

## What is Judaism?

### Matters of central importance:

God, Torah, mitzvot, covenant

**Context:** a minority culture in Christian and Muslim regions.

### A very brief timeline:

9<sup>th</sup> C BCE- kingdoms of Israel and Judah

5<sup>th</sup> C BCE- Torah revised

70 CE-Temple destroyed

200 CE- Mishnah

6<sup>th</sup> C CE- Talmud

Medieval Europe

18<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> C- emancipation

1917: Balfour Declaration

1940s- Holocaust

1948: modern state of Israel

### Jewish populations today

## Impact of Judaism

### Interesting people...

Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon): Medieval Torah scholar and philosopher;

Ben Gurion: first PM of modern Israel

Julia Neuberger: British Jewish Reform Rabbi

### Influence of Judaism on the world

Monotheism: transcendence, idolatry

Judeo-Christian law: a nation under God

Ethics: love God, love your neighbour

### Stories of communities...

- Kibbutz: collective community in Israel, originated early 20<sup>th</sup> C, combination of Socialism and Zionism
- Jews fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia- late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> C. Settled in East London
- 'The Promised Island': BBC documentary detailing move of Strictly Orthodox Jews in North London to Canvey Island on the Essex coast.

### Morality and meaning making...

Tzedakah: charity and generosity

Community: hospitality, welcoming the 'stranger'

## Different ways to be Jewish

### Diversity of beliefs and belonging

#### TRADITIONAL

Revelation closed at Sinai

Traditional gender roles

Branches: Orthodox, Strictly Orthodox, Masorti

#### PROGRESSIVE

Ongoing revelation in the world

Liberal gender roles

Branches: Liberal, Reform, Reconstructionist

#### STRICTLY ORTHODOX

difference between Hasidism and Haredi

### Diversity of expression and practice

Observing Kashrut

Observing Halakha

Role of women

Relationship with non-Jewish world

# Supplementary Notes

- These notes offer further detail and explanation to support your understanding of the **two shaded sections** of the Judaism knowledge organiser.
- The information given here is general subject knowledge for the teacher. You will find suggestions for KS2, KS3 and KS4 planning pathways below.
- This might feel unfamiliar, it *is* unfamiliar. Considering Judaism as a worldview; with history, political and cultural pressures, diversity and plurality, is breaking new ground.

## References

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# What is Judaism?

## How is it understood?

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### Jewish populations today

**CONTEXT:** Context is crucial when it comes to Judaism. It is an essential dimension of all worldviews, but Judaism is singular in having developed as a minority culture since 70 CE. Jewish communities have lived by Halakha (Jewish law) but against a wider political and sociological context of a dominant law, religion and culture. In Christian regions the Jewish bible is called the 'Old Testament' and Jews have been held responsible for 'deicide'. Jewish communities have been at times tolerated and at times persecuted. Most Jewish communities lived in North Africa and the Middle East until 1750, when the populations in Eastern and Central Europe grew rapidly, by 1939 around 10 million Jews lived in Europe and 5 million in North America (Solomon, 15). As the Christian theologian Jaroslav Pelikan notes, Judaism in Europe has evolved in a context of anti-Semitism (Pelikan, 17- 20).

'Core' population (who identify as Jews)	14.6 million
'Connected' population (who have a Jewish parent or are partly Jewish)	17.8 million
'Enlarged' population (who have a Jewish background or live with Jews)	20.7 million
Largest populations worldwide	USA (51% of Jews) Israel (30% of Jews)
In the UK	2% of Jews

### JEWISH POPULATIONS (IN 2018):

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_population\\_by\\_country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population_by_country)

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### A VERY BRIEF TIMELINE 1

**9<sup>th</sup> C BCE:** Kingdoms of Israel and Judah emerge from Canaanite tribal lands. Polytheism the norm; Hebrew tribes united in worