

Rites of Passage & Rituals		✓
Rites of Passage	Rites of Passage are the religious ceremonies which mark a person's journey from one stage of life to another. Vital moments in the life of a Jewish person are marked by customs going back to biblical times, and which have developed according to Halakha and local custom.	
Brit Milah	The Brit Milah (circumcision ceremony) is an important initiation rite for young Jewish boys. Circumcision is a religious obligation on Jews recalling the covenant that God made with Abraham. Ordinarily circumcision ceremonies take place when the child is eight days old, but it can be delayed for medical reasons. The Brit Milah , sometimes called Bris, is usually attended by men. The child is placed on the lap of a male friend or relative who has the honour of being the Sandek . The Sandek has the responsibility of holding the child still whilst the circumcision is performed by a Mohel .	
Initiation ceremonies for girls	A Jewish girl does not have to go through the same initiation ceremony as a baby boy. The longest-standing tradition among Ashkenazi Jews (German/Eastern European origin) is for the father to come to the synagogue on the first Shabbat after his daughter's birth and receive an <i>aliyah</i> (the honour of reading the blessings before and after a portion of the public Torah reading), after which the baby's name is proclaimed/ announced. Fully-fledged ceremonies of covenant, welcome, and naming for girls have only taken place since the 1970s, and generally in the Reform movement. The most common names for these ceremonies are <i>simchat bat</i> ("celebrating a daughter"), <i>brit bat</i> ("a daughter's covenant"), or in English, simply "a baby naming."	
Bar Mitzvah	Boys become Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13. Bar Mitzvah means 'son of the commandment'. According to Jewish Law, parents are held responsible for their children's actions up to this point. Once they come of age, they are responsible for their own sins - in the eyes of G-d. In Orthodox Judaism a boy who has become Bar Mitzvah is subject to the same responsibilities, obligations and privileges as an adult regarding religious observance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must put on tefillin for his morning prayers. • Can make up the numbers for the minyan - the required number for prayer. • Is obliged to observe the fast days in full. • May be called up to the reading of the Torah. The ceremony is held in the synagogue on the first Sabbath after the boy's 13 th birthday. After months of practising and preparing, during the ceremony he may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recite the blessing before the reading from the Torah. • Read the appointed passage from the Prophets, preceded by part of the Torah passage for that Sabbath. At the end of the ceremony the boys father acknowledges that his son is now ready to take responsibility for his own actions. 'Blessed be he who hath freed me from responsibility for this child.'	
Bat Mitzvah	Girls become Bat Mitzvah at the age of 12. Bat Mitzvah means 'daughter of the commandment'. In Orthodox Judaism a girl who has become Bat Mitzvah does NOT become subject to the same responsibilities and obligations in worship as a boy. However, she does take on the many obligations she has as a Jew, and is responsible for her own actions.	
Bat Chayil	Some synagogues hold a Bat Chayil (daughter of worth) ceremony on a Sunday. Family and friends gather together to hear the girl read a Hebrew passage of her choice, but not from the Sefer Torah.	

Common & Divergent Views

Reform and Liberal synagogues have Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, as they believe that there is no difference between men and women in terms of Jewish obligations and privileges. The girls will prepare for their Bat Mitzvah in exactly the same way as the boys prepare for their Bar Mitzvah. It is not unusual for Reform Jewish women to wear a **tallit** (prayer shawl) and **kippah** (skull cap), just as the men do. They can also read from the Sefer Torah and make up the numbers for the **minyan**.

Rites of Passage & Rituals		✓
Kiddushin	A Jewish marriage is called Kiddushin which means 'sanctification' (when something is made holy or sacred). Jewish marriages cannot be performed on Shabbat or any festival day, or during periods of mourning. Traditional Orthodox Jews generally marry during the month of June, as it was the only full month left for weddings to take place. In the UK, Jewish weddings are usually on a Sunday afternoon.	
Kiddushin and Huppah	According to Jewish Law, marriage is a two step process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiddushin - the betrothal • Huppah - the canopy In ancient times these were two separate ceremonies with about a year between them. The couple were legally bound to one another, but did not live together until after the Huppah. Nowadays, the two parts are in one ceremony.	
Huppah	Wedding Canopy - The couple are escorted by their parents to stand under the Huppah. It is a symbol of the home that they will make together and also of the Tallit (prayer shawl). In ancient tradition the groom would take the bride under the protection of his shawl.	
The Ring	The rabbi recites the blessing of betrothal over a cup of wine. The groom, then the bride, take a sip of wine from the cup. The groom places the wedding ring on the bride's finger and recites this pledge: ' Behold thou art consecrated unto me by this ring, according to the laws of Moses and Israel. ' During the wedding ceremony, the groom places the ring on the bride's right index finger. Its artery is the closest bloodline to the heart! Once the ceremony ends, the bride moves her wedding ring to the more well known wedding ring finger.	
Ketubah	Marriage Contract - Rather than saying vows, the Rabbi reads out the Ketubah , the marriage contract, which the bride and groom then sign in front of two witness. The document can be very ornate and beautiful. The text can differ between Orthodox, Reform and Liberal Judaism. The Orthodox contract sets out the groom's marriage responsibilities. It does not contain promises from the bride. It is intended to offer her future security. The Reform contract refers to a mutual partnership and equal responsibility within marriage.	
Smashing the glass	The ceremony closes with seven blessings, which are said over the wine, calling for G-d's blessing on the bride and groom. A prayer for Zion (Jerusalem) is included. The bride and groom sip the wine again, then the groom stamps on the wine glass and shatters it - a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. The practice is based on verses found in the book of Psalms. Psalm 137 pledges that Jerusalem will never be forgotten - even in the midst of joy.	
Burial Rites	When a Jewish person dies, the funeral must take place as soon after death as possible (usually within 24 hours) as a mark of honour. However, they cannot take place on Shabbat or on the first or last days of festivals.	
Chevre Kaddisha	A group of worthy men and women who have volunteered to attend the dying and the dead, wash and prepare the body for burial, and help to make funeral arrangements.	
Kaddish	Mourning begins after the funeral when the Kaddish is recited. Children are required to recite Kaddish at the funeral of a parent and then daily for the next eleven months. The Kaddish focuses on G-d's name, praying that the world will acknowledge its holiness. The mourners affirm that, although he has bereaved them, G-d is still their G-d and they continue to accept G-d as ruler of the universe.	
Sitting Shiva	Shiva is the Hebrew word for 'seven' and refers to a seven day period of mourning after a funeral, but not including Shabbat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mourners do not work during Shiva. • Mourners may sit on low chairs as a means of expressing grief. The practice symbolizes the humility and pain of the mourner being "brought low" by the passing of a loved one. • Mirrors are covered. A mourner should not be concerned with his or her personal appearance at this time. 	
Orthodox and Conservative Judaism does not permit cremation, but some Reform Jews do.		

