

JUDAISM

(Note: In consideration of the Jewish practice of not writing the name of the Creator, to avoid disrespect, this profile of Judaism will use the spelling "G-d.")

Description:

Jews trace the history of their faith back to the beginning of time and the creation of the world and humanity. The Torah, the sacred Scripture of Judaism, begins with the Book of Genesis, telling of G-d's creation of the world and of humanity. Genesis relates the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, patriarchs of the Israelites (circa 2000–1800 BCE), and Moses (circa 1300 BCE). Abraham was told by G-d that he would be the father of a great nation. He had two sons. His firstborn was Ishmael, considered in both Jewish and Muslim tradition to be the patriarch of the Arab people. The second son, Isaac, became the father of the Israelites through his son, Jacob, whose 12 sons were the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Torah tells of G-d revealing Himself to Moses and making a covenant to lead His people from Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land, Israel, in return for their obedience to His laws. Those laws, beginning with the Ten Commandments given by G-d to Moses on Mount Sinai, are set out in the Torah, the five books of Moses.

In Judaism, there is no religious point of view or set of beliefs that everyone must accept. However, there are commonly held beliefs that help define the Jewish faith. In the 12th century, a Jewish scholar named Maimonides (also called Rambam) set out his 13 Principles of Faith, which are still widely accepted by Jews:

1. There is a G-d.
2. There is one G-d.
3. G-d has no physical body.
4. G-d is eternal.
5. Only G-d may be worshipped.
6. G-d communicates with humans through prophecy.
7. Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
8. The Torah came from G-d.
9. The Torah is the authentic word of G-d and may not be changed.
10. G-d is aware of all our deeds.
11. G-d rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked.
12. The Messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.

Dietary Requirements:

- May not eat food containing blood or blood products.
- May not smoke.

Medical and Health Requirements:

Blood transfusions: Taking blood into the body is morally wrong and prohibited, as stated in the Bible. This includes any components of blood, such as packed red cells, plasma, white cells, and platelets. Jehovah's Witnesses will place their faith in God for healing instead of accepting a blood transfusion. Jehovah's Witnesses can choose whether to accept other products, such as albumin, immunoglobulins, and clotting factors. Blood testing is permitted as long as the samples are disposed of. Dialysis and other medical treatments are acceptable.

Scriptural and Doctrinal Sources

The body of writings known as the *Tanakh* constitutes the sacred Scripture of the Jewish faith. It corresponds approximately to the Old Testament of the Christian Bible and comprises the following:

- The (written) Torah, which includes the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It tells of the creation of the world and humanity, of G-d's naming of the tribes of Israel as His chosen people, and His giving to them of the Promised Land in return for their obedience to His moral law. The Torah addresses ethical responsibilities and values, and it outlines rituals and religious paradigms.
- The Nevim, consisting of the books of the prophets.
- The Ketuvim, comprising Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I Chronicles, II Chronicles.

Rituals

- Female children are named in special naming ceremonies at the synagogue the first Saturday after their birth.
- Baby boys are circumcised eight days after their birth, to symbolize their commitment to Israel.
- On the 31st day after a baby boy's birth, Pidyon Ha'Ben, a ceremony of redemption rites, is held.
- On a boy's 13th birthday, a bar mitzvah is held at the synagogue to mark the boy's formal admission to the Jewish religious community, when he takes responsibility for his religious obligations. Similarly, in Conservative or Reform Jewish families, a bat mitzvah is held at the synagogue on a girl's 12th birthday, when she takes responsibility for her religious obligations.
- A Jewish wedding ceremony involves reciting blessings over two goblets of wine, which represent the change in marital status of the man and the woman. A marriage contract outlining marital responsibilities is written and signed by witnesses, who state that the couple has been married in the Jewish tradition.

Moral Code - The Ten Commandments as written in the Torah, amplified by the Talmud.

Devotional Practices and Services

- Daily worship can be offered at home or in a synagogue.
- Daily prayer occurs three times a day: in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening.
- During the weekday prayers, Orthodox Jews may wear phylacteries on the forehead and arm. These are small leather cases that carry biblical texts.
- The Jewish Sabbath, or day of worship, begins 18 minutes before sundown on Friday and continues until 42 minutes after sunset on Saturday.
- Respect for the Sabbath requires that Jews do not work, travel by vehicle, turn on the electricity themselves, handle money, or bathe during the Sabbath.
- During the Sabbath, Jews study and reflect upon the Scriptures.
- At Sabbath meals, special blessings are made and wine and bread are consumed.

