

Judaism: Beliefs & Teachings

GCSE Course Information



Name:

Teacher:

Information for Students

This course information booklet covers all areas of GCSE Paper 3 Section 1:

Area of study	Content
Diversity of Jewish Belief & Rabbi Maimonides 13 Principles of Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Orthodox Judaism➤ Reform Judaism➤ Secular Judaism➤ Rabbi Maimonides 13 Principles of Faith
The Nature of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ God as One (Monotheism)➤ God as Creator➤ God as Lawgiver➤ God as Judge
The Shekinah	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The dwelling and divine presence of God➤ The significance of the Shekinah
Different Jewish beliefs about the Messiah	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The nature of the Messiah➤ Orthodox beliefs about the Messiah➤ Reform beliefs about the Messiah
Covenant: Abraham	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The nature of Covenant➤ The three parts of the Abrahamic Covenant:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Promised Land- Descendants- Circumcision
Covenant: Moses & the Ten Commandments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The Covenant with Moses➤ The importance of the Ten Commandments (Torah)
Sanctity of Life & Pikuach Nefesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Jewish beliefs the Sanctity of Life➤ Jewish beliefs about Pikuach Nefesh➤ "Do not stand by while your neighbours life is at risk"
The 613 Mitzvot & Free Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The 613 Mitzvot➤ The relationship between free will and the 613 mitzvot➤
Different Jewish beliefs about the Afterlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Orthodox beliefs about life after death➤ Reform beliefs about life after death

Judaism

Judaism is the original of the three Abrahamic faiths, which also includes **Christianity** and **Islam**. Judaism originated in the Middle East over 3500 years ago. It was founded by **Moses**, although Jews trace their history back to their patriarch, **Abraham**. Jews believe that there is only one God with whom they have a **covenant**. In exchange for all the good that God has done for the Jewish people, Jewish people keep God's laws and try to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives. Judaism has a rich history of religious text, but the central and most important religious document is the **Torah**.



There are roughly 13-14 million Jewish people in the world with the majority based in the USA and Israel. There are many people within this number whom strictly observe their Jewish faith. However, there are many who identify themselves as Jewish without necessarily believing in, or observing, all, if any Jewish law.

Diversity within Judaism

Orthodox Judaism

This is a major branch of Judaism that maintains the most traditional beliefs and practices of the religion. They strictly observe the dietary laws (called 'kosher') and the practices of the Sabbath, and are often marked by their ways of dress. Men undergo the ritual of circumcision (brit milah) when they are eight days old. As adults, males wear black suits and hats. Women usually wear hats or head coverings, and dress modestly. Orthodox synagogues are gender segregated and male and females have clear and distinct roles within society.



Reform Judaism

This branch of Judaism began in the 19th century. Reform Jews reject what they see as outdated practices of Orthodox Jews and focus less on the traditional rituals, commandments and practices, and more on the ethical dimensions of the faith. Some Reform Jews even moved the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, they may read the Torah in their vernacular language instead of Hebrew, set aside the kosher dietary laws and the distinctive ways of dress. Reform Jews also have a different approach beliefs about the Jewish Messiah and some have discarded circumcision and replaced this was a naming ceremony called 'brit shalom'.



Secular Judaism

This branch of Judaism covers people who identify as Jewish culturally, but not religiously. Unlike most other religions, Judaism is passed down through maternal bloodlines. That is, a person is a Jew if his/her mother is Jewish. Many Jews identify as Jews and have Jewishness as a core part of their identity, but they don't believe in God or practice the Jewish faith. They are secular people whose Jewish identity is cultural, not religious.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam)

Rabbi Moses Maimonides also known as "The Rambam", is regarded as one of the most influential Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages. His work was used by Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars to help them gain a greater understanding of God. He compiled what he refers to as the "Thirteen Fundamental Principles" of the Jewish faith. Maimonides refers to these thirteen principles of faith as "the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations":

1. God exists; God is perfect in every way, eternal, and the cause of all that exists. All other beings depend upon God for their existence.
2. God has absolute and unparalleled unity (God is one/monotheism)
3. God is incorporeal—without a body.
4. God existed prior to all else. (In a later version of the Thirteen Principles, Maimonides included the notion that God created the world from nothing [creation *ex nihilo*].)
5. God should be the only object of worship and praise. One should not appeal to intermediaries, but should pray directly to God.
6. Prophets and prophecy exist.
7. Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived. No prophet who lived or will live could comprehend God more than Moses.
8. The Torah is from heaven. The Torah we have today is the Torah that God gave to Moses at Sinai.
9. The Torah will never be changed, nothing will be added to it or subtracted from it; God will never give another Law.
10. God knows the actions of humans and is not neglectful of them.
11. God rewards those who obey the commands of the Torah and punishes those who violate its prohibitions.
12. The days of the Messiah will come – the Messianic Age
13. The dead will be resurrected.



Judaism: Beliefs and teachings

The Nature of God

The basic Jewish beliefs about God come from the Torah, which is the Jewish written law. They also feature in Rabbi Moses Maimonides' (Rambam) 'Thirteen Principles of Faith'. The most important belief is that there is one God. This is called monotheism and the importance is highlighted in the first commandment which states: "Do not have any other gods before me". Although God is one, Jews believe God has certain attributes (qualities) such as being all knowing (omniscient), all powerful (omnipotent) and existing always and everywhere (omnipresent).



Jews believe that the non-physical nature of God makes it difficult to describe him. The name of God is so holy that it should not be spoken aloud or written. Some Jews use "Hashem" (the name), "the Almighty" or write G-D instead to show their respect.

God as One

The belief that there is only One God is at the core of Judaism. Jews are monotheist, which means belief in one God who is whole, complete and perfect. There is no division in God and Jews reject the idea of Trinity that Christians have. The Shema is the most important prayer for Jews and it affirms the belief that there is only one God. The first paragraph declares a belief in the one God and in his ruling over all creation.



'Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.' Deuteronomy 6:4

This idea is so important it is recited daily by Jews. Many Jews will say the Shema during their prayers in the morning and the evening. God is the only being to whom Jews should offer prayer.

God as Creator

Orthodox Jews believe that the world is too intricate and complex to have happened by chance. Everything in the universe was created by God. This belief is found in the first book of the Genesis, which is the first of the five books of the Torah. Celebrating God as the creator is an important part of Judaism and Jews remember God as creator weekly when they celebrate Shabbat (Sabbath). Jews also celebrate a yearly festival called Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) where they focus on the important belief that God created the world. The book of Genesis reveals key beliefs about God and creation:



- God is so powerful he speaks and the world happens.
- God creates night and day, and everything in the world over six days.
- Everything God makes is good.
- God creates animals and finishes by making humans in his own image and likeness.
- Orthodox Jews believe that every detail of the creation as told in the Torah is true, that God literally created the world in six days.
- Reform and Secular Jews believe the details are not meant to be taken literally. The most important thing to understand from the creation story is that God is responsible for the creation of everything that exists.



Sources of Wisdom & Authority

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" Genesis 1:1

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Genesis 1:31

God created man...In the image of God, He created him, male and female" Genesis 1:27

God as Lawgiver

Jews believe that God gave his Law to Moses on Mount Sinai as part of the covenant.

A covenant is a promise or agreement that God made with the Jewish people. Jews are expected to follow God's laws to keep their side of the covenant. The Torah records 613 laws, which are called 'mitzvot'. The mitzvot are actions that Jews must perform or avoid, for instance, they are expected to rest on Shabbat and must avoid certain foods/actions that aren't kosher. Jews believe God judges how each Jew follows the laws. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-15) that God gave to Moses are the basis of how a just society should work.



God as judge

Judaism teaches that God will judge each person's actions. God is a just or fair judge.

He will always be merciful. God's judgement is seen in the book of Genesis in the story of Adam and Eve and Noah. Each year Jewish people focus on God's judgement and in the festival of Rosh Hashanah it is believed God will judge every person. The Talmud describes how God brings out scales to weigh the deeds (mitzvot) of each person. God is a God of mercy and humans can try to make up for any bad deeds and ask for forgiveness. Ten days after the festival of Rosh Hashanah, Jews have a day called Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. It is regarded as the holiest day of the year. On this day Jews confess their sins and try to make up for the things they have done wrong.



