

Judaism is...



- *"A 4000 year old tradition with ideas about what it means to be human and how to make the world a holy place"*
(Rabbi Harold Kushner, *To Life*)
- *A "covenant relationship" between God and the Hebrew people*
- *A celebration and sanctification of life*
- *A faith, a people, a way of life...*

A 4000 year old tradition...

- *The Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob ("Israel") - origins of the Hebrew people (more than 3800 years ago)*
- *Enslaved in ancient Egypt and freed by Moses (more than 3300 years ago)*
- *Hebrew monarchy in the "Promised Land" (The Land of Israel), ends 6th century BCE*



As a faith, Jews Believe...



- *In one God, creator of the universe, personal but non-corporeal*
- *In prophets of old - especially Moses, through whom Torah was revealed to the Hebrew people*
- *In Torah (first five books of the Bible), containing religious, moral and social law which guides the life of a Jew*
 - *the Hebrew Bible does not include the New Testament*

As a people, Jews are...



- *A nation in Diaspora (Dispersed)*
- *15 - 16 million in worldwide population*
- *United by a common heritage (an "ethnic" religion), divided in contemporary practice:*

- *Orthodox:*
 - *Modern*
 - *Chasidic (Ultra Orthodox)*
- *Reformed (18th century Germany)*
- *Conservative - moderates, response to reform*
 - *Reconstructionalism (20th century America)*



As a way of life, Judaism is based on...



- 613 commandments found in Torah ("Written Law")
- Talmud ("Oral Law") - commentary of ancient rabbis that elaborates on how to apply God's Law in everyday life through:
 - Dietary rules (Kashrut/Kosher)
 - Dress and other symbols
 - Prayer and devotion to the one God
 - The Temple and Temple rites
 - Observance of Holy days
 - Proper social relations between male and female, in business, judicial rulings, etc.
- Thus sanctifying life, blessing it in every way



How does Judaism sanctify life?



Life cycle celebrations:

- Bris - ritual circumcision, sign of the covenant
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah - full adult status and responsibility within religion
- Marriage - "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:22)
- Death - funerals, mourning (sitting "Shiva"), and memorials ("Yartzeits")



How does Judaism sanctify time?

The Jewish Holidays:

■ High Holidays:

- Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

■ Sukkot, the "Festival of Booths" (fall harvest festival)

■ Simchat Torah - celebrating Torah

■ Chanukah, the "Festival of Lights"



More Holy Days...



- Purim ("Lots") - a carnival (commemorates events told in book of Esther)
- Pesach ("Passover") - commemorates the exodus from Egypt (events told in Exodus)
- Shavuot ("weeks," Pentecost) - commemorates receipt of Torah at Sinai
- Other, minor festivals
- Shabbat (Sabbath, 7th Day, on Saturday) - the "Day of Rest"





How is Judaism related to Christianity?



- *Judaism predates Christianity - it is the foundation of Christianity but is not a part of it*
- *Jesus was Jewish, as were his followers and the Apostles*
- *Jews do not believe that Jesus was anything more than a good and wise man who lived and died 2000 years ago - Jews still await their messiah*
- *The Jewish messiah would not be divine. He would be a political figure who restores the Hebrew monarchy and causes peace to reign on Earth*
- *Jews are not concerned about salvation and the "world to come"*

What are Jews really concerned about



- *Tikkun Olam - "repairing this world" through justice and righteousness; through "deed, not creed"*
- *The heart of Judaism is in the home and family, social responsibility and doing Mitzvot ("good deeds" based on God's commandments)*
- *Through education and hard work we make our lives, the lives of others, and the world, what God intended it to be - Holy!*



To Life!



To Life!



LeChaim!

Web resources



- Judaism 101: <http://jewfaq.org/>
"an online encyclopedia of Judaism, covering Jewish beliefs, people, places, things, language, scripture, holidays, practices and customs"
- ReligiousTolerance.org on Judaism:
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/judaism.htm>
- This PowerPoint presentation available at:
<http://www.nvcc.edu/home/lshulman/Rel232/resource/judaism.ppt>

