

1. How did Judaism begin?

Jewish history begins during the Bronze age in the Middle East, about 4,000 years ago.

The birth of the Jewish people and the start of Judaism is told in the first 5 books of the Bible, called the Torah.

God chose Abraham to be the father of a people who would be special to God, and who would be an example of good behavior and holiness to the rest of the world.

2. The story of Abraham

Abraham and his wife Sarah lived in Ur. God told them to leave all of their possessions behind to find the 'promised land' in Canaan. This became the Jewish nation of Israel.

God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. As Abraham was about to kill his own son, God stopped him and asked him to sacrifice a ram (male sheep) instead.



3. Moses

Moses was born in Egypt to Hebrew parents, at a time when Hebrews were kept as slaves. A new Pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew boys should be thrown into the River Nile at birth. Moses' mother saved him by sending him floating down the Nile in a basket. The Pharaoh's daughter found him and the Hebrew Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household. As an adult Moses killed an abusive Egyptian slave driver and so he fled to the country.

The Burning Bush

Forty years later, Moses saw a strange sight: a bush covered in fire, but not burning! Amazed, Moses drew even nearer and heard the voice of God speaking to him.

"Go down to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let My people go!"

This is the moment God sent Moses to deliver Israel from the control of Pharaoh.

The Plagues

When the Pharaoh continued to refuse to free the Israelites, Moses warned the Pharaoh that God would punish both him and his people. God sent the ten plagues upon the Egyptians. Using the leadership of Moses and the powerful 10th plague, which killed Pharaoh's son, God led the Israelites out of Egypt.

Passover

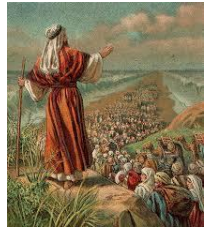
The escape of the Jews from Egypt is remembered by Jews every year in the festival of Passover which is when the angel of death passed over the Jews and killed the Egyptians' first born. The main part of the Passover celebration is the meal. This is called the Seder Meal. The special order of the Seder meal is written down in the Hagadah. This tells the story of the Exodus. The story is always told to the children during the meal so they don't forget their history. Special food in the Seder: the wine is drunk as reminder of the freedom of the Jews; dipping parsley in salt water is meant to remind the Jews of the tears they shed whilst they were slaves; three pieces of Matzah bread are broken down the middle as a reminder of the rush our ancestors were in their escape from Egypt; the beetroot is a reminder of the lamb which was killed so its blood could be put on the doorposts to show the Angel of Death that Jews lived there.

Exodus

The Jews were helped on their journey by God; the same God who'd promised Abraham that he would look after the Jews. God parted the Red Sea to help them escape. When they reached Mount Sinai, in present day Egypt, God spoke to Moses high on the mountain slopes and made a deal (called a covenant) with the Jews that renewed the one he had made with Abraham.

The Ten Commandments

At the same time, God gave the Jews a set of rules that they should live by. This is because they were starting to misbehave. On behalf of Israel, Moses received torah, traditionally translated 'law' to help Moses in the teaching and guidance of the Jewish people. The most famous of these are the Ten Commandments. But there are actually 613 commandments (Mitzvot) covering every aspect of life including law, family, and personal hygiene and diet.





4. Mitzvot

Examples of the 613 laws are: pay wages on time, celebrate festival, do not kidnap. Do not cook meat and milk together, look after the elderly.

Every Synagogue has a Rabbi which means 'teacher.' One of the Rabbi's responsibilities is to make sure that Jews who attend his or her synagogue follow the laws closely during the week.

Following the laws are an important part of the covenant that God made, first with Abraham and then with Moses. Orthodox Jews- follow the original rules that were written in the Torah as God gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai. They think they are more loyal and take their religion more seriously.

Non- orthodox(Reform Jews) – adapt the rules to make them work in today's world. They remove ones that they think are no longer relevant. They think this makes them more modern whilst still being Jewish.

5. Kosher

Jews have very strict rules about what they can and can't eat. Food they can eat is called Kosher and there is a list in the Torah.

Kosher means =“fit to eat”. In a Jewish kitchen, meat and dairy are not eaten together. After eating meat, Jews will wait several hours before eating dairy products.



6. The Sabbath

Every week in a Saturday, Jews must have a day of rest. This will happen 52 times in a year- one for each week.

There are strict rules concerning what Jews can and cannot do on the Sabbath. They cannot do anything that is counted as work! They have to focus on God and spending time with their family, reflecting on the previous week and getting ready for the next week. They will avoid anything that distracts them from this, for example, driving a car, handling money and gardening!

7. Jewish Prayer

In order to pray, Jews needs several items. These are: Tallit, Torah Scroll, Yad, Siddur, Kippah, Tefillin and Bimah.

Jews, like other people of faith, pray in many different ways:

- They pray so that their hearts can reach out to God
- They pray to express and exercise their beliefs
- They pray to share in the life of a worshipping community
- They pray to obey God's commandments

The important things about prayer are:

- You should do it with total concentration on God-there should be nothing else in your mind
- The prayer should be completely from the heart.

Prayer can happen anywhere including in the Synagogue, at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, at home, anywhere!



8. The Synagogue

The Synagogue is a place of prayer, study and assembly for the Jewish community. Songs will be sung, readings and prayers said. The leader of the synagogue is called a Rabbi which means 'teacher.' He will lead the services, teach about the Torah and give advice. Every synagogue will have an Ark which is a large box at the front. The Torah scrolls will be kept inside the Ark so it is a very holy part of the building. A Synagogue can be identified by the displaying of the Magen David. This is a symbol often known as the Jewish Star of David. The Bimah is a platform in the middle of the synagogue from where the readings take place. Here the Rabbi will read from the Torah using a Yad (pointer) . Every synagogue has a Mikveh (Ritual Bath). This is a pool of natural water in which people can bathe to be ritually pure. The Synagogue is where many Jews will hold important events for their children like Brit Millah (when a baby is circumcised) and Bar Mitzvah (when a young boy becomes a man) The Ner Tamid meaning 'everlasting light' is above the Ark. It represents the eternal presence of God and has been an important part since the first Temple in Jerusalem thousands of years ago.