

# RE - Judaism - Beliefs and Practices

## Key words

The Torah	Contains the word of God
Monotheism	A belief in the oneness of God (Central message in the Shema prayer)
The Shema	A prayer declaring the Jewish faith said by many twice a day. The Shema says that God is personal and demands love with every aspect of their being.
Tenakh	24 collected books of the Jewish Bible. It is in three sections: Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim
Covenant	An agreement or promise.
Mitzvot	Commandments
Agape	Unconditional, selfless love (The love that Jesus taught).
Synagogue	Jewish place of worship which means 'assemble or gather together'
Minyan	Congregational worship that requires at least 10 Jewish men.
Shabbat	Holy Day of spiritual renewal which takes place on Friday at sundown to sundown on Saturday.
Shul	School
Hanukkah	The Jewish Festival of Lights celebrated for 8 days in November or December
Mezuzah	Small case containing a scroll of parchment inscribed with the words of the Shema
Menorah	A seven-branched candelabrum which is lit daily in the temple.

1

4

## Differences in Tradition

**Orthodox Jews:** Believe the Torah word for word, are more traditional, services in Hebrew and don't believe that laws can be changed. It is tradition to wear a Kippah.

**Reform Jews:** keeps traditions, but updates them to suit modern life. They don't believe God wrote the Torah and they believe that laws can be changed.

**Liberal Jews:** tries to bring Judaism and modernity together. They are more radical than Reform and they believe that all teachings and beliefs should be brought up to date.

6

## Religious Dress

- The Kippah – often called a skull- cap is worn by Jewish males as a sign of Jewish identity. Some believe it is respectful to God to cover your head.
- The tallith – also known as the prayer shawl, is traditionally worn by Jewish men at morning prayer, festivals and on the Sabbath. It is worn to remind Jews of the 613 commandments which they are expected to follow. The commandments are represented by the 613 fringes known as the tzitzit.
- The Tefillin- a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah. They are worn by observant adult males during weekday morning prayers

5

## The Jewish Home

- Important and valued
- A place of worship
- Mezuzah on every door frame
- Observe many traditions at home such as Shabbat
- Menorah in every window during Hanukka

7

## The Shema and respect for God

### Reciting the Shema

The Shema Yisrael is the most ancient Jewish prayer in the Torah. It affirms that there is only one God. It states that God is personal and demands love from all with every aspect of their being. It also says that Jews should follow his instructions and allow love to be seen. The Shema must be recited every morning and evening. Jews will cover their eyes with their right hand, as a sign of concentration.

### God and Art

**Idolatry means to worship an image or created object. This is seen as a sin in Judaism. For this reason God will not be represented in any art form. This law is the second of the Ten Commandments.**

### G-d

God is so important care must be taken when using his name as it is sacred and therefore different to any other word.

Many Jews will write the word as G-d so that God's name is not disrespected if the paper is damaged. Many Jews will not speak or write his name except in prayer and in Torah scrolls.

2

## The teachings of the Shema

**God as merciful** – God is forgiving, and although he knows of sins people have committed he doesn't always punish them.

**God as Law giver** – Many believe that God has given laws that have to be observed which are found in the Tenakh. God demands that Jews follow his instructions and show their appreciation of him visibly.

The belief is that Abraham, Noah and Moses entered covenants with God. There are two covenants 1) God will teach people how to live. 2) Jews will only worship on God and obey his commandments. (Mitzvot)

### God as judge

Jews believe that God is responsible for: Punishing, rewarding and forgiving. Jews believe that God is judging humans every moment of every day and cares about how people treat one another.

3

## The Synagogue

The Jewish place of worship which is at the centre of the community and life. The functions of the Synagogue can be divided into social, educational and worship.

