

12 Judaism

The People of the Covenant

Judaism is not only the adherence to particular doctrines and observances, but primarily living in the spiritual order of the Jewish people, the living *in* the Jews of the past and *with* the Jews of the present. . . . It is not a doctrine, an idea, a faith, but the covenant between God and the people. (Heschel, *Man's Quest for God*, page 45)

The religion Judaism can be summarized in several ways. Abraham Joshua Heschel, a renowned Jewish holy man of the twentieth century, refers to Judaism as “the covenant between God and the people.” Heschel emphasizes the role of the Jewish people, both past and present.

The **Covenant** is an agreement established long ago between God and the ancient Israelites, first through Abraham and later through Moses. God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, promising that if the Israelites would keep the Covenant by obeying the Law (or Torah), they would be God’s “treasured possession,” and “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6, Tanakh).

Because of the Covenant, the Jews are understood to be God's Chosen People, a status that carries serious responsibilities. Moreover, they are forever challenged to live as befits a "holy nation," or a good and righteous people. The Covenant is between God and the people; thus Judaism places great emphasis on group identity. In modern times this emphasis has given rise to new challenges, for not all Jews are adherents of the religion Judaism. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between "religious" (or "observant") Jews, and "cultural" (or "nonobservant") Jews.

Heschel remarks that Judaism is "the living *in* the Jews of the past and *with* the Jews of the present." These notions refer to two related ways of summarizing Judaism. First, Judaism

is the interpretation of the history of the Jewish people, "the Jews of the past." Second, Judaism is the sanctification of life, the means through which Jews live with "the Jews of the present." Behind each of these summary statements are Judaism's central teachings on God and on the divine revelation.

Judaism's Central Teachings: On God and Torah

God's revelation of the divine will to the Chosen People is recorded in the Hebrew Bible and in writings of rabbis from the first centuries after the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70). This revelation, called Torah (toh'rah), is understood through the framework of Jewish teachings regarding God.

Master of the Universe: Judaism's God

Observant Jews venerate their God so deeply and constantly that they avoid pronouncing the divine name—considering it too holy to be spoken by human beings. The name is written, however, and appears in the Hebrew equivalents of the letters *YHWH*. (Hebrew had no vowels.) This name is pronounced (though not by observant Jews) as *Yahweh* (yah'way). When observant Jews come across the name while reading the Bible, they say "the Lord" instead of pronouncing the actual name. Often God is referred to by other phrases, too, the most common being "Master of the Universe."

God has a personal name, and God is thought to be a personal being, intimately involved in the welfare of humans and the rest of the created world. But God is also transcendent of creation, and is infinitely powerful, all-knowing, and beyond the limits of space and time. And God is believed to be the one and only God. Judaism's most basic theological statement, called the *Shema* (shuh-mah';



God promised Moses that if the Israelites kept the Covenant by obeying the Law, they would be God's "treasured possession" (Exodus 19:5).

Hebrew for “hear”), declares the uniqueness of God: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (Deuteronomy 6:4, Tanakh). The Shema is recited at least twice daily, in morning and evening prayers.

This basic declaration of monotheism may sound obvious or commonplace today. But when it was first formulated, Israel’s neighbors were all polytheists, and the Shema was a radical statement. Monotheism itself was a radical religious development, marking one of Judaism’s major contributions to Western civilization.

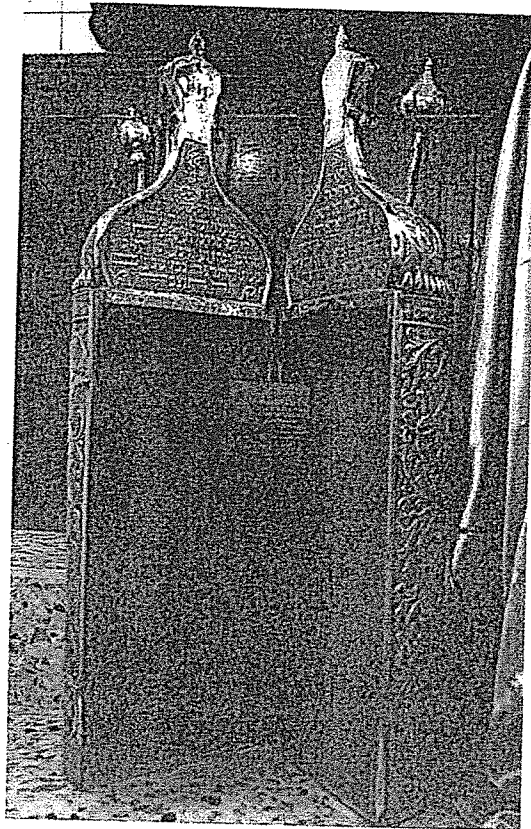
Torah: Revelation of God’s Will

Torah is among the most important terms in Judaism. It literally means “instruction” and refers to the will of God as it is revealed to humankind. It is also loosely translated as “law”; on a practical level, the revelation of God’s will sets forth the Law, which guides proper human conduct. Finally, in a more specific—and more common—usage, *Torah* refers to the first five books of the Bible, which are traditionally believed to have been revealed directly by God to Moses. The five books of the Torah are the primary statement of the religious laws of Judaism.

In its more general sense, as revelation, Torah is presented in several ways, each one the extension of another. With God in the center, the divine will is revealed outward in a series of concentric circles, like the rings of a tree trunk. The first ring consists of the “written Torah,” the word of God contained in the Hebrew Bible.

The Written Torah: The Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible contains three major parts: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. In Hebrew the words *Torah*, *Prophets*, and *Writings* begin with the letters *T*, *N*, and *K*, respectively. The Bible itself is sometimes referred to as the **Tanakh** (tah-nakh; from *T-N-K*).



Each synagogue has an ark, which contains a scroll of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.

The contents of the Hebrew Bible are also found in the Christian Old Testament, but the books are named and ordered somewhat differently. Of course, for Judaism the Tanakh is in no sense an “Old Testament.” Nothing new has ever superseded it, and it remains the vital foundation of Jewish understanding.

The Torah. The Torah contains the first five books of the Bible. It is also called by the name *Pentateuch*, a Greek term meaning “five books.” The Torah holds a position of prominence that sets it apart from the rest of the Tanakh. According to tradition, God revealed its contents once and for all time at Mount Sinai to Moses, who is regarded as the Torah’s author. The Torah, the Law, stands forever as Judaism’s central code of holiness. It is thought to contain 613 specific laws, the most famous being the Ten Commandments, which are set forth in Exodus, chapter 20. Every synagogue (building for Jewish worship) contains a scroll

A The term *Torah* has three meanings: “God’s revelation (instruction),” “the Law,” and the “first five books of the Bible.” One of the books of the Torah is Leviticus: Read chapter 19 of Leviticus. List several of the specific laws given. Then discuss how those laws of the Torah might also convey God’s revelation.

of the entire Torah, kept in a vessel called an ark.

The Prophets. The Prophets comprises books that include both historical accounts of ancient Israel and proclamations of the will of God spoken by those called to serve as God's mouthpieces. The Greek term *prophet* literally means "one who speaks for."

The Hebrew prophets who spoke for God are among the world's most striking religious figures. With charisma and courage, they attempted to keep Israel on its religious course through times of severe difficulty.

