Glossary of certain terms and expressions relevant to Orthodox Life

Pronunciation guide:

- *Many terms appear with more than one pronunciation. In Ashkenazi (Eastern European) pronunciation, the Hebrew letter ת is sometimes pronounced as "t" but often pronounced as "s" whereas in Sephardi (North African or Middle Eastern) pronunciation, that letter is always pronounced as "t." There are variations within Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities in the pronunciation of other consonants and vowels. Israeli pronunciation tends to follow Sephardi traditions.*
- *Most Orthodox Jews in Chicago are Ashkenazi. Among them, most follow Ashkenazi traditions of pronunciation, especially when referring to common religious terms in conversation.*

Terms

Achdus, Achdut – "Unity," a term describing a sense of common purpose among Orthodox Jews of different groups

Acheinu – "Our brothers," the name of a directory of Orthodox Jews in Chicagoland, published by the Chicago Center for Torah & Chesed.

Aliyah; pl. Aliyos or Aliyot – 1. The honor of being called to recite blessings over a portion of the reading of the *Torah scroll in the synagogue. 2. Immigrating to Israel

Arvit (Ar-VEET) – the evening prayer service, usually called *Maariv by Ashkenazi Jews.

At Risk – For many Orthodox Jews, this term describes an Orthodox adolescent who is showing signs of abandoning observance. See also *Off the Derech

Bar mitzvah – Celebration of a boy's reaching the age of religious adulthood, 13.

Bat mitzvah, Bas mitzvah – Celebration of a girl's reaching the age of religious adulthood, **12**.

Beis Din, "Bezdin," Beit Din, Beth Din – Rabbinical court

Beis Midrash or Beis Medrash – Study Hall of a *Yeshivah or *Shul. Place where people study *Torah, especially *Talmud. May refer to Talmud study after the completion of high school.

Bris, Brit; *pl.* Brises – *literally,* covenant. Short for Bris Milah, [covenant of] circumcision. A Bris is a public event usually accompanied by a festive meal.

Charedi (sing.), Charedim (plural) (khah-RAY-dee or khah-ray-DEE) – stringently observant, ultra-Orthodox, right-wing Orthodox, 'black hat'. Many Orthodox Jews are moving in a 'Charedi' direction.

Chasid (sing.), Chasidim (pl.) (KHAH-sid, khah-SEED-ihm)– an Orthodox Jew who is loyal to a grand rabbi or *rebbe. Contrast *Yeshivish or *Litvish.

Chasidish (khah-SI-dish) – Chasidic, in a/the Chasidic way. Contrast *Yeshivish or *Litvish

Chassunah (KHAH-si-nah) – Wedding. "I saw him at the Goldberg Chassunah"

Chesed (KHEH-sed) – loving kindness. The term is used to a single act of loving kindness, or a general commitment to perform acts of loving kindness. An organization can also be referred to as a "Chesed." See *Gemilus Chesed and *Gemach

Chillul Hashem (KHIH-lul Ha-SHEM, Khee-LOOL Ha-SHEM) – desecration of the Name [of G-d]. An act that embarrasses or might embarrass Judaism, the Jewish people, and especially, Orthodox Jews. This term is also used to refer to the act of publicizing a prior act.

Chinuch (KHEE-nukh) – Education, religious education (learning Hebrew language, *Chumash, *Talmud, *Mitzvos/Mitzvot, and thereby dedication to *G-d)

Chumash (KHOO-mish, Khoo-MAHSH) – Pentateuch, *Torah in the narrow sense as the Five Books of Moses (Genesis – Deuteronomy).

Da'as Torah (DAH-as TOH-rah) – *literally,* "Opinion of the *Torah." The concept that the opinion of the Torah—and, hence, of God—can only be ascertained by consulting with great rabbis known for their piety and learning. For many Orthodox Jews, 'great rabbis' are near infallible. To disregard their formal statements (their "Da'as Torah") is to rebel against God. This does not mean that every Orthodox rabbi is seen as infallible or that every statement of 'great rabbis' is taken as an expression of 'the opinion of the Torah.' It does mean that, for many Orthodox Jews, one cannot have direct intuition in matters of great moment—those must be resolved by the *Gedolim (great rabbis).

Daven (DAH-ven) – to pray.

Davening (DAH-ven-ing) – prayer, or a particular prayer service. "When is davening tonight?"

Dayyan (DAH-yahn, dah-YAHN) – a rabbinical judge, member of a *Beis Din

Emunah (Eh-MOO-nah, Eh-moo-NAH) – Faith in G-d

Eretz Yisroel, Eretz Yisrael – *literally,* the Land of Israel. Israel (the country). "My son is *learning in Eretz Yisroel."

Frum – Pious, punctilious. Also used to refer to an Orthodox Jew. Compare *Shomer Shabbos.

Gedolim (Geh-DOH-lim)– Great rabbis (See *Da'as Torah)

Gemach (Geh-MAKH) – an organization that provides loans of money, clothing, etc. at no expense (originally, a freel-loan society); literally, an abbreviation for *Gemilus Chesed.

Gemilus Chesed, Gemilut Chesed; also, Gemilus Chasadim (Geh-MEE-loos KHEH-sed, Geh-mee-LOOT Chesed; Geh-MEE-loos khah-SAH-deem)– the performance of acts of loving kindness. See also *Chesed

G-d – Orthodox Jews often write this word with a dash in place of the 'o,' out of concern for the possible holiness of the word.

Halachah (Hah-LAH-khah or Hah-lah-KHAH)– Jewish Law. Also: a specific teaching on a point of Jewish law. "There is a halachah that says…." Plural: Halachot or Halachos "What are the Halachos of Shabbos?"

Hashem –*literally* "The Name," G-d (God). A common appellation for G-d, since Orthodox Jews are reluctant to use formal names for G-d outside of the context of prayer and study.

Kashrus / Kashrut (KAHSH-roos or kash-ROOT) – Jewish dietary laws

Kedushah – sanctity. The value expressed in living life in a way that sancdtifies the mundane.

Kinderlach – Yiddish for 'children'

Klal Yisroel, Klal Yisrael – lit. Collective of Israel; the Jewish people, conceived of in religious terms.

Kollel, Kollelim (plural) – an institution of higher *Torah study for recently married men who devote ~5 years to study and teaching.

Learn, learning *v.* – to study *Torah (especially to study Talmud with traditional commentaries in a *Yeshivah or *Kollel)

Levayah (leh-VAI-ah)- Funeral

Limmudei Kodesh – Jewish studies (as opposed to General Studies) in a school

Litvish – *literally* Lithuanian. *Yeshivish

Loshon Hora, Lashon Hara – *literally, bad tongue or tongue of evil.* Gossip, especially of a negative kind.

Ma'ariv – the evening prayer service, called *Arvit by Sephardic Jews

Mesivta – *Yeshiva. "Mesivta" is the Aramaic cognate of "Yeshiva."

Minchah (MIN-khah)– the afternoon prayer service

Minyan (MIN-yin)– lit. 'quorum.' A group of ten males aged 13 and older serving as the quorum for public Orthodox prayer. Sometimes used to describe a particular group who gather regularly, such as 'a youth minyan.'

Mishpachah (mish-PAH-khah; mish-pah-KHAH) – Family. Also, the name of a popular Orthodox women's magazine.

Mitzvos / Mitzvot (MITZ-vohs or mitz-VOHT) – "commandments". Singular: mitzvah. 613 categories of observance controlling what must be done ('positive commandment') and what must be avoided ('negative commandment').

Modern Orthodox – Orthodox Jews who strive to reconcile modernity (professional life, secular education, popular culture, openness to the non-Jewish world, etc.) with Orthodox observance. Modern Orthodox parents sometimes find their children moving to the right religiously. The Modern Orthodox position is hard to maintain in the fact of rampant secularization on the left and a general tendency to conservatism on the right.

Neshamah (N'-SHAH-mah; N'-shah-MAH) – Soul. Sometimes used to refer to a person.

Off the Derech (DEH-rekh) or "OTD" – description of Orthodox children who no longer lead an observant life. See also *At Risk. "He's off the derech."

Oral Torah – Rabbinic teachings that apply the *Written Torah to all aspects of personal and public life, both ritual and non-ritual.

Posek (POH-saik, poh-SAIK) – a rabbi who is known as an expert in deciding questions of *Halachah; literally, a 'decisor.'

