Sylvia Barack Fishman is Associate Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department; she is also Codirector of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, both at Brandeis University. She is the author of Double Or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage (2004), Jewish Life and American Culture (2000), Follow My Footprints: Changing Images of Women in American Jewish Fiction (1992), and A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community (1992).

Lloyd P. Gartner is Professor Emeritus of Jewish History at Tel Aviv University. His most recent book is History of the Jews in Modern Times (2000).

Nathan Glazer is Professor of Education and Sociology Emeritus at Harvard University. He was one of the original editorial staff of Commentary magazine, and for many years he was editor of the public policy quarterly, The Public Interest. He is the author of American Judaism, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1957, with revised editions in 1972 and 1989 and still in print. Among his other books is Beyond the Melting Pot (with Daniel P. Moynihan), Affirmative Discrimination, Ethnic Dilemmas, The Limits of Social Policy, and most recently We Are All Multiculturalists Now.

Lawrence Grossman is a coeditor of the American Jewish Year Book and Associate Director of Research at the American Jewish Committee. Beginning in 1988, his annual articles on “Jewish Communal Affairs” for the Year Book have traced the development of Judaism in contemporary America.

Dana Evan Kaplan is Visiting Research Scholar at the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies and the Cuban and Cuban-American Institute at the University of Miami. He is also rabbi of Congregation B’nai Israel in Albany, Georgia. His previous books include American Reform Judaism: An Introduction (2003), Platforms and Prayerbooks: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism (2002), and Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism: Conflicting Visions (2001).

Debra Renee Kaufman is Director of Jewish Studies, a Matthews Distinguished Professor, and Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University. Her more recent books include Rachel’s Daughters: Newly Orthodox Jewish Women (1991) and a special edited edition of Contemporary Jewry, Women and the Holocaust (1994), as well as other publications on post-Holocaust Jewish identity politics. She is currently researching intergenerational ties among adult Jewish daughters and their mothers.

Mark Kligman is Associate Professor of Jewish Musicology at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, where he teaches in the School of Sacred Music. He specializes in the liturgical traditions of Middle Eastern Jewish communities. He has published several articles on the liturgy of Syrian Jews. His
work also extends to historical trends in the liturgical and contemporary music of Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions.

Sara S. Lee is Director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education and a Professor of Education. She has edited Touching the Future: Mentoring and the Jewish Professional with Michael Zeldin; A Congregation of Learners with Isa Aron and Seymour Rossel; “Religious Traditions in Conversation” with Mary Boys, in Religious Education (1996); and Communities of Learning: A Vision for the Jewish Future (1997).

The late Charles S. Liebman was Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Bar Ilan University. He published many books and articles on American Jewish life as well as on religion and politics in Israel. Dr. Liebman was the recipient of the Israel Prize in Political Science.

Rela Mintz Geffen is President of Baltimore Hebrew University. Previously, she was Professor of Sociology and Dean for Academic Affairs at Gratz College. She is a graduate of Columbia University (B.S. and M.A.), the Jewish Theological Seminary (B.R.E.), and the University of Florida (Ph.D). Her major research interests are in the area of sociology of religion, particularly the American Jewish community. Dr. Geffen has written more than forty scholarly articles and edited or coedited three books, including Celebration and Renewal: Rites of Passage in Judaism (1993) and The Conservative Movement in Judaism (2000), coauthored with the late Daniel J. Elazar. She has served as president of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry and as vice president of the Association for Jewish Studies.

Alan Mittleman is Professor of Modern Jewish Thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary and the director of the Louis Finkelstein Institute. He is the author of three books, most recently The Scepter Shall Not Depart from Judah: Perspectives on the Persistence of the Political in Judaism (2000). He has edited three books on Judaism and politics, most recently Religion as a Public Good: Jews and Other Americans on Religion in the Public Square (2003).

Bruce Phillips is Professor of Sociology and Jewish Communal Service at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles. He is one of the leading sociologists studying American Jewry. He has been a leader in Jewish social research for more than twenty years, conducting local demographic studies in Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, Milwaukee, Houston, Las Vegas, Chicago, Seattle, and San Francisco. His study, “Re-Examining Intermarriage,” published by the Wilstein Institute for Jewish Policy Studies, is considered an essential reference on this subject. He served on the National Technical Advisory Committee of the 1990 and 2000 National Jewish Population Studies.

