

JUDAISM

Judaism is the monotheistic religion, embracing the transcendent God, established through the covenant made with **Abraham** and carried forward through Moses and other Jewish leaders of the ancient Hebrew people. During its early history, Judaism was the way of life under the rule of God solely for the twelve tribes of the Hebrew people chosen by God and ultimately known as Israel. Today, Judaism has a broader context and is embraced by Jews and anyone who embraces its theology, laws, and cultural traditions, regardless of whether or not they descend from the original twelve tribes. Judaism is also the root system from which **Christianity** would begin through Jesus Christ.

Origin

The Bible, particularly the Old Testament, reveals the origin and development of Judaism over millennia. Around 1800 BC, God made a covenant with Abraham, to make a great nation through him, one that would bless all people of the earth (**Genesis 12:2-3**). God further stated to Abraham that his descendants would ultimately be countless, like the stars in the sky (**Genesis 15:5**).

Abraham's descendants would come through two sons: Ishmael, from an Egyptian handmaid, and **Isaac**, from his wife Sarah. Descendants from Ishmael are the Arab population of the world today. The chosen descendants, however, came through Isaac and his son, **Jacob** who would be renamed Israel. Israel had twelve sons that became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Ancient Israel, the Hebrew people, were to follow the Ten Commandments and other laws and guidance given them by God. This agreement is known as the Abrahamic Covenant, the details of which can be found in the Torah of the Hebrew bible as well as the first five books of the Old Testament of the Christian bible.

The Hebrew people made their way to Egypt in a time of famine and became slaves there. God raised up Moses to lead them out of slavery in Egypt and into Canaan, the land promised to Abraham. When there, they flourished when obeying the covenant and struggled mightily when they did not. Following periods of patriarchal, judicial, and monarchical rule, the twelve tribes divided into two kingdoms:

Northern Kingdom (10 tribes)

Rueben	Gad
Simeon	Asher
Levi	Issachar
Dan	Zebulun
Naphtali	Joseph

Southern Kingdom (two tribes)

Judah
Benjamin

Continued disobedience to their covenant resulted in the obliteration of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrian Empire in 722 BC. Those ten tribes were lost to history. The two Southern Kingdom tribes, as well as some of the survivors from the Northern Kingdom, were exiled when conquered in 589 BC by the Babylonian Empire.

Several generations later, the Jews would return to the promised land, rebuild it, and embrace reforms in their relationship with God under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. This renewed faithfulness is recognized by some scholars as the starting point of true Judaism. Their faithfulness, however, would erode as some Jews married outside of the Hebrew family and worshipped pagan gods, leading to centuries of turmoil and struggle. God prompted the prophets of Israel to warn Israel of judgment, which they did repeatedly. The prophets also began sharing the message of a coming Messiah who would rule over them and enlarge their nation. Before any of that would come to pass, Palestine would come under Greek influence and ultimately the Roman Empire that exerted strong influence over Judaism and its leaders. A message of increasing doom and crisis was signaled by the Hebrew prophets.

Jesus Christ, recognized by Christianity as the Messiah that was proclaimed by the Hebrew prophets, was born, ministered, died on a cross, was resurrected, and finally ascended to heaven from which He will return some day. The Jewish leaders and Hebrew people, however, rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The doom proclaimed by the prophets many years earlier came in the form of God's judgment upon the Jewish people in 70 AD when the Roman Empire utterly destroyed Jerusalem and slaughtered over a million people. It should be noted that many Christians recognize the events of 70 AD as the end of the Jewish Age and the beginning of the Church Age.

Jews who managed to survive the calamity of 70 AD dispersed into various areas of the known world at the time, taking Judaism with them. Jews would not return in numbers to Palestine for almost 2,000 years, their culture surviving time and a Holocaust. In 1948, Great Britain opened the door for Jewish return with the Balfour Declaration.

Despite their long and dramatic history, most Jews believe there has never been a real break in the continuity of Judaism. Various Jewish groups – Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, still claim direct spiritual descent from ancient Pharisees and other rabbinic leaders. Though core beliefs have changed little, the practices of Judaism have changed significantly to the present. The original twelve tribes no longer exist. Followers of Judaism reside both in the nation of Israel as well as throughout the world. The priesthood and the sacrifice of animals, initially done in the ancient tabernacle and later in multiple versions of the temple in Jerusalem before 70 AD, no longer exist.

Main Beliefs

The primary belief of Judaism is monotheism, i.e., there is only one true God.

13 Articles of Faith of Judaism were developed by the medieval rabbi, Maimonides. Though considered core beliefs by many Jews, especially within the Orthodox community, not all Jews agree on or are guided by these beliefs . . .

In the existence of God, the Creator.

In God's absolute and unparalleled unity.

That God is incorporeal. God will not be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.

That God is eternal.

That it is imperative to worship God and no false gods; all prayer should be directed only to God.

That God communicates with man through prophecy and that this prophecy is true.

In the primacy of the prophecy of Moses our teacher.

In the divine origin of the Torah, both the Written and the Oral (*Talmud*).

In the immutability of the Torah.

In God's omniscience and providence, that God knows the thoughts and deeds of man.

In divine reward and retribution.

In the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.

In the resurrection of the dead.

There exists a wide variety of thought and belief on theological matters by those who practice Judaism. This may relate to the finding that almost 80% of Jewish people outside of the nation of Israel do not feel connected to their Jewish ancestry¹.

Demographics

More than 14 million Jewish people with full ancestry to the ancient Hebrew people populate the world. When those with partial ancestry to the original Hebrew family are added, the number grows to over 20 million as determined in 2017². Jews live in almost every country of the globe but have significant concentrations in 2 countries:

Israel	6.7 million
U.S.	7.0 million (most living in New York, California, Florida, New Jersey)

These are the only two countries with Jewish populations in excess of 1 million people. Other Jewish populations by continent:

Europe	1.10 million
South America	.32 million
Asia	.30 million
Australia/New Zealand	.12 million
Africa	.07 million

This is an introduction on the subject of **Judaism**. Here are a few other resources you may wish to explore:

¹ [World Jewish Population Nearly 14.5 Million but 80% Unconnected \(breitbart.com\)](https://www.breitbart.com/judaism/2017/05/14/world-jewish-population-nearly-14-5-million-but-80-unconnected/)

² [Jewish Population By Country 2021 \(worldpopulationreview.com\)](https://www.worldpopulationreview.com/country-comparisons/jewish-population-by-country/)

[Judaism | Definition, Origin, History, Beliefs, & Facts | Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/define/judaism)

[Jewish Beliefs - ReligionFacts](https://www.religionfacts.com/judaism/)

[Learn the Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith \(learnreligions.com\)](https://www.learnreligions.com/learn-the-thirteen-principles-of-the-jewish-faith/)