Rabbanim – Plural of *Rabbi. Often used in place of "Rabbis." Often used to refer to synagogue rabbis.

Rabbanit – Israeli/Hebrew equivalent of *Rebbetzin.

Rabbi – For Orthodox Jews, a rabbi is a loyal servant of God, *Torah, and the Jewish people. The respect shown to a rabbi is a function of his doctrinal purity, learning, and probity. Being the spiritual leader of a congregation is insufficient to inspire respect.

Rabbinic authority – For Orthodox Jews, the authority of the rabbinate is very great; sometimes it approaches the authority of prophecy. Many Orthodox Jews ascribe near infallibility to formal rabbinic statements (see *Daas Torah). For Chasidic Jews, the grand rabbi or "*rebbe" to whom they are loyal is seen not only as a spiritual guide but also as a link to God.

Rav, Rov - *Rabbi. Often used to refer to a person's personal rabbi, someone to whom he/she may present religious questions

Reb. Can be used as a parallel to "Mr./Mister". See *Yid ("Reb Yid).

Rebbe (REH-beh or REH-bee) – 1. a Chasidic grand rabbi, the leader of a Chasidic court, to whom a *Chasid is loyal. "The Rebbe" is a term often used to refer to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe. Other Chasidim refer to their various grand rabbis by the same term. 2. a male teacher (of *Talmud and of Jewish studies generally--*Limmudei Kodesh) at a School, *Yeshivah or *Kollel

Rebbetzin (REH-beh-tzin) – the wife of a *Rabbi, especially a *Shul rabbi or *rebbe in a *Yeshiva or *Kollel; the wife of a Chasidic *Rebbe.

Sefer (SAY-fer), pl. Seforim or Sefarim (seh-FAR-im) – lit. book/books; Torah literature.

Shabbos (SHAH-bis), Shabbat (Shah-BAHT) – Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest, observed from Friday before sunset through Saturday after nightfall including by refraining from 39 categories of transformative labor ("melakhah") and long, formal prayer services. Featuring large celebratory meals for dinner and lunch. See *Shomer Shabbos/Shomer Shabbat.

Shacharis, Shacharit – morning prayer service

Shidduch (sing.), Shidduchim (pl.) (SHIH-dookh, shih-DOOKH-ihm) – *lit.* 'arrangement(s).' Refers to arranged marriages arranged by a Shadchan (matchmaker), expected among *Charedi families or by young adults who identify as *Charedi. A "Shidduch date" is a date in a public place where the intent is to rapidly identify that a couple are suitable for marriage. Orthodox families who depend on Shidduchim for their children are concerned to avoid any cause of shame that could limit their childrens' (particularly their daughters') opportunities for a Shidduch.

Shomer negi'ah (SHOH-mehr neh-GHEE-ah) – literally, "one who keeps [the rules of] touching/contact." This describes the rule that men/boys should not come into physical contact with women/girls outside of a parent, sibling, spouse, child, grandchild.

Shomer Shabbos / Shomer Shabbat (SHOH-mehr SHAH-bus or sho-MEHR shah-BAHT)– "Sabbath observant." This does not just describe a person's observance of the Sabbath. If a person is "Shomer Shabbos," the assumption is that they also observe *kashrut (dietary laws), that they *daven daily, that they send their children to Orthodox schools—in a word, that they are *frum.

Shul - Synagogue

Simchah; pl. Simchas or Semachot – Joy. Especially a joyous occasion, such as a *Bris, Bar Mitzvah, or *Chasunah. "The Goldbergs had a simchah last week."

Simchat Bat – lit. 'joy of the daughter.' A Sephardic custom of publicly greeting a newborn girl. Also observed by some Ashkenazi Jews.

Talmud – the enormous collection of traditions of *Oral Torah, particularly the version edited in Babylonia circa 500 CE, which is the central text of study in a *Yeshiva or *Kollel

Talmud Torah (usually TAHL-muhd TOH-rah)– Learning *Torah. In Orthodox life, this is not merely a *good* thing. It is often seen as the *best* thing – particularly among *Yeshivish people. For families where years of learning are expected of young men, distractions to learning are understood as a particular problem.