Source of Wisdom & Authority

God spoke all these words, saying: I am God your Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, from the place of slavery. Do not have any other gods before Me. Do not represent [such] gods by any carved statue or picture of anything in the heaven above, on the earth below, or in the water below the land. Do not bow down to [such gods] or worship them. I am God your Lord, a God who demands exclusive worship. Do not take the name of God your Lord in vain. God will not allow the one who takes His name in vain to go unpunished. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. 9 You can work during the six weekdays and do all your tasks. But Saturday is the Sabbath to God your Lord. Do not do anything that constitutes work. It was during the six weekdays that God made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on Saturday. God therefore blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honour your father and mother. Do not commit murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify as a false witness against your neighbour. Do not be envious of your neighbour's house. Do not be envious of your neighbour's wife, his slave, his maid, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that is your neighbour's.



The Nature and Significance of Shekinah -'the divine presence' of God

Shekinah refers to God's presence in the world. Shekinah means "the dwelling" and refers to the divine presence of God. Jews believe God created the world and they believe God continues to work and be present in the world. The actual word Shekinah does not appear in the Torah, but there are many examples of people being in God's presence:

Shekinah – the dwelling and divine presence of God. Often depicted as a cloud in the Torah.

- God reveals himself to Adam and Eve in the garden.
- God speaking to Moses from the burning bush and Moses receiving the Torah at Sinai
- The Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem was thought to be a special place of God's presence too. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter.
- It is often used to refer to the feminine characteristics of God. This gives the idea that God cares just like a mother cares for her children. It emphasises God's compassion and care, like a mother.
- Jewish people today focus on a spiritual connection with the divine presence; in worship, prayer, study or doing good in the world.

The Shekinah is sometimes shown as a cloud which comes down to the earth and reaches out to the Jewish people. For example, the Shekinah is said to have **appeared to Moses** when God asked Moses to save the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. It is also important because it helps Jews to understand the **greatness of God**. Many Jews were worried that people would imagine God to be like a great and powerful human. However, they wanted to avoid **anthropomorphising God (making God human like)**. Having a belief in the Shekinah means that God remains **omnipotent** (all-powerful) as God has power beyond the human world.

Messiah – the 'anointed' or 'chosen one' Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah is a descendant of King David.

The Messiah (Mashiach)

The term 'Messiah' comes from the Hebrew 'Mashiach', which means 'anointed one' or 'chosen one' This refers to the way oil was put on the head of a king or queen at their coronation. It showed they were chosen by God for a special role. There is no reference in the Torah to a messiah, however, the first clues appear in the writings of some of the prophets.

The Prophet Isaiah gives a clear overview of Jewish beliefs about the Messiah. He will be a great political leader descended from King David. The Messiah is often referred to as "messiah ben David" (messiah, son of David). He will have a superb understanding of Jewish law, and follow all 613 mitzvot. He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel. He will be a great judge, who makes fair decisions. Above all, he will be a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being. In Judaism there is a strong belief that humans should focus on the here and now. The world to come is beyond humans' understanding. The Messianic Age is a goal or an ideal to strive for.

Source of Wisdom and Authority

"A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be a Wonderful Advisor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace. His Power will never end; peace will last forever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule with honesty and justice. The Lord All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done." (Prophet Isaiah)

Different views within Orthodox and Reform Judaism about the Messiah (Mashiach)

For some Jews a belief in the Messiah is central to their faith, but not for all.

Orthodox Jews believe that in every generation there is a descendent of King David who has the potential to be the Messiah. This person will be directed by God to rule over all humanity with kindness and justice. He will also follow and uphold the Jewish written law (The Torah) and will be the ultimate teacher of it. He will rebuild the Temple that was destroyed in 70AD and bring Jews back to the land of Israel.



In contrast, **Reform Judaism**, rather than believing in a single, male descendant of King David who will be the Messiah, urges us to be more active in bringing a time of peace on earth through our actions. Instead of a particular person, they believe Jewish people have the power to bring peace on earth through their actions and how they react to other people. Reform Jews have the view that we should act the way we hope a messiah would act. They focus more on the ideal or goal of the Messianic Age. They will bring about this time by keeping the commandments and doing what God wants.



Covenant – a promise or an agreement between two people. God made many covenants with the Jewish people.

Covenant

A covenant is a promise or an agreement between two people or groups of people. It benefits both and there are conditions and obligations. It is like a contract you may sign when you are employed. The contract outlines your responsibilities as the employee and the responsibilities of your employer.



In Judaism, the covenant agreement is between God and the Jewish people. The Torah records God making relationships with individuals or groups through a covenant. The making of the covenant is marked by a special sign.

Covenant with Abraham

Abraham founded Judaism and is often called 'father'. Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob are called the Patriarchs. They are the physical and spiritual ancestors of the Jewish people. Abraham was a shepherd by trade and came from Ur in Mesopotamia which is in modern-day Iraq. At that time, people believed in many gods (polytheism). Tradition says his father made idols, but the young Abraham questioned this and he was the first person to teach that there is only one God (monotheism).

The Torah says that God commanded Abraham to leave his homeland behind for a new life. Abraham took his wife Sarah with him. His original name was Abram but God called him Abraham as it means 'father of many nations'. There are three main parts of the Abrahamic Covenant.

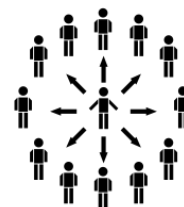


1. The Promised Land [Genesis 12:1]

- God called Abraham from Ur to a land that he would give him (Genesis 12:1).
- Abraham and his descendants made their new home in the land of Canaan (Genesis 12).
- This land is now known as Israel. It is named after Abraham's grandson.
- The land is often referred to as the 'Promised Land' because of God's repeated promise (Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, 17:8) to give the land to the descendants of Abraham.
- Jews have lived in this land continuously from the time of its original conquest by Joshua more than 3,200 years ago until the present day.

2. The promise of descendants Genesis 12:2

- God promised Abraham that he would make a great nation out of him.
- God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, meaning 'father of many nations'.
- This promise is shown in Genesis 17:6-8 where God promises that nations and kings will descend from Abraham.
- Even though Abraham and Sarah were very old they had a son called Isaac.
- Isaac's son Jacob would go on to found the twelve tribes of Israel.



3. The sign of circumcision (brit milah) Genesis 12:1-3

- God promised to bless Abraham and the families of the earth through him.
- Abraham sealed the covenant by circumcising himself and the males in his family.
- Circumcision involves the removal of a boy's foreskin on the eighth day after birth.
- All males were to be circumcised and so carry a mark in their flesh of their relationship with God.



Moses

God made covenants with the three patriarchs of Judaism: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As time passed their descendants became slaves in Egypt. They led hard lives and suffered at the hands of the pharaoh. Moses was chosen by God to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt.



Covenant with Moses

Moses was born an Israelite but was raised as part of the Egyptian royal family. He had been rescued as a baby from the river Nile. He found out about his Jewish heritage and had to flee Egypt after killing an Egyptian taskmaster. God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush and told him to return to Egypt to lead the Jewish people to freedom.

With the help of Aaron his brother Moses asked Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go. Pharaoh refused to let them leave so God sent ten plagues on the Egyptian people and Pharaoh finally gave in. Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them and God then parted the Red Sea for the Jews to cross but brought it back down on the Egyptian army. The festival of Passover recalls this event every year.



Moses led the people in the desert for forty years before arriving at the Promised Land. While in the desert, Moses took the people to Mount Sinai and here God made a covenant with the Jewish people. He received the Ten Commandments and the Torah.



The meaning and significance of this covenant

Moses is thought by Jews as the greatest of all the prophets and as the first rabbi. He had a special relationship with God and is believed to be the only person who has seen God face to face (the Shekinah). Whilst at Sinai Moses received all of the commandments that make up the Torah (613 mitzvot)

This covenant identified the Jewish people as the chosen people of God. The Torah is the most important part of the Jewish scriptures. Jews believe they are bound to follow its teachings because of the covenant with Moses.

