

Judaísmo

History

- ◆ Judaism traces its origins to the beginning of man, as told in the Old Testament. More specifically it began with Abraham and the Hebrews around 1300 BCE, who came from a town in Mesopotamia (now known as Iraq). Abraham was called by God to migrate to Canaan (what is roughly Israel and Lebanon today). Many years passed when a great famine occurred. The Hebrews, who were semi-nomadic, migrated to Egypt, where they were enslaved by the Pharaoh's command. The Prophet Moses, who was also Hebrew but was adopted by the Pharaoh's queen, was exiled for killing a slave-master after witnessing how the Hebrews were treated. Soon after, God called upon Moses to free his people. After they fled Egypt, they once again settled in Canaan.
- ◆ Jews have been persecuted throughout their history, including the time of the Holocaust, which took place during the 1930's and early 1940's. Jews were forced to move from country to country, acquiring different aspects of cultures along the way. However, Jews have also experienced "golden ages", acceptance, and cultural growth.
- ◆ It is recorded in the Hebrew Bible that God made the Jews his chosen people and promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation.



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The Western Wall, Israel

Fast Facts

- ◆ Judaism was the religious foundation for Christianity and Islam.
- ◆ Jews have their own ethnicity and culture.
- ◆ History is the most important aspect of Judaism and is centered on historical narrative.
- ◆ Holidays are meant to connect Jews with their historical ancestors and traditions.
- ◆ The Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall) is Judaism's most sacred place on earth. It is what is left of The Temple of Jerusalem, where the Ark of the Covenant was stored (the Ark contained the commandments and many other laws sent by God).

A golden Ark of the Covenant with two golden cherubs on top, set against a background of patterned columns and a bright light source. The Ark is highly detailed with gold leaf and intricate carvings. The cherubs are positioned on the roof, facing each other with their wings spread. The Ark is supported by four golden legs with decorative finials. The background features two large, patterned columns and a bright light source creating a lens flare effect. The floor is covered in a patterned material, possibly stone or metal.

The Ark of the Covenant



Major Sects

- ◆ Orthodox: Designated as the most traditional form of the religion, Orthodox Jews believe in the Torah, which was revealed at Sinai and is concerned with oral and written versions of the law. Some religious holidays differ slightly from other affiliations. Households are very strict regarding food and utensils. Meat and dairy are never eaten together. The two food groups have separate storage areas and utensils, which are also washed separately. Segregation of women and men in synagogues is still continued.
- ◆ Hasidic: Are considered to be ultra-Orthodox. This branch of the religion originated in Poland, led by Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (master of the Good Name), who stressed the study of Jewish literature. A *Zaddik* or righteous man was believed to have a direct line to God. They are recognized today by their distinct appearance; men dressed completely in black with wide-brimmed hats, long coats, beards, and extended rope-like sideburns.



Major Sects, cont.

- ◆ Conservative: The Torah and Talmud are taught to be constant authorities but that historical and textual studies both could set apart cultural ideas from permanent religious laws. The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, is the leading institution for conservatives. Rabbis are trained there, along with women (Orthodoxy strictly prohibits this), who are also allowed to pray together with men. Jewish Conservatism upholds the importance of Jewish nationalism and stimulates the study of Hebrew and the support of Zionism (modern political movement that supports the creation of a Jewish state).
- ◆ Reform: The main distinctions are that many beliefs, laws, and practices were either abandoned or modified from Orthodoxy. The central principle is that they have the right to decide which beliefs and practices to follow. Conversion to Judaism is also much simpler. Today, Reform Judaism is moving toward embracing more of the rituals and dietary laws as Orthodox and Conservative Jews do.

