

5. Judaism: beliefs and teachings

The Almighty	The Shekhinah	The Messiah	The covenant at Sinai	The covenant with Abraham	The sanctity of life	Moral principles and the Mitzvot	Life after death	<i>Tenakh</i>	<i>Talmud</i>	<i>Pikuach Nefesh</i>	<i>Covenant</i>
The nature of God shown as one, creator, lawgiver and judge	The presence of God in the world	The anointed one – waiting for the arrival of the Messiah is a fundamental Jewish belief	Covenant with Moses which concerns Jewish law	God’s promise that Abraham’s descendants will be a great nation	Human life is sacred and therefore the most important concern for Jews	613 laws from the Torah which teach Jews how to live an obedient life	There is general agreement that death is not the end of life but different beliefs about what happens next	The Jewish Bible, consisting of the Torah, Nevi’im and Ketuvim	The ‘Oral Torah’ passed down from Moses	The principle that the most Jewish laws may be broken in order to preserve life	A binding agreement between God and his people

The Almighty – Natures of God		The Shekhinah		The Messiah		The covenant at Sinai	
Meaning: God’s nature can be broken down into four distinct areas: • God is One – Judaism is monotheistic, so believe in one, indivisible God. • God is the Creator – the first words of the Torah say God created heaven and earth, so everything comes from him • God is the Law-giver – God gave laws to humans to show them how to behave towards the earth and to each other • God is the Judge – God will decide if each person deserves reward or punishment	Importance: • God as One is important because it is written and said in the Shema which is in every Mezuzah and tefillin boxes. It also encourages unity in society. • God as the Creator is important because it shows that everything belongs to him and depends on him. • God as the Law-giver is important because the law is the basis of Jewish lives today • God as the Judge is important because he will show justice for keeping his laws	Meaning: • Rabbis use the word shekhinah for any form of human contact with God • It is used to describe God’s presence with Moses, both when receiving the 10 Commandments and as he went through the desert • God’s presence was kept in the tabernacle (tent) which was so holy no-one unclean could touch it • Some Reform Jews describe the shekhinah as a light linking God and the world together • Other Jews believe shekhinah brings followers into God’s presence	Importance: • However close Jews feel to God, he is so much greater than humans so he must always be respected • God’s presence in the temple made it a very holy place for Jews • Moses was surrounded by the shekhinah when receiving the 10 commandments meaning that they came directly from God • Because God is in the world Jews may come across it at any time, particularly in study, worship and prayer	Meaning: The Messianic age is when the Messiah will... • Rebuild the temple in Jerusalem • Unite all peoples of the world together and make them all aware of God • Bring in the Messianic Age of world peace Jews believe the Messiah will be... • A descendant of David • Human, not a divine being • A man very close to God There is no reference to the Messiah in the Torah, the teaching comes from the Nevi’im which are the books of prophecy in the Tenakh	Importance: • Jews pray for the coming of the Messiah to return those in exile, to reward the good and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem There are different beliefs about the Messiah: • Some Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah will come once the Mitzvot are followed fully • Some Reform Jews don’t believe in an individual Messiah, but that every Jew should try to bring about the Messianic Age	Meaning: • This covenant was when the Jews had been freed from slavery and were walking through the desert • It was written on two stone tablets and kept in the Ark of the covenant. • There were 613 laws (Mitzvot) given to Moses at Sinai, including the decalogue (the 10 commandments) Commandments included: • Worship one God • Avoid using images of God • Don’t take God’s name in vain (using it in swearing) • Don’t work on the Sabbath • Don’t steal, kill, commit adultery, lie or be jealous	Importance: • The 613 Mitzvot provide a way of life for Jews • Jews have a duty to keep the commandments in order to continue to be God’s chosen people • By keeping the commandments, Jews believe they can bring the whole world to worship God • There are differences in interpreting the commandments which is why there are divisions of Jewish people into Reform, Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox
The covenant with Abraham		The sanctity of life		Key moral principles and the Mitzvot		Life after death	
Meaning: • This covenant took place 1,000 years before Moses • Abraham was asked to leave his homeland and travel to a place God would show him (Canaan) • God promised to make a great nation from Abraham’s son and to give the land of Canaan to the Jews as an everlasting possession. • In return, Abraham all male descendants had to be circumcised and to worship the one God. • Some Reform Jews believe the covenant at Sinai is more important and don’t circumcise their male children.	Importance: • Most Jewish boys are circumcised at 8 days old • The covenant encourages Jews to believe that they have a right to live in the ancient Kingdom of Israel • The nation of Israel has been recognised by the UN since 1947, but has never been accepted by the Palestinians who were living there which has led to a great deal of conflict • Some Jews outside of Israel believe that only by following the Mitzvot and the coming of the Messiah will restore all Jews to the Promised Land rather than supporting the country of Israel itself.	Meaning: • Jews believe that life is a gift from God which makes it sacred (very holy) • God as the Creator gives life, only he should take it • Pikuach nefesh is the belief that most religious laws may be broken in order to save a life e.g. working on the Sabbath • If a person can be saved, a Jew is required to break religious law to save that person • The only laws which cannot be broken are murder, idolatry, incest and adultery. This would include putting other people’s lives in serious danger to save another	Importance: • Pikuach nefesh requires Jews to decide when the Mitzvot take priority • Some Jews believe abortion should never be permitted, unless the mother’s life is at risk • Orthodox Jews do not allow the use of condoms as the male seed is sacred, but the Jewish AIDS Trust promotes condoms to prevent HIV transmission • Orthodox Jews do not believe in organ donation as the body must be kept whole, but other Jews believe that pikuach nefesh would apply if an organ from a dead person can save another person’s life	Meaning: • The 613 Mitzvot were received by Moses on Mount Sinai • There were written briefly, but explained by the Oral Torah. • The moral principles are healing the world, justice and kindness • Further explanation of the Mishneh from rabbis were written down in the Talmud • Jews have the freedom to follow the commands or not because they have free will – this will be what they are judged on	Importance: • Understanding and keeping the Mitzvot means Jews develop a good relationship with God and other people • Some Jewish laws such as food laws (Kosher) are seen as a test of faith • The Mitzvot are seen as very important for Orthodox Jews as they are God’s commands given to Moses and cover every aspect of life. Keeping them develops a deep connection with God • Liberal Jews don’t believe the laws came directly from God so do not feel the need to obey them all.	Meaning: • Jewish scripture says that righteous people will reunite with loved ones after death, God will end the world, raise the dead and create a new world. Different rabbis believe that: • judgement will be based purely on behaviour • this will apply to non-Jews as well as Jews • judgement is based on both belief and behaviour • it is better to concentrate on this life rather than the next as it is unclear	Importance: • Some Jews believe that the totally righteous go to Gan Eden (heaven) and ordinary people go to a place of punishment (Gehinnom) • Some believe Gehinnom is where people are purified before entering Gan Eden, some that it is eternal punishment. • Orthodox Jews believe that as life after death is taught in the Torah it must be believed. • Judgement at death makes sense of this life if the good are rewarded and evil are punished

