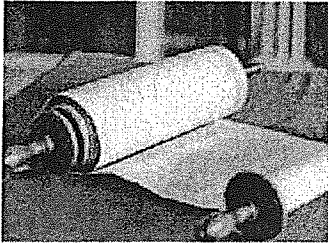


#1 Judaism



Judaism is a relatively small world religion with fewer than 20 million followers worldwide. Its spread has not occurred through the conversion of nonbelievers, as is the case with other religions, but through the migration of Jews from the Middle East throughout much of the world in what is called the Jewish diaspora. The relatively small number of Jews belies the religion's significance: Judaism provided the philosophical and historical foundation from which two of the world's largest religions, Christianity and Islam, sprang.

Judaism holds that there is one all-powerful God (Yahweh) to whom all Jews have a personal relationship, which is enacted through individual conduct. God, who selected the Jews as his chosen people, has revealed himself through prophets and great events. Historical events are therefore seen as crucial guides to the development and meaning of Judaism. The primary Jewish scripture, the Torah, devotes large sections to the recording of that history.

The History of Judaism

Judaism dates back to about 2000 B.C., when the ancestors of the Jews were one of several nomadic tribes in northern Arabia. The Jews roamed the entire region with relative freedom for several centuries until they were enslaved by Egyptian pharaohs. In the 13th century B.C., Moses emerged as a leader to guide the Jews out of enslavement and back to the promised land that had since become occupied by the Canaanites. Moses led the Jews through the Sinai Desert. At Mount Sinai, he climbed to the top of the mountain to meet with God, who initiated a covenant with the Jewish people that consisted of the Ten Commandments. Because the covenant was accepted by the Jewish people, all Jewish descendants are bound to the covenant.

The commandments are the basic ethical code that Jews follow. They include pronouncements not to worship any likeness of God, not to kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, use God's name in vain, or covet one's neighbor's possessions or wife. In addition, God invoked Jews to worship him as the sole god, to honor one's father and mother, and to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest once a week. As long as the Jews abided by the commandments, God would protect them and assure them prosperity.

After 40 years, the Jews finally crossed the Jordan River under the leadership of Joshua. Their arrival coincided with the arrival of the Philistines, a seafaring tribe who also envisioned their future in the land occupied by the Canaanites. The three groups struggled for domination for more than 200 years until King David prevailed and established a Jewish kingdom. His son Solomon built a great temple in Jerusalem. Before long, however, the kingdom collapsed and divided into two parts. In both of the divided kingdoms, Jews strayed from worshipping only Yahweh despite the pleas of the Jewish prophets, who condemned the occultism and illicit behaviors of their brethren. The prophets took on the responsibility for the character of the Jewish religion. They equated human conduct to ethical principles and moral obligations and claimed that good conduct was more important than fulfilling religious ceremony. They stressed the inward quality of religion as a personal relationship between the individual and God, a merciful and just deity.

In the sixth century B.C., the ruling Babylonians exiled the Jews three times, the most important of which took place in 587 when the Babylonians destroyed Solomon's temple. Those exiles marked the beginning of the diaspora, the scattering of Jews throughout the world. Seventy years after the temple was destroyed, Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jews back to Jerusalem, and a new temple was built. Under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, a Jewish theocratic state was created in the fifth century B.C. that ruled according to the dictates of the Torah. It was during that time that many of the diverse practices of the Jews were consolidated into a single religion. In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered the region (then known as Palestine) and brought with him Greek civilization. The Roman general Pompey entered Palestine in 63 B.C. and quickly occupied Palestine as a Roman district.

After years of repression, the Jews revolted against Rome in A.D. 66 but were put down in brutal fashion. Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple burned to the ground. The Jews were exiled from Palestine and scattered throughout the Mediterranean lands.

The center of Jewish life shifted westward to Spain for several centuries until the Muslims conquered the region in the eighth century. When Christian rule returned to Spain in the 14th and 15th centuries, the Jews were expelled. By that time, they were scattered throughout Europe and under constant threat of persecution in most European and Arabic countries. In 1555, the pope

authorized the containment of Jews in ghettos and placed tight restrictions on their activities. They became subject to uprisings known as pogroms. Nevertheless, they developed such new languages as Sephardim (a mixture of Hebrew and Spanish) and Yiddish (a mixture of Hebrew and German) and kept the Jewish traditions alive. Jews in Arab nations faced similar hardships. They lived in their own communities and engaged in specific occupations, like metalworking. In the 18th century, a mystical movement known as Hasidism erupted among eastern Europeans. In the 19th century, most of the restrictions placed on Jews in Europe were removed. Also in the 19th century, a group of Jews were influenced by the nationalism that was sweeping across Europe. Under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, the Zionists were convinced they would never be treated justly in Europe and advocated the creation of a Jewish nation.

When World War II broke out in Europe, Nazi Germany systematically killed 6 million Jews in concentration camps. Known as the Holocaust, the genocide convinced the rest of the world to allow the Jews to establish their own country in former British Palestine. After the brief but victorious Israeli War against Palestinian inhabitants and Arab neighbors, the Jews established Israel as a religious state in 1948. Hundreds of thousands of Jews from Europe, the United States, the Arab world, Russia, and Ethiopia have since emigrated to Israel. The largest concentrations of Jews are in the United States (6 million), Israel (more than 4 million), and the former Soviet Union (1.5 million), but there are also substantial Jewish populations in western Europe, Canada, South Africa, Argentina, and Brazil.

