

Judaism Guidelines for RE

What are the 'big ideas' in Judaism?

Jews believe in One Eternal God, who is the giver of all life and has a purpose for the world. Jews believe that they are **descendants of Abraham**, chosen by God to show what he is like. Jews try to live according to God's laws in the Torah, which are unchangeable, but can be interpreted for the present. **Torah** reading is an essential part of synagogue worship, and will be the most valuable and sacred object in the synagogue. Jewish worship is also centred on the home: often it will be lighting candles on Friday night and welcoming **Shabbat**. For Jews life itself is a religious ceremony: living according to the Torah and carrying out the mitzvot (commandments) are all a form of worship. **Belonging** is a key concept for Jews, as being a Jew makes someone part of a community & a tradition as well as a religion. There are many festivals during the Jewish year, many of which are based in home-life. Through them, Jews keep their history alive and **remember** what the events have taught them about God.





What do I need to know about Judaism?



Judaism is not just a religion, but can also be understood as a tradition and a cultural identity. Some Jews might identify themselves as belonging to the nation of Israel, some may practise Judaism as a religion and others choose to recognise their 'Jewishness' through the keeping of cultural traditions, religious or secular. According to Jewish law (**Halakah**), a Jew is anyone whose mother is Jewish, or has chosen to become a Jew by converting to the Jewish religion, regardless of personal beliefs or observance of Jewish laws. The Jewish people are very family-orientated, and this is reflected both in the celebration of weekly Shabbat, festivals throughout the Jewish year and a proud tradition of caring institutions. Shabbat and festivals are celebrated both in the home and in the synagogue. Although (through the part of the Bible that Christians call the 'Old Testament') Christianity shares many stories (and its roots) with Judaism, it is important that the Jewish religion is taught in its own right: the New Testament is not part of Jewish religious teaching.

Much of Jewish history is connected with the struggle of Israel and their identity as a people. The Torah describes this early history from the Creation, and contains key events such as the Exodus (the escape from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses), the building of a portable sanctuary in the desert, and the Tenakh tells of the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE, and the Jews were exiled to Babylonia. Re-settlement and the rebuilding of the Temple commenced about 70 years later. In 70 CE the Romans destroyed the second Temple, and over many centuries the Jews were dispersed throughout the world.



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

Since 1948, the foundation of the State of Israel has provided a beacon of hope for a people nearly destroyed by the Nazis in Hitler's Germany. The Holocaust and the systematic murder of 6,000,000 Jewish men, women and children is a permanent reminder of the evils of racism. Holocaust Memorial Day has been marked every year from the year 2000, on January 27th, and not only commemorates the WWII Holocaust but provides opportunity for remembrance of other genocides since. More information about the Holocaust, and the Holocaust Memorial Day can be found on the Trust website: www.hmd.org.uk.

What do Jews believe?

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

*Sh'ma Yisra'el Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai echad.*

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God,
the Lord is one.

Key beliefs in Judaism are expressed in the **shema**, the first prayer in the Torah, which is also a declaration of what Jews believe. It is the oldest prayer in Judaism and is recited by Jews morning and night. The complete text of the shema comes from three places in the Torah: the book of Deuteronomy (6:4-9 and 11:13-21) and the book of Numbers (15:37-41). It is the shema that is placed inside a **mezuzah** and nailed to the right-hand doorposts in Jewish

homes as a reminder their faith and in obedience to the command to '...write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.' (Deut. 6:9) Another command within this portion of text gives rise to the wearing of **tefillin**: 'you shall bind them on your hand and they shall be for you a reminder between your eyes.'

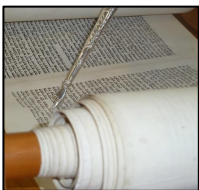


There are two main branches of Judaism, with some significant differences: **Orthodox** and **Progressive** (also known as reform or liberal). **Orthodox Jews** believe that the Torah contains the exact words of God, and follow the rules laid out in the Torah very closely as outlined in the **Talmud** (oral Jewish laws, written down), whereas **Progressive Jews** believe that their religion needs to move with the times and that some religious practices need to be reformed to fit with the modern world. Jews believe their special relationship with God is expressed in the 613 Mitzvot (laws). Each of these 613 mitzvot can be placed under one of the **Ten Commandments**, which were given to Moses by God (Exodus 20), and which define life for a Jewish person. Jews also believe that God's special relationship with all humanity is expressed through obedience to the seven Noachide laws (Genesis 9), when, after the flood, God made a covenant with Noah, and that the purpose of Judaism is the repair of the world.