The prophet is called to speak for God, a role that is illustrated clearly at the beginning of the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was one of the most important prophets.

The word of the Lord came to me:

Before I created you in the womb,

I selected you;

Before you were born, I consecrated you;

I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations.

(Jeremiah 1:4-5, Tanakh)

Jeremiah protests, insisting that he, a mere boy, is not capable of speaking for God. But God assures Jeremiah that he will succeed, promising to be with him. Then comes the central moment:

The LORD put out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: Herewith I put My words into your mouth. (Jeremiah 1:9, Tanakh)

The Writings. The books that constitute the Writings are highly diverse in both content and literary form. With the poetry of the Psalms, the wisdom literature of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the short stories of Esther and Ruth, and the historical accounts of the Chronicles, just to name some examples, the Writings contribute much to the overall rich-

ness of the Bible. For the most part, the Writings were composed later than the rest of the Tanakh.

Mishnah and Talmud: Teachings of the Rabbis

The Bible, or written Torah, is complemented by the vast and ingenious wealth of religious teachings of the "oral Torah." This is the material taught and transmitted by Judaism's great rabbis of antiquity. Then as now, a **rabbi** (ra'bi) was a teacher of Torah or leader of Jewish worship. The teachings of the early rabbis were eventually written down, most notably in the Mishnah and later in the Talmud, among other texts.

The written revelation of God's will would always remain the foundational teaching of Judaism, but the varying circumstances of life demanded that the religious laws be elaborated on. The written Torah did not always say enough; also, it could not directly address the continually changing situations of the Jews in a world that was always in a state of flux. The oral Torah continues the task begun by the written Torah.

Moving outward from the Bible, the next ring of interpretation is the **Mishnah** (meeshnah'). It was written down in about A.D. 200, but it contains teachings that were formulated and transmitted orally by the rabbis of the preceding four centuries. Soon after it was written, the Mishnah came to be regarded as a sacred text, like the Bible. It remains the starting point for rabbinic study of the oral Torah.

The **Talmud** (tahl-mood') forms the next ring of interpretation. A great modern scholar of Judaism states, "If the Bible is the cornerstone of Judaism, then the Talmud is the central pillar, soaring up from the foundations and supporting the entire spiritual and intellectual edifice" (Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, page 3).

The Talmud is based directly on the Mishnah. Small portions of the Mishnah are cited, followed by intricate commentary, usually

B
Read at least the entire first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah. Explain how the prophet Jeremiah is one who speaks for God. Also describe the sorts of messages Jeremiah delivers.

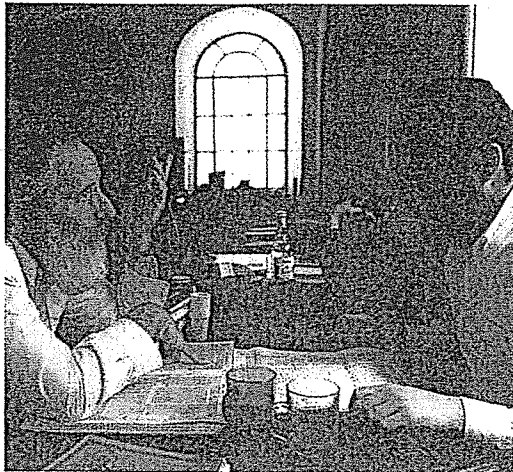
C
Choose a discipline or subject area that interests you, such as music, science, mathematics, or literature. Then choose a specific activity from that discipline and describe the concentric rings of creation and interpretation that surround it. For example, a certain scientific theory is formulated by one person, studied and commented on by another, revised by yet another, applied in a practical way by someone else, and so on. Be specific.

page after page of it. The rabbis support their arguments by citing biblical passages. The Talmud presents a grand scheme of interpretation of God's will, blending together the oral and written forms of Torah. It is a massive work, spanning thousands of pages. Amazing though it may seem, great rabbis through the centuries are thought to have committed the entire Talmud to memory.

The Talmud itself continued to be interpreted for centuries. The most important commentary, by rabbis who lived as late as the Middle Ages, is included in modern editions. And in a real sense, the Talmud is still being interpreted; the concentric rings of the tree trunk are still growing outward. Modern Jews, like those of ancient times, strive for deeper understanding of God's will. This process of interpretation is itself a meaningful act of worship, occupying a significant place in the ongoing sanctification of life.

The History of the Chosen People: Blessings and Tribulations

Earlier we noted that Judaism can be summarized as the interpretation of the history of the Jewish people. Who are the Jewish people, and why is their history of such vital importance?



Scholars in a yeshivah (school) discuss the meanings of passages from the Talmud.

Contents of the Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh

The Torah, or Law

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

The Prophets

Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; and the twelve minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The Writings

Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles

Originally the Jews were the descendants of the ancient Israelites (who are also known as Hebrews). Around the time of the Exile and following it, they became known as Jews, and their religion became known as Judaism, because their country was Judah. Conversion to Judaism was quite common in ancient times, and continues in the present day. No single Jewish "race" of genetically related people exists. It is more accurate to think of the Jews as an ethnic group that shares a common history and religion (though recently, as we have noted, some Jews do not practice Judaism).

History has great significance for Judaism because its adherents believe that God is providential, or directly involved in guiding and caring for creation. The Chosen People are convinced that God knows what is happening and provides for them. They therefore consider history to be a record of God's will as manifested in the events of the world.

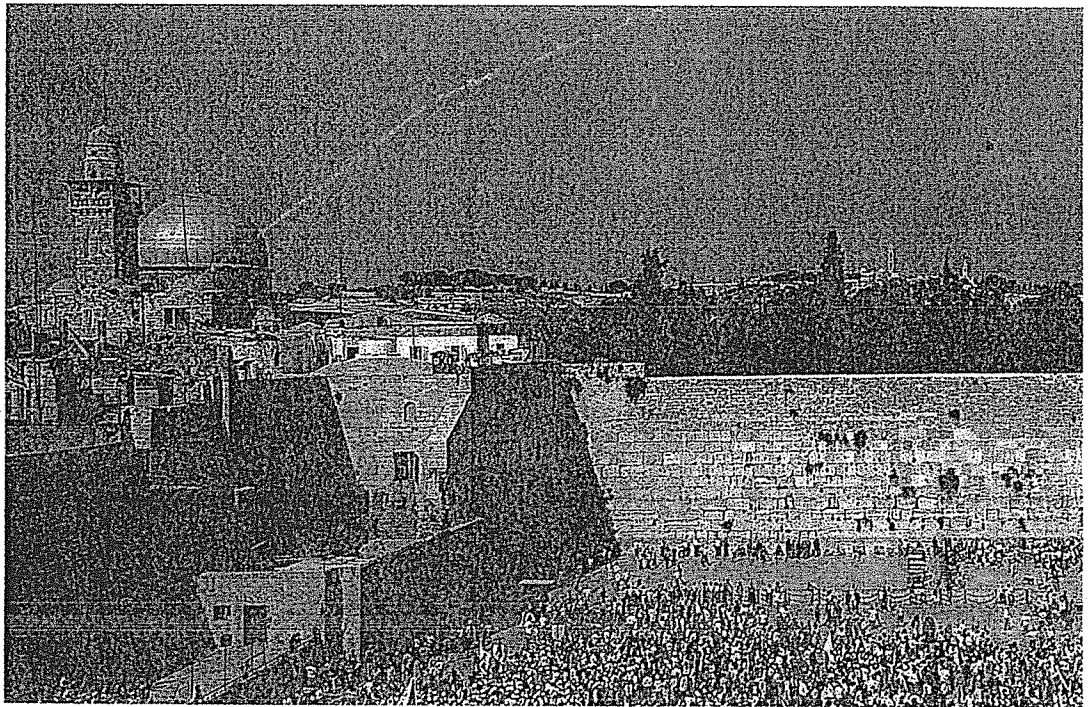
This explains why Judaism itself can be thought of as the interpretation of Jewish history. God is loving, all-knowing, all-powerful, and providential. The Jews are the Chosen

