

Circumcision - Brit Milah: The *brit milah* or *bris* is a Jewish circumcision ceremony performed on 8-day-old male infants by a specially trained mohel. Many *mohelim* are doctors or rabbis (some are both) and are required to receive appropriate training both from the religious and medical fields. The *brit milah* is followed by a celebratory meal. If the child is born prematurely or has medical problems, the *brit milah* will be postponed until the doctors and *mohel* deem the child strong enough.

Death and mourning: In the Diaspora, Jews are buried in a plain, wooden casket. In the Land of Israel, burial is without a casket, because the ground is considered holy. At the funeral, mourners traditionally tear an outer garment. *Shiva* is the Jewish week-long mourning period for close relatives: father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister and spouse. The ritual is referred to as 'sitting *shiva*'. This commences immediately after the funeral, and lasts for seven days, during which family members traditionally gather in one home and receive visitors, who usually bring food. Prayers are held at the home, and male mourners recite the *kaddish* (prayer for the dead). Men attend synagogue every day for a year to mourn their parents, and for a month to mourn their children. Mourners light a *yortzeit* (memorial) candle, which burns for 24 hours on the Jewish anniversary of the death of the person being mourned.

Tefillin: *Tefillin*, also called phylacteries, are a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah. They are worn by observant Jews during weekday morning prayers. The hand-*tefillin* is placed on the upper arm, and the strap wrapped around the arm, hand and fingers; while the head-*tefillin* is placed above the forehead, in accordance with the Torah instruction that they serve as a 'sign' and 'remembrance' that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Kippah: A *kippah*, also known as a *yarmulke*, is a round skullcap worn by Orthodox Jewish men to fulfill the requirement that their head be covered as a sign of humility and obedience to God's will. It is always worn by Jewish men at times of prayer. Observant Jews wear it at all times.

Tallit (Plural: Tallitot): A *tallit* is a Jewish prayer shawl worn by Jewish men over their outer clothes during all morning prayers. The *tallit* has special twined and knotted fringes known as *tzitzit* attached to its four corners. Observant Jews also wear a small *tallit* as an undergarment at all times during the day. Most traditional *tallitot* are made of wool. Many parents purchase a *tallit* for their sons at the age of 13, together with *tefillin*. In the egalitarian, Reform and Conservative movements, it is common for both men and women to wear a *tallit*. At Jewish wedding ceremonies, a *tallit* is sometimes used as a chuppah or wedding canopy. The *tallit* is traditionally draped over the shoulders, but during prayer, married men often cover their heads with it, notably during specific parts of the service or when called to read the Torah.

Mezuzah: A *mezuzah* is a scroll of parchment inscribed with biblical verses or prayer. The scroll is put in a decorative container and affixed to the upper right doorpost of a house or room.



Mezuzah case containing Biblical verses handwritten on parchment, affixed to doorways of Jewish homes



Reciting the Kiddush (Sanctification of the Sabbath or Festival) over a cup of wine



The Siddur (Prayerbook)



Public reading from the Torah in the synagogue