Lynn Rapaport is Associate Professor of Sociology and Department Chair at Pomona College. She is the author of Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity, and Jewish–German Relations (1997), which won the 1998 Best Book Award
in the Sociology of Religion from the American Sociological Association. She is currently working on a project on how the Holocaust is portrayed in popular culture.

**Steven T. Rosenthal** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Hartford. He is the author of numerous articles and two books, including *Irreconcilable Differences: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* (2001).

**Jonathan D. Sarna** is Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, and he chairs the Academic Board of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. He has authored or edited more than twenty books on American Jewish history and life, including his most recent work, *American Jewish History: A History* (2004). He is also the chief historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History and of the 350th commemoration of Jewish life in America, 1654–2004.

**Byron L. Sherwin** is Distinguished Service Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Mysticism at Chicago’s Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. A protege of Abraham J. Heschel, he is the author of twenty-three books and more than 150 articles and monographs.


**Jonathan Woocher** is President and Chief Executive Officer of JESNA, North America’s organization for Jewish education advocacy and excellence. Previously, he was Associate Professor in the Benjamin S. Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service at Brandeis University. He is the author of the book *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (1986), and he has written extensively on a wide range of Jewish communal and educational issues.

**Michael Zeldin** is Professor of Jewish Education, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles. His specialties are day school education, educational change, and mentoring in the Jewish professions. He was the national chair of the Network for Research in Jewish Education and project director of Day Schools for the 21st Century (JDS-21), the Rhea Hirsch School of Education’s pilot project in day school education. He is director of DeLet@HUC: Day School Leadership Through Teaching, a national initiative to prepare teachers for Jewish day schools. He is also the Senior Editor of the *Journal of Jewish Education*.
Chronology

1636 Roger Williams founds Rhode Island, the first colony to endorse freedom of religion.

1654 Twenty-three Jews sail to New Amsterdam from Brazil on the St. Catherine, creating the first Jewish presence in what would become the United States.

1656 Abraham de Lucena, Salvador Dandrada, and Joseph Jacob Cohen petition Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Amsterdam for the right "to be permitted to purchase a burying place for their nation."

1678 Jews purchase a plot of land for a cemetery in Rhode Island.

1697 Four Jews settle and are given citizenship in South Carolina.

1730 Jews complete and dedicate a synagogue in Lower Manhattan.

1740 Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia dedicates land for a cemetery.

1761 The first English prayerbook for High Holy Day services is printed in New York.

1789 Gershom Mendes Seixas, Minister of New York’s Sephardic congregation Shearith Israel, is invited to George Washington’s inauguration.

1823 Solomon Henry Jackson publishes The Jew, the first Jewish monthly in the United States.

1824 Jews in Charleston, South Carolina, establish the Society of Reformed Israelites, the first Reform congregation in the United States.

1825 Mordecai Manuel Noah tries to found Ararat, a Jewish homeland near Buffalo, New York.

1838 Rebecca Gratz establishes a Sunday School in Philadelphia.

1843 B’nai B’rith, a Jewish fraternal organization, is established.

1845 Isaac Leeser publishes a translation of the Pentateuch into English.

1859 The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, the first national organization of Jewish congregations, is formed.
1860 Morris Jacob Raphael of New York opens a session of the House of Representatives with prayer.
1867 Maimonides College, the first rabbinical school in America, is founded in Philadelphia but folds shortly thereafter.
1875 Isaac Mayer Wise founds the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.
1885 A group of Reform rabbis meeting in Pittsburgh writes a statement of principles encapsulating the basic beliefs of Reform Judaism.
1886 The Jewish Theological Seminary is founded in New York.
1889 The Central Conference of American Rabbis is founded.
1892 The American Jewish Historical Society is founded.
1893 The National Council of Jewish Women is founded in Chicago.
1893 Rabbis are invited to participate in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.
1898 The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations is established in New York with Henry Pereira Mendes as its first president.
1902 Agudath ha-Rabbanim, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, is established to represent the more traditional Orthodox rabbis.
1902 Solomon Schechter comes to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York from Cambridge University in England.
1904 The first Jewish museum in the United States is founded in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
1906 The American Jewish Committee is founded.
1912 Henrietta Szold founds Hadassah, the Zionist women’s organization, in New York.
1913 Shortly after the trial of Leo Frank, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith is founded.
1913 The first Hebrew College is founded in Boston.
1917 The National Jewish Welfare Board is founded.
1918 The American Jewish Congress is founded.
1922 Mordecai M. Kaplan founds the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in New York.
1927 Al Jolson stars in the Jazz Singer, the first film with sound.
1928 The National Council of Christians and Jews is established.
1928 Yeshiva College, the first liberal arts college under Jewish auspices, is established in New York.
1930 Modern Hebrew is introduced into the public high school curriculum by the New York City Board of Education.
1930 Salo Wittmayer Baron is named to the Miller Chair of Jewish History, Literature, and Institutions at Columbia University, the
first chair in Jewish studies to be established at a secular university in the United States.

