



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 the 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>

