

NAME: _____

RE TEACHER _____

Eduqas Religious Studies

Component 3 – Jewish Beliefs

BELIEF ABOUT THE NATURE OF G-D...

1. Jews believe that the name of **G-d** should never be uttered. This is because in the Torah once you can name something you have **dominion** over it. When Moses is in the divine presence of G-d (**the Shekhinah**) he asks for a name. The response from G-d is '**I am who am**'. This is written **YHWH**. Some Jews use **Adonai** meaning LORD.
2. Jews believe that G-d is the **Creator**. The Torah begins... '**When G-d began to create Heaven and Earth...**' (Gen 1) G-d is **omnipotent** (all powerful) **omniscient** (all knowing) and **omnipresent** (all present)... G-d **creates goodness AND evil...** '**I the LORD form light and create darkness**' (Isaiah). Both are necessary for **free will** to exist.
3. Jews believe that G-d is the **Sustainer** (he sustains everything in the universe). He gives us laws so we use our free will properly (**Lawgiver**) and holds us to account as the perfect balance between justice and mercy (**Judge**). There are **613 laws or mitzvot** in the Torah. These form the basis for the Jewish code of moral living (**Halakah**).

Orthodox Jews

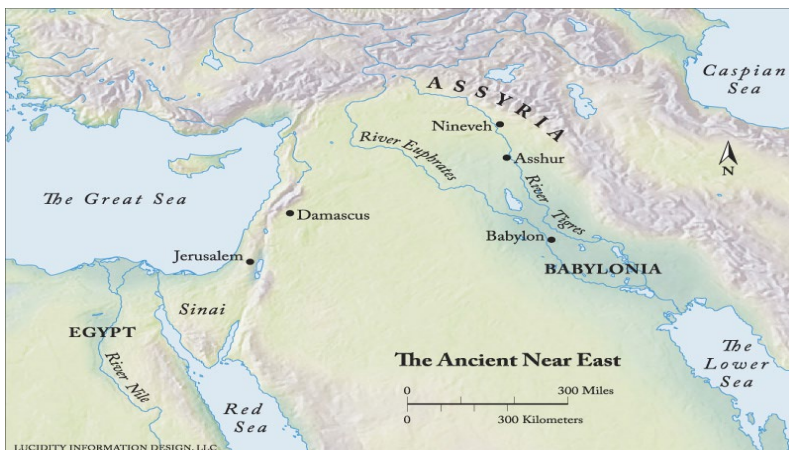
Many Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah should be read literally. As a result they believe that the **world was created in 6 days** and that the world is **6,000 years old**. The 613 mitzvot in the Torah must be obeyed as they are the words of the LORD.



Reform Jews

Reform Jews accept evolutionary theories and believe that the **Genesis accounts should not be read literally**. They believe that living in the **spirit of the law** is important but that not all of the 613 mitzvot are relevant today.

BELIEFS ABOUT COVENANT...



The Jewish people originally consisted of a small number of nomadic tribes roaming around the area of **Mesopotamia**. Many of these tribes had different beliefs in different gods. It was their shared experience of slavery in Egypt which united them. The **Ten Plagues of Egypt** and the **Exodus** (escape) are the most important events in Jewish History. Here they united under one leader (**Moses**) one set of laws (**Torah**) and one G-d (**YHWH**)



Abraham's Covenant

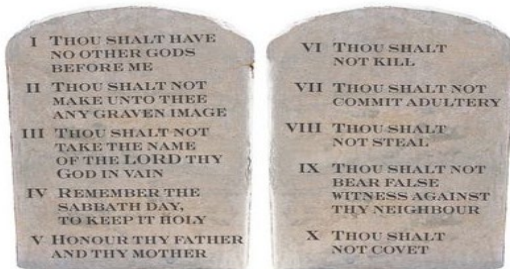
A covenant is an agreement made out of love between G-d and the Jewish people. **Abraham** is the first person to put his faith completely in G-d as he is prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. G-d stops Abraham from doing this and rewards him by making his name great... '**I will make you a great nation... Your descendants shall be as many as the stars in the sky... I will give to you a promised land**' (Genesis 15) Abraham agrees to walk in the ways of G-d and to '**be blameless**' (Genesis 17: 1). He seals the covenant through **circumcision**.