People of God. As the Chosen People, the Jews must live up to their end of the Covenant. History provides a means of measuring how adequately they have done that. To the extent that they honor the Covenant, God will reward them as a "treasured possession" (Exodus 19:6). Through the centuries the difficulties encountered by the Jews have challenged them to question over and over again just how adequately they have upheld their covenantal responsibilities.

Classical Judaism

In A.D. 66 Jews in Palestine initiated the Jewish War to overcome their Roman rulers. Roman armies defeated them and destroyed the Second Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70. This was both an unprecedented catastrophe and a new opportunity for Judaism. The Pharisees, who focused on the study of Torah rather than on the rituals observed at the Temple, emerged from this event with their religious ways largely intact. With the impetus provided by Pharisaic Judaism, and with the compilation of the Mishnah and the Talmud over the next few

Young people gather for a celebration at Jerusalem's Western Wall.



centuries, classical Judaism was established. It has remained the standard for Jews down to modern times.

The classical period stretched from the end of the first century A.D. through the seventh century, when Muslim forces conquered Palestine and the surrounding area. The Jews of the classical period were forced to live under the threat of Roman political oppression, which sometimes had violent consequences. Several decades after the Jewish War and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Jews waged a second large-scale revolt against the Romans. This ended in A.D. 135, when the victorious Romans leveled the city of Jerusalem and issued a decree forbidding Jews to inhabit the region of Palestine. The Jews were now technically in exile from their homeland.

However, neither exile nor oppression was new to the Jewish people. Through the centuries their ancestors had endured persecution by foreign rulers: Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. In the classical period and beyond, Jews encountered new threats: In the fourth century, Christianity arose to become the official religion of the Roman Empire. A few centuries later, many Jews found themselves living under Muslim rule.

The Jews exiled in the classical period could look to those exiled in an earlier period for a precedent. In 587 B.C. some of their ancestors had been forced out of their homeland and into Babylon; in 538 B.C. the ancestors had been allowed to return to their homeland. The Babylonian Exile had lasting significance, instilling among all Jews hope for a return from exile to a situation of peace and prosperity. It also taught the Jews how to survive without returning home. Following the Exile many remained in Babylon or elsewhere in Persia, and in Egypt. For the first time, there were Jews living away from their homeland who maintained their religious identity. This situation, known as the **Diaspora** (di-as'puh-ruh) or

Dispersion, continued throughout Jewish history. Indeed a majority of Jews have lived in the Diaspora, from the classical period to the present.

Medieval Judaism

The medieval period of Judaism spans from the eighth century to the middle of the eighteenth century. Scattered throughout a large Diaspora, Jews lived under various political and social conditions. In some places Jewish culture thrived. Medieval Spain, for example, produced both the philosophy of Maimonides (mi-mah'nuh-deez) and the mystical teachings of the Zohar.

Jewish Life in the Medieval Period

For the most part, Jews lived under the rule of Muslims (in Africa, Spain, and the Near East) and Christians (in most of Europe). Under Muslim rule, Jews were generally free to practice their own religion and to conduct their own courts of law, and they were assured security of life and property. There were occasional exceptions to those principles, and Jews were required to pay certain taxes to the Muslim rulers. But overall, the Jewish people fared quite well and established a large middle class.

Conditions under Christian rulers tended to vary considerably over the centuries. In the early centuries of the medieval period, European Jews emerged as successful moneylenders. (Church laws strongly discouraged Christians from participating in this profession.) This helped Europe's changing economy, and some Christians respected and appreciated the Jews with whom they had dealings. But the economic success of the Jews led to resentment among many Christians. Christians also resented the Jews for being "sons of the crucifiers" who intentionally rejected Christ.

Resentment led to open and violent persecution. Beginning in the twelfth century, Jews were commonly the victims of blood libels,

which were false accusations that they had ritually murdered Christian children. Large-scale expulsions of Jews occurred in France, England, and Spain (which had come under Christian rule by the fifteenth century). Jews were also blamed for causing the Black Death, the devastating bubonic plague that killed about one-third of Europe's population in the mid-fourteenth century. For this, entire Jewish populations were massacred, mostly by wandering bands of Christians. Meanwhile the Spanish Inquisition also targeted Jews, putting many to death.

To escape persecution, many Jews migrated eastward, especially to Poland, which welcomed them. By the mid-seventeenth century, Poland had the largest population of Jews (about 150,000) of any country in the Diaspora. Here Jews enjoyed a large degree of governmental autonomy, and lived in relative safety and prosperity. Polish rabbis made remarkable intellectual achievements. But even here the threat of persecution loomed. In 1648 a Cossack rebellion against Poland resulted in the brutal massacre of about one-fourth of its Jewish population.

Clearly, many Jews endured great tribulation during the medieval period. But some lived in havens of relative peace and prosperity. Muslim Spain, home of the Jewish philosopher Maimonides and of the origins of Jewish mysticism, was one such refuge.

Jewish Philosophy: Maimonides

Moses Maimonides (1135 to 1204) represents a great number of Jewish philosophers, teachers, and scriptural masters who contributed to the ongoing process of interpreting Torah.

Maimonides applied the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle to the biblical tradition, fashioning a new and much debated Jewish theology. His most famous book, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, has stood through the ages as an influential and challenging philosophical work.

In addition, Maimonides contributed Judaism's most famous statement of beliefs, thirteen principles that set forth the backbone of Jewish theology:

1. The belief in God's existence.
2. The belief in His unity.
3. The belief in His incorporeality.
4. The belief in His timelessness.
5. The belief that He is approachable through prayer.
6. The belief in prophecy.
7. The belief in the superiority of Moses to all other prophets.
8. The belief in the revelation of the Law, and that the Law as contained in the Pentateuch is that revealed by Moses.
9. The belief in the immutability of the Law.
10. The belief in Divine providence.
11. The belief in Divine justice.
12. The belief in the coming of the Messiah.
13. The belief in the resurrection and human immortality.

(The Ways of Religion, pages 261–262)



D Consider the reasons behind the persecution of medieval Jews. In general, why, do you think, did certain groups of people harass other groups? Try to name at least one example in today's world of a group persecuting another group. What seem to be the reasons behind this harassment?

Moses Maimonides applied the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle to the biblical tradition, fashioning a new Jewish theology.

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Might the philosophy of Maimonides and the mysticism of the Kabbalah be used as two complementary approaches to God? Describe how the two approaches could work together.

