

# JUDAISM

Judaism (from the Latin Iudaismus, derived from the Greek Ioudaïsmos, and ultimately from the Hebrew יהודה, **Yahudah**, "Judah"; in Hebrew: יהדות **Yahedut**, the distinctive characteristics of the Judean ethnos) is the religion, philosophy, and way of life of the Jewish people. Originating in the Hebrew Bible (also known as the **Tanakh**) and explored in later texts such as the Talmud, Judaism is considered by religious Jews to be the expression of the covenant relationship **YHWH** developed with the Children of **Israel**.

Rabbinic Judaism holds that **YHWH** revealed his laws and (10) commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of both the Written and Oral Torah. This assertion was historically challenged by the Karaites. Judaism claims a historical continuity spanning more than **3,000** years. It is one of the oldest monotheistic religions, and the oldest to survive into the present day. The Hebrews Israelites were already referred to as "Jews" in later books of the **Tanakh** such as the Book of Esther, with the term Jews replacing the title "Children of Israel".

Judaism's texts, traditions and values strongly influenced later Abrahamic religions, including **Christianity**, **Jehovah Witness**, **Hinduism**, **Islam** and the **Baha'i** Faiths. Many aspects of Judaism have also directly or indirectly influenced secular Western ethics and civil law

**Principles of Faith** The minimum requirements of Jewish belief, are:

- **YHWH** exists
- **YHWH** is one and unique
- **YHWH** is incorporeal
- **YHWH** is eternal
- Prayer is to be directed to **YHWH** alone and to no other
- The words of the prophets are true
- Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets
- The Written **Torah** (first **5** books of the Bible) and Oral **torah** (teachings now

contained in the Talmud and other writings) given to Moses

- There will be no other **Torah**
- **YHWH** knows the thoughts and deeds of men
- **YHWH** will reward the good and punish the wicked
- The Messiah will come
- The dead will be resurrected

As you can see, these are very basic and general principles. Yet as basic as these principles are, the necessity of believing each one of them has been disputed at one time or another, and the liberal movements of Judaism dispute many of these principles.

Unlike many other religions, Judaism does not focus much on abstract cosmological concepts. Although Jews have certainly considered the nature of **YAH**, man, the universe, life and the afterlife at great length (see Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism), there is no mandated, official, definitive belief on these subjects, outside of the very general concepts discussed above.

Judaism is more concerned about actions than beliefs and focuses on relationships: the relationship between **YHWH** and mankind, between **YHWH** and the Jewish people, between the Jewish people and the land of **Israel**, and between **human** beings. Our scriptures tell the story of the development of these relationships, from the time of creation, through the creation of the relationship between **YHWH** and Abraham, to the creation of the relationship between **YHWH** and the Jewish people, and forward. The scriptures also specify the mutual obligations created by these relationships, although various movements of Judaism disagree about the nature of these obligations.

Some say they are absolute, unchanging laws from **YHWH** (Orthodox); some say they are laws from **YHWH** that change and evolve over time (Conservative); some say that they are guidelines that you can choose whether or not to follow (Reform, Reconstructionist).

Actions that Judaism is concerned about? According to Orthodox Judaism, these actions include **613** commandments given by **YHWH** in the Torah as well as laws instituted by the rabbis and long-standing customs