Source of Wisdom & Authority

"We will do everything the Lord has said" (Exodus)

"The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai...Moses entered the cloud as he went up to the mountain" (Exodus)



The importance of the Ten Commandments

God gave Moses the commandments at Mount Sinai. Moses went up the mountain and disappeared into a thick cloud where he met with God. Here Moses learned the commandments that God wanted him to teach the Israelites that make up the Torah. In the Torah there are 613 mitzvot, which explain how Jews should live their lives. The first ten of the mitzvot are the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are found in the Torah in Exodus 20:2-14 and Deuteronomy 5:4-21. The Ten Commandments were written on two different tablets. The first four commandments are duties concerning humans and God, their creator. The second six all deal with relationships between people. Moses is also believed to have been given the Oral Torah. This is the whole commentary that discusses the Written Torah.



Duties concerning Humans & God	Relationships between People
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I am God your Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, from the place of slavery.2. Do not have any other gods before me.3. Do not take the name of God your Lord in vain. God will not allow the one who takes His name in vain to go unpunished.4. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Honour your father and mother,6. Do not commit adultery.7. Do not steal.8. Do not commit murder.9. Do not testify as a false witness against your neighbour.10. Do not be envious of your neighbours' wife, his slave, his maid, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that is your neighbour's.

Sanctity of Life

Judaism teaches that all life comes from God as it clearly states in the book of Genesis that humans are created in God's image. Life is given by God so it is sacred. This is reflected throughout the Jewish scriptures. The Psalms often speak poetically of the way that God created humans and cherishes them. In Jeremiah the prophet speaks about how God has total knowledge of him as he was made in his mother's womb.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"So God created man in his own image" **Genesis**

"You shall not murder" **Exodus**

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" **Jeremiah**

"For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb" **Psalms 139**

"Whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved the entire world." **Talmud**

"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy." **Torah**

Nature and importance of the 'Pikuach Nefesh' (Sanctity of Life)

Following the commandments and keeping religious laws is very important for Jews, but if human life is at risk, saving it is the most important thing to do. This principle is called Pikuach Nefesh. Saving of life should take priority over everything even if this means breaking some of the mitzvot in the Torah. To support life, all but 3 of the 613 mitzvot can be broken idolatry (worshipping false gods), incest and adultery.

Jews believe that they should live by the Torah, but not die because of it. An example would be at Yom Kippur, Jews are supposed to fast, but if a person's life is put at risk by this then they shouldn't do it. Jewish people are supposed to follow strict laws about what to eat, but if they are starving any food will do, the rules can be broken.

The Talmud allows actions on the Sabbath such as:

- Rescuing a drowning child
- Breaking a door to prevent it closing on a child
- Moving rubble from a collapsed wall to save a child
- Extinguishing a fire to save a life



It is acceptable to work on the Sabbath if doing so will save life. Doctors can answer emergency calls, travelling to hospital in an emergency is acceptable. To preserve a life one may travel on Sabbath. In Judaism the emphasis is on life not on death. God is the creator who has given life.

This principle affects Jewish attitudes to abortion. Jewish people believe that if a pregnant woman is going to die, but having an abortion would save her life, then the foetus should be aborted. Her life is superior to the foetus.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"The possibility of danger to human life renders inoperative the laws of the Sabbath" **Yoma 83-84**

"Do not stand by whilst your neighbours life is at risk" **Leviticus**

The 613 Mitzvot

It is difficult to find a word in English that really translates 'mitzvot' as it has more than one meaning:

- Keeping the duties given by God
- Doing good deeds
- Being given an honour or a privilege



The Talmud refers to the 613 mitzvot in the Torah. Today it is impossible to keep all 613 mitzvot as many related to religious practices in the Temple, which has been destroyed. For Orthodox Jews, keeping the mitzvot is an important principle of Judaism. Although many Reform Jews also try to keep the mitzvot many consider that some are no longer relevant for modern life. Decisions about which ones to observe are often based upon individual choices.

The mitzvot either show how people should relate to God or how they should relate to other people. By following they build a relationship with God. Observing the mitzvot brings people close to God.

Mitzvot – actions that Jews must perform or avoid. There are 613 mitzvot including the Ten Commandments.

The relationship between free will and the 613 mitzvot

The concept of free will is central to the principles of the Torah. Free will is the idea that Jewish people can choose how they behave, choosing to do good or evil. People choose the way they behave and this is part of God's plan.

God made humanity in His own image. Other animals do not have this ability to choose their actions and decide on their moral behaviour. The Torah provides the 613 mitzvot to give knowledge to make the choice between good and evil. Those who choose to do good and obey the commandments will be rewarded and those who choose to disobey them will be punished. God knows everything (omniscient) and therefore knows how people have acted.



People have complete freedom to decide how to act, but God knows what people will choose to do. Judaism teaches that humans are born with two inclinations: the urge to do good (Yetzer ha tov) and the urge to do evil (Yetzer ha ra). People are born with these inclinations in balance but as the person does more good or bad the balance changes.



Jewish beliefs about the Afterlife

Jewish beliefs about life after death are **ambiguous**. This means beliefs are unclear and different between Orthodox and Reform Jews. Judaism places great emphasis on how life should be lived. It teaches that what happens in the next life is in the hands of God. It is therefore, more important to focus on this life as a preparation for the life to come.



The afterlife in Judaism is called **Olam Ha-Ba** which means the 'world to come'. There are many different beliefs about what the world to come will be like. There are no specific teachings in the Torah but the Talmud contains clear reference to the Olam Ha-Ba.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"The world is like a lobby before the Olam Ha-Ba" **Talmud**

"This world is like the eve of Shabbat, and the Olam Ha-Ba is like Shabbat. Those who prepare for Shabbat will have good food to eat" **Talmud**

A place called "Sheol" or the underworld is mentioned in the Torah. It is a physical place where the dead go, but its nature is not clear. Judaism is vague about life after death. One of the reasons for this is humans can never fully understand the ways of God. There are many different opinions among Jews, but there is general agreement that death is not the end.

Orthodox Beliefs

Many Orthodox Jews believe in some form of resurrection. Resurrection is the belief that the dead will come back to life with a physical body. This belief is stated in daily prayers and at funerals. This affects Jewish attitudes to cremation, organ transplants and autopsies as they believe they must be buried complete so they can be resurrected whole. Some rabbis argue that the resurrection of the dead will occur during the Messianic Age.



Many Orthodox Jews also believe in some form of Judgement. God has provided Jewish people with his laws (mitzvot). Their actions and how well they have followed the laws will be taken into account and this can lead to either reward or punishment.

The reward is an eternity in 'Gan Eden' (heaven) and the punishment is an eternity in 'Gehenna' (hell)

Reform Beliefs

Reform Judaism has rejected a belief in resurrection and references have been taken out of prayer books and worship. They allow cremation to take place as emphasis is placed on the immortality of the soul. Reform Jews believe the soul lives on after death. The body remains on earth; only the soul goes to heaven.



Some Reform Jews believe that the memories of people live on through their actions and good deeds. Although it is not a central belief in Judaism, some Reform Jews believe in reincarnation. By this they mean that in some form the soul of the person will take on a different body to live again on earth. Some Jews believe that if the mitzvot of the Torah have not been completed then a soul may be allowed a second chance through reincarnation.

Judaism: Practices

GCSE Course Information



Information for Students

This course information booklet covers all areas of GCSE Paper 3 Section 2:

Area of study	Content
Tanakh, Torah and Talmud	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Importance of the Tanakh➤ Importance of the Torah➤ Importance of the Talmud
Features of the Synagogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The different features of an Orthodox and Reform Synagogue
The Function of a Synagogue in Britain Today & Orthodox and Reform services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ House of Prayer➤ House of Study➤ Community Centre➤ Worship in the synagogue
Jewish worship in the Home and symbols of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The different signs and symbols of worship in a Jewish home➤ The different signs and symbols worn by Jews in worship
Shabbat (The Sabbath)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Preparation and celebration of the sabbath➤ The importance of the sabbath
Rites of Passage: Brit Milah	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The circumcision ceremony
Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah & Bat Chayil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Bar Mitzvah ceremony➤ Reform Bat Mitzvah ceremony➤ Orthodox Bat Chayil
The Jewish Marriage Ceremony	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The different features and symbols of the Jewish marriage ceremony
Jewish Mourning Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Orthodox beliefs about life after death➤ Reform beliefs about life after death
Jewish Festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Rosh Hashanah➤ Yom Kippur➤ Passover➤ Sukkot

Jewish Daily life: Sources of Wisdom & Authority

The Tanakh

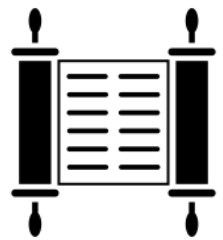
The Tanakh is the Jewish Bible. The name is formed from its three parts:

1. Torah -the Five Books of Moses (Jewish written law)
2. Nevi'im -the Prophets
3. Ketuvim- the Writings (made up of history, wisdom and poetry, it includes the Psalms)

The Torah

The Torah is the most sacred object in Judaism. It takes the form of a written scroll on parchment and it is kept in the Ark in the synagogue. The Torah is written in Hebrew and it is a great honour to be asked to read it. The person reading from the Torah uses a pointing stick called a yad so that the scroll is given respect and not damaged by touch.

