

The Nature of God

God as Creator - Jews believe that God made the world and everything that is in it in 6 days then He rested on the 7th day (which is why Jews also rest on the Sabbath).

God as Sustainer - Jews believe that God not only created the universe but also sustains it; this means keeps it going. An example of how God sustains people in the Torah is when he gave the Jews manna bread from heaven each day when they were in the desert for 40 years.

God as Lawgiver - When God made humans, he gave them free will, however, to help them know how to make good choices, God also gave them various laws (mitzvah). The key laws are the 10 Commandments given to Moses but there are also 613 in total which govern everything they do.

God as Judge - Jews believe that as well as giving them laws, God will also judge them if they don't follow them like when they spent 40 years in the desert. He also judges them after they die, and this judgement decides where they spend eternity.

Moses and the Second Covenant

Moses was originally born to a Jewish family but in an effort to save his life his mother sent him down the river in a basket. Found by the Pharaoh's wife he was raised as a prince until God spoke to him through a burning bush and gave him a mission - to make the Pharaoh release all the Jewish slaves. 'Let my people go!'

When the Pharaoh refused God sent 10 plagues (blood, locusts, frogs, fleas, cattle died, boils, hail stones, flies, darkness). After the final plague, death of all the first born the Pharaoh finally released them after thousands died including his own son. The Jews however were saved by putting lamb's blood over their door causing the spirit of death to 'pass over' their house. The next day they left in such a hurry that their bread had not even risen! However, Pharaoh then changed his mind and tried to recapture them. God parted the Red Sea so Moses could lead them to freedom. However, they spent 40 years in the desert where life became very difficult and they started behaving in a way that made God angry. As a result, God then gave Moses the 10 Commandments which were to be their key rules to help them know how to behave. This is known as the Second Covenant, or sometimes the **Sinai Covenant** as Moses was on the Mount Sinai when God gave him the rules.

Shema - key beliefs found in the prayer:

- 1) **God as ONE** (monotheism) 'The Lord your God is one' which is repeated in 10 Commandments
 - 2) They should wear a tefillin (box containing the laws) as it says bind these to your head and write them on your arms
 - 3) The nail a mezuzah to their door as it says write these on your gateposts.
 - 4) Raise your children in the religion as it says 'Impart these laws onto your children'
- This is the first prayer that they learn as children and will repeat it every day with their hand over their eyes, so they are not distracted. This belief of ONE God can also be seen in the 10 Commandments.



Abraham's Covenant

Abraham is considered to be the founder of Judaism as God gave him various tests before entering into a special relationship with him. He was the father of the 12 Tribes of Israel, meaning Jewish people can trace their lineage back to him.

Abraham's tests - God's first test was to ask Abraham to leave his home in Ur and travel many miles to a new land that God would give him. Next God test Abraham by telling him to take Isaac to the top of the mountain and to sacrifice him on the altar. Abraham was about to kill him when God sent an angel at the last moment to stop him and gave him a goat instead. This proved that he was worthy of entering into a covenant or agreement with God on behalf of humanity.

First Covenant - Abraham

A covenant is a two-way relationship with God. This means that God expects the Jews to do certain things for Him but will then do certain things for them in return. God expected the Jews to worship only him and follow his rules. In return he promised him children ('More decedents than stars in the sky') and land ('A land of milk and honey')

Next God said to Abraham you must circumcise all of the men in your household as a sign of your commitment to me. Today Jews still believe that they must enter into a covenant with God through circumcising all their boys and following God's commandments.

Modern day Passover (PESACH)

Every year Jews remember the story of Exodus and how God saved them from slavery through celebrating Passover. (Pesach in Hebrew). It reminds them that they are God's chosen people and that God protects them and also teaches them that they must obey His orders like the Jews in the Exodus story. During Passover the whole family will get together for a big meal where the Exodus story will be told from a book called the Haggadah. They leave an empty chair for a famous prophet called Elijah and even open the door for him. Flatbread called matzot will be hidden for children to hunt, and there will be a Seder plate which will contain various symbolic foods including:

- An egg to symbolise new life
- Lamb bone to symbolise the lamb that was killed for its blood
- Salt water to symbolise the tears of the slaves
- Bitter herbs to remind them how bitter life was
- Charoset which is apple, honey and nuts which symbolises the cement from their days building as slaves