The Kabbalah: Jewish Mysticism

Whereas Jewish philosophy emphasizes reason, Jewish mysticism, or **Kabbalah** (kab'uh-luh), teaches that God can best be known with the heart, through love. The mystics acknowledge the ultimate transcendence of God, but stress the immanence of God: they say that God can be found by looking inward.

The most famous text of Jewish mysticism is the *Zohar*, probably written in thirteenth-century Spain by Moses de Leon. The *Zohar* incorporates rich symbolism based on numbers and esoteric language, and teaches that Torah can be interpreted on different levels, each revealing hidden meanings that bring one closer to God. Thus, though God is regarded as the Infinite, transcending the fallen world of humanity, the mystic can come to know God through love and understanding of the hidden truth.

Though in many ways it is an alternative to traditional Judaism, the Kabbalah does not abandon the basic forms of Jewish practice.



A Hasidic teenager in New York City.

Kabbalists observe the commandments of the Torah, and are renowned for their highly ethical behavior.

Modern Judaism

Great changes in European civilization began to occur in the eighteenth century. The period known as the Enlightenment, or Age of Reason, gave rise to new social theories asserting the equality of all. Monarchies began to be replaced by governments that were based on rule by the people.

These changes greatly affected religions too, including Judaism. The wide variety of reactions to the new challenges of this period gave rise to different forms of modern Judaism.

Hasidism

Hasidism (from *hasid* [ha'seed], meaning "pious") arose in the eighteenth century in eastern Europe. It draws from some of the mystical teachings of the Kabbalist tradition, holding that God is immanent and known first and foremost with the heart. Hasidism emphasizes personal relationships with God and the community, rather than study of the Torah and strict observance of its commandments.

The center of each Hasidic community is the leadership of the *zaddik* (tsah'dik), a holy man who is believed to have an especially close relationship with God. Through the teachings and mere presence of the *zaddik*, Hasidic Jews are able to move closer to God. Large Hasidic communities still exist today in North America and elsewhere.

Zionism

Zionism originally referred to a movement arising in the late nineteenth century that was committed to the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland (*Zion* is a biblical name for Jerusalem). Now that the modern nation of Israel, established in 1948, exists, *Zionism* refers generally to the support of Israel.

As we have seen, throughout the centuries Jews faced persecution, a phenomenon known as **anti-Semitism**. Despite the new ideals of social equality that arose with the Enlightenment, some Jews were convinced that the only way to ensure their safety was to have their own nation. Events of anti-Semitism in the twentieth century, most tragically the Holocaust, confirmed the Zionist conviction regarding the need for a Jewish state.

The Holocaust

Of all the tribulations suffered by the Chosen People through the centuries, the Holocaust is surely the most horrific. Sometimes called by the name *Shoah* (Hebrew for “mass destruction”), the **Holocaust** refers to the persecution of Jews by German Nazis from 1933 to 1945. Culminating in the use of highly efficient extermination camps, the Holocaust resulted in the murder of an estimated six million Jews.

The tragic consequences of this immense loss of life included religious challenges for Judaism. Until this event Jews could generally make sense of their difficult history. There had been trials, of course. But some reasoned that perhaps they were the result of the Jews’ own failure to live up to the Covenant. Or perhaps God would right the wrongs and bring justice to the Jews, by sending the Messiah—as had been expected since Roman times. But in the face of the Holocaust, in which one-third of the Jewish people were senselessly murdered, such answers no longer make sense to many Jews. How could God have allowed such a horrible thing to happen?

Jews have responded to these challenges in a variety of ways. Some maintain that they deserved even this as punishment for their sins—most specifically, the sin of abandoning the ways of traditional Judaism. Others contend that the Holocaust can only mean that God

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In “The Precious Prayer,” the rabbi learns that “while humans see what is before their eyes, God looks into the heart.” Compare this insight about prayer with that offered by Jesus in Matthew 6:5–6.

“The Precious Prayer”

The true character of Hasidism is perhaps best exposed through its many stories. This one, “The Precious Prayer,” expresses the Hasidic emphasis on knowing God with the heart, through which God, in turn, knows human beings.

One Yom Kippur long ago, a rabbi was praying in the synagogue. An angel whispered in his ear about a man whose prayers had reached the highest heavens. The angel told the rabbi the man’s name and hometown, and the rabbi went to find him.

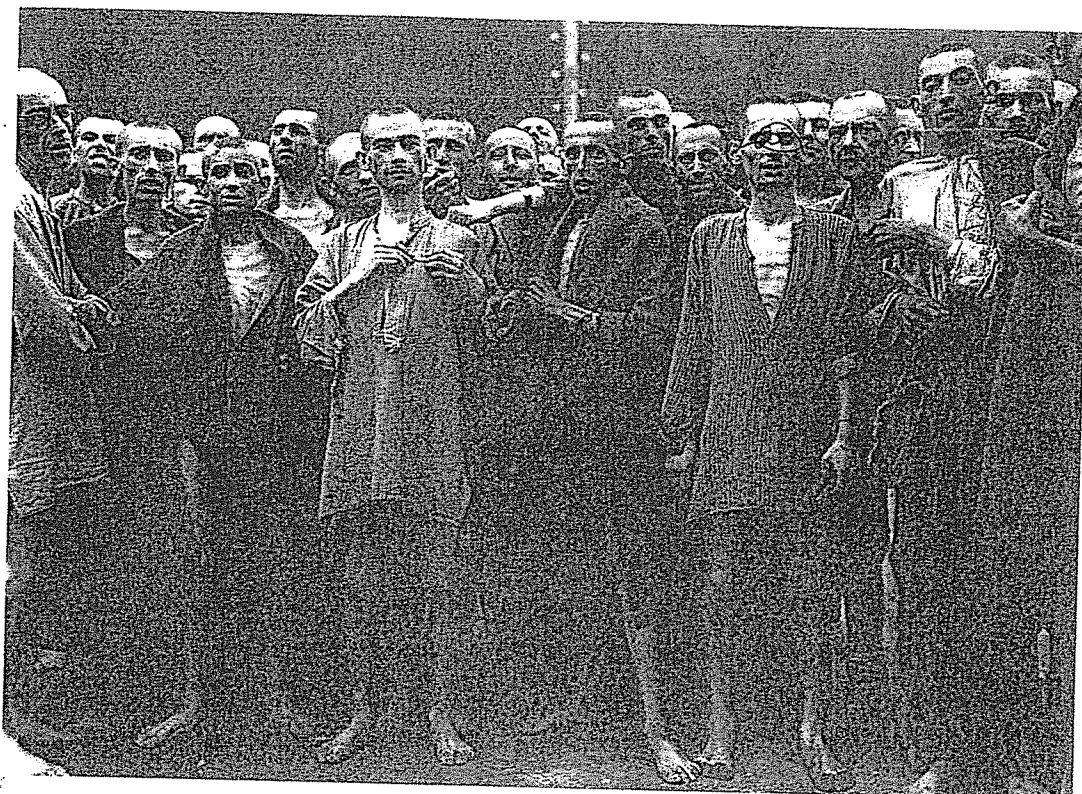
When the rabbi reached that town, he asked for the man whose name the angel had given him. The only man by that name was a poor farmer. The rabbi found the farm, and the man invited him to enter the little hut in which he lived. Getting right down to business, the rabbi asked the farmer how he prayed. “But sir,” replied the farmer, “I am afraid I cannot

pray. For I cannot read. All I know are the first nine letters of the alphabet.”

