

Judaism

Type

Judaism is a **monotheistic** religion meaning they *believe in only one god*. Their name for this god can be called Yahweh or simply God. They believe in the same god as followers of Christianity and Islam.

Followers

Today, there are about **15 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. Someone who isn't born a Jew can convert to Judaism, but it is not easy to do so.



Founder

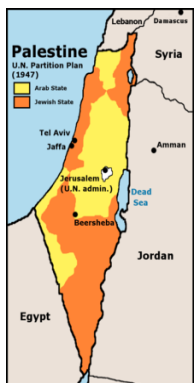
The origins of Jewish faith are explained throughout the Torah. According to the text, Yahweh first revealed himself to a Hebrew man named **Abraham**, who became known as the founder of Judaism. Descendants of Abraham and his son Isaac created the Jewish/Hebrew people who lived in the area of the Middle East we know today as Israel and Palestine.

History

Throughout history, the Jewish people have been discriminated against, violently attacked, and killed for their religious beliefs. Around 70 A.D. the Jews fought against Rome. Many Jews were killed and the rest were forced into exile and had to flee out of the Kingdom of Jerusalem creating a **diaspora** which is the *scattering of the Jewish people around the world*.



As Jews lived around the world, they were continually attacked because they were a religious minority. In 1492, Spain's rulers declared all Jews who refused to convert to Christianity would be expelled from the country. About 200,000 people were ousted and tens of thousands died while trying to reach safety. Throughout Eastern Europe Jews were forced into small ghetto communities and prevented from marrying or going to school with non-Jews. In the **Holocaust** from 1939-1945, the Nazis murdered more than 6 million Jews.



During and after the Holocaust, many Jews advocated for the creation of a Jewish country in the Middle East region known as Palestine which was the location of the Ancient Kingdom of Jerusalem. In 1948, **Israel** officially became an independent nation. However, tensions between Jews and Arabs living in Palestine escalated in the years since Israel became a state and are still ongoing today.

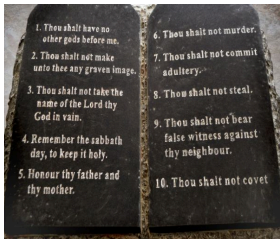
Major Beliefs

Jews believe that their god, Yahweh, made a special **covenant** which was a *promise with Abraham and that he and his descendants were the chosen people who would create a great nation*. This is part of the reason why Jews feel so strongly about having their own country in the Middle East as they believed that was their **promise land** given to them by their god through his covenant.

Jews also believe Yahweh communicates to believers through prophets and rewards good deeds while also punishing evil. **Prophets** *communicates the word of God, remind Jews of their duties, warn of God's anger and punishment, and teach them how to choose between right and wrong*. Most Jews believe that their **Messiah**, which is a *savior or person they believe will end the persecution and discrimination against them*, hasn't yet come. But they hope the Messiah will come one day. Some early Jews had believed **Jesus Christ** was the Messiah and became the first Christians and followers of Jesus. All other Jews don't think he is the Messiah but instead a Prophet.

Afterlife

Like Christians and Muslims, Jews believe there is a **heaven**. Which is the *afterlife place of paradise and peace for those who follow the teachings and laws correctly*. They also believe in a **hell** *afterlife place of torture and punishment for those that don't follow the teachings and law correctly*.



Holy Book

The Jewish sacred text is called the **Torah** which *outlines laws for Jews to follow*. Some of the most famous laws include the **Ten Commandments**. They were revealed to the prophet Moses while he was leading the Jews out of Egypt after hundreds of years of enslavement. Some of the commandments *include believing that God is the only god and forbidding practices like stealing, lying, cheating, and murder*.

Worship

Jews worship and pray in **synagogues**. Most Jews will cover their heads when praying, attending the synagogue or at a religious event or festival. Jewish spiritual leaders are called **rabbis**.

Major Holidays

Shabbat is the *day of rest and prayer for Jews*. It starts every week at sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday. Jews will refrain from work or physical labor. Most Jews celebrate Shabbat by reading or discussing the Torah, attending service at their synagogue, and sharing meals with friends and family members who are Jewish.

Hanukkah is a *holiday that commemorates the rededication of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem after it was destroyed*.



This festival in late December is often called the “Festival of Lights” because of the story of a candle staying lit for 8 days while the Temple was being rededicated despite only having enough oil for 1 day. Jews celebrate this holiday by lighting a **menorah** *candlestick with 8 candles* every day of Hanukkah and reciting a prayer. They also celebrate by eating deep fried foods such as potato pancakes and jelly filled donuts. Finally prizes like money or chocolates are exchanged and children will play a **dreidel** game.

Customs/Practices:

Yarmulke is a *skullcap* worn by Jewish men in public, while praying, or while at synagogue. It is worn because the head is viewed as sacred and shows devotion to their faith/beliefs, and to show respect for Yahweh their god.



Kosher is *Jewish dietary regulations that specify what types of food you can and can't eat and how the food should be processed or prepared*. Foods that are considered kosher would be meat from a cow, sheep, goat, or birds killed correctly with their blood drained. Other rules include not eating meat and dairy together, fish being kosher because it has scales but shellfish like shrimp is not kosher, and many others.

Divisions/Spread

There are several sects in Judaism. Two of the most common ones include:

- **Orthodox Judaism:** *strict observance of traditional Jewish law and rituals*. For instance, most believe Shabbat shouldn't involve working, driving or handling money. They will also more strictly follow rules about the yarmulke and kosher food.
- **Reform Judaism:** *Less strict observance of traditional Jewish law and ritual*. For example, wearing a head covering is viewed as optional and not all of them eat Kosher food. Most of the Jews living in the United States follow Reform Judaic traditions.

While there are various denominations of Judaism, many Jews don't identify with a particular classification and simply refer to themselves as Jewish.