

Judaism - An introduction

Questions answered

How do you become a Jew?

Some Jews believe that you are Jewish if your mother is Jewish or you convert according to the Orthodox tradition. Others believe that you are Jewish if either your mother or father is Jewish, or you convert according to the Progressive tradition.



Why are the Jewish prayers in Hebrew?

Hebrew is the Biblical term for Israelite, and is the word used for the language of the Bible and of modern Israel.

Do Jewish people watch TV on Shabbat (the Sabbath)?

Some Jews do and some don't. Orthodox Jews keep the seventh day for spiritual and physical rest based on the Biblical teaching: 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy'. Shabbat is a weekly reminder that God created the world. Usual everyday activities are replaced by a 25 hour period of prayer, study, festive meals and song.

What rites of passage are marked in Judaism?

- **Brit Milah** (the Jewish words for 'Covenant of Circumcision') is celebrated when a baby boy is eight days old, although this can be postponed for medical reasons. This is when the baby is named. Girls are blessed and named the first time the parents attend the synagogue after the birth. Children are often given a name in the memory of a deceased loved one.
- **Bar Mitzvah** (Son of the Commandment) is celebrated when a boy reaches the age of 13 and **Bat Mitzvah** (Daughter of the Commandment) and is celebrated when a girl reaches the age of 12. Both girls and boys promise to keep the Commandments.