

Judaism

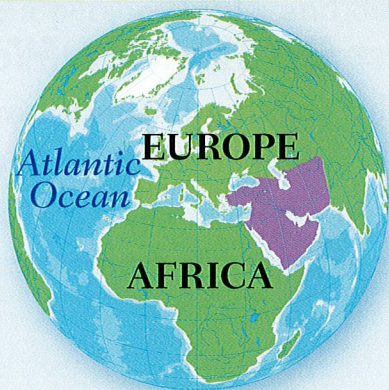
Judaism started about 4,000 years ago in the Middle East. People who follow Judaism call themselves Jews. Today, there are about 14 million Jews.

What Do Jews Believe?

Jews believe in a perfect, all-powerful God who created the universe. Although Jews refer to God as He, God is neither male nor female. Some Jews think that God's name is so sacred it should never be said out loud or spelled out, so they write *G-d*.

Jewish tradition says that God spoke to Jews through special people called **prophets**. Jews believe that Abraham was the first prophet. God gave His rules to Abraham and made a promise. He would bless Abraham and his descendants if they stayed faithful to God. God's rules showed people how to live a good life. Later, God gave His rules to another prophet, Moses. Jews believe Moses led the Jewish people out of slavery to the land God had promised them. They also believe that one day a special prophet, the Messiah, will be born. He will be the king and saviour of the Jews.

Where Judaism Started



Key

■ Middle East

What Brings People Happiness in Life?

Jews believe that God wants people to be happy. By giving them His rules and the free will to follow them, He has shown people how to lead a happy life. In Judaism, happiness comes from faith and trust in God, loving God, and obeying His rules. Part of obeying God's rules is being kind and just. For Jews, treating other people with love and compassion every day is also part of fulfilling their duty to God. They believe people's actions in life are what counts.



Some Jews believe that food has to be prepared a certain way, or *kosher*, to show they are obedient to God every day.

Jewish Scriptures

Judaism's scriptures are the *Torah* and the *Talmud*. The Torah tells the words and rules God gave Moses. It tells the history of the Jews to 2,400 years ago. It has writings by important Jewish prophets. The Talmud explains parts of the Torah. Jewish religious teachers, or *rabbis*, wrote the Talmud about 1,500 years ago.

How Do Jews Worship?

Jews believe all of life is a way to worship God. To do this, they live by the rules in the Torah and the Talmud. Jews meet to worship at a place called a synagogue on their holy day Sabbath, or Saturday. Jews may not work on this day.

An important Jewish celebration is *Yom Kippur*. It is in September or October each year. Jews do not eat on this day. They feel regretful about past deeds that go against God's law, their sins. If they truly repent, God forgives their sins.



An artist's impression of Moses holding God's rules that He wrote on two stone tablets



A rabbi discussing the Torah with a Jewish boy



During Yom Kippur, a special horn called a *shofar* is blown.