Torah – the Jewish written law and first 5 books of the Hebrew Bible.



Orthodox Jews regard the Torah as the literal word of God revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai. The Torah cannot be changed. In Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam) 'Thirteen Principles of Faith' he outlines the importance of the Torah:

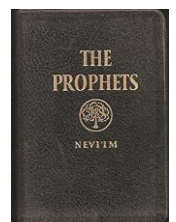
Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"Belief in the divine origin of the Torah (Torah comes directly from God)" **Rambam's 8th Principle**

"Belief in the immutability of the Torah (the words cannot be changed)" **Rambam's 9th Principle**

The Nevi'im

The Nevi'im is the second part of the Tanakh and its main purpose is to teach about the history of the Jewish religion. Jews believe the prophets had special knowledge from God. They pass on a message about how God wants Jews to live. Parts of the Nevi'im are read during synagogue service. Many parts of the Nevi'im are only read at home or for personal study. The Prophet Isaiah is found in the Nevi'im and it contains teachings about the Messiah.



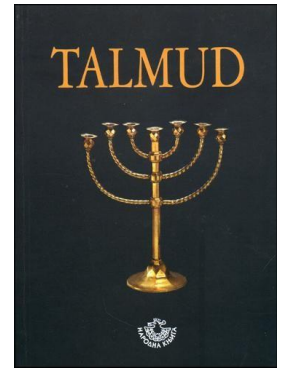
The Ketuvim

This is the third section of the Tanakh and includes the Psalms. These are songs of praise to God and in tradition some were written by King David and King Solomon. The psalms have been used in Jewish worship for thousands of years. They are used in communal and private worship. It also includes an overview of Jewish history and tradition.



The Talmud

This is a record of the Oral Tradition and means "instruction or learning". Tradition says it was given to Moses on Mount Sinai explaining how to interpret the Torah. Over 1000 years later it was written down so it did not become distorted or forgotten. It is made up of two parts the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah is written in Hebrew, The Gemara in Aramaic.



The Talmud contains the opinions, teachings and comments of thousands of rabbis on many topics such as law, customs and ethics. Extracts from the Talmud are used in public and private worship and also in the siddur, the Jewish prayer book. However, the Talmud is very difficult and takes years of training to understand. If a Jewish person wants to find an answer to an issue they would consult their rabbi who has trained in reading the Talmud and is an expert. Orthodox Jews are encouraged to study the Talmud. There are many colleges throughout the world where Jews study the Torah and the Talmud. These are called Yeshiva.

The Tanakh	The Talmud
"Bind them as a sign upon your arm and let them be ornaments between your eyes" Deuteronomy 6:8	The Talmud teaches Jews how they should wear the Torah and display it in their houses
"...You may slaughter from your cattle and your flocks that G-d has given you..." Deuteronomy 12:21	The Talmud teaches Jews how to prepare food and gives clearer guidance on which actions are Torah (clean or fit)
"Respect the Sabbath and keep it holy" Exodus	The Talmud gives clear guidance on what Jews should and should not do on the Sabbath. The Talmud describes 39 activities that should not take place

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Torah teachings about the Sabbath:

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." **Genesis 2:2-3**

The Talmud teaches that Jewish people will be rewarded for observing the Sabbath:

"When man leaves the synagogue for his home an angel of good and an angel of evil accompany him. If he finds the table spread in his house, the Sabbath lamps lighted, and his wife and children in festive garments ready to bless the holy day of rest, then the good angel says:

May the next Sabbath and all thy Sabbaths be like this. Peace unto this dwelling, peace;" and the angel of evil is forced to say, "Amen!"

The Synagogue

The Jewish place of worship is called the synagogue, it means bringing together. In Hebrew it is called Beth Knesset meaning, "house of assembly".

Synagogue – Jewish place of worship and place of meeting for the Jewish community.

Synagogues have three main functions:

1. **A house of prayer.** It is the focus of community prayers. Jews can pray anywhere but there are certain prayers that can only be said in the presence of a **minyan** (ten adult males, although some traditions include women.)
2. **A house of study.** It is sometimes called shul, meaning "school". Studying sacred text is important. It is also the place where children receive religious education.
3. **As a social hall.** The synagogue is a focus for community celebration, clubs, cultural events and charity.



Features of different Synagogues in Britain

Synagogues can be large or small, highly decorated or very simple, but they will all have a few common features. One common feature of all synagogues is a lack of statues or representations of living things. This is stated in the Torah (see source of wisdom). Synagogues should face towards Jerusalem, so those in the UK face east. Many of the synagogues features echo the now destroyed Temple in Jerusalem. The features of synagogues are the same in Orthodox and Reform traditions, however, the main difference being Orthodox synagogues and Reform is the separate seating for men and women.

Aron Kodesh or Holy Ark

At the wall facing towards Jerusalem there will be a cupboard called the Ark. This is where the Torah scrolls are kept. It is the most important part of the prayer hall. The Ark is a reminder of the Holy of Holies in the Temple where the Ten Commandments were kept. The door or curtain is only opened when the Torah Scrolls are taken out during worship.



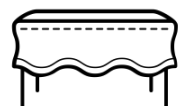
Ner Tamid

The Ner tamid or eternal light is kept burning always in front of the Ark. It is a reminder of the eternal nature of God and is a symbol of the light that burned continually in the Temple.



The bimah

This is a platform, usually in the middle or front of the synagogue. This represents the altar in the Temple and is the place from which the service is led. The Torah scrolls are removed from the Ark, placed on the bimah, and read from here. The words of the Torah are followed using a yad, a long finger shaped pointer. This is so the Torah is not touched directly by the reader, showing respect for the sacred Scripture.



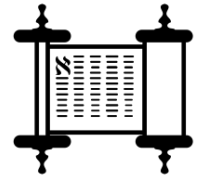
Seating

Synagogues often have seating on three sides facing the bimah, with the Ark on the fourth side. In traditional Orthodox synagogues, there may be a separate balcony or gallery for women. If not, men and women may sit on separate sides. Men and women sit together in Reform synagogues and it is also acceptable for women to make up part of the minyan in a Reform synagogue. The minyan is a group of ten or more people that need to be present for prayers to take place.



Torah Scrolls

The scrolls are kept in the Holy Ark and are dressed in silk or velvet covers in rich colours, and are embroidered with gold thread. They might also be decorated with gold and silver ornaments like a breastplate, crown or bells. These represent what the priests used to wear in the Temple.



The Menorah

This is the seven-branched candlestick used by Moses whilst the Jews were in the wilderness and then became a feature of the Jerusalem Temple. It was burned daily and has become a symbol of Judaism ever since. The construction of the Menorah is outlined in the Torah.



The Commandments or 'Ten Sayings'

There are no images of God or statues of anyone associated with Judaism in the synagogue. This is forbidden in the 2nd commandment. The only feature that will be displayed is the Ten Commandments or Ten Sayings which is the common name within Judaism. They represent the covenant agreement made between God and Moses on behalf of the Jews at Sinai.



Chazzan

This is the person who will lead the congregation of the synagogue in prayer. In an Orthodox synagogue this will be an adult male. They must be able to understand and read Hebrew. Much of the Orthodox service is sung so the Chazzan plays a vital part in the service.



Rabbi

The spiritual leader or religious teacher in the synagogue. They will deliver teaching on the Torah passages that are read as they will be experienced and educated in the teachings of the Talmud.



Star of David

The Star of David, also known as the Shield of David is the symbol of Judaism. It is often found on the outside of the synagogue. This is a more modern Jewish symbol than the Menorah.



Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"Do not represent gods by any carved statue or picture of anything in the heaven above, on the earth below, or in the water below the land. Do not bow down to such gods or worship them." **Exodus**

The Synagogue in Britain today

Synagogues are first and foremost a place of worship and prayer for Jewish people. However, this is not their only use. The synagogue is a central part of the Jewish community. Orthodox Jews often use the Yiddish word *shul* (pronounced shool) to refer to their synagogue.

House of Prayer (beit tefilah)

The synagogue is the place where Jews come together for community prayer services. Jews believe that certain prayers, such as the Amidah, can only take place when there is a minyan (in Orthodox synagogues this is a group of ten or more male Jews). Tradition teaches that there is great merit in praying with a group rather than praying alone. The sacredness of the synagogue is second only to the Jewish Temple that stood in Jerusalem. The Talmud refers to the synagogue as the 'little temple'.



House of Study (beit midrash)

A synagogue is also a house of study. For Orthodox Jews, the study of sacred texts such as the Torah and Talmud is a life long task. A synagogue is likely to have a library of sacred Jewish books for members of the community to study. It is also a place where young children receive their basic religious education. Furthermore, the synagogue is the place where a young boy will prepare for his bat mitzvah. This will mean many months of studying sections of the Torah and perfecting their spoken Hebrew.



A Social Hall or Community Centre

Most synagogues also have a social hall for religious and non-religious activities. It can be used as a town hall where matters of importance within the community can be discussed. The hall might be used youth clubs, sporting activities, lunch clubs for the elderly, music and drama groups, celebrations of rites of passage such as bar mitzvahs and charity events. These charity events are linked with social welfare where the community will provide support for the most needy.



Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"Thus said the Lord: Though I have removed them far away among nations, and though I have scattered them among the lands, I have made for them a small sanctuary (synagogue) in the lands where they have arrived."

Prophet Ezekiel

Jewish Public Worship: Orthodox and Reform Synagogue Services

Public Worship

The main public acts of worship take place in the synagogue. Each synagogue usually has daily prayers, but the time when the community comes together is for the Shabbat service and the festival services. In order for an act of public worship to take place there has to be at least ten people present. This is known as a minyan. In an Orthodox synagogue they must be men, but in a Reform one they can be men or women.



Shabbat service in the synagogue

It is important for Jews to come together as a community to worship. Important ceremonies happen at festival times but each week the Shabbat service brings the community together. It is the most important service of the week and many Jews make a real effort to get there. Services are held on Shabbat eve (Friday night), Shabbat morning (Saturday morning), and late Shabbat afternoon (Saturday afternoon).

The Orthodox Service

The Shabbat morning service is quite long and can last between two to three hours. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal. People might arrive at different times and chat. Children will come in and out. The service will include important prayers such as the Shema and Amidah (known as the standing prayer). At each service, selected portions of the Torah are read and almost all the service is in Hebrew, apart from the sermon (the teaching of the Rabbi) and the prayer for the welfare of the country and its rulers.

The Rabbi will give a sermon which explains the meaning of the readings from the Torah. Musical instruments are not used. Any singing is unaccompanied and led by the Chazzan. The service is often followed by a buffet called a Kiddush. It is a chance for people to chat and socialise. Kiddush is the special blessing recited over a cup of wine or Shabbat wine before Friday night dinner.

The Reform Service

The service in a Reform synagogue is based on traditional elements, but contains more use of English and far less Hebrew, because it is important that people understand it. Reform services are usually shorter but more formal, and more of the service is read aloud together. The Rabbi could be male or female and men and women can sit together unlike in an Orthodox synagogue. Prayers and readings usually leave out beliefs about bodily resurrection, a personal Jewish Messiah, and references to angels. Reform services often play instrumental or recorded music.

The Amidah

The Amidah is the core of every Jewish worship service, and is also referred to as 'The Prayer'. Amidah means 'standing' and people stand throughout the prayer to show they are in God's presence. It consists of 18 blessings and contains the three types of prayer: praise, requests and thanksgiving. The last line is, '**May God who brings peace to the universe, bring peace to us and all the people, Israel. Amen.**' This is recited while taking three steps backward, bowing to both sides, and taking three steps forward again.



Jewish Private Worship: Worship in the home

Many Jews cannot attend the synagogue on a daily basis. Therefore praying at home is an important part of daily life. There are a variety of different prayers, signs, symbols and items associated with worship in the home:

The Siddur

The siddur is a book of daily prayers. It literally means “order” or “sequence”. It guides Jews through daily prayers at home and at the synagogue. It contains many of the prayers used in daily life and festivals, which vary throughout the calendar. Orthodox Jewish families will always keep a copy of the Siddur in their houses.



Modeh Ani

The ‘Modeh Ani’ is a prayer that Jews say first thing on a morning when they are still in bed. The first words of the prayer are “I give thanks”. As it is short and simple, it is very popular with children. They are giving thanks for being alive.

מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם
שֶׁהַחַיָּוִת בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלֶךָ -
רַבָּה אֶמְוִנְתְּךָ.

The Shema

The Shema is the most important prayer in Judaism. Shema means “hear”. The first line is, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, He is the One and Only.” It is usually recited twice daily, in the morning and in the evening. It sums up the important Jewish belief in one God known as ‘monotheism’.



Mezuzah

The Shema is also kept in a container found on the right side of the doorpost outside Jewish homes. It is called a mezuzah. The parchment inside the mezuzah is prepared and written by a scribe. They will be put in every door post in the house except for the toilets and cupboards. It should be placed at a slight angle, with the top pointing toward the inside of the room and the bottom pointing toward the outside. It is traditional to touch it as you enter and exit to remind yourself of god’s presence. These remind Jews of God’s presence and the covenant.



Many Jews consider it a duty to wear special clothing for worship:

The Kippah

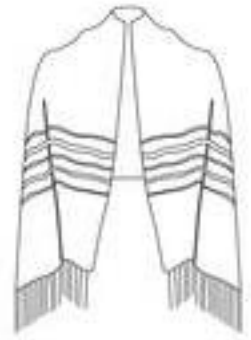


Orthodox Jewish men always cover their heads by wearing a hat or a skullcap known in Hebrew as a kippah. Wearing a Kippah is an obvious sign of Jewish identity. Most Jews will cover their heads when praying, attending the synagogue or at a festival. Liberal or Reform Jews see the covering of the head as optional. Women do not wear skullcaps, but do cover their heads by wearing a scarf or a hat. For Orthodox Jews wearing a skullcap is a sign of devotion to God. The most common reason for covering the head is a sign of respect and fear of God. By wearing a hat you are recognising that God is above all mankind.

Tallit

The tallit is a four-cornered garment which has fringes (tzitzit) attached. The tzitzit or fringes are to represent the 613 mitzvot. It is usually worn by men and boys who have been through bar mitzvah at every morning service. The tallit or prayer shawl is worn during prayer and worship. It goes across the shoulders and arms. After death the tallit is sometimes wrapped around the body like a shroud.

Many observant Jewish males choose to wear a small tallit under their everyday clothes throughout the day. It has a central hole that goes over the head and covers the front and back of the body with the fringes hanging down from the corners. It reminds them that life is a prayer.



Tefillin

Tefillin are worn by Orthodox Jewish males at Morning Prayer each day, apart from on Shabbat and festivals. The tefillin is made up of two leather boxes. In each there is a small handwritten scroll containing the first two paragraphs of the Shema. One is bound to the head with a strap. It is a reminder that the wearer must serve God with his mind by developing good thoughts. The second box is bound with a strap to the upper arm and leans slightly towards the heart. It is a reminder that the wearer must serve God with his heart through acts of compassion.

Women may wear tallit and tefillin in Reform and Liberal communities but Orthodox women do not wear them.



Sources of Wisdom and Authority

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. **Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead**, inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

The Shema: Deuteronomy 6: 5-9

Shabbat (The Sabbath)

Shabbat is the weekly festival that is celebrated from sunset on a Friday to sunset on a Saturday. Shabbat is considered by many Jews as the most important celebration. Jews believe God instructed them to keep it holy and it is repeated many times in the Torah. It is seen by many as a gift from God when weekday worries can be forgotten. Even in times of persecution, such as the Holocaust, Jews tried to celebrate Shabbat. It celebrates creation and is a time for family. No work is permitted on the Sabbath.