The rabbi was stunned. Could the angel have been wrong? So he asked, “What did you do on Yom Kippur?” The farmer said: “I went to the synagogue. I saw how intently everyone was praying, and my heart broke. So I began to recite the letters I know of the alphabet. And I said in my heart: ‘Dear God, take these letters and form them into prayers for me, that will rise up like the scent of honeysuckle. For that is the most beautiful scent I know.’ And I said that with all my strength, over and over.”

When the rabbi heard this, he knew that God had sent him here to learn this: While humans see what is before their eyes, God looks into the heart. And that is why the prayers of the simple farmer were so precious. (Adapted from Schwartz, *Gabriel’s Palace*, pages 86–87)

Starving Jewish concentration camp prisoners were liberated at the end of World War II in Austria. The Holocaust, or Shoah, challenged Jews to make sense of the killing of a third of their people.



G Review the opening section of this chapter, beginning with the passage from Abraham Joshua Heschel. What challenges do you think the Holocaust presents to this understanding of Judaism?

has broken the Covenant. Another response, and a prominent one, is Zionism, the ongoing support of the State of Israel.

The State of Israel

With the rise of the Zionist movement at the end of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of Jews immigrated to Palestine. The Hebrew language was restored; the land was nurtured into fields fit for productive agriculture; and farming communities and cities were built. In 1948, in the wake of the Holocaust and with the sympathetic support of most of the world, Israel was granted statehood. Its political and cultural achievements since that time continue to be a source of pride for Jews. For the first time in over two millennia, the Jews have a national homeland.

Today the State of Israel provides a great deal of unity for Judaism. Most Jews, whether Israelis or not (fewer than half of the world's Jews live in Israel), and whether religiously observant or not, regard Israel as their earthly

center and common cause. Much financial and political support has been provided to the state, especially by North American Jews.

Along with this unity over the State of Israel, divisive problems persist. The Palestinians also call this land their home. For both Judaism and Islam, this land is charged with sacred significance. Jews and Palestinians alike put forth claims of ownership that are based on deeply held religious convictions. Ever since the establishment of the State of Israel, wars and other violent incidents have periodically plagued the area. And so, difficult questions need to be answered. Should the land be shared through the creation of a Palestinian state? And if so, how should control of the region be apportioned?

Deep divisions also exist between secular and religious Israeli Jews. The task of reconciling secular ideals such as Western democracy with the ways of traditional Judaism poses a great challenge to Israel.

Modern Institutional Divisions

The same challenges of the modern period that prompted the development of branches of Judaism, such as Hasidism and Zionism, have also led to divisions within traditional Judaism. These divisions are most relevant in North America, where the three most prominent forms of Judaism are Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative.

Reform Judaism holds that being Jewish and being completely involved in modern society are compatible. As society changes, so must Judaism adapt to it. Reform Judaism is therefore relatively relaxed regarding the observance of the details of Jewish traditional practice. The worship liturgy is spoken in English, and the rabbi functions much like a Christian preacher, rather than a traditional scholar and teacher of Torah. About one-third of Jews in the United States adhere to Reform Judaism.

Orthodox Judaism maintains that Torah is the standard of truth, and that life within society must always conform to it. Despite changes in society, Jewish life should change very little, for Torah is unchanging. This does not mean that Orthodox Judaism rejects all aspects of modernity; secular education, for example, is affirmed. But compared with Reform Judaism, Orthodox Judaism is deeply traditional. In the United States, the Orthodox often live in separate communities to help maintain their traditional ways. About one-tenth of Jews in the United States adhere to Orthodox Judaism.

Conservative Judaism occupies a middle position between Reform and Orthodox. While somewhat open to change and to modern ways, Conservative Judaism is quite strict regarding observance of traditional Jewish practices. The worship liturgy is in Hebrew, for example, and laws regulating diet and behavior on the Sabbath are strictly observed. Almost half of the Jews in the United States adhere to Conservative Judaism.

Each of these varieties of Judaism, even the Orthodox, continues to change. For example, women are becoming increasingly active in both leadership and participation. Women often now serve as rabbis in Reform and Conservative Judaism.

The Sanctification of Life: The Way of Torah

According to Judaism, life is sanctified through the moment-to-moment observance of Torah. Judaism is far more concerned with correct practice than with correct belief (and differs considerably from Christianity in that respect). Judaism places little emphasis on theology or statements of belief. Rather than focusing on what God is, Judaism focuses on how to worship God. Traditionally, therefore, a Jew is not a “believer” so much as an “observer of the commandments.” It could be said that for Jews, spiritual perfection is mainly a matter of perfect observance. Just what constitutes perfect observance varies depending on the type of Judaism practiced. In this section of the chapter, we will be concerned mainly with more traditional ways of being Jewish.

Daily Life

Traditionally, all aspects of Jewish life are guided by regulations derived from Torah, which categorizes acts as permitted or forbidden, obliged or free, and holy or profane. Torah thus defines both ethical conduct and worship.

Ethics

Observing Torah requires not only worshipping God but also leading an ethical life. In the Mishnah an esteemed rabbi puts it this way: “By three things is the world sustained: by the Law, by the [Temple-]service, and by

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For some two thousand years before 1948, Jews endured without a national homeland. Imagine what your life would be like if your nation did not exist in a physical location and you were living in exile in some foreign land. What important things would be missing? How would this situation affect your religious outlook? In general, how would it affect your priorities?

People often tend to think of religion as primarily a matter of believing in certain doctrines. Drawing from your own experiences, list several examples of religious practices. In your opinion are these practices meaningful if they are independent of beliefs?

deeds of loving-kindness" (page 446). We have already noted the importance of the study and interpretation of the Law, or Torah. Soon we will consider some details of service, or worship. As for deeds of loving-kindness, we need only note the prominence of the Ten Commandments in God's revelation on Mount Sinai to realize the basic significance of ethics. In addition to these famous ethical requirements (not to kill, steal, and so on), Judaism teaches many more. For example, Jews are obligated to help those who are needy, to give food and shelter to guests, and to visit those who are sick. The traditional emphasis on ethics is reflected in the charitable and philanthropic work done by the Jewish community today.

Daily Worship Through Prayer

The predominant form of daily worship is prayer, which is mandatory only for males age thirteen and older. Women are traditionally excused because of their household responsibilities (which are themselves done in accor-

dance with Torah, and so are an integral part of the sanctification of life). However, in recent times more women have been participating in prayer. In any event, males alone are required to wear certain ritual accessories. One is the skullcap, which is called a yarmulke (yah'muh-kuh) in Yiddish or *kipah* (kee-pah') in Hebrew. A second is a set of small boxes containing biblical passages. These are secured to the forehead and to the left arm so as to be near the mind and the heart, the two primary means of serving God. A third accessory is the prayer shawl, which can be drawn over the head for privacy.

