



GLOSSARY

Ai-ai-ai. A happy, sad, or disdainful exclamation depending on the circumstances.

Alte. Old.

Bar mitzvah. The initiation ceremony conducted when a boy turns thirteen and assumes the responsibilities and privileges of an adult in the Jewish community.

Basherter. A woman's intended one or soulmate. A man's intended one is called his *besherter*.

Bobe. Grandmother.

Bobe mayse. Grandmother's tale or old wives' tale.

Bobie. Grandmother.

Chanukiyah. The nine-branched Chanukah menorah.

Chuppah. Wedding canopy.

Dreidel. A small four-sided top used in a gambling game during Chanukah.

Gonif. Thief.

Gute neshome. A good soul.

Hora. A lively circle dance with roots in Eastern European folk tradition.

Kabbalah. Jewish mysticism.

Kibbitzing. Chatting.

Kiddish cup. Ceremonial cup used during the benediction over wine.

Klezmer. Jewish musicians and the style of music they play.

Kosher. Food prepared according to Jewish law.

Kvetch. Complain.

Latkes. Potato pancakes fried in oil.

Mazel. Luck.

Menorah. The traditional seven-branched candelabra used in the synagogue. Also used to refer to the nine-branched candelabra used during Chanukah.

Mentsh. A person; a moral and ethical person of worth and integrity.

Meshuge, meshugeneh. Crazy.

Mezuzah. A box or case that contains a small parchment scroll with two blessings from the Torah. The mezuzah is fastened to the doorpost of a house or building.

Mitzvah. Good deed; commandment.

Myzele. Little mouse.

Nosh. To eat or munch on something.

Nu. An interjection similar to the words "so?" "so what?" or "well."

Oy. Similar to the expression, "Oh my!"

Oy gevalt. Similar to the expression, "Oh trouble!"

Oy vey. Similar to the expression, "Oh no!"

Rabbi. Jewish religious leader and teacher.

Reb. A title of respect similar to "Sir" or "Mister."

Rebbetzin. Rabbi's wife.

Schlemiel. An inept or foolish person.

Schlimazel. An unlucky person.

Shabbes. The Sabbath.

Shammes. Caretaker of a synagogue; the candle used to light the other Chanukah candles.

Sholem aleichem. An expression of greeting that means "peace unto you." The response in return is *aleichem sholem*, "and unto you peace."

Shtetl. Small Jewish town or village in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Shul. Synagogue.

Tate. Father.

Torah. The holy scroll on which the five books of Moses is written.

Tzedakah. Charity.

Vey iz mir. Similar to the expression, "Woe is me."

Yarmulke. Skull cap.

Yeshiva. A Jewish institution of religious learning.

Yikhes. Lineage.

Yortsayt. The anniversary of a death.

Zay gezunt. Be well.

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