Shabbat – Jewish day or rest on the 7th day of the week. Celebrates God resting after creating the universe in Genesis.

Preparation and Celebration

The home will be cleaned and tidied ready for Shabbat. The wife or mother will light two candles 18 minutes prior to sunset to begin the Sabbath celebration. The adult male members of the family will usually visit the synagogue on the Friday evening and return for the Friday night dinner. The meal is served with a Kiddush blessing using wine and a blessing of two pieces challah bread. The family may attend the synagogue on the Saturday morning before returning home for a day of rest with the family. The end of Shabbat is marked with the Havdalah blessing over wine, when a special candle is lit. No work can be done, cooking is forbidden so everything to be eaten has to be prepared in advance. Igniting a cooker counts as lighting a fire which is considered as work.



Why do Jews worship on the Sabbath?

Jews worship on Shabbat because of the creation story found in the book of Genesis. The Torah states that G-d created the world in six days and on the seventh God rested. Jews follow this example and perform no work throughout Shabbat.

Jews also worship on Shabbat because it is one of the Ten Commandments. The commandments were given to Moses by God and all Jews are expected to follow these ten laws. In the book of Exodus in the Torah it teaches Jews to **“Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy”**. They do this by having a family meal and attending the synagogue.

Furthermore, Jews worship on Shabbat as it is part of the covenant that Moses made with God at Sinai. A covenant is a promise or agreement that Jews are expected to keep. Jews keep the covenant to show their love, gratitude and devotion to God. This impacts Jewish lives as it makes them focus on God and their family rather than work.

Finally, Jews worship on Shabbat because it is an opportunity for the family to spend time together. It is also a way in which Jews can have structure and discipline in their lives. All preparations are made before the Shabbat and the same prayers and rituals are carried out each week. The wife or mother lights two candles and blessings are said over wine called Kiddush and blessings are made over two pieces of bread.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

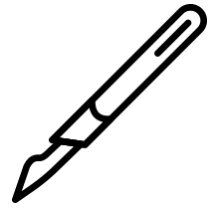
“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work” **Exodus 20: 8-10**

Jewish Rituals

Important moments in the life of a Jew are marked by special rituals and traditions. They help to show thanks to God, bring God into everyday life and increase a sense of Jewish identity and belonging.

Brit milah

One of the most significant rituals for a male Jew is Brit milah. This dates back to the time of Abraham and the covenant of circumcision. It involves the removal of the foreskin and takes place on the 8th day after the birth of the child.



It is one of the most universally observed mitzvot. Even secular Jews almost always observe it. It is an outward physical sign of God's covenant. It usually takes place at home and it is performed in front of a minyan (a group of ten or more male adult Jews). The baby boy is placed on a cushion held by a person called the sandek, this is generally the grandfather or the oldest person in observance. This is a great honour as the tradition of the Jewish faith is being passed down to the next generation that was promised to Abraham in the covenant.



The person doing the circumcision is known as a mohel. During the Brit milah the boy is given his Hebrew name. This is the one that will be used in the synagogue and on formal occasions. Traditionally, only men attend the ceremony. Reform communities encourage all to be present regardless of gender. Orthodox communities believe that failure to undergo circumcision can lead to 'karet' which means being cut off from Jewish society.

Alternatives to Brit milah

As we have previously seen, you do not become Jewish through circumcision but through being either a righteous convert or born of a Jewish mother. Some Jewish people would argue this makes the circumcision ceremony irrelevant and unnecessary. An alternative to the ceremony is Brit Shalom (Covenant of Peace), a naming ceremony that emphasises the importance of tradition but avoids ritual circumcision. There are also some Reform and Secular Jews who argue that such a decision should not be made on behalf of the eight day old child. Likewise, the tradition of circumcision belongs to Jews that lived in a different time and place. Additionally, there are some Reform Jews who argue that the Torah forbids the cutting of flesh and this teaching overrides the need for Brit milah.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"Every male among you must be circumcised." **Genesis 17:11-12**

"You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh on account of the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord." **Leviticus 19:28**

Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah and Bat Chayil

At puberty (13 years old for a boy and 12 years old for a girl) a Jewish boy or girl becomes responsible for living by the Jewish Law (Torah). He or she has to accept the law and its obligations in full, take part in synagogue services and set a good example.

Bar Mitzvah (Male Rite of Passage)

On the Sabbath nearest to his 13th birthday, the boy will become Bar Mitzvah which means 'Son of the Commandment'. During the Sabbath service, the boy will stand at the bimah and read aloud part of the Torah. He will have studied for many months to learn Hebrew and the section of the Torah. He will wear tefillin (black leather boxes containing an extract of the Torah) for the first time.



The Rabbi will address part of his talk to the boy and the boy might give a talk to the rest of the assembly. The boy's father will then recite a prayer of thanks for his sons coming of age. After the service there will usually be a party to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah.

The boy is now counted as part of the minyan and may lead part of the synagogue services. According to Jewish law, he is now eligible to own property and get married (however this is unusual in today's society).

Bat Mitzvah (Female Reform Rite of Passage)

A girl from a Reform Jewish community will prepare for her **Bat Mitzvah (which means 'Daughter of the Commandment')** in a similar way to a boy preparing for his Bar Mitzvah. Unlike a boy, she will do this around the time of her 12th birthday.



During the Bat Mitzvah ceremony itself, the girl will not wear the tefillin (black leather boxes containing an extract of the Torah). She may lead prayers and read from the Torah scroll.

The Bat Mitzvah demonstrates that she is taking on these additional privileges and responsibilities. Some Reform Jews ask that the girl read a section from the Tanakh from one of the female figures. She may be asked to prepare a speech based on the reading or talk about a 'Mitzvah project'. This is where a girl may choose one or two of the mitzvot to focus on such as kosher cooking, a day dedicated to prayer or some form of charity work. Most **Orthodox Jews** do not accept Bat Mitzvah and do not allow girls to count as part of the minyan or to lead services.









Bat Chayil (Female Orthodox Rite of Passage)

Bat Chayil means 'daughter of valour' and is an Orthodox Jewish ceremony. It takes place in Orthodox synagogues at a date close to the girl's 12th birthday. The girl will give a talk on a Jewish topic, but not during the Sabbath service. Orthodox Jews see the role of women and men as different. Women do not take an active part in the synagogue services, but have a very important role to play in the home. Bat Chayil allows the girl to take up her adult role in the community. The girl has to observe those Jewish laws that pertain to women and learn how to keep a good Jewish home. How to apply the Jewish dietary laws (**Kosher**) is a good example of one of the lessons an Orthodox Jewish teenage girl has to learn.



Features of the Jewish Marriage ceremony

Marriage is very important in Judaism. It is given by God. It allows a couple to bond and to have a family.

Feature	Image	Description
Ketubah (contract)		The marriage ceremony begins with the reading of the ketubah (marriage contract). The ketubah outlines the groom's various responsibilities — to provide his wife with food, shelter and clothing, and to be attentive to her emotional needs. It is a legally binding agreement.
Badeken (veiling)		The next stage is the badeken ceremony. This is the veiling of the bride by the groom. This custom dates back to Rebecca (the wife of Isaac, Abraham's son). She is said to have covered her face with a handkerchief when she met her groom, Isaac. It also highlights that the groom must focus on more than just the physical beauty of his bride.
Chuppah (canopy)		The wedding ceremony takes place under the chuppah (canopy), a symbol of the home that the new couple will build together. It is open on all sides. This means that all the family and friends are also part of the family that has been created.
Blessings of Betrothal (Kiddush)		Two cups of wine are used in the wedding ceremony. The first cup accompanies the betrothal blessings, recited by the rabbi. After these are recited, the couple drinks from the cup. Wine is a symbol of joy in Jewish tradition.
Giving of the ring		In Jewish law, a marriage becomes official when the groom gives an object of value to the bride. This is traditionally done with a ring. According to Jewish law, this is the central moment of the wedding ceremony, and at this point the couple is fully married.
Seven Blessings		The Seven Blessings (<i>Sheva Brachot</i>) are now recited over the second cup of wine. The seven blessings link to the seven days of creation in Genesis.
Breaking the glass		A glass is now placed on the floor, and the groom shatters it with his foot. It represents the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The congregation shout "Mazel Tov," and the groom and bride leave the chuppah together.
Yichud Room		The couple are then escorted to a private "yichud room" and left alone for a time. These moments symbolise their new status of living together as husband and wife. Since the couple has been fasting since the morning, at this point they will also have something to eat.