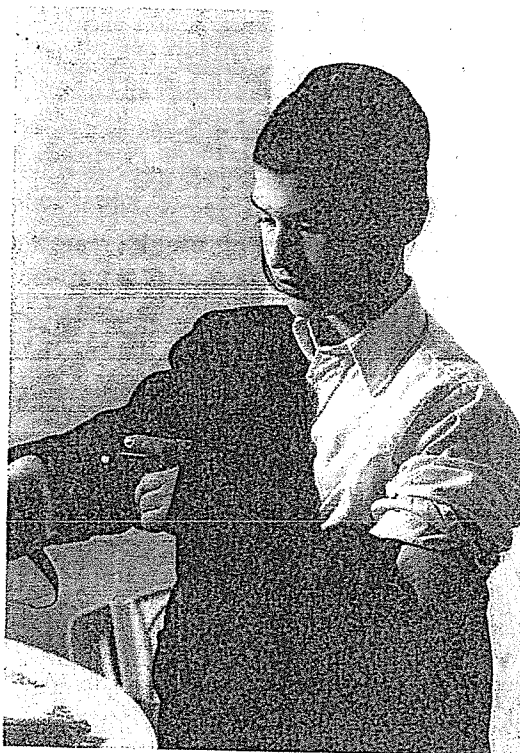
Prayers are said at least three times daily: in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening. They include a variety of traditional passages from the Bible and other authoritative sources. Prayers are usually recited at home, but are also frequently said in public at the synagogue. Home and synagogue are the two centers of Jewish worship.

The Home and the Synagogue

The home is the most common place for Jewish worship, and it is the center of Jewish social life, which focuses on the family more than on anything else. Rules based on Torah govern family relationships, so that children honor their parents, and parents care diligently for their children.

Jewish homes are often easy to identify. On the outside, just to the right of the door, many Jews attach the *mezuzah* (muh-zoo'zuh), a small container with a scroll on which is written the Shema.

The social and religious center of the home is the dinner table. Along with festive meals in celebration of holy days and the Sabbath, ordinary meals too are important occasions. Traditionally, all the food must be kosher ("proper" according to Torah), meaning that certain dietary regulations apply. Pork, for example, is prohibited, as is the mixing of meat and dairy products.



A Hasidic boy prepares for morning prayers by binding a small box containing biblical passages to his arm and by wearing a skullcap.

In addition to the home, the synagogue (which Reform Judaism calls the temple) is a common forum for Jewish worship. Since the Babylonian Exile (in the sixth century B.C.), synagogues have been centers for prayer, study, and fellowship. Though building designs vary, all synagogues contain a scroll of the five books of the Torah, which is encased in a box called an ark.

Synagogues are led by rabbis. In general, *rabbi* simply refers to one who has mastered the sacred writings of Judaism, mainly the Bible and the Talmud. The precise role of the rabbi varies among the different forms of Judaism. It also differs from the role of the Christian priest or minister, and other faith leaders, whose status tends to be more formal.

Sabbath

One of the Ten Commandments states, "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8, Tanakh). This the Jews have done through the centuries with both reverence and festive joy. The **Sabbath** (also commonly known by its Hebrew name, *Shabbat*) begins at sunset on Friday and lasts until sunset on Saturday. (Some Reform Jews celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday.) It is both the religious and the social high point of the week.

The Sabbath is patterned after the seventh day of creation, on which God rested from labor and beheld the glory of the created world. Along with avoiding labor, Jews are required to refrain from many sorts of usual activities, such as driving, answering the phone, and (for the very observant) turning on an electric light, which would violate the biblical law prohibiting lighting a fire on the Sabbath.

As well as being a day of rest, though, the Sabbath is also a day of worship and celebration. Jews devote part of the time to Torah study and Sabbath services, both at home and at the synagogue. They enjoy meals of special foods that have been prepared before the onset of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a time of fel-

lowship with family and other Jews of the community, and is joyful and celebratory.

The Annual Calendar of Holy Days

The calendar of holy days is fundamental to Jewish life. Those annual observances ensure both the unity of the Jews and the continuity of their religious tradition. Some sixteen days are considered holy, and the first day of each month, marked by the new moon, is also honored. The most important holy days are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover.

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah (rohsh hah-shah-nah'), the festival of the new year, occurs in early fall and is observed for two days. Unlike the strictly secular celebration of the New Year, Rosh Hashanah is a religious event involving both festivities and serious contemplation. A celebration of God's creation of the world is accompanied by individual reflection on the deeds of the past year and on the need for redemption. The ram's horn, or shofar, is blown on Rosh Hashanah as a means of reminding the Jews of these spiritual needs. Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the Days of Awe, a ten-day period of reflection.

Rosh Hashanah is also a time to reinforce social relationships. Festive meals are held for family and friends. Visits to the graves of family members strengthen bonds with the deceased, as well.

Yom Kippur

The Days of Awe conclude on the tenth day of the new year with **Yom Kippur** (yohm' kee-poor'), the Day of Atonement, Judaism's most important holy day.

Deeply personal and solemn, Yom Kippur emphasizes repentance through confession of sin. The day is observed through prayer and through abstention from food, drink, and work. The synagogue hosts services, during which prayers like this one are recited:

J
Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Identify parts of this passage that relate to the Jewish worship practices you have read about in this section of your textbook. Describe how you think the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) relates to the rest of the passage.

K
On the Sabbath Jews celebrate the creation of the world by avoiding labor in order to rest and to worship. Do you reserve time in your life for that kind of celebration? If so, describe what that time is like. If not, reflect on what benefits it might bring.

O my God, before I was formed, I was nothing. Now that I have been formed, it is as though I had not been formed, for I am dust in my life, more so after death. Behold I am before You like a vessel filled with shame and confusion. May it be Your will . . . that I may no more sin, and forgive the sins I have already committed in Your abundant compassion. (Translated by Neusner in "Judaism," in *Our Religions*, page 345)

Passover

The festival **Passover** occurs early in the spring and lasts for eight days. It commemorates the Exodus of the Jews from bondage in Egypt, and is a time of joyful celebration.

The high point of the festival is the Seder, which features a recitation, called the Haggadah, of the events of the Exodus as well as a meal of traditional foods that symbolize those events. Throughout the eight days of Passover, only unleavened bread (matzo) is to be eaten. The matzo is symbolic of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the forefathers of the Jewish people.

The Passover clearly illustrates a characteristic common to most of Judaism's holy days:

the events of Jewish history are commemorated as having religious significance.

Rites of Passage

Like most other religions, Judaism prescribes rites of passage, or ritual events marking life's major changes. Rites of passage serve two primary purposes. First, they reflect the inevitable changes of life, while providing a sense of permanence through their unchanging rituals and the deeply rooted values they enunciate. Second, rites of passage help to define the responsibilities of each stage of life, and to teach the means for advancing through them with appropriate maturity.

Birth and Naming

The rite of passage marking the birth of a child involves circumcision (removal of the foreskin of the penis) for boys, and naming for both boys and girls.

Boys are circumcised and named in a ceremony that takes place on the eighth day of life, usually at the home of the parents. In the Book of Genesis, circumcision is the sign

Throughout the eight days of Passover, only unleavened bread, called matzo, is to be eaten. The festival commemorates the Exodus of the Jews from bondage in Egypt.



