

RITUAL

Not all of those whose Jewish parentage might suggest the label “Maine Jews” are affiliated or observant. However, thousands of Jews in and from Maine have viewed their faith as part of a vital, ongoing, millennia-old tradition and one that is realized and perpetuated through practice.



Ornaments for the Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark) that contains sacred Torah scrolls



These elements adorn an Ark at The Cedars in Portland.

Accordingly, they attend synagogue on a daily, weekly, annual or as-the-occasion demands basis. They mark holidays with Jewish foods and special family customs. They participate in life cycle events that follow prescribed Jewish rituals or are imbued with Jewish flavor. These images, spanning decades, highlight some holidays and festivals of the Jewish year in Maine.



Raphael Gribetz ushers in the New Year in Presque Isle



Zachary Olstein of Auburn celebrates the harvest festival



Community Passover seder in Bangor, 1947



Making Purim masks



The first Chanukah for a Lewiston baby

Maine Jewish parents, like Jewish parents everywhere, seek to educate their children by sending them to Sunday schools, Hebrew schools and Jewish day schools, and they *shep nachas* (are filled with happiness and pride) at each step in their children's progression toward B'nai Mitzvah and Jewish adulthood.



Beth Jacob (Lewiston) boys become Jewish men, 1964



RSVP to David Astor's Bar Mitzvah, Portland, 1932



Sidney Unobskey, Bar Mitzvah in Calais, 1945

Jewish weddings are another joy-filled occasion for assembling. In synagogues or banquet halls, indoors or out-of-doors, with opulence or minimal frills, countless Jewish couples have married in Maine. They have been “launched” under a *chuppah* (canopy), sometimes with seven ancient blessings and almost always with the smashing of a glass, or glass stand-in, underfoot.

Through institutions like the Jewish Home for the Aged, and, later, The Cedars in Portland, Maine Jews have demonstrated their commitment to caring for elders and to affording them dignity in declining years.



The *miznke* dance, honoring parents as their last child is wed, at the nuptials of Phil Levinsky and Elizabeth Zaitlin, 1950



Garden of the Jewish Home for the Aged, later The Cedars

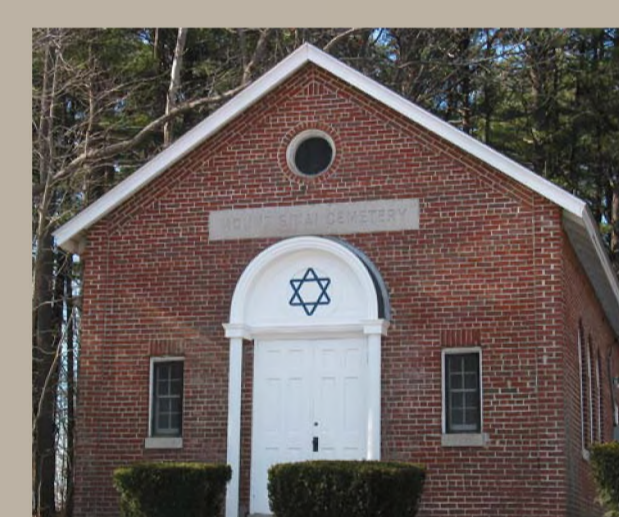
When lives come to an end, Maine Jewish mourners are supported by relatives and friends, by clergy, and by members of the *chevra kadisha* (burial society) and cemetery associations, who, respectively, minister to the dead and help to arrange Jewish funerals.



Funeral chapel in Bangor



Seal of the Hebrew Burial Society in Portland



Mount Sinai Cemetery, Portland

Rituals come in many forms. They may be associated with holidays or the life cycle, may fulfill the 613 *mitzvot* (commandments) or make everyday events special. Whether they follow *halacha* (Jewish law) or are newly minted, they provide means to connect with Jewish spirituality and heritage in Maine.



A former mikvah at Beth Abraham in Auburn



Heralding a new one in Portland



Rabbi Moshe Wilansky of Chabad Lubavitch of Maine blessing the Birkat Hachamah, reciting the sun at the end of its 28-year cycle