Following the escape from Egypt G-d leads Moses up a mountain. Here G-d gives Moses Ten Commandments which the people are to obey (**The Covenant at Sinai**). These Ten Commandments become the foundations for the mitzvot contained in the **Torah** (books of law). The Jews agree to live according to these commandments in return for becoming G-d's **chosen people**. Moses leads the Jews to the Promised Land Canaan but does not live to see it.



The Covenant at Sinai

THE MITZVOT...



The **first four** of the Ten Commandments help Jews to develop a **positive relationship with G-d**... To discern the **will of YHWH** and to use their free will effectively... The **last six** of the Ten Commandments help Jews to develop **positive relationships with their neighbours**... This is good for everybody in a community and leads to peace... Orthodox Jews obey all **613 mitzvot** whilst Reform Jews live in the Spirit of the mitzvot but do not take each one literally

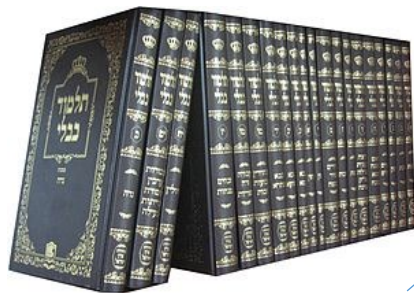
TeNaKh (TNK) – The Jewish Holy Book

Torah – The five books of 'Law' containing the **613 mitzvot**; the most important section of the TNK

Nevi'im – 'Prophets' speaking for G-d over the centuries, helping the Jewish people to turn back to YHWH

Ketuvim – 'Writings' are a collection of the Jewish peoples' most special memories, poems, songs and sayings

HOW TO READ THE TORAH...



The Talmud is a commentary written by Rabbis. It is made up of two parts...

The Mishnah

In 200 C.E. Rabbi Ha'Nasi decided to write down the **Oral Law**. This was the **spoken teaching** that had been passed down informing each generation how the Torah should be interpreted.

The Gemara

In 500 C.E. a number of 'discussions' were also included in the Talmud. These discussions were between Rabbis on the importance of the Mishnah.

ORTHODOX JEWS

- Orthodox Jews believe that the **Torah** is a gift from YHWH... It is the '**Light of the World**'... It should not be open to human interpretation... It is the **Word of G-d** and should be respected as such.
- Orthodox Jews will obey each of the mitzvot including preparations for ancient rituals and dietary requirements... The law should not and must not change with each new generation!

REFORM JEWS

- Many Reform Jews believe that they should live in the '**spirit of the mitzvot**' but they can achieve this simply by living by following the commandment '**love your fellow as yourself**' (**Leviticus 19: 18**)
- Reform Jews believe that they are doing the will of YHWH when they work for **1) justice 2) kindness and 3) healing in the world**. Many Jews choose to support **World Jewish Relief** in order to achieve this.
- Reform Jews believe that living a good life can be summarised in the teachings of the Prophet Micah...

"Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your G-d" (Micah 4: 3)

BELIEFS ABOUT THE MESSIAH...

4. The word messiah means '**anointed one**.' It was a name given to Jewish kings as they were chosen by G-d to lead His people. The first messiah was Saul. At first Saul was a good leader but was corrupted by power and became a bad king. Saul was stripped of his position and David was anointed as the new messiah.
5. The **Prophet Micah** and others speak of a new '**Messiah**' being anointed by G-d. This Messiah is destined to bring about an end to violence and establish a new **Messianic Age** i.e. an **everlasting kingdom of justice and peace**. The Messiah will be of the **line of David** and will **rebuild the Temple** in Jerusalem.
6. **Orthodox Jews** believe that in **every generation** there is a Jewish male who has the potential to become the Messiah. This male person will be in the **line of David** and will bring about the Messianic Age.
7. **Reform Jews** do not believe that the Messianic Prophecies should be taken literally. They believe that the temple being rebuilt is a metaphor. It represents the kingdom of G-d that exists in each one of us. We all need to work together as one to bring about the Messianic Age and establish a kingdom of peace.