Growing Up Jewish in a Christian Town

Throughout history Jews have commonly lived in situations in which they were the minority. This is still the case for many Jews today. Stuart Miller tells of his experiences growing up Jewish in a small, predominantly Christian city in Minnesota.

My parents were born overseas and immigrated to this country, my mother from Poland and my father from White Russia. Through different circumstances, they ended up in Winona, Minnesota (population twenty-five thousand), a town with only about ten Jewish families. I grew up with an older brother and a younger brother. My younger brother, Morrie, died in 1989 of cancer. My father, William, was an Orthodox Jew in the traditional sense. He observed the holidays, obeyed dietary laws, and prayed three times a day. My mother was not as religious. After my father's death, she shifted away from strict observance of Jewish Law, although she never lost her Jewish identity and remained totally devoted to Judaism.

When I was in grade school, a Jewish Sunday school teacher was brought to Winona from Minneapolis (about two hours away). There were about a dozen of us kids, of various ages. We studied Jewish history, Torah, and the Hebrew language—as much as the teacher could cram into those weekly sessions. My bar mitzvah was held in Winona, after I had received instruction from a medical student who came from Minneapolis. We celebrated the Jewish holidays in Minneapolis with my parents until my father got ill. Then we started going to synagogue in La Crosse, Wisconsin (a half hour from Winona). Through the years I received most of my learning of Hebrew, Torah, and Jewish history in La Crosse.

To a Jewish kid in a Christian community, the differences were most clear during the Christmas season. We celebrated Hanukkah, and the rest of the kids celebrated Christmas. It felt different. I was discouraged from singing Christmas songs, but I did anyway, with a compromise—I skipped certain words. The high holy days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, also revealed differences. I missed school on those days in order to attend Jewish services. My younger brother, Morrie, was an excellent athlete. I remember a conflict when a high school football game was scheduled on Yom Kippur. Morrie missed the game that Friday. The coach was a little put off and was not able to understand my brother's decision. I was not a very good football player, so my absence never bothered my coach!

When I was in high school, a diplomat from Israel came and spoke at an assembly. Due to my upbringing, I understood what he

said about Israel, and it meant a lot to me. It was obvious that my classmates did not have the same emotional involvement that I did. Most neither understood nor cared about what he said.

Not once during my high school or college years did I experience firsthand any open anti-Semitism. However, in high school I knew of two brothers who were constantly teased and harassed for being Jewish. These same harassers never did that to me or my brothers, which made me wonder, why them and not me? I recall a specific incident concerning a gas station owner with whom my family did business. A customer of ours from out of town stopped at his station to ask directions to our business. The owner told him where "the Jews'" business was—not "the Millers'" business, but "the Jews'." This astonished me. I thought I knew that station owner better than that.

Now I am older and have a family of my own. My eighteen-year-old daughter, Jessica, attends college at Penn State. My older son, Asher, is fifteen and is in high school. My younger son, Joshua, is in grade school. My wife, Sheryl, is also in school, working on a degree in dental hygiene. Sheryl and I have tried to instill in our children a love of Judaism. Jessica celebrated bat mitzvah at age thirteen. The synagogue had just changed from Orthodox to Conservative, and so she was the first woman called to publicly read the Torah. Asher celebrated bar mitzvah at age thirteen, and Joshua will as well. We usually celebrate the Jewish holidays as a family, the most important being Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, and Passover. I think we would agree that our favorite is Passover. The special food, the Seder night, the retelling of the Exodus from Egypt—all combine to give parents, children, and invited guests an appreciation of who they are and why their past is so important. We try to go to synagogue as much as we can, but kids (being kids) don't want to go all the time. I was much the same in my youth. I only hope that my children will have a basis of Jewish faith, and that over time they will expand upon this base on their own. Their faith can help make them aware of bad things and enable them to combat these bad things.

Growing up Jewish in a Christian town has been an experience. One lucky thing for me is that I was able to find a wonderful Jewish woman to marry. It was difficult, but as I say, I got lucky. There is anti-Semitism, but for the most part it has been covered up by a thin veneer of civility. I hope the veneer gets thicker as time goes by so that my kids can be openly proud of who and what they are, and appreciate how they differ from other kids.

established by God when entering into the Covenant with Abraham. This ritual therefore signifies entrance into the Jewish community of descendants of Abraham.

Girls are usually named at the synagogue during a Sabbath service. However, Reform Judaism has developed a distinct ceremony for girls that is patterned after the ceremony of circumcision.

Coming of Age

The primary ritual marking the Jewish coming of age, the point at which a child takes on the religious responsibilities of an adult, is called **bar mitzvah** (bahr meets-vah'; "son of the commandment") for boys, and **bat mitzvah** (baht meets-vah'; "daughter of the commandment") for girls. At that point the young person becomes responsible for observing the detailed practices of daily Jewish life.

Bar mitzvah takes place on a boy's thirteenth birthday. During the special service, the boy is a participant for the first time. He per-



With the help of a rabbi, young people prepare for their rite of passage to religious adulthood, called their bar mitzvah (for boys) or bat mitzvah (for girls).

forms such tasks as reading from the Torah. Most Jewish girls celebrate bat mitzvah in the same manner. Orthodox Jewish girls, however, do not observe bat mitzvah.

Marriage

For Judaism, marriage is the ideal human relationship. Patterned after the union between Adam and Eve, marriage celebrates God's creation by symbolically re-creating the Garden of Eden. The wedding is a most joyous and festive occasion, and is almost always celebrated in a traditional manner, even by Jews who are otherwise not traditional.

Several symbols and events highlight the marriage ceremony. The bride and groom stand beneath the *huppah* (khoo-pah'), or bridal canopy, which creates a special, sacred space. Seven blessings, including the one that follows, are read over a cup of wine:

Grant perfect joy to these loving companions, as You did to the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden. Praised are You, O Lord, who grants the joy of bride and groom. (Translated by Neusner in "Judaism," in *Our Religions*, page 350)

The ceremony concludes when the groom breaks a wine glass beneath his foot. This ancient custom may have originated as a symbol of the destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem. Today it serves to remind those present that marriage, like every aspect of life, will involve some difficulties and pain along with joy.

Death and Mourning

Death, the ultimate transition, poses unique challenges to the family of the deceased and to the community. Judaism deals with those challenges by carefully regulating the rituals and mourning activities that follow the end of a life.

Several distinct stages of mourning are prescribed. The first stage lasts from death to bur-

ial, which preferably occurs on the day of death (though today that is usually not practical). When family members first learn of the death, they rip their clothes, and recite verses that acknowledge God as the "true judge." The mourners are restricted from certain activities, such as shaving and wearing leather. They are also relieved of many of the normal religious requirements, including the regular schedule of daily prayer. This allows them to attend to their grief and to special responsibilities, such as making sure the body is ritually washed and clothed in a shroud. It is buried in a plain wooden coffin.

A second stage of mourning begins after burial, with the recital of the kaddish (kah' dish), a prayer of mourning. This stage lasts for seven days. During this time community members visit the family. Conversation is limited to good comments about the one who has died. Upon departing, the visitors recite a special prayer of comfort.

A third stage lasts until thirty days after burial. Throughout this period most normal activities are resumed, but social gatherings and celebrations are avoided.

