



Key facts:

Judaism is the oldest of the three monotheistic religions and its origins are from 4000 BCE in the time of the Patriarchs: Abraham, his son Isaac and his son Jacob. The name Judaism is derived from Judah, one of the 12 sons of Jacob.

There are three particularly important features in Judaism:

- belief in one God;
- the Torah;
- the community and their land.

Belief in one God

Jews believe in a creator God who made humans. They believe that we cannot know what God looks like and so no visual representation of God will be found in synagogues or homes. Many Jewish people believe the name of God is too sacred to pronounce.

The words of the Shema are at the centre of Jewish belief. The opening of the Shema is, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.'

The Torah

The contents of the Torah is at the centre of Judaism as it embodies the covenant that Jewish people made with God in which God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and look after his descendants. The teaching in the Torah, which means instruction, contains 613 commandments. The Torah and the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Jews have other important teachings which together make up the Tenakh or written Torah. These are:

- Torah – five books of Moses;
- Nevi'im – the books of the Prophets;
- Ketuvim – the holy writings, including such books as Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.

The community and their land

The family and the wider Jewish community are essential to living a Jewish life. The Kashrut or Jewish food laws play an important part in the daily lives of Jews, reminding them of their covenant with God.

Festivals: **Rosh Hashanah** is the Jewish New Year, which is celebrated in September or October. It is a time for thinking about the achievements of the past year and considering plans for the next year. **Yom Kippur** is the Day of Atonement. It begins at sunset, ten days after Rosh Hashanah. Many Jews fast for 25 hours. It is vital for Jews to forgive one another for anything they have done wrong before the beginning of Yom Kippur. The three foot festivals, when Jews made a pilgrimage to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, are Passover, Pentecost (Feast of weeks – 7 weeks after the beginning of Passover and when the Tora was given) and Tabernacles.



Key vocabulary:

Monotheistic: a religion that teaches belief in one God

Torah: The first 5 books of the Old Testament written in Hebrew. It takes one year to complete a reading of the Torah in the synagogue.

Hebrew: The language of the Jews

Synagogue: The place of worship for Jews

Rabbi: A Jewish faith leader

Tenakh: The written teachings of Judaism which include the Torah (acronym for Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim).

Covenant: An agreement/promise

Ark of the Covenant: Where the Torah is stored in the synagogue

Yad: A silver pointer used to help read the Torah scrolls as it is not permitted to touch the scrolls

Simchat Torah: the festival that celebrates the completion of the annual reading of the Torah.

Kosher: Foods which are fit to be. . In order to be kosher only certain types of meat and fish can be eaten and they must be killed in a special way.

Treyfah: Food which is unfit to be eaten

Shabbat meal : celebrated at home each week on a Friday evening. This is followed by a day of rest with the family and a time to worship God.

Sabbath: The day of rest for Jewish people (a Saturday)

Israel: a holy site for Jews, wherever they live in the world. Jews believe it was promised to them by God through the promise to Abraham and his descendants. There are many sites of pilgrimage in Jerusalem, the most important of which is the Western Wall, which formed part of the second temple in Jerusalem.