Clergy, Organization, and Government

In America, there are four major divisions of Judaism: *Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist*.

Major Celebrations and Observances:

Days of Regular Observance

- Sabbath: from 18 minutes before sunset on Friday until 42 minutes after sunset on Saturday.
- Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year): late September or early October.
- Fast of Gedaliah (commemorates the death of the last governor of Judea in 586 BCE, after the Babylonians burned the first temple).
- Ten Days of Repentance (period of reflection and repentance): the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement, during which Jews fast and ask forgiveness from G-d, as well as from other people): from before sunset the day before Yom Kippur until after nightfall on Yom Kippur, the 10th day of Tishri, the first month of the Jewish civil year.
- Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles, a harvest festival during which families may have meals in a *sukkoth*, a temporary booth or hut decorated with fruit and vegetables; on the first day special prayers are said at the synagogue): nine days, beginning five days after Yom Kippur.
- Hosanna Rabba (congregation members walk around the synagogue seven times and sing prayers for salvation): seventh day of Sukkoth.
- Shemini Atzereth (prayers for rain): eighth day of Sukkoth.
- Simhat Torah (celebration at the end of the year's Torah readings): ninth day of Sukkoth.
- Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication; includes Festival of Lights, for which candles are lit each night and small gifts may be exchanged): eight-day festival in December.
- Asarah B'Tebet (day of fasting to commemorate the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 586 BCE).
- Hamishah Asar Bishvat (minor festival, celebrating a new year of trees).
- Fast of Esther: from the morning of the day before Purim until sundown when Purim begins.
- Purim (Feast of Lots, celebrating the rescue of the Jewish empire from destruction; the story of Purim is read in the synagogue): Feb or March.
- Pesach (Passover, a celebration of the exodus of Hebrews from enslavement in Egypt; see Dietary Requirements section for requirements for the day before Passover).
- Lag B'Omer (festival commemorating the Bar Kochba revolt against Rome; trips may be taken and bonfires built).
- Shavuoth (commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai; dairy products may be eaten, and the Torah is studied well into the night).
- Shiva Asar B'Tammuz (day of fasting commemorating the Babylonian breach of Jerusalem's walls and the ensuing Jewish exile).
- Tisha B'Av (major fast that commemorates the day the Babylonians destroyed the first temple, in 586 BCE, which is also the same day the second temple was destroyed in 70 BCE).

Special Observances

- Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Israeli Independence Day.
- Jerusalem Liberation Day.

Dress Requirements:

- Jewish men may cover their heads with a *kippa*, oryarmulke, a small cap that covers the crown of the head, as a sign of respect for G-d. It is worn during prayer and during meals, and some Jewish men choose to wear it at all times.
- Men may also wear under their everyday clothing a four-cornered garment with fringes at each corner.
- Men may wear side curls of hair and avoid shaving.
- When married, some women may choose to cover their hair with a scarf.
- Both men and women dress modestly.
- Men and women may cover their arms and legs.

Dietary Requirements:

The Fundamental Rules

Observance of Jewish dietary laws (*kashrut*, or kosher law) is considered a call to holiness, a call to distinguish between good and evil and to make the right choice. Although some of the laws appear to have a basis in hygiene and healthy living, the purpose of many is obscure. Jews see their observance as obedience to G-d's commandment. The details of *kashrut* are extensive. However, the laws for preparation and serving of kosher foods all derive from a few basic rules:

- Certain animals (camel, pig, hare, shellfish, birds of prey, and others) may not be eaten at all. This restriction includes the flesh, organs, eggs, and milk of the forbidden animals.
- Of the animals that may be eaten, the birds and mammals must be killed in accordance with Jewish law.
- All blood must be drained from the meat or broiled out of it before it is eaten.
- Certain parts of permitted animals may not be eaten.
- Meat (the flesh of birds and mammals) cannot be eaten with dairy. Fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and grains can be eaten with either meat or dairy. (According to some views, fish may not be eaten with meat.)
- Grape products made by non-Jews may not be consumed.
- Dietary laws extend to methods of preparation, use of utensils and dishes, and manner of serving.

All information is extracted from the following sources:

Religions in Canada. (2003). Retrieved from <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/pub/rc/index-eng.asp>

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