Tanakh (tah-NAKH)– Hebrew Bible, including *Torah, Prophets, Writings

Torah (most commonly TOH-rah, also TOY-rah, TAY-rah, toh-RAH) – 1. Broadly speaking, Jewish religious teaching, including the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh or *Written Torah) and rabbinic teachings reflected in *Talmud and commentaries (*Oral Torah). 2. Narrowly: the 5 books of the Pentateuch, also called *Chumash

Tzaddik – (TZAH-dik) lit. righteous one. Can be used to describe a particularly righteous person ("He's a real tzaddik"), or a Chasidic rabbi/rebbe. Can also be used affectionately to describe a person ("tzaddik, can you help make a *minyan?") or to refer a son.

Tzedakah – Charity

Tzenius / Tzeniut (tz' NEE uss *or* tze-nee-OOT) – literally "modesty." In practice, rules that control the dress and behavior of Orthodox Jewish girls and women. More broadly, refers to modest behavior and the avoidance of sexual images and themes.

Written Torah – Hebrew Bible. See *Tanakh

Yeshiva – Talmudic academy. Sometimes applied to an elementary school. See also *Mesivta

Yeshivish (yeh-SHEE-vish or yeh-SHIH-vish)– (adj.) used to describe Orthodox Jews who associated themselves with the "Yeshiva world," that is, prominent Talmudical academies and the lay people who support them and who look to their scholars (the Roshei Yeshiva or 'Yeshiva heads') for inspiration, learning, and guidance. Compare *Litvish. Contrast *Chasidim.

Yichud (YEE-khood)– seclusion. Name for the principle in *Halachah that a male and a female may not be in a private place together except for close family members or under certain specific situations.

Yid, Yidden (YIH-den; YEE-den) – Yiddish for Jew, Jews. "Reb Yid" can be used akin to addressing a stranger as "Sir."

Yiddish – "Jewish." 1. *Noun* The Yiddish language, a version of German with a very large Hebrew vocabulary that was spoken by most Ashkenazi Jews, and indeed by most of the Jews in the world, before the Holocaust. Today spoken mostly by *Chasidim. 2. *Adj.* Jewish. A *yiddisher kind* is a Jewish child.

Yom tov, yumtiff, yontiff – *Literally* 'Good day'. Major Jewish holiday (Pesach/Passover, Shavuos/Shavuot, Sukkos/Sukkot, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur). *Plural:* Yamim tovim, Yomim tovim, 'yomtovim' – Used to refer to the fall holidays (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot).

Expressions

Alav hashalom, aleha hashalom – peace be unto him/her. Used to refer to someone who has passed away. Compare *zichrono livrachah.

Baruch *Hashem, Boruch *Hashem! – *literally* 'blessed is the Name', Thank God! Often used in conversation: "How are you?" "Baruch Hashem!"

Bli neder (beh-LEE NEH-dehr) – "Without [expressing] an oath." Often added before expressing an intent. "Bli neder, I'll be at the meeting."

Chas veChalilah (KHAS ve-kha-LEE-lah) - G-d forbid, Heaven forfend. Like *Chas veShalom.

Chas veShalom (KHAS ve-SHO-lom) – G-d forbid, Heaven forfend. Like *Chas veChalilah.

Chasdei Hashem! – (KHAS-dei Ha-SHEM) – lit. kindnesses of G-d. "Thank God." Expression of appreciation. Close to *Baruch Hashem.

Im yirtzeh HaShem, "IYH" – Please G-d.

Kein eine hora, kenahora – *Literally* 'without the evil eye.' A saying to ward off calamity when mentioning a person's children, age, or other mark of favor or blessing

Lo aleinu – may it not happen to us. "The family's house *lo aleinu* burned down"

Mazel tov, Mazal tov – *literally,* a good constellation. Congratulations! Offered on good news, such as the birth of a child, a bar/bat mitzvah, wedding, new job, jew car, public accolades, etc.

Shlita (SHLEE-tah) – Acronym for 'may he live a long and good life, amen.' Often added, usually in writing, after the name of a prominent rabbi.

Tahkeh – (TAH-keh) – Really! "Takeh it's a problem" (It's really a problem).

Yasher koach! – Good job! Well done! Sometimes used as 'Thank you.'

Zichrono livrachah – of blessed memory. Used to refer to someone (usually a man, usually well known for piety, learning, or commitment to community) who has died.

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