Moses on Mt. Sinai

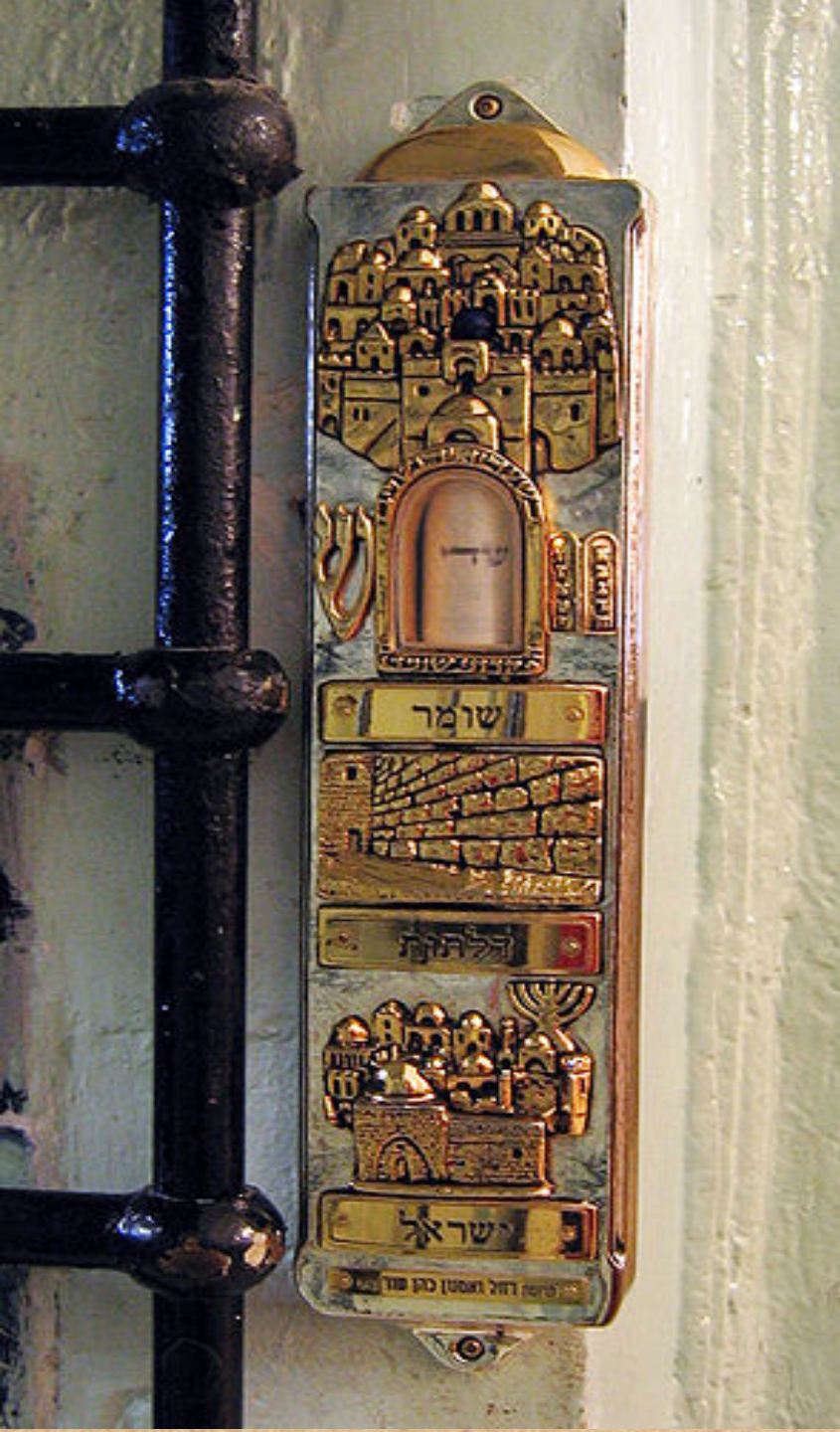


Beliefs

- ◆ Ethics are the foundation of Judaism.
- ◆ The backbone of Judaism is the Five Books of Moses (Torah), which contain 613 commandments and should be read each Sabbath (*shabbat*).
- ◆ God is all powerful. The sacred name of God is YHWH (sometimes pronounced as “*Yahweh*”).
- ◆ The 13 Articles of Faith were created by a 12th century rabbi, Maimonides, and are accepted as a general summary of religious Judaism.

