

# Jewish American Heritage Month

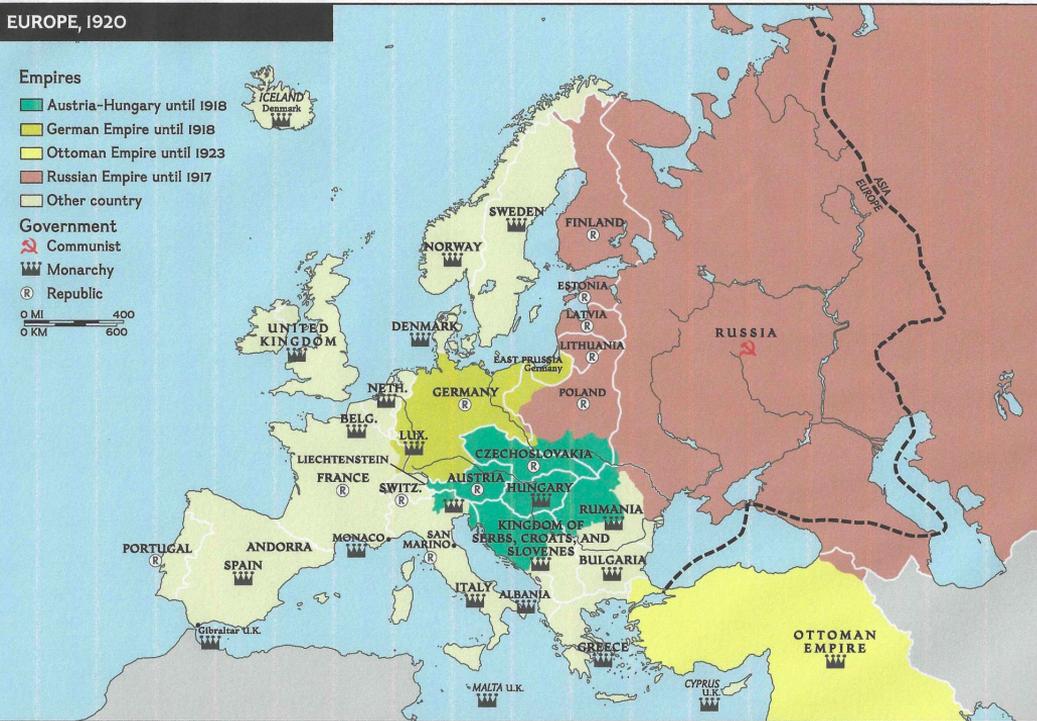
**May, 2021**

**Created by Contributions from Sharon Elementary Families**

# Immigration to the United States

**Ashkenazi Jews** are those whose ancestors came from in Eastern European countries such as Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Romania, and Hungary. **Sephardic Jews**, by contrast, are from the areas around the Mediterranean Sea, including Portugal, Spain, the Middle East and Africa.

Most Jewish immigrants came to the United States between 1820 and 1924 for economic opportunities and to escape religious persecution and political upheaval. This period of immigration came to an end with the passage of restrictive laws in 1921 and 1924. Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe to the United States never again reached the levels that it did before 1920.



# Famous Jewish Americans



**Joe Shuster and Jerome Siegel** - Co-created the DC Comics character, Superman

**Ruth Bader Ginsburg** - Supreme Court Judge

**Robert Kraft** - Owner of the Patriots and the Revolution

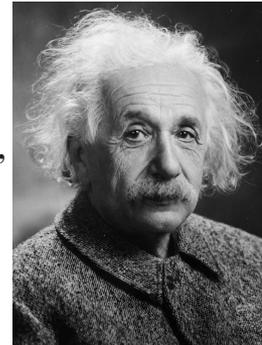
**Daveed Diggs** - Actor, rapper, singer, songwriter, screenwriter, and film producer. In the original cast of Hamilton.

**Pink** - Singer-Songwriter

**Albert Einstein** - Physicist

**Daniel Radcliffe** (Harry Potter), **Scarlett Johansson** (Black Widow),

**Natalie Portman** (Padme Amidala) - actors



# Language

Although most Jewish Americans speak English at home, many learn to read and write Hebrew in order to participate in religious services and celebrations. Hebrew uses a different alphabet than English and is read from right to left. Watch the [video](#) to learn the hebrew letters.