Source of Wisdom and Authority

"A man shall therefore leave his father and mother and be united with his wife and they shall become one flesh."
Genesis 2:24

Mourning Rituals



Following a Jewish person's death, the body is washed and wrapped in a white cloth. This cloth may be the tallit (prayer shawl) that belonged to the person. The body must not be left alone and someone should stay with the body until the burial takes place. This custom comes from the Torah, which outlines that the burial must take place within 24 hours. The body is washed and wrapped in white as Jewish custom says a person should leave the world in the same way they entered it.

'... you must not leave his body overnight. Be sure to bury him the same day.' Deuteronomy

Prior to the body being buried is a stage called 'Aninut' which means pre-burial mourning. During this time, the family will concentrate only on funeral arrangements and each will make a small tear in their clothes before the funerals service. The tearing of the clothes comes from the story of Jacob in the Torah. Jacob believed his son Joseph to be dead and it states:



'Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.'

Genesis

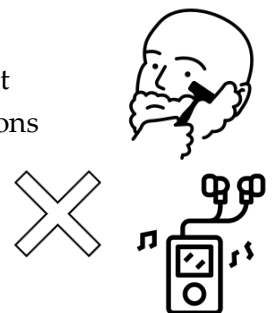
Following the burial there is a seven day mourning period known as 'shiva'. During this time, mourners (usually the immediate family) remain at home and carry out a number of traditions. The family members will sit on low chairs or stools and cover mirrors in the house. Sitting on low chairs comes from the book of Job in the Tanakh. Jews follow the example of Job by bringing small chairs or stools

into their houses for seven days. Likewise, they cover mirrors, as the focus of attention should be on the deceased person and not on their physical appearance.



'then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was.' Job 2:13

Following 'shiva' there follows 30 more days of mourning. This is less intense and most family members will resume normal activities such as work. However, certain restrictions still apply such as cutting hair, shaving the beard or attending celebrations such as Jewish festivals. At the end of the 30th day Jewish the mourning period is over. However, the children or close relatives such as husband or wife will continue to mourn for an entire year. On the year anniversary, a candle will be lit and prayers are dedicated to the deceased. This symbolises the end of the mourning period for the children.



However, the tradition of lighting the candle on the anniversary will continue. This tradition comes from the book of Proverbs in the Tanakh which states:

'the candle of the Lord searches the soul of man.' Proverbs 20:27



Jewish Dietary Laws (Kosher)

Religious beliefs affect all aspects of Jewish people's lives including the food they eat and how it is prepared. Jewish dietary laws are known kashrut. The 'kashrut' laws tell what a Jew is allowed and not allowed to eat, and how it should be prepared. Food that is clean or fit is kosher whereas food that is unclean is treifah. For many Jewish people keeping the food laws is a very important part of their observance.

Kosher – means 'clean' or 'fit'. Often refers to the food that Jews are able to eat and how it is prepared.

Kosher

The word kosher comes from the Hebrew, meaning fit, proper or correct. Kosher refers to the set of Jewish food and dietary laws contained in the Torah, mainly in the book of Leviticus. Orthodox Jews will keep to these food laws strictly, however, some Reform or Liberal Jews may choose not to.



The term kosher refers to foods which Jews are allowed to eat. It can also refer to certain actions that are allowed, clothing they may wear and for males, circumcision is also considered kosher. Kosher means clean or fit. Foods that are kosher will contain a label that indicates that the food is fit to eat. The following foods are kosher:

- All fruit
- All vegetables
- Animals with split hooves that also chew the cud (grass)
- Some birds, e.g. chicken, duck, turkey are favoured, but birds of prey are prohibited
- Fish that have both fins and scales

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

"Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat" **Leviticus**

Preparing kosher food

Animals will only be considered kosher if they have been slaughtered in a certain way. They have to be slaughtered in a way that causes the least amount of pain to the animal. This involves cutting the animals' throat with a razor-sharp knife, and all blood must be drained from the meat which causes an immediate loss of consciousness and death to avoid prolonged suffering.

Combining foods

As well as keeping in mind what foods are kosher and treifah, Jews also have to be careful about what foods they put together, as some combinations of food are also forbidden. This rule comes from the instruction in the Torah which states "*Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.*" Jews interpret this quote to mean that they are forbidden to eat meat and dairy products together. This means that dishes such as meat lasagne or cheeseburgers cannot be eaten. A kosher kitchen usually has separate utensils, washing up bowls, and tea towels so that milk and meat are kept separate.



Benefits of keeping kosher

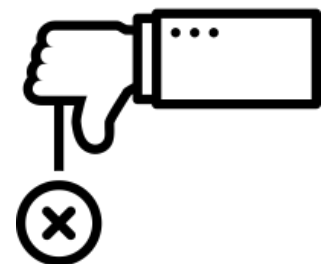
For many Jewish people the laws of kosher are a central part of their Jewish identity. It marks Jewish people as different and distinct. Every time a Jewish person eats it also helps to remind themselves of their relationship with God. Preparing and eating food is something that has to be carried out daily so keeping kosher enables Jews to have a daily relationship with God. Kosher is also one of the 613 mitzvot. By following the mitzvot Jewish people are fulfilling the covenant that was established with Abraham and renewed by Moses at Mount Sinai. God is seen as both a lawgiver and a judge. By following the laws God will judge Jewish people kindly.



Challenges of keeping kosher

Keeping kosher can be difficult and there are many challenges such as:

- Eating out can be difficult. Some will only eat in kosher restaurants, because they have been checked by rabbinic supervisors to make sure kashrut laws have been observed. Some Jews will only eat in vegetarian restaurants, because these will have no meat or fish.
- Meat has to be bought from a kosher butcher to guarantee it has been prepared in the correct way.
- A three-hour gap is must be observed after eating meat before eating dairy. If you wanted tea or coffee at the end of a meal where meat had been served, it would have to served black, or use soya milk as it is vegetable in origin. A dessert would have to be dairy free.
- A simple tin of baked beans may appear acceptable but what if it comes into contact with treifah food in the factory? Rabbinic authorities regularly publish lists of products that comply with the kashrut laws.
- It could be more expensive, especially if the kosher food is only sold in specialised shops.

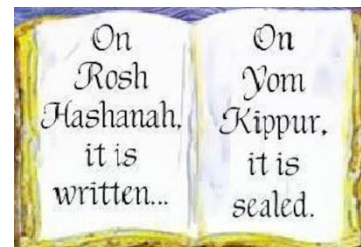


Jewish Festivals

There are many festivals in the Jewish calendar. Most remember a great event in Jewish history. They provide an opportunity to build a relationship with God. They build Jewish identity as families and communities come together.

Origin of the Festival of Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year it means “head” or beginning the year. It is a time for Jewish people to think about what they have done right and wrong over the past year and to look forward to the year ahead. Jewish people evaluate their behaviour, ask forgiveness and make plans for the year ahead. It is also a time to recall the story of creation in Genesis and celebrate belief in God as creator.



How is Rosh Hashanah Celebrated?

In Jewish homes, wine is blessed and slices of apple dipped in honey are eaten. Challah (bread) is also eaten but the challah is round to represent the cycle of the year. A shofar horn is blown 100 times. The shofar is made from the horn of a ram and is blown to announce holidays. The noise of the horn represents the soul crying out to God. Later in the day Jews say special prayers at a stream or river. This is called ‘**tashlikh**’ which means ‘casting away’. Crumbs from the challah are thrown into the water representing the sins thrown away. For the next ten days Jews try to make up for actions they regret and plan ways in which they can live a better life. Jews believe God will not forgive unless a person asks for forgiveness.

Why is Rosh Hashanah important?