"Nation shall no longer take up sword against Nation; they shall know war no more" (Micah 4: 3)

LIFE AFTER DEATH

8. Jews are often split in opinion on matters of life after death and judgement.
9. Some Jews believe in the existence of an afterlife whereas others do not. This is because scripture is not clear.
10. Some Jews believe in the existence of **Gan Eden** (heaven) and **Sheol** (a place of cleansing)... Some Orthodox Jews believe that the afterlife will be a **physical place** whilst many Reform Jews believe it will be **spiritual**.
11. Some Jews believe that we are all **judged immediately** when we die. This is because in **Ecclesiastes** it says '**the dust returns to the ground and the life breath returns to G-d**'.
12. Some Jews believe that we are all **judged together on 'The Last Day'**... This is because in the **Book of Daniel** it says '**many of those who sleep in the dust of the Earth will awake**'.
13. Many Jews agree that it is not for us to know what happens when we die and that we should focus on our lives here and now enjoying every day as a gift from G-d.
14. Many Jews believe that judgement takes place in our lifetimes at **Rosh Hashanah** and **Yom Kippur**.

SANCTITY OF LIFE

15. Jews believe that all life comes from G-d making all living things holy. In **Genesis 2** G-d **breathes life** in through Adam's nostrils. This makes **human life sacred** as humans are made in **G-d's image**.
16. All Jews are opposed to practices such as murder and euthanasia as these things take life... '**Do not profit by the blood of your fellow**' (**Leviticus 19: 16**)
17. There is disagreement as to whether Jews should keep a person alive once the time for natural death has passed. This makes the topics of life support machines and organ transplants very difficult.
18. **Pikuach Nefesh** is a Jewish obligation to save life even if this means breaking one or several of the mitzvot.
19. The Talmud gives examples where it is acceptable to break the mitzvot in saving a life. It says...

'He who destroys one soul of a human being, the Scripture considers him as if he should destroy a whole world, and him who saves one soul of Israel, the scripture considers him as if he should save a whole world'
(**Sanhedrin 4: 5**)



Yad Vashem

This is the Medal of the Righteous... Awarded to people outside of the Jewish Faith for great acts of courage in saving the lives of others... Many individuals received this award for risking their own lives attempting to help Jews escape their own countries during the holocaust.

Key Concepts



Covenant A promise or agreement between two parties. Covenants were made between God with Noah, Abraham and Moses.

Kosher Means 'fit' or 'proper'. Foods that are permitted to be eaten according to Leviticus Chapter 11. It is also used to refer to the purity of ritual objects such as Torah scrolls.

Messiah The anointed one who Jewish people believe will bring in a new era or age for humankind. This will include rebuilding the Temple and bringing in an age of universal peace.

Mitzvot The term has a mix of meanings. It is often used to refer to duties (such as the 613 in the Torah) and good deeds.

Shabbat Day of spiritual renewal and rest. Beginning at sunset on Friday and closing at nightfall on Saturday.

Shekinah The place where God's presence rests and can be felt.

Synagogue A house of assembly; building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.

Torah The five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Regarded as the holiest books of the Tenakh.

Core Questions



What is God like?

What do Jewish people believe about the Messiah?

Why are Abraham and Moses important to many Jewish people today?

Do Jewish people have free will?

Why is life so special?

What do Jewish people believe about the afterlife?

Which is more important: the home or the synagogue?

Is keeping kosher still important for Jewish people today?

Why does a Jewish burial happen as soon as possible after death?

What does Pesach celebrate?

Do all Jewish people celebrate Shabbat in the same way?