The 13 Articles of Faith

- 1. God exists.
- 2. God is one and unique.
- 3. God is incorporeal.
- 4. God is eternal.
- 5. Prayer is to God only.
- 6. The prophets spoke truth.
- 7. Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
- 8. The Written and Oral Torah were given to Moses.
- 9. There will be no other Torah.
- 10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
- 11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
- 12. The Messiah will come.
- 13. The dead will be resurrected.



Mezuzahs

Rituals & Practices

- ◆ Most Jews have a *mezuzah* (parchment inscribed with religious texts attached in a case) on every door post in their home, that reminds them to keep God's laws.
- ◆ Circumcision (*brit milah*) takes place on the 8th day after a boy's birth. This custom is written in the Torah and said to be the fulfillment of the covenant between God and Abraham. The ritual is performed by a *mohel* (specially trained in Jewish law and surgical techniques).
- ◆ *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*: All 13/12 year-old boys and girls are considered to be of marriageable age (today it is almost unheard of that children marry this early) and must obey Jewish laws (children are not held to Jewish laws up until this age). A ritual is not needed in order to signify their new status. It is only recently that these elaborate ceremonies were invented.

Torah Scrolls



Sacred Texts

- ◆ Torah (also known as the *Pentateuch* or the Five Books of Moses): Most important section of the Jewish Bible (Tanakh). It consists of narratives and laws that have been recorded, in historical order, the beginning of the world all the way through to the death of Moses. To study the Torah is considered to be an act of worship. The five books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- ◆ Talmud (means study or learning): A reference to the interpretations of the Torah. It is the ultimate authority of law and is used mostly by rabbis. It uses the rules of Torah and describes how to apply them to different circumstances.
- ◆ Tanakh (acronym for Torah, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*): The Hebrew Bible is the same as the Christian Old Testament and consists of the historic writings of rabbis. The books are arranged in a slightly different order along with other minor variations from the Christian version. The Tanakh consists of the Torah, *Nevi'im* (law) and *Ketuvim* (writings).

Hurvah Synagogue, Jerusalem



Worship

- ◆ Jews gather at synagogues (center of Jewish community life) for worship. There are three traditional functions of a synagogue:
 - House of Prayer (where services are held on the Sabbath and festival days)
 - House of Study (where the Torah and Talmud are studied)
 - House of Assembly (people can meet for any purpose)
- ◆ Synagogues were developed after the destruction of The Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, when the Jews dispersed all over the Roman Empire.
- ◆ A rabbi (teacher) runs the synagogue and helps settle disputes regarding Jewish law, although they can be run without one.
- ◆ In traditional Judaism, Jews recite prayers three times a day. Although private praying is accepted, it is ideal if praying takes place in a synagogue with a *minyan* (quorum of 10 adult males).



Symbolism

- ◆ The Menorah (candelabrum): One of the oldest symbols of the Jewish faith. Menorahs in synagogues and homes represent the eternal lamp that was left burning in front of the Ark of the Covenant.
- ◆ The Jewish Star (*magen david*): This six-pointed star appeared around the 1600's (roughly) and was first used to adorn synagogues. The Zionists adopted the symbol in the 19th century, it became popular among the Jewish culture. Today it is part of the flag of Israel.
- ◆ Chai: Consists of two Hebrew letters *chet* (life) and *yud* (living), which represents the value that Judaism places on life. This symbol is mainly used in jewelry.



"Intelligent people know of what they speak;
fools speak of what they know."

-Minchas Shabbos Pirkei Avos 3:18 /

-Ethics of The Fathers (Talmud)



Response Questions

Please respond to the following questions about this presentation in the form of full sentences, either typed or handwritten:

1. What is something in this presentation that you were already aware of before reading it?
2. What is something new that you learned about Judaism from this presentation?
3. Name and describe something within this presentation that you found interesting or surprising about the religion
4. What aspect of this religion would you like to learn more about?