The **Torah**, which is the Hebrew word for 'teachings' or 'guidance', is the most important portion of the **Tenakh** for Jews, which is demonstrated in its prominence within the synagogue. The word '**TeNaKh**' is an acronym for its constituent parts: 'T'



for **Torah**, 'N' for **Nev'im** (the Prophets) and 'K' for **Ketuvim** (other sacred writings, including stories from Jewish history, amongst them the books of Ruth, Job, Esther and the Psalms). The Torah is the first five books (Genesis-Deuteronomy) of the Tenakh and contains the story of G_d's covenant with his people from the time of Abraham. It is through Abraham and his descendants that G_d would show what he is like, and bless the nations. The Torah, which was revealed by G_d to Moses on Mt. Sinai, is the central core foundation of Jewish life, and sets out practical rules and guidance (including the Ten Commandments) for all aspects of daily individual, family and community life. It is through the Torah that G_d reveals His nature and what's important to Him.



The Torah is written in Hebrew, which is read from right to left (NB not 'backwards'!) A **sofer**, a Jewish scribe, will hand-write the Torah on sections of parchment that are then stitched together to form a long scroll, which, if unrolled, would stretch the length of a football pitch. A Torah scroll costs in excess of £25,000, will take a sofer around a year to complete: if any mistakes are made when writing God's name in the scroll, the Torah will be given a burial, just like a person. A Torah is the most precious object that any synagogue will



own, and is dressed up when not in use in a cover called a **mantle**, a **breastplate** bearing symbolism relating to ancient Jewish priesthood and a pair of finials, 'the Crown of the Law', called **rimmonim** which sit over the top of the handles when the scroll is rolled up. 'Rimmonim' is Hebrew for pomegranates, which is an important symbol in Judaism as they are said to contain 613 seeds, one for every commandment (or **mitzvot**) in the Torah. The bells that are a part of the rimmonim provide an auditory signal that the Torah is being taken out of the special cupboard, the **Ark**, where it is kept in the synagogue until it is read. On Shabbat, the Torah is processed out of the Ark, and portions are read according to the passage for that week, so that it will be read completely over time (a year for Orthodox Jews, 3 years for Reform). The procession of the Torah back to the Ark takes the longest route to involve the whole community. **Simchat Torah** is a joyful and noisy Jewish holiday at the end of Sukkot centred on the Torah, marking the end of the yearly cycle of synagogue Torah readings, during which the Torah is paraded / danced around the synagogue before the final verses of Deuteronomy, then the first verses in Genesis, are read. At Simchat Torah, it is traditional to eat foods that are rolled, like the Torah!

The name of God, YHWH (in Hebrew, *right*) is so holy that it is only permissible to speak it once a year, on the Jewish Day of Atonement. The name 'Adonai' (Master) or 'Lord' is more frequently used by Jews. The name YHWH means 'I AM', which is what God told Moses when he revealed Himself in the burning bush, and speaks of His eternal nature. When written in translation, vowels are often omitted, as Hebrew doesn't have any, so you might see 'G_d' (which is not a name) or 'L_RD' (always written in capitals). Jews believe that God is One and that He is the Creator of the world who cares for all His Creation. Much of God's character is revealed by the titles he is given in the books of the Tenakh, such as Elohim (Authority), Shaddai (Almighty), Elyon (Most High) and Avinu (our Father).



I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.

Genesis 12:1-3

Abraham: Jews believe they are descendants of Abraham, who abandoned the polytheistic idol-worship of his ancestors to follow the One Eternal God, leaving his home in Ur and becoming a nomad. God's covenant promise to Abraham describes how Abraham will have many descendants, which was brought about through the birth of his son, Isaac, and by Abraham's faithfulness to God as demonstrated in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. Through Abraham's son Isaac, the prophet and leader of the Jewish people, Moses, was born.

How does a synagogue help us to understand the Jewish faith?

As the Torah is the most important object in a synagogue, the primary uses for the synagogue as a place of worship, learning and community are centred around it. The **Ark**, in which the Torah



and other Jewish scrolls are kept, is sited in the Eastern wall, facing Jerusalem, where the only remaining part of the original ancient Temple, the Western or 'Wailing' Wall, is located. Much of the Ark's symbolism relates to this part of Jewish history, as the

original **Ark of the Covenant** contained the Ten Commandments given by G_d to Moses as Israel journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Ark is always raised up to show how important

the Torah is in Jewish worship, study, and community. Once removed from the Ark, the Torah is 'undressed' and placed on a platform called a **bimah**, from where it is read (only in Hebrew in an Orthodox service,



where men and women will sit separately or in Hebrew & English in a Progressive service, where men and women will be seated together.) As well as an Ark, every synagogue will contain a lamp (*detail, left*) called **Ner tamid** (meaning 'lamp forever', or 'everlasting light'), which is symbolic of G_d's presence and is never extinguished (it will usually have its own back-up generator, just in case!)

