

Judaism is the world's oldest monotheistic religion, dating back nearly 4,000 years. Followers of Judaism believe in one God who revealed himself through ancient prophets. The history of Judaism is essential to understanding the Jewish faith, which has a rich heritage of law, culture and tradition.

Judaism Beliefs

Jewish people believe there's only one God who has established a covenant—or special agreement—with them. Their God communicates to believers through prophets and rewards good deeds while also punishing evil.

Most Jews (with the exception of a few groups) believe that their Messiah hasn't yet come—but will one day.

Jewish people worship in holy places known as synagogues, and their spiritual leaders are called rabbis. The six-pointed Star of David is the symbol of Judaism.

Today, there are about 14 million Jews worldwide. Most of them live in the United States and Israel. Traditionally, a person is considered Jewish if his or her mother is Jewish.

Torah

The Jewish sacred text is called the Tanakh or the “Hebrew Bible.” It includes the same books as the Old Testament in the Christian Bible, but they're placed in a slightly different order.

The Torah—the first five books of the Tanakh—outlines laws for Jews to follow. It's sometimes also referred to as the Pentateuch.

Founder of Judaism

The origins of Jewish faith are explained throughout the Torah. According to the text, God first revealed himself to a Hebrew man named Abraham, who became known as the founder of Judaism.

Jews believe that God made a special covenant with Abraham and that he and his descendants were chosen people who would create a great nation.

Abraham's son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, also became central figures in ancient Jewish history. Jacob took the name Israel, and his children and future generations became known as Israelites.

More than 1,000 years after Abraham, the prophet Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt after being enslaved for hundreds of years.

According to scriptures, God revealed his laws, known as the Ten Commandments, to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

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