If the deceased is one's parent, a fourth stage of mourning follows, this one lasting until the first anniversary of the death. During this stage the mourners avoid their usual seats at the synagogue, and they recite the kaddish during services. On the anniversary of the death, the mourners again recite the kaddish.

Note how thoroughly Judaism deals with a rite of passage, in this case, death. This same thoroughness applies to all aspects of Jewish life. Judaism is truly a religion of correct practice, from moment to moment, day in and day out.

The Tradition of the Chosen People

We began this chapter by noting three ways to summarize Judaism: First, it is the Covenant between God and the Chosen People; second,

it is the interpretation of the history of the Jewish people; and third, it is the sanctification of life. Now that we have explored Judaism in some detail, it is possible to make sense of yet another summary statement, one that pulls all the others together: Judaism is the tradition of the Chosen People. To recall the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel cited at the beginning of this chapter, Judaism is "primarily living in the spiritual order of the Jewish people, the living *in* the Jews of the past and *with* the Jews of the present."

With only about fourteen million adherents worldwide, Judaism is among the smallest of the world's major religions. Many Jews today are gravely concerned that their numbers are decreasing, that the tradition is weakening, and that the Jewish people are losing their sense of identity.

Time will tell what is to become of Judaism. But given that it has endured against all odds for over two millennia, time seems to be on Judaism's side.

Chapter Review

1. Define the term *covenant* in relation to the Jews.
2. Why do observant Jews avoid pronouncing the divine name? How is the name written?
3. What is the Shema?
4. Identify the three related meanings of the term *Torah*.
5. Why is the Hebrew Bible also known as the Tanakh?
6. What is the Pentateuch?
7. Who is traditionally regarded as the author of the Torah? How many specific laws is the Torah thought to contain?
8. What is the literal meaning of the term *prophet*?
9. What is the oral Torah? How is it thought to complement the written Torah?
10. When was the Mishnah written, and what does it contain?

L

Judaism carefully observes rites of passage, as can be seen in the details involved in its mourning of the dead. How does Judaism's approach to mourning compare with secular society's approach?

11. What do the rabbis comment on in the Talmud, and how do they support their arguments?
12. Rather than describing them as a single "race" of genetically related people, what is the most accurate way to think of the Jews?
13. What does it mean to say that God is providential?
14. Why did the Pharisees emerge after the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70 with their religious ways intact?
15. What is the Diaspora?
16. In what areas of the world did medieval Jews live under Muslim rule? under Christian rule?
17. Briefly describe the situation of medieval Jews in Poland.
18. What does the Kabbalah teach?
19. What is believed about the *zaddik*, the leadership figure in Hasidism?
20. What is Zionism?
21. When did the Holocaust occur? What does the Hebrew term *Shoah* mean?
22. Briefly describe Reform Judaism.
23. How is Orthodox Judaism distinguishable from Reform Judaism?
24. What are the distinguishing characteristics of Conservative Judaism?
25. According to the Mishnah, what sustains the world?
26. What is the predominant form of daily worship in Judaism?
27. What are the two centers of Jewish worship?
28. What does every synagogue contain?
29. When does the Sabbath occur? What are the two main aspects of its celebration?
30. What is celebrated on Rosh Hashanah?
31. What is emphasized on Yom Kippur?
32. What does the festival Passover commemorate?
33. What is signified by the rite of passage that marks the birth of a child?
34. What are the bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah?
35. What symbols and events highlight the Jewish marriage ceremony?
36. What is the kaddish?

The Seven Dimensions of Religion: Judaism

Dimension	Examples
Experiential	knowing God inwardly through Kabbalah, Jeremiah's calling to be a prophet
Mythic	the Haggadah (recited on Passover)
Doctrinal	the Covenant, the Shema, Maimonides's thirteen principles of belief
Ethical	the Ten Commandments and other rules of Torah
Ritual	daily prayer, the Sabbath meal and observances, Passover's Seder, reciting the kaddish
Social	cohesion of the Chosen People, Hasidism's <i>zaddik</i>
Material	yarmulke, <i>mezuzah</i> , shofar, matzo, <i>huppah</i>

Glossary

anti-Semitism. Hostility toward Jews and Judaism; ranges from attitudes of disfavor to active persecution.

bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah (bahr meets-vah', bah't meets-vah'; Hebrew: "son of the commandment," "daughter of the commandment"). The ritual celebration marking the coming of age of a Jewish child, at which time the person takes on the religious responsibilities of an adult.

Covenant. The agreement established between God and the ancient Israelites, first through Abraham and later through Moses, that designates the Jews as God's Chosen People, with special rights and responsibilities.

Diaspora (di-as'puh-ruh; Greek: "dispersion"). The situation of Jews living away from their ancestral homeland, a circumstance that has been true for most Jews since the classical period.

Hasidism (from Hebrew *hasid* [ha'seed]: "pious"). A form of Judaism that arose in eastern

Europe in the eighteenth century and that emphasizes mysticism, a personal relationship with God, a close-knit community, and the leadership of the *zaddik* (tsah'dik), a charismatic holy man.

Holocaust. The persecution of Jews by German Nazis from 1933 to 1945, resulting in the murder of some six million; commonly referred to by Jews as Shoah (*shoah* is Hebrew for "mass destruction").

Kabbalah (kab'uh-luh). Jewish mysticism, which teaches that God can best be known through the heart; developed mainly in the medieval period with such texts as the Zohar.

Mishnah (meesh-nah'). Written down in about A.D. 200; contains collected teachings of the rabbis of the preceding four centuries; along with the Talmud, is the most important text of the oral Torah.

Passover. The eight-day festival celebrated in early spring that commemorates the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

rabbi (ra'bi; Hebrew: "my teacher"). A teacher of Torah and leader of Jewish worship.

Rosh Hashanah (rohsh hah-shah-nah'; Hebrew: "the beginning of the year"). The festival occurring in early fall in commemoration of the new year.

Sabbath (in Hebrew, *Shabbat*). The day from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday (observed on Sunday by some Reform Jews) that is set aside for rest and religious celebration, as decreed by one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8).

Shema (shuh-mah'; Hebrew: "hear"). From Deuteronomy 6:4, Judaism's basic statement of monotheism: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (Tanakh).

Talmud (tahl-mood'; Hebrew: "study," "knowledge"). The vast depository of the oral Torah, based on the Mishnah with extensive rabbinic commentary on each chapter; there are two versions, the Palestinian

(completed about A.D. 450) and the Babylonian (completed about A.D. 600).

Tanakh (tah-nakh). A common way of referring to the Hebrew Bible, derived from the first letters of the Hebrew names of its three sections: Torah (*T*), Prophets (*N*), and Writings (*K*).

Torah (toh'rah; Hebrew: "instruction"). Generally, the revelation of God's will to the people; more specifically, the divine Law, especially as contained in the first five books of the Bible, which together are often called the Torah.

Yom Kippur (yohm' kee-poor'; Hebrew: "day of atonement"). Judaism's most important holy day, occurring in the fall on the tenth day of the new year; spent primarily at synagogue services in prayer for forgiveness of sins and marked by abstention from food and drink (fasting).

Zionism. Originally, the movement arising in the late nineteenth century that sought to re-establish a Jewish homeland; since 1948, the general support of the State of Israel.