Jews gather to:

**Pray as a community-** Most Jews visit at least once a week and observant Jews go every evening.

**Study-** learn Hebrew, about the Torah, Kosher food laws and Bar Mizvah classes

**Celebrate different rites of passage and festivals** –Bar Mizvah, weddings and funerals

**Assemble as a community-** social gatherings and activities almost like a town hall

There prayer hall where the Torah is kept is the most important part of the Synagogue

1

## Inside the Synagogue

### **Aron Hakodesh – the ark**

This is the most important place inside the Synagogue, as this is where the Torah is kept. If the door of the ark is open it is a symbol that the prayer is important. The door is often opened for certain prayers during **Yom Kippur** (day of atonement) and **Rosh Hashanah** (The Jewish New Year).

### **Sefer Torah**

The Torah scrolls are the holiest object in Judaism and contain 613 laws given to Moses by God. They are dressed in a **mantle** (velvet cloth) with a silver breast plate and crowns. The **Yad** (pointer) is used to read the scroll as it should not be touched by a human hand.. Over the year the whole scroll is read in sequence.

**Ner Tamid**- eternal light which is symbolic of the menorah used in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem

Is situated at the front of the Synagogue above the ark. Traditionally it was an oil lamp, but it is often an electric lamp. It always burns .

The Bimah

The raised platform where the Torah is read and where services are delivered.

### **The Ten Commandments**

Are ten rules that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. They are part of the 613 commandments. The ten commandments are mentioned twice in the Torah and provide the foundations of Jewish law. They are read aloud three times a year, as well as during the festival of **Shavuot**.

### **Menorah**

**Seven branched candle . The design was instructed to Moses by God.**

### **Seating**

**Traditionally men and women are not allowed to sit together, as it was believed to cause distraction. In reform Synagogues men and women sit together .**

2

## Ordination of Rabbis

- Ordained by a Jewish religious leader
- Traditionally only men can be ordained
- Orthodox women can not become a Rabbis
- Reform movement is more relaxed, but women can't be counted in the Minyan

3

## Shabbat

Shabbat is the most important day of worship at home. It is celebrated every Friday at sunset to sunset Saturday in order to remember the Sabbath.

Families celebrate in their own way but most included a lot of preparation.

Friday:

- House cleaned
- Food cooked
- All jobs finished before sunset

Shabbat starts with a service at the

Synagogue followed by a meal at home. The table is covered with a white cloth and there are two Shabbat candles on top. There is a glass of wine at every seat and in the a plate containing the challah bread covered with a cloth is in the middle.

At sunset the mother lights the candles and says a prayer. The father blesses the children and says Kiddush (the blessing over the wine). Then the challah is blessed.

Benefits of observing Shabbat:

- Quality time with family
- A break from work and technology
- Time to think about their religious beliefs
- Obeying two of the Mizvot and well as remembering the freedom of the Israelites

Challenges:

- Have to leave work or school early
- Lots of preparation

Avot Melakhah (prohibited tasks)

- No work
- No cooking
- No driving
- No phones
- No handling of money
- No laundry

3

## The Kosher Kitchen

### **Kashrut**

Means fit, proper or correct. It refers to Jewish food and dietary laws.. Orthodox Jews stick to the laws however, some Reform Jews choose not to.

### **Kosher**

The term refers to foods that Jews are allowed to eat.

Kosher foods include:

- All fruit and vegetables ( they have to be washed)
- Animals with split hooves
- Chicken
- Duck
- Turkey
- Fish the have both fins and scales

### **Shechitah**

Animals are only considered Kosher if they have been slaughtered in a way that causes the least amount of pain.

Tereif

Foods that are forbidden.

### **Combining foods**

Some combinations of food are forbidden. Exodus 23:19- Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk. This means you can not eat meat and dairy products together. Some leave a gap of three hours

Between eating milk and dairy.

### **Parev**

Means neutral and refers to food that are not meat of dairy.

Different families have different rules about the extent to which they keep a Kosher kitchen.

Orthodox Jews uses different utensils, fridges, dishwashers for preparation of meat and dairy. Others will just ensure they are not eaten together and some Liberal Jews don't observe the law at all.