

Judaism - An introduction

Judaism has about 13 million followers throughout the world, mostly in USA and Israel. Aproximately 270,100 people in the UK said that their religious identity was Jewish (2011 census).

Judaism originated in the Middle East over 3500 years ago.



Moses was the main founder of Judaism, but Jews can trace their history back as far as Abraham.

6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust in an attempt to wipe out Judaism.

Beliefs

Jews believe that there is only one God.

Jews believe they have a special agreement or **covenant** with God. In exchange for all the good that God has done for them, Jewish people keep God's laws and try to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives.

Judaism is a faith of action and Jews believe people should be judged not so much on what they believe as on the way they live their faith - by how much they contribute to the overall holiness of the world.

Holy Books

The most holy Jewish book is the **Torah** (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) which was revealed by God to **Moses** on Mount Sinai over 3,000 years ago.



The Torah, together with the Talmud (commentary on the Torah), give the Jewish people rules for everyday life. Observing these rules is central to the Jewish religion.

Worship

Jews worship in **Synagogues**

A Jewish Religious leader is called a **Rabbi** (literally 'teacher')

Shabbat (The Sabbath)

The family and community are very important within Jewish life.

The most important day of the week is Shabbat (the Sabbath). It is the day on which Jews remember the seventh day of creation on which God rested. On Shabbat Jews stop working and make time for God and family life.

Shabbat starts on Friday evening and ends at sunset on Saturday.

Shabbat begins with the family sharing a meal.

During Shabbat, services are held at the synagogue, often led by a Rabbi.

Jewish festivals

The most important Jewish festivals are:

- [Pesach \(Passover\)](#)
- [Rosh Hashanah \(the New Year\)](#)
- [Yom Kippur \(the Day of Atonement\)](#)
- [Hanukkah \(the Festival of Lights\)](#)

Jewish symbols

The emblem of the Jewish people is the Magen David (Shield of David), also known as the Star of David.