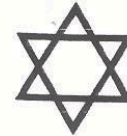


# JUDAISM

**BASIC BELIEF** Judaism is founded on the belief of monotheism, stated in the biblical proclamation, "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One". Judaism believes the world stands on 3 things: Torah, prayer and good deeds. It commands us to "love your neighbor as yourself". The Torah (5 Books of Moses) is the sacred text of Judaism. Scholars believe it was written starting in the 9th century BCE and contains the formative history of the Jews and ethical and ritual laws of Judaism. The Star of David, of ancient origin, is one of the main symbols.



**BACKGROUND** Judaism was founded by Abraham, a nomad shepherd, about the 18th century BCE. He was called forth to be the ancestor of a new nation and to follow God. It was the beginning of monotheism. Milestones: 13th century BCE - the covenant between God and the people of Israel was formed with Moses on Mt. Sinai. 586 BCE and 70 CE - destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem and the exile of the

Jews from their land, leading to the development of the synagogue and prayer and thus the "portability" of Judaism which enabled its survival. 1948- the founding of the State of Israel as an independent homeland for the Jews. Worldwide, there are 12 million Jews.

**CUSTOMS AND PEOPLE** Judaism originated in the Middle East but as the Jews spread throughout the world they adopted local clothing and customs. Exceptions are Hassidic (ultra-orthodox) men who wear dark clothes and beards. All Jewish men are circumcised. At prayer services, some men wear kipot (skull caps) and tallitot (shawls). Kashrut, the dietary laws observed by many, prohibit shellfish, pork and

mixing meat and dairy. Famous Jews include Albert Einstein - scientist, Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin - conquerors of polio, Hayim Salomon - financier of the Revolutionary War, George Gershwin and Irving Berlin - composers. Social action on LI is performed by the UJA Federation and each synagogue based on local community need.

**STRUCTURE** The Jewish congregation is led by a full time spiritual leader, the rabbi, who is chosen by the congregation. The rabbi's duties include that of teacher, leader of services, counselor to individuals and families, interpreter of religious laws, performer of life cycle ceremonies and, sometimes, as administrator. Rabbis are ordained from a rabbinic (post-college) seminary. They do not report to a superior body or

central authority. Some Hassidic sects are an exception. The Board of Trustees, an elected body, is the governing body of the congregation. The necessary funds to operate the congregation are obtained through dues and fund raising.

**MAJOR HOLY DAYS** Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) celebrates the creation of the universe. It is observed in early Fall and begins the 10 days of repentance which end on Yom HaKippurim (Day of Atonement). This day is observed by prayer, fasting, self-denial and asking God and individuals for forgiveness. Shabbat (Sabbath) Friday sundown through Saturday sundown, symbolizes God resting

after creation and is observed through prayer, rest and Torah study. Pesah (Passover) 7 days in Spring, celebrates the exodus from Egypt. The story is retold at a special meal, the Seder. Matzah, unleavened bread, is eaten because during the exodus there was no time for bread to rise.

**WORSHIP** Synagogue or Temple is the building used for worship. The prayer area does not contain pictures or statues. The focus is on the altar (bema) with the Holy Ark which contains the Torah scrolls. Seating is provided. Services, conducted by Rabbi and Cantor in English and Hebrew, are held Friday PM. and Saturday am. and on Holy Days, Services last from 1 1/2 to 3 hrs. Purpose of service is prayer and Torah study. Rabbi's

sermons deal with Jewish views on social issues or interpreting weekly Torah reading. In liberal temples, women participate in all aspects. All services have singing or music. Visitors are welcome, but men may be asked to wear skullcaps (provided).

## SAYINGS OF THE FAITH

If I am not for myself, who is for me? And being only for my own self, what am I? If not now, when? Hillel, the Elder.

The whole Torah exists only to establish peace. Its highest teaching is love and kindness. What is hateful to you, do not do to any person. That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary.

Justice, justice shalt thou pursue. Torah