Yiddish is another language spoken by some Jewish Americans. It integrates many languages including German, Hebrew, Aramaic and various Slavic and Romance languages. Listen to this [song](#) in Yiddish.



| HEBREW ALPHABET CHART   |                  |              |   |  |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|------------------|--------------|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7   | ז                | ו            | ה   | ד  | ג   | ב  | ב   | א   |   |   |   |   |
|   | Zayin<br>'Z'     | Vav<br>'V'   | Hay<br>'H'  | Dalet<br>'D'   | Gimel<br>'G'  | Vet<br>'V'   | Bet<br>'B'  | Aleph<br>Silent <sup>1</sup>                                  |   |   |   |   |
| 40  | מ                | ל            | ך   | כ  | כ   | י  | ט   | ח   |   |   |   |   |
|   | Mem<br>'M'       | Lamed<br>'L' | Final Khaf<br>'KH'  | Khaf<br>'KH'   | Kaf<br>'K'  | Yud<br>'Y'   | Tet<br>'T'  | Chet<br>'KH'  |   |   |   |   |
| 80  | ף                | פ            | פ   | ע  | ס   | ן  | נ   | מ   |   |   |   |   |
|   | Final Fay<br>'F' | Fay<br>'F'   | Pay<br>'P'  | Ayin<br>Silent <sup>1</sup>                            | Samekh<br>'S'   | Final Nun<br>'N'   | Nun<br>'N'  | Final Mem<br>'M'  |   |   |   |   |
| 400   | ת                | ת            | ש   | ש  | ר   | ק  | ץ   | צ   |   |   |   |   |
|   | Sav<br>'T'       | Tav<br>'T'   | Sin<br>'S'  | Shin<br>'SH'   | Raysh<br>'R'  | Kuf<br>'K'   | Final Tzadi<br>'TZ'   | Tzadi<br>'TZ'   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Notes:</b>   |                  |              | Above each letter is its numeric value <sup>1</sup>                     |  |   | Vowels: The Aleph is silent <sup>1</sup> so we will use it in the example for each sound |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <sup>1</sup> If there is a vowel underneath the letter, the sound of the vowel is pronounced. If there is no vowel underneath, the letter remains silent.<br><sup>2</sup> In Hebrew there are two types of Sh'va's. Ash'va na is considered a vowel and is pronounced. This is represented in our transliteration by the apostrophe ('), and pronounced like the 'e' in father. The other sh'va, the sh'va nakh, indicates the end of a syllable. It does not have its own sound, and therefore no phonetic representation.<br><sup>3</sup> A kamatz katan looks like a regular kamatz but is pronounced like a kholam. |                  |              | אָ/אַ/אֱ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אוֹ/אִי<br><b>Shuruk / Kubutz</b><br>'u' in junior | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Segol</b><br>'e' in Edward | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kheirik</b><br>'ee' in street       | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kamatz Katan<sup>3</sup></b><br>'o' in host                  | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Patakh</b><br>'a' in hurrah       | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kamatz</b><br>'a' in hurrah       | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kheirik + Yud</b><br>'ee' in street | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kholam</b><br>'o' in host | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Patakh + Yud</b><br>'ai' in aisle | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kamatz + Yud</b><br>'ai' in aisle |
| <sup>4</sup> The Hebrew alphabet has a unique feature known as <i>gematria</i> , in which every letter is assigned a numerical value.   |                  |              | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Sh'va<sup>2</sup></b><br>' (apostrophe)     | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Tzayray</b><br>'ay' in day | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kheirik + Yud</b><br>'ee' in street | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kholam</b><br>'o' in host                                    | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Patakh + Yud</b><br>'ai' in aisle | אֶ/אִ/אֵ/אֶ/אַ/אֹ/אִי<br><b>Kamatz + Yud</b><br>'ai' in aisle |   |   |   |   |

# Bar Mitzvah/Bat Mitzvah

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a ritual coming of age celebration. According to Jewish law when a child is 13 years old, they becomes accountable for their actions and become a bar mitzvah (boys) or bat mitzvah (girls). After this age, the boys and girls bear their own responsibility for Jewish ritual law, tradition, and ethics, and are able to participate in all areas of Jewish community life. The ceremony usually involves the bar/bat mitzvah reading from the Torah, leading a religious service, and discussing a lesson learned from the weekly Torah portion.