6. Judaism: practices

Public acts of worship	The Tenakh and Talmud	Private prayer	The Shema and the Amidah	Ritual and ceremony	Shabbat	Festivals	Features of the synagogue	<i>Kosher</i>	<i>Kiddush</i>	<i>Circumcision</i>	<i>Tefillin</i>
Collective worship which takes places in a synagogue	Holy scriptures which contain the law and teachings of the Jewish faith	Types of prayers said in the home as a family or as an individual	Particular prayers which are very important for Jews	The rituals concerning birth, circumcision, coming of age, marriage and death	The weekly Jewish holy day celebrated in the home and the synagogue	Feast days in the Jewish year including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot	The nature and design of a Jewish synagogue	Something which is permitted e.g. certain types of food	Prayer of sanctification (to make something holy)	The removal of the foreskin. For Jews this is done as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant	Small boxes worn on the head and arm containing scripture passages

Public acts of worship		The Tenakh and Talmud		Private prayer		The Shema and the Amidah	
Meaning: - Public worship gives a Jewish person a sense of belonging to a community - Some prayers can only be said in a congregation (a group of worshipers) - Jews believe worshipping as a group is better than as an individual and gives structure to religious life - Weekly worship services take place on Shabbat and special holy days (see festivals section) - In Orthodox worship, prayers are said in Hebrew with men and women sat separately whereas Liberal Jews have mixed seating with prayers said in English	Importance: Community: - Jews believe to worship God with all your heart you need to be with other Jewish people as a community - Worshipping as a community in the synagogue allows Jews to share great festivals and family celebrations Individual: - It gives a sense of belonging - It gives the opportunity to think about life - The sermons from the rabbi may help Jews discover more about their own lives	Meaning: The Tenakh is the Jewish Bible which contains the... Torah: contains the 613 Mitzvot and Jewish history from creation to the death of Moses Nevi'im: contains books on Jewish history as well as books of the prophets Ketuvim: contains a mixture of history, poetry, philosophy and prophecy. The Talmud is the explanation of the Mitzvot: - The Torah and Oral Torah together make the halakhah, which was written as the Mishneh. - Discussions from this were written in the Talmud	Importance: The Tenakh is important because: - Scripture is an essential part of worship in the synagogue and at festivals - Studying it improves a Jewish person's relationship with God The Talmud is important because: - It explains the meaning of the 613 Mitzvot and how it should be applied in life An example of the Mitzvot are food laws which say certain foods cannot be eaten. This provides a sense of identity for Orthodox Jews, but Reform Jews do not always follow them.	Meaning: - Prayer is communication with God which can be formal (a set prayer) or informal (spontaneous) - Formal prayers are written in the Siddur (prayer book) Prayer takes place at home: - In the morning / at night - The Shema is contained in a small box on each doorpost (a mezuzah) - Prayer takes place before and after meals - Jews should pray formally three times a day: - Morning (shacharit), afternoon (minchah) and evening (arvit) - Each prayer contains the Shema and Amidah	Importance: - Orthodox prayers would be said in Hebrew and men would wear the tallit and tefillin. - Reform Jews would pray in English and wearing the tallit and tefillin is optional. Jews believe the purpose of prayer is to: - Serve God with their heart - Take the opportunity to talk to God knowing he will listen and respond - Prayers stop selfishness - Formal prayers give a sense of community - Informal prayers build your own relationship with God	Meaning: The Shema starts with “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This fundamental prayer emphasises: - The oneness of God - The need to love God - The need to follow the Mitzvot and pass them on - The covenant - The need for mezuzah, tefillin and tallit The Amidah - second most important prayer known as the standing prayer - It contains 19 blessings which praise God, asks for blessings and peace, and ends with giving thanks - It is said facing Jerusalem	Importance: The Shema is important because: - It expresses faith and trust in God - It expresses the belief in one God - It is said three times every day - Jews touch the Mezuzah every time they enter a room to remind themselves of the Shema The Amidah is important because: - It fulfils the requirements set out by the great rabbis - It asks for God to help with both spiritual needs (e.g. forgiveness) and physical needs (e.g. food)