1933 Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany.

1934 Hank Greenberg refuses to play for the Detroit Tigers on Yom Kippur.

1934 Mordecai M. Kaplan publishes *Judaism as a Civilization*.

1937 Moses Feinstein immigrates from Luban, White Russia, to the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

1937 The Central Conference of American Rabbis passes the Columbus Platform.

1938 Roman Catholic priest Charles E. Coughlin uses the media to attack Jews and Judaism.

1939 The *S.S. St. Louis*, carrying 907 Jewish refugees from Germany, is turned back by Cuba and the United States.

1940 Lubavitch Rebbe Joseph Isaac Schneersohn emigrates from Warsaw, Poland, to Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

1941 Agudath Israel moves its international headquarters from London to New York.

1942 Stephen S. Wise confirms the mass murder of European Jews after receiving the Riegner report.

1942 Nazi leaders meet at the Wannsee Conference to decide on the “Final Solution.”

1945 *Commentary* magazine founded.

1945 The Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada issues a herem against Mordecai Kaplan for the editing of his Sabbath Prayer Book. The *New York Times* reports that the prayerbook was actually burned during the herem ceremony at the Hotel McAlpin in New York.

1947 Jacob Rader Marcus founds the American Jewish Archives on the campus of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

1948 The *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* is transformed from an annual to a quarterly publication. Its name is later changed to *The American Jewish Historical Quarterly* and then *American Jewish History*.

1949 Chaim Weizmann is elected Israel’s first president.

1950 Paula Ackerman, widow of William Ackerman, begins serving Temple Beth Israel of Meridian, Mississippi, as its unofficial rabbi.

1950 Joseph I. Schneersohn passes away. His son-in-law, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, becomes the seventh Rebbe, assuming the leadership of the worldwide Chabad-Lubavitch movement.
1954 Stern College for Women, the first degree-granting college of liberal arts and sciences for women under Jewish auspices, is established in New York.

1956 Hank Greenberg of the Detroit Tigers is inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

1958 Leon Uris writes *Exodus*, which becomes a runaway best seller.

1965 Abraham Joshua Heschel marches with Martin Luther King, Jr., for civil rights in Selma, Alabama.


1967 Israel conquers the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Six Day War.

1968 Havurat Shalom, a Jewish renewal community, is founded in Somerville, Massachusetts. It declares itself devoted to egalitarian prayer and learning. The community serves as a model for a Jewish counterculture Havurah.

1969 The Association for Jewish Studies, a learned society and professional organization that seeks to promote Judaic studies on the university level, is founded in Boston.

1972 Sally J. Priesand is ordained a rabbi by Hebrew Union College.

1972 Gerson D. Cohen succeeds Louis Finkelstein as chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

1973 *The Jewish Catalog* is published, helping counterculture Jews to become personally involved in the many aspects of Jewish ritual life.

1976 The Central Conference of American Rabbis passes the Centennial Perspective in San Francisco.

1983 The Reform movement accepts patrilineal descent as well as matrilineal descent as determining the Jewish status of offspring born to intermarried couples.

1985 The Jewish Theological Seminary votes to admit women to the rabbinical school.

1985 President Ronald Reagan visits the German military cemetery at Bitburg, which contains the graves of forty-seven members of the Waffen S.S.

1985 Joseph Soloveitchik ordains the 2,000th Orthodox rabbi at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University.

1986 Ismar Schorsch becomes chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

1986 Elie Wiesel is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson dies and is buried in Queens, New York. No successor is appointed, and many of his followers continue to believe that he is the messiah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Richard Joel replaces Norman Lamm as president of Yeshiva University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The American Jewish community celebrates 350 years of American Jewish life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

Agudath ha-rabbanim: Union of Orthodox rabbis.

Ark: The sacred space where the Torah scrolls are kept, usually at the front of the sanctuary. The Hebrew term is Aron hakodesh.