In this picture, the Bar Mitzvah boy is reading from the **Torah**. A pointer called a “**yad**” (meaning literally “hand”) is used to help him keep his place since one does not touch the scroll with bare hands. A “**kippah**” in Hebrew or “**Yarmulka**” in Yiddish is a head covering worn during prayer (though some people wear them all the time) and a **tallit** is a prayer shawl with specially knotted ritual fringes.

# Holidays and Food

Jewish holidays and food are inextricably linked. Each holiday has at least one special food aside from fasting holidays. During fasting holidays like Yom Kippur, Jewish adults don't eat anything at all!

Shabbat - Challah (a sweet, yummy, braided bread)

Rosh Hashanna - Apples dipped in honey

Sukkot - Fresh fruits and vegetables eaten in a structure called a sukkah

Passover - Matzah (a flat cracker)

Purim - Hamantashen (triangle shaped cookies with fruit filling)

Chanukah - Latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiot (donuts)

Shavuot - Dairy foods...this holiday is in May. Join us for a zoom cooking class to celebrate!!!



# Passover (Pesach): Celebrating Freedom

This holiday celebrates the Jewish people being freed from slavery. Typically we eat special foods in a special order during a festive meal called a Seder. We tell the story about pleas for freedom and acts of God (the 10 plagues) that convinced the ancient Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go. In the story of Passover we learn that the people had to leave quickly when they had the opportunity and their bread did not have time to rise, so we eat matza to remember that.

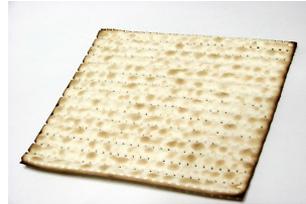
There are many and varied customs for this holiday ranging from eating traditional foods on the seder plate, singing lots of silly songs, to pouring cups of wine for honored guests. It is a time to rejoice in freedom, though there is still much work to be done in our world to end oppression for all. Enjoy this [song!](#)



Seder  
Plate



The  
Plagues



Matza



Elijah's  
Cup



Miriam's  
Cup

# Chanukah (Hannukah) a Festival of Lights

Chanukah celebrates a hard fought battle for religious freedom and a great miracle. A Temple was destroyed and only a tiny bit of oil to burn was found, but miraculously it burned for 8 nights. To celebrate, we light a menorah for 8 nights and eat oily (and yummy) food, like latkes and donuts!

The Maccabees were a small but powerful group of Jewish people that helped protect religious rights.

Many Jews play a game called dreidel with a spinning top with Hebrew letters that show “a great miracle happened here/there” and kids collect chocolate coins. Enjoy this traditional [song!](#)



Playing dreidel



Menorah



Donuts



Latkes

# Shabbat: The Day of Rest

Shabbat celebrates the day that God (Hashem in Hebrew) rested after creating the world. It is a wonderful time to relax with family and friends. Shabbat begins every Friday night and lasts until Saturday evening. Some Jewish people fully “unplug” during Shabbat, including no electronics and no work.

Many people make blessings over wine or grape juice and a special braided bread, called challah before a festive meal. It is also a custom to light special candles to help bring light into the world, and to donate money in a coin box, called a tzedakah box.

Some people also celebrate by praying in a Temple, called a synagogue or shul.

Enjoy this [song](#)! We do some singing at Shabbat dinner :)



**Tzedakah Box.**  
Collect coins  
each Friday  
night to give to  
charity.



**Challah.**  
**Yummy yummy!**



**Shabbat Table** set for  
festive meal with  
fancy cup for  
wine/grape juice,  
challah and flowers

# Jewish Symbols and Ritual Objects



The Star of David or Magen David is a symbol of Jewish identity. It is also the symbol on the flag of Israel.



“Chai” is the word spelled here. It means “alive” and also represents the number 18. For this reason 18 is considered a spiritual or lucky number to many Jewish people.



A mezuzah is a decorative case that holds a piece of parchment (paper) inscribed with words from the Torah, the Jewish bible. It is hung on the doorpost of every living space in a Jewish household.



A tzedakah box is used as a place to put money that will be donated to charity. Charitable giving (tzedakah) and repairing the world (tikkun olam) are seen as moral obligations in the Jewish faith.