Ritual and ceremony (Rites of Passage)		Shabbat		Festivals		Features of the synagogue	
Meaning: Birth ceremonies: - Brit Milah: boys being circumcised at 8 days old - Brit Bat: welcoming a girl into the Jewish community Coming of age: - Bar Mitzvah: a boy of 13 becoming a fully responsible male adult - Bat Mitzvah: a girl of 12 becoming a fully responsible female adult Marriage: - There is a commandment that all Jews should marry and have children Death and mourning: - Special prayers are said and actions taken at the end of life - There is a prolonged period of mourning	Importance: Birth ceremonies: - Bringing a child into the community means they will be supported in their new life in the Jewish faith Coming of age: - These ceremonies give young Jewish people the chance to live responsibly and continue the practice of their Jewish faith Marriage: - Marriage brings two people together in the Jewish faith and provides the opportunity for raising a family Death and mourning: - Whilst this is a time of grief the rituals bring comfort and the support of the Jewish community	Meaning: - Shabbat literally means to cease from work and remembers God resting on the Seventh day (Saturday) - It takes place between the sunsets on Friday and Saturday. - Orthodox Jews have 39 categories of work which must be avoided, whereas Liberal Jews have a more relaxed view - It begins with the woman of the house lighting a candle to welcome Shabbat into the home - The main service of the week takes place in the synagogue with a variety of rituals and prayers - More celebrations then take place in the home	Importance: - Observing Shabbat is one of the 10 Commandments - It gives Jews a chance to rest and focus on faith - It provides the chance to socialise with other Jewish people outside of the pressure of work - It is the oldest Jewish festival so links modern Jews with their ancestors - It binds the community together - The Kiddush prayer sanctifies the wine to symbolise the sweetness of the day - The plaited loaves of bread (challot) remind Jews of the bread (manna) God provided for them in the desert	Meaning: Rosh Hashanah: Jewish new year giving Jews a chance to think about their sins and relationships Yom Kippur: A period of fasting 10 days after Rosh Hashanah where Jews reflect on their sins Pesach (Passover): Remembering when the Jews freedom from slavery by God through Moses; celebrated with the Seder meal	Importance: Rosh Hashanah: Jews can acknowledge their faults and promise good behaviour in the new year Yom Kippur: It releases Jews from guilt and encourages discipline Pesach: There are many rituals linked with Pesach, particular the meal where each ingredient represents the story of the Exodus	Meaning: - All synagogues display a Star of David or a menorah (seven-branched candlestick) and will face Jerusalem where the Temple stood. Some standard features of synagogues are: - A sink at the entrance for spiritual cleansing Aron Hakodesh – the Holy Ark where the Torah scrolls are kept - A yad – a pointer for reading so the Torah won't be touched - A bimah – a raised platform for reading the Torah - A symbol and / or a real menorah - The 10 commandments	Importance: - Most synagogues contain classrooms for learning preparation for ceremonies. Orthodox synagogues: - Men and women sit separately so as not to distract one another - The rabbi and readers will always be male - No music will be played as that is considered work - Prayers mostly in Hebrew Reform synagogues: - Men and women sit together - The rabbi and readers may be female - Organ or piano music may be used in worship - Prayers mostly in English