A synagogue's three names **Bet HaTefillah** (House of Prayer), **Bet HaMidrash** (House of Study) and **Bet HaKnesset** (House of Gathering) reveal its purpose within the Jewish community, but also shows how Jews believe the synagogue to be an extension of the home and at the centre of Jewish community life. Shabbat services are often a time for debate and discussion, as well as listening and prayer. Prayer is important to a Jew as the Torah tells them that G_d listens when they speak to Him, that He knows what is on their minds and that He responds to their prayers. King David's Psalms (contained in the *Ketuvim*) are an insight into the Jewish way of 'wrestling' with G_d through prayer. There will often be classes at synagogue for all ages to help them to learn Hebrew, or better understand the teachings of the Torah, or even learn practical skills such as cooking. Food is an important part of Jewish community life, and there are many insights into Jewish beliefs about food within a



kosher kitchen (*pictured, above right*), used for preparing food and drink for times of celebration, or simply after a Shabbat service, when the community linger. A Jewish mitzvah (requirement) states that you should walk quickly to synagogue, but walk slowly when you leave, showing you are eager to get there and sorry to leave! **Bar mitzvah** (boys, aged 13) and **bat mitzvah** (girls, aged 12) mark a Jewish young person's move into adulthood, when they will take on religious and legal responsibilities. At synagogue, they will publically read from the Torah and say the blessings for the first time (though for girls, only in progressive Judaism).

Why should Jews 'remember'?

The command to 'remember' is given many times throughout the Torah, and indeed, the dating of the Jewish calendar is connected with the importance of **remembering** how the world began, as the date represents the number of years since the creation, currently (in 2016), 5776. Many Jews (from both branches of Judaism) would suggest that the 'days' in the creation account are not 24 hour periods, but time periods: others might say that the six days are literal. Throughout their history, God gave his people the command to 'remember': in the Ten Commandments, Jews are told to remember how they were slaves, and the weekly celebration of Shabbat or 'Sabbath', the Jewish day of rest, is a reminder that only free people can choose to rest in this way. Many other Jewish festivals and celebrations are marked because of the command to 'remember'.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:15

Shabbat, the 'Day of Delight'

After creating the world, God rested on the seventh day, as the account in the book of Genesis relates. For Jews, celebrating **Shabbat** is a reminder of this, but also a direct command within the Ten Commandments. **Shabbat** starts on Friday at sunset, (all Jewish 'days' run from sunset to sunset) and all chores must be completed before then in order for the gift of the day of rest to begin. Jewish families will gather in their homes and share a meal together, during which the symbolic lighting and blessing of



two candles takes place and they share wine and two special, plaited loaves called **challah**. There are two as a reminder that Shabbat is no ordinary day, but also relating back to the exodus from Egypt and manna in the desert, when God would provide them with double portions on Shabbat. This meal is a leisurely affair, a marked contrast to the busy-ness of life on other days. Jewish families often attend synagogue on Saturday, using an order of service set out in the Jewish prayer book, called the **siddur**. Back in the home, as dusk falls, there is another symbolic ceremony, called **havdalah**, marking the end of Shabbat. Havdalah means 'separation' and involves the lighting of a plaited candle with 6 wicks and smelling sweet spices: both symbolising the hope that the sweetness and light of Shabbat will last through the coming week.

Jewish festivals

Rosh Hashanah and **Yom Kippur** are festivals of new beginnings, taking place during the Ten Days of Repentance. Jews will look back on the year that has passed and look ahead to the year that is to come. **Rosh Hashanah** is a celebration at the start of the Jewish new year (in the autumn) when apples and honey are eaten, symbolising a sweet new year. **Yom Kippur** or the **Day of Atonement** follows 10 days later, and is the holiest day in the Jewish year, beginning with the blowing of the *shofar* (*above*). It is a day of fasting and repentance for all Jews: the *Kol Nidre* is a prayer of corporate forgiveness and is sung to the same ancient melody in synagogues all over the world. On this day, prayers are said and candles lit in memory of family and friends who have died. Just before or after the Day of Atonement, it is also customary to give money to charity



(*tzedakah*) to honour their memory. During Yom Kippur, it is also traditional to read the story of Jonah – a story of forgiveness and repentance.



