

Judaism and the State of Israel: Where to from here?

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JUDAISM

The Central Faith Affirmation

The **Shema**: “Hear O’ Israel, The Lord is God, The Lord is one.

This prayer is said three times a day by all religious Jews.

Judaism

Key Words

Torah: The teaching of God about how to live given to the Jewish people; It includes Genesis-Deuteronomy (Torah scrolls), the ten commandments, the laws in scripture, as the entire Jewish Bible. The Jewish Bible begins at Genesis and ends at Malachai.

Talmud: The oral law or a multi-generational rabbinic commentary on how to live out the Torah.

Rabbi: Teacher

Kipah or Yarmulka: Skullcap

Kosher: Pure or clean

Who or what is a Jew?:

A Jew is someone who is a member of the Jewish community. One becomes a member of the Jewish community in two ways. First, if your mother is Jewish you are automatically Jewish. Second, you can convert to the Jewish religion. Being Jewish is not a matter of race. There are white and black Jews. There are Chinese Jews and Swedish Jews.

Jewish Traditions:

Since the “Emancipation” and the “Enlightenment” Jews have been divided and dividing into different groups: Hasidic, Ultra-Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Zionist, and secular. There are many different ways to be Jewish. A person can be Jewish without believing in God.

Jewish Holy Days

The Sabbath: The Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday night at sundown and ends on Saturday night at sunset.

Rosh Hashanna: The Jewish New year. The Jewish year runs according to a lunar calendar. The present year is 5762. The words “Rosh Hashanna” mean “head of the year.” The holiday occurs in the early fall and begins a ten day period of self examination that culminates in the holiday of Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement. Jews over the age of 13 fast for 24 hours and pray to God for forgiveness, work to be reconciled to their neighbors, and a good year ahead. This is the holiest day of the year for Jews.

Sukkot: Booths: Jews remember the biblical journey in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. They remember how they were forced to live in fragile tents and how God cared for them despite the elements.

Simchat Torah: The Joy of the Torah. Jews celebrate the yearly completion of reading the entire Torah.

Chanukah: A celebration of the rededication of the temple in 163 B.C.E. by the Macabees. This is a relatively minor holiday but because it occurs around Christmas time has received a good deal of attention.

Passover: A celebration and remembrance of the deliverance of the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt.

Shavuot or Pentecost: A celebration of the giving of the Torah 50 days after the departure from Egypt.

Purim: A joyous celebration of the success of Esther and Mordachai in saving the Jews in the Book of Esther.

Zionism

A Jewish nationalist movement that began in the late 19th century in Russia that believes and is committed to the return of the Jewish people to Israel and the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the land given to them by God, the present day state of Israel.

Judaism and Christianity

There is very little mention of Jesus in the Talmud. Most Jews do not think about or have an opinion about Jesus. Those who do range between those who respect the religion of Christianity and see Jesus as possibly the messiah for the gentiles to those who think of Jesus as a Jewish prophet to those who see him as a false messiah.

Orthodox, Hasidic and Conservative Jews continue to wait for the messiah. In Jewish tradition, the messiah will be a human being sent by God that will bring about peace in the world, Israel at peace in its own land and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Most Jews are aware of the long history of anti-Judaism within Christian scripture and tradition. They are also aware that in the past 40 years Christians have made efforts to change their attitudes towards Jews.

Jews do not consider Jewish converts to Christianity or the group, “Jews for Jesus” to be Jewish. These people are seen as being Christian in every way, shape, and form.

Jews do not believe that a person has to be Jewish in order to be “saved.” Most Jews would like to be good neighbors with Christians but some are fearful that certain Christians are only interested in converting them to Christianity.

Note: There are about 15 million Jews in the world and about 5.5 million in the United States.