Ashkenazi: This was the term use to describe those Jews who settled in Central Europe in the middle ages. The word Ashkenaz, which came to mean “Germany” in medieval Hebrew, appears in Genesis 10:3.

Bagel: Round bread product with a hole in the middle that became known as a traditional American Jewish food item.

Bar mitzvah: Coming-of-age ceremony for boys at age thirteen at which the young men are called up to read from the Torah.

Bat mitzvah: Coming-of-age ceremony for girls at age twelve or thirteen. The ceremony itself varies, depending on the denomination, but it usually includes the reading of the Torah.

Ben or shalom zachor: The ceremony held on a Friday night after the birth of a baby boy.

Bimah: The pulpit or raised platform in the synagogue.

Brit: The covenant between God and Israel.

Brit Bat: The covenant of a daughter ceremony.

Brit Milah: The covenant of circumcision, which is performed on all Jewish males at eight days of age.

Challah: Braided loaf that is baked in preparation for the Sabbath and holy days.

Chanukkah: See Hanukkah.

Charoset: A mixture of apples, nuts, and wine that is eaten during the Passover Seder as part of the evening ritual.

Chutzpah: A Yiddish word meaning “having a lot of nerve.”

Dvar Torah: A brief comment on the weekly Torah portion, which is replacing formal sermons in many synagogues.
xxii  Glossary

Daven: The act of praying, usually referring to traditional prayer.

Derashot: Collections of sermons.

Edelkeit: Traditional virtue of scholarly refinement.

Emet Ve-Emunah: The most recent statement of principles issued by the Conservative movement.

Etrog: A citron that is one of the four species waved on Sukkot.

Etz Hayim: Recent Torah commentary commissioned by the Conservative movement.

Galut: Exile.

Gefilte fish: Chopped up white fish and pike baked in loaves or balls. A traditional Eastern European Jewish food.

Gemara: Extensive legal debates on the contents of the Mishnah, brief rabbinic legal statements. The Mishnah and the Gemara together form the Talmud.

Gemillut hasadim: Social welfare.


Gelt: Money.

Grogger: A noisemaker used on Purim when the name of Haman is read from the Scroll of Esther.

Goy, goyim: Gentile, Gentiles.

Haftorah: A reading chanted from one of the books of the prophets, following the Torah reading in traditional synagogues.

Haggadah: The liturgy for the Passover Seder.

Halakha: Jewish Law.

Hamantaschen: A triangular-shaped pastry stuffed with apricot, prune, or poppy seed filling, baked in the shape of Haman’s hat.

Hametz: Food that is prohibited during Passover, which includes all bread products.

Hanukkah: Eight-day festival of lights celebrating the victory of the Maccabees over the Hellenizers in the second century BCE.

Haskamot or askamot: Earlier bylaws in keeping with Sephardic tradition.

Hassid: A type of Ultra-Orthodox Jew who follows a Rebbe.

Havdalah: A short ritual with multiwicked candle, wine, and spices that marks the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the working week.

Hazan: The cantor who chants and sings Hebrew prayers during services in the synagogue.

Huppah: The canopy held over the bride and groom at Jewish weddings.
Kabbalah: Jewish mysticism.
Kaddish: Mourner’s prayer for the dead.
Knish: Dough-filled baked good.
Kashrut: The Jewish dietary laws.
Kavanah: Having intent; concentrating on a religious thought or act.
Kedushah: Holiness or sanctity.
Kehillot or kehillah: Community.
Ketubah: A Jewish marriage contract.
Kibud: Honor.
Kiddush: The prayer chanted over wine to consecrate the Sabbath and holidays.
Kiddushin: The halachic aspect of the Jewish marriage ceremony.
Kippah: A head covering worn by men (and now some women) to show respect for God during worship. Also called a Yarmulke or skullcap.
Kittel: White robe worn by a groom, and traditionally by men in the synagogue on Yom Kippur.
Kollel: Yeshiva for married men.
Kol Nidre: The prayer annulling all vows that opens the Yom Kippur evening service.
Kosher: Ritually “fit,” usually used to refer to food.
Latkes: Fried potato pancakes that are eaten on Hanukkah to remember the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days instead of one in the Temple in Jerusalem.
Lox: Smoked salmon.
Lulav: The palm branch that is waved on Sukkot with myrtle twigs (hadasim) and willow branches (Aravot).
Manischewitz: Name brand of the most popular Kosher wine used for ritual occasions.
Mashgiach: The supervisor over Kosher food production.
Matzah: Unleavened bread eaten during Passover.
Matzah ball: Chopped matzah mixed with eggs and oil to make a round dumpling, often eaten in chicken soup.
Mezuzah: The physical divider between the men’s and women’s sections in Orthodox synagogues.
Menorah: Candelabra that is lit incrementally one candle per night during Hanukkah to represent the one cruse of oil left in the Temple.
Glossary

Mezuzah: Scroll with a decorative casing placed on the doorpost of Jewish homes.