Sukkot celebrates the harvest, and also helps Jews to remember how God provided for them in the desert during the 40 years of journeying to the Promised Land. During this 7-day festival, it is traditional to build a *sukkah* or shelter, open to the sky, where meals are eaten, recalling the 'tents' that the Jewish people built as shelters in the wilderness. *Lulav* and *etrog* are used in special blessings and ceremonies during Sukkot. **Simchat**

Torah (rejoicing in the Torah, *right*) is a joyful and noisy Jewish holiday at the end of Sukkot, marking the end of the yearly cycle of synagogue Torah readings, and during which the Torah is danced around the synagogue before the final verses of Deuteronomy, then the first verses in Genesis, are read. At Simchat Torah, it is traditional to eat foods that are rolled, like the Torah!



Pesach (Passover) is one of the most important festivals in the Jewish calendar and is the festival



celebrating Jews' freedom and remembering G_d's faithfulness in rescuing them from Egypt. In the past, it was one of three festivals of pilgrimage, focussed on the Temple on Jerusalem, but is now celebrated at home and in the synagogue. Preparation for Passover is important, as the house must be clean of any products containing leaven: unleavened products and bread called *matzah* is eaten for the 8 days of the festival. It is another family-centred event, focussing on the story and using symbolic foods as part of the *seder meal*. Each element on the *seder plate* (pictured, left), is connected to the story of the Exodus, read from a book called the *haggadah*, when the youngest member of the family asks 4 questions and the children play 'hunt the matzah', finding

a hidden piece of broken matzah (*afikoman*). It is also traditional to leave an empty place at the table, set for Elijah, who every year, Jews hope will visit to announce the coming of Messiah. The final words at the table are 'Next year, in Jerusalem.'



The celebration of **Hanukkah**, which lasts for 8 days and takes place in the dark winter months. As a festival of remembrance, it is common for children to receive presents each night and for families to light candles on an 8-branched candelabra called a **hanukiah**, with one more candle being lit on each night so that it is

fully illuminated by the final night of the festival. The **dreidel** game (pictured, left) is linked to the story of the miracle of the oil – 'a great miracle

happened there' – which is found in the Books of the Maccabees, not in the Torah, and is a traditional part of this Jewish celebration.



Useful web-based resources for teachers and classrooms:

- www.reonline.org.uk Great for background knowledge, with lots of links to classroom resources via a search tool. Use the 'Knowing' tab to find out what you want to know, or try here: www.reonline.org.uk/knowning/what-re/judaism/
- REOnline also have some lesson ideas (search for '**RE Banquet**').
- There is also plenty of information for teachers at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/> and the Jewish Way of Life resources <http://www.reonline.org.uk/specials/jwol/> contains materials for teachers and pupils. It features two Jewish children, Sarah and David, who tell us all about their faith through a mix of photos, sound and words.
- Two sacred stories from Judaism (one **Hanukkah**) on the British Library website: www.bl.uk/learning/cult/sacred/stories/ Another useful version for teachers can be found at: <http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/hanukkah>
- ChildsEye media sell great DVDs supporting learning about festivals, one of which focuses on Hanukkah. They are very well filmed, and include many different aspects of religious life in Britain. Each DVD also has adaptable and creative resource materials. These are available for order from: <http://www.childseyemedia.com/festivals-p-195.html>
- 'My Life, My Religion' can be found as individual clips, and as complete programmes at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05pc1c9> Although these programmes are aimed at KS2 pupils, many would be suitable for KS1, with some teacher input. There are plenty of clips about Judaism on this site that would be suitable to support the Diocesan units, notably 'Shabbat', 'Torah' and 'Chanukah'.
- There are clips you can view online from the Pathways of Belief (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zyxn34j>) and Places for Worship DVD sets, such as Shabbat: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zyxn34j>
- '**Sammy Spider's First Shabbat**' (ISBN: 978-1-58013-006-6) and '**Sammy Spider's First Hanukkah**' (ISBN: 9780929371467) are lovely KS1-friendly picture books about a spider who lives in a Jewish household
- RE Today have support materials for teaching Judaism: '**Opening up Judaism**', <http://shop.retoday.org.uk/9781905893553>
- For teacher subject knowledge, the 'Religions to InspiRE' series deals with teaching Judaism to KS3-aged pupils. Pupil books very useful for 'reading up' on a religion. The ISBN number for Judaism pupil version is: 978-1-444-12224-4.

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