The Elements of Judaism

The Jewish Bible (known as the Old Testament by Christians) outlines the central components of Jewish beliefs. The Bible (which means "books" in Greek) consists of three main sections: the Torah (Law), Neviim (The Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). Those writings, which are supplemented by a collection of more modern writings called the Talmud, describe Jewish tradition, laws, priorities, religious ceremonies, and codes of conduct. The Torah consists of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and is considered the most significant scripture.

After the Bible, the next most important writings for Judaism are the Talmud, a collection of commentaries and traditions, and the Midrash, a series of interpretations of scripture. The two are often considered as recordings of the oral version of the written Bible. Both those collections are studied in Judaism to supplement the knowledge imparted in the Bible. Throughout the centuries, Judaism has encompassed many different interpretations. At the time of Jesus Christ, several different sects existed. During the diaspora, as Jewish groups became scattered and isolated throughout the world, various versions of Judaism evolved. One important distinction is between Ashkenazim, or European Jews, whose culture evolved in eastern and central Europe, and Sephardim, or Oriental Jews, whose culture evolved in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East.

In the United States and other nations, there are four main variations of Judaism, based on the degree of religiosity. Orthodox Jews strive to adhere as closely as possible to biblical laws. They eat only kosher food, observe the Sabbath, and have the sexes sit in separate areas in the synagogue. Conservative Jews are not as strict in their adherence to biblical regulations. Synagogue services are held in the vernacular as well as in Hebrew, and they apply a more scientific approach to the study of the Bible. Reform Judaism applies a much less rigorous application of biblical Jewish duties and holds services on Friday nights. Men and women may sit together and do not have to cover their heads. Mordecai Kaplan founded Reconstruction Judaism, a recent movement in the United States that views Judaism not simply as a religion but also as a unique culture that encompasses art, music, literature, and other nonreligious aspects of Jewish history. Jewish sects that have often lived in isolation from other Jewish communities in China, India, Yemen, far-eastern Russia, and Ethiopia have practiced forms of Judaism that include ceremonies and observances that date back to ancient times.

The most important Jewish observance is the circumcision of male babies. It is an external symbol of a Jew's commitment to Judaism. Boys, and more recently girls in Reform Judaism, fulfill a religious obligation at age 13 through the Bar Mitzvah (or Bat Mitzvah for girls), a ceremony in which they are recognized as adults responsible for fulfilling the obligations of Judaism. Jewish marriage vows are made under a canopy, representing the bride and groom's home, and are concluded by the couple sharing wine as a representation of their common destiny. Although mixed marriages are permitted, Jewish men are strongly encouraged to marry Jewish women, as a child takes his or her faith from the mother in Jewish tradition. When a Jewish person dies, an elaborate ceremony takes place designed to comfort the closest relatives. There is a seven-day mourning period called the shiva, during which the bereaved remain at home and hold services every evening.

The Sabbath, or day of rest, is observed from sundown on Friday evening to dusk the following day. Synagogue services are held on the Sabbath. The two most important holy days are Rosh Hashanah, celebrating the New Year each fall with 10 days of penitence, and Yom Kippur (meaning "Day of Atonement"), which is held at the end of the 10-day period. Yom Kippur involves a day of praying and fasting that includes confessing all one's sins and shortcomings and seeking forgiveness. Passover is a very important eight-day family festival held in early spring to mark the anniversary of the flight of the Jews from Egypt.

Judaism

1. Compared to other world religions, is Judaism considered a larger or smaller world religion?
2. What differs between how Judaism is spread, and how other religions are spread?
3. What is the migration of Jewish people called?
4. Describe why the religion of Judaism is considered significant, even though there are a relatively small number of Jews.
5. Describe Yahweh, and the significance Yahweh has to Jewish people.
6. What is the torah?
7. Describe the lives of Jewish people before they were enslaved by Egyptian pharaohs.
8. Describe how Moses impacted the Jewish people during the 13th century B.C.
9. What are the 10 Commandments? Give 5 examples of what is listed in the 10 Commandments.
Define-
 - Ex-1
 - Ex-2
 - Ex-3
 - Ex-4
 - Ex-5
10. Describe the struggles which the Jews went through after they crossed the Jordan River under the leadership of Joshua in at least a complete paragraph.
11. What is diaspora? What caused it to begin?
12. Describe what happened to the Jews when they revolted against Rome in AD 66?
13. What is a pogrom?

14. Describe Sephardim.
15. Describe Yiddish.
16. The leadership of Theodor Herzl helped convince the Zionist Jews of what?
17. Before and during WWII, Nazi Germany systematically killed 6 million Jews in concentration camps. This was known as what?
18. The event in # 17 convinced the world of what, after WWII?
19. What is the name of the Jewish state established in 1948? Where did the Jewish people come from to help form this state?
20. Where does the largest concentration of Jewish people exist? Why do you think this is?
21. List and describe the 3 parts of the Jewish Bible.
 - Part-1
 - Part-2
 - Part-3
22. List and describe in your own words the four main variations of Judaism in the US as well as other nations.
 - Var-1
 - Var-2
 - Var-3
 - Var-4
23. Describe the Jewish Sabbath.
24. Describe Yom Kipper, and its significance to people of Jewish faith.