

GLOSSARY

Note: Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew differs from the modern Sephardic-based pronunciation used in the State of Israel. Where both are given, the modern form is given first, and then the Ashkenazi form.

aliya (Hebrew) — to emigrate to Israel. Literally, 'rising'.

bar mitzvah (Hebrew) — rite of passage at age thirteen, after which a boy is considered to have all the religious obligations of an adult Jewish male. Literally, 'son-of-a-commandment'.

bima (Hebrew) — raised area in the synagogue from which the Torah is read.

bocher — (Yiddishised Hebrew) — youth or young man.

brit/bris (Hebrew) — circumcision. Literally, 'covenant'.

Bund, the — the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland and Russia. It was an important social democratic structure in pre-war Eastern Europe. It existed between 1897 and 1921 (when it was forcefully disbanded by the Bolsheviks) and was the first trade union to initiate strike action. Bundist strikes played an active part in the political turbulence of 1903-1905.

chaveyr (Hebrew) — friend or comrade.

Chevre Kadisha (Aramaic) — Jewish burial society which ensures the dead are buried in the Orthodox manner. Also involves itself with charitable work. Literally, 'the holy society'.

cheyder (Hebrew) — a school for young boys where they were taught to read and write, as well as *chumash* (the Five Books of Moses, or Pentateuch). Literally, 'room'.

chuppah (Hebrew) — wedding canopy.

chutzpah (Hebrew) — cheek.

frum (Yiddish) — religious in the Orthodox sense.

ganif (Yiddish, from Hebrew) — a thief.

ganste macher (Yiddish) — ‘a big deal’.

goyim (Hebrew) — Gentiles. Literally, ‘the nations’.

Habonim (Hebrew) — a Zionist-Socialist youth movement. Literally, ‘the builders’.

halacha (Hebrew, noun) — the body of Jewish law evolved over the centuries. Literally, ‘the-way-to-walk’. The adjective is *halachic*.

Hashomeyr Hatzair (Hebrew) — youth and kibbutz movement on the extreme left of the Zionist spectrum, banned in South Africa in the 1950s. Literally, ‘the young watchman’.

Hoshanah Rabbah — the seventh day of Succot. Succot (tabernacles) is the holiday when Jews erect temporary dwellings and move into them for eight days.

kaddish (Hebrew) — a prayer for the dead.

kashrut/kashrus (Hebrew, noun) — the dietary laws of Judaism. The adjective is *kasheyr/kosher*. Literally, ‘fit in accordance with Jewish law’.

kibbutz (Hebrew) — socialist collectives in Israel. Today most kibbutzim have shifted towards varying degrees of private ownership.

kiddush (Hebrew) — blessing said on Friday nights acknowledging God as the source of all creation. Literally, ‘sanctification’.

klabberyas (Dutch) — card game popular amongst Jews.

kugel (Yiddish) — a potato or noodle pudding. Used in South Africa — in a mildly pejorative sense — for a spoilt, materialistic, fashion-conscious girl or woman.

kulak (Russian) — a peasant working for him or herself (rather than for a collective farm) in Soviet Russia. Literally, ‘tight-fisted’.

landslayt (plural) (Yiddish) — people who came from the same town or area in Eastern Europe. Singular, *landsmán* or *landsvrou*.

Lubovitcher — adherent of Chabad, a chasidic group which originated in Lubovitch, a town in Russia.

luftmentshn (Yiddish) — people with their heads in the clouds, impractical people.

machaneh (Hebrew) — December camps run by the Zionist youth movements, which combined social and educational activity. Literally, 'camp'.

matzo/matzah (Hebrew) — the unleavened bread Jews eat for eight days over Paysach. Plural, matzos/matzot.

mensch (Yiddish) — a decent human being.

meshuganah (Yiddishised Hebrew) — a nutter, a madman.

mezuzah (Hebrew) — scroll of parchment with extracts from the Bible which Orthodox Jews place upon their doorposts. Plural, *mezuzot*.

minyon/minyan (Hebrew) — a quorum, ten people needed for certain ritual acts such as communal prayer. Literally, 'a number'.

mitzvot (Hebrew) — commandments.

Paysach (Hebrew) — the holiday of Passover. The Paysach *seder* (Hebrew) is the festive meal and reciting of the story of the exodus from Egypt which occurs on the holiday of Passover.

rabbi (Anglicised Hebrew) — spiritual leader or halachic authority.

rebbe — leader of chasidic sect.

Rosh Hashanah (Hebrew) — the Jewish New Year. Literally, 'head-of-the-year'.

Shabat/Shabbes — the sabbath.

Shalom Aleichem (Hebrew) — The pen name of Yiddish writer Shalom Rabinowitch (1859-1916). A prolific humorist, Rabinowitch invented the character Tevye the Milkman, upon which *Fiddler on the Roof* was based. His work has been translated into most major languages, and was especially popular in the USSR.

shammes (Yiddishised Hebrew) — in Eastern Europe, the beadle who looked after the synagogue and served the rabbi.

shikse (Yiddish) — Gentile woman.

shiva (Hebrew) — the seven-day period of most intense mourning after a close relative has died. Mourners sit on low stools, hence the expression 'sitting *shiva*'. Literally, 'seven'.

shlemiel (Yiddish) — idiot, bungler.

shmuze (Yiddish, both verb and noun) — chat.

shtetl — small Jewish village, often in the pale of settlement, a Jewish 'bantustan' in which Jews were forced to live by Tsarist Russia.

Tsimmes — cooked carrots, prunes and potatoes sweetened with sugar or honey, served on Rosh Hashanah and sometimes Paysach.

shul — a synagogue.

Ulpan — a school where modern Hebrew is taught. New immigrants to Israel will often attend an *Ulpan*.

yamekah (Yiddish) — skull cap. The Hebrew is *kipah*.

yeshiva (plural *yeshivot*) (Hebrew) — theological seminary for men.

Yom Kippur (Hebrew) — the day of atonement, which follows ten days after Rosh Hashanah.

yomtov (plural *yamim tovim*) (Hebrew) — any Jewish holiday. Literally, 'a good day'.