Midrash: Scriptural interpretation and teaching.

Minyan: A quorum of ten adult Jewish males (and now females in all non-Orthodox streams) required for public worship.

Mishnah: A compilation of brief rabbinic legal statements edited by Rabbi Judah the Prince around the year 200 CE.

Mitzvah: A commandment (in religious terms) or a good deed (in popular terminology).

Mohel: A ritual circumciser.

Oy vay: Oh my!

Payos: Side curls worn by Hassidic Jews.

Pidyon haben: Redemption of the firstborn son from sacred service on the thirtieth day after birth.

Rav ha kollel: Chief rabbi.

Rebbe: Charismatic Hassidic rabbi.

Rebbetzin: A rabbi’s wife.

Rosh Hashanah: The Jewish New Year, which is observed by Jews around the world by attending synagogue services and undergoing a process of repentance and forgiveness.

Seder: The ritual meal conducted on the first (and in traditional homes on the second) night of Passover.

Sephardi: Jews who descended from the Spanish exile of 1492 and Portugal.

Seudah shel mitzvah: Special added benedictions to the grace after meals.

Shaggitz: A derogatory Yiddish term for a male non-Jew.

Shacharit: The morning prayer service.

Shehitah: The ritual of slaughtering a kosher animal for the purpose of eating.

Shema: The central prayer of Judaism encapsulating the religious concept of ethical monotheism. The text, which begins with the words “Hear oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,” is taken from Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

Sheva brachot: The seven benedictions traditionally recited at a Jewish wedding ceremony.

Shiksa: A derogatory Yiddish term for a female non-Jew.

Shochet: A ritual slaughterer.

Shofar: A ram’s horn that is blown 100 times as part of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, and at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.
Glossary xxv

Shtetl: Yiddish for predominantly Jewish village in Eastern Europe’s Pole of Settleret; sometimes extended metaphorically to Jewish neighborhood.

Shul: A Yiddish term for a synagogue, almost always used to refer to a traditional congregation.

Shulhan Arukh: An authoritative code of Jewish law.


Tahara: The process of preparing and purifying the deceased for burial.

Taharat ha-mishpakhah: The laws governing sexual relations between husbands and wives.

Tallit: A rectangular, fringed prayer shawl.

Talmud: The oral law that consists of the Mishnah and the Gemara. It is a vast compilation of legal discussions divided into six orders and 63 tractates.

Teshuvah: Repentance.

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

Tref: Unkosher food.

Torah min ha-shamayim: Torah from Heaven.

Trop: The musical system for chanting Torah.

Tzedakah: Charity.

Verklempt: Overcome with emotion.

Yarmulke: Skullcap for men and, in the liberal movements, for women too. The yarmulke traditionally indicated humility before God. Also called kippah.

Yahrzeit: The annual observance commemorating the anniversary of the death of a family member.

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement.
List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADL</td>
<td>Anti-Defamation League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPAC</td>
<td>American Israeli Public Affairs Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJC</td>
<td>American Jewish Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJCongress</td>
<td>American Jewish Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJS</td>
<td>Association for Jewish Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCAR</td>
<td>Central Conference of American Rabbis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJF</td>
<td>Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAL</td>
<td>National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIAS</td>
<td>Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUC</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUC-JIR</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCC</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JDL</td>
<td>Jewish Defense League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOFA</td>
<td>Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Jewish Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JWB</td>
<td>Jewish Welfare Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCJ</td>
<td>National Council of Christians and Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJPS</td>
<td>National Jewish Population Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU</td>
<td>Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Rabbinical Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>Rabbinical Council of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAHC</td>
<td>Union of American Hebrew Congregations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UJA</td>
<td>United Jewish Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UOR</td>
<td>Union of Orthodox Rabbis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URJ</td>
<td>Union for Reform Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPR</td>
<td>World Parliament of Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WZO</td>
<td>World Zionist Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YKUF</td>
<td>Yiddisher Kultur Farband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YU</td>
<td>Yeshiva University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>