Rosh Hashanah is important to Jews because it is the celebration of the Jewish New Year. On Rosh Hashanah Jews celebrate God creating the world. The book of Genesis teaches that God created the world in six days and on the seventh God rested. **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.**

It is also important to Jews because along with Yom Kippur, it is looked upon as being one of Judaism’s ‘**High Holy Days**’. This means that Rosh Hashanah is a festival that should be celebrated by all Jews above all others. Furthermore, the festival gives Jews the opportunity to spend ten days planning how they are going to live a better life throughout the year ahead. Finally, it is important to Jews because it is considered to be both a joyous and serious festival. It is joyous because Jewish families can celebrate the New Year together and celebrate the world that God created. It is serious because it provides an opportunity to reflect on the previous year and plan. Most Orthodox Jews will consider ways in which they can fulfil the covenant and be observant to the Torah and Mitzvot.

Festival of Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur comes ten days after Rosh Hashanah. It is considered to be the holiest day of the year. Yom Kippur is known as the 'Day of Atonement' which means it is the day when Jews ask God for forgiveness.

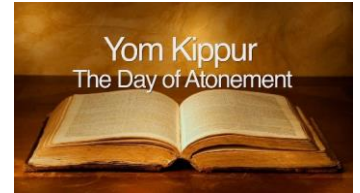


Origin of Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur dates back to the time of the Temple and the early Jewish community. Jewish people would visit the Temple in Jerusalem and offer a small sacrifice to God to atone (seek forgiveness). The 'Holy of Holies', which contained the original Torah, given to Moses by God was open so that sacrifice and prayers could be offered directly to God.

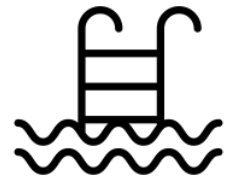
How is Yom Kippur celebrated?

Celebrated is not the best way to describe how Jews take part in Yom Kippur. It is a holy and solemn (sacred & serious) day where Jews believe that if they are truly sorry for their sinful actions God will be fair and compassionate and forgive them. As it is the holiest day of the year, all Jews (both Orthodox and Reform) will attend the synagogue. It is traditional for Jewish people to wear white clothing and many will spend a large part of the day in the synagogue in prayer and reflection. During prayers in the synagogue, people quietly ask God for forgiveness. The doors of the Holy Ark (Aron Kadesh) are open to symbolise that God is present.



It is a day of fasting and Jewish people will go without the following for 25 hours:

Food, Perfume, Alcohol, Sexual Activity and the wearing of leather shoes



On the day before Yom Kippur many Jews visit a mikveh (a pool of natural water) for a spiritual cleaning. The rules of Shabbat apply on Yom Kippur so Jews will do no work. However, pikuach nefesh applies meaning if you are ill or too young you don't have to fast.

Why is Yom Kippur important?

Yom Kippur is important to Jewish people because along with Rosh Hashanah, it is looked upon as one of Judaism's '**High Holy Days.**' This means that Yom Kippur is a festival that should be celebrated by all Jews above all others. It is also important as it is looked upon as the holiest day of the year for Jewish people. All Jewish people are expected to attend the synagogue on this day and seek forgiveness for their sins. Furthermore, Yom Kippur is important because it is referred to as the '**Sabbath of Sabbaths.**' Even Jews who do not always follow Sabbath laws throughout the year will try to do so on this day. Finally, Yom Kippur is important because the Torah commands it: "**The tenth day is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering to the LORD.**" (Leviticus)

During this time, Jews can focus on God rather than focus on material possessions. There are five prayer services on the day. At each service, Jews confess their sins to God. Rabbis and cantors dress in white on this day to represent forgiveness. Throughout the service the doors of the **Holy Ark** are open so that they can confess directly to God.

Festival of Pesach (Passover)

Pesach is known as Passover and takes place in the spring. It recalls the time the Jewish people were saved by Moses from Egypt. It is a festival of freedom.

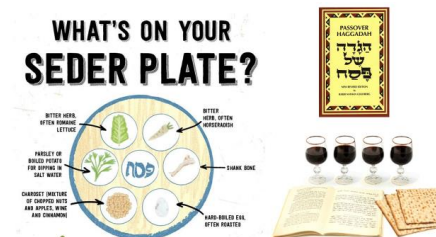


Origin of Pesach (Passover)

Pesach recalls that the angel of death passed over Egypt killing every firstborn male, but not those of Jewish people. This was the tenth plague that God sent, and after this Pharaoh agreed to allow the Jewish slaves to leave. Pesach reminds Jewish people that they are God's chosen people, and that he saved them.

How is Pesach celebrated?

In preparation for this festival, the home is thoroughly cleaned. All chametz (food containing yeast or rising agents) is thrown out. Flat bread or matzo, is the only bread eaten during this time. This symbolises that the slaves who left Egypt were in such a rush that they did not have time for their bread to rise.



The Seder meal is the most important event of the festival. Seder means order and everything on the Seder plate is symbolic. For example, matzo crackers remember how there was no time for the bread to rise when the Jews left Egypt, bitter herbs like horseradish help to remember the bitterness of slavery, salt water is used to remember the tears of the slaves, and charoset (a mix of apple, cinnamon, nut and wine) is used to symbolise the cement used in buildings by slaves. Four cups of wine are drunk. Wine is a symbol of freedom. Children play a key role in the celebration. The youngest child present start the meal by asking four questions about the origins of the ritual. A piece of matzah bread is hidden and the first child to find it receives a prize.

Why is Pesach important?

Pesach (Passover) is important to Jews today because God commands Jewish people to celebrate Passover in the Torah, namely the book of Exodus which tells the story of the Jewish people escaping Egypt. **'Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves and kill the Passover lamb."**



As the story of Passover comes directly from the Torah, the festival holds great importance. Jews believe that God is both a lawgiver and judge so they attempt to follow all of his commandments and teachings from the Torah. Furthermore, it is important because retelling the story ensures that the Jewish faith and religion are passed on. This means younger Jewish people will learn the important events from Jewish history and be able to pass these on to their children in the future.

Pesach is also an important festival because it reminds Jews to think about people today who are suffering from slavery and oppression. When they taste the bitter herbs on the Seder plate, they are able to think about the bitterness of slavery. Having the Seder meal means Jews can feel empathy with their ancestors who were kept as slaves in Egypt. In addition, Pesach is important to Jews today because it is a joyful celebration and helps Jews remember their freedom and entering the Promised Land. It is an opportunity to spend time with family and show gratitude to God.

Festival of Sukkot

This festival follows four days after Yom Kippur, Sukkot is the festival of tabernacles or booths (huts). It marks the end of summer and brings in the autumn harvest. It is celebrated for eight days and is seen as a holiday period and a time of hospitality.



Origin of Sukkot

The festival of Sukkot comes from the time when the early Jewish community were wandering in the wilderness after leaving the slavery of Egypt. Having left Egypt, Moses and his people were in the wilderness for 40 years. During this time, the people had to build small shelters (sukkahs) to protect them

from the elements.

How is Sukkot celebrated?

Jewish people build tents and huts to represent the temporary shelters the wanderers used in the desert. The booths can be very large, enough for many people, and people are often invited into a family's sukkah (plural is sukkot). Families will eat in them and if the weather allows, even sleep in them. It is a time of hospitality and sharing. Leaves, fruit and vegetables will be hung from the roof to recall it is a harvest festival.

There is an ancient tradition that a lulav (palm, myrtle and willow placed in a woven palm holder) and an Etrog (a type of citrus fruit) are waved in six directions showing God's power is everywhere.



There is also a tradition of remembering Jewish biblical characters such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Often young children create drawings of them and decorate the sukkah with them. The last day of Sukkot is a celebration of the Torah. On this day all of the Torah scrolls are taken out of the Ark, with much singing and dancing, and are paraded around the synagogue.



Why is Sukkot important?

Sukkot is important because it commemorates the years that the Jews spent in the desert on their way to the Promised Land. It celebrates the way in which God protected them under difficult desert conditions for forty years. It is also important because it helps Jewish people connect with their ancestors.

The word sukkot means 'hut' or 'booth' and every Jewish family will build an open air structure in which to live during the holiday. This reminds them of how the Jewish people lived whilst in the desert.

Furthermore, it is important because Jews are commanded to celebrate this festival in the Torah. **"You shall dwell in sukkot seven days so that generations will know how the Israelites lived"**. The Torah is the written Jewish law that Jews must follow. Celebrating sukkot is one of the 613 mitzvot. The mitzvot are actions that Jews must perform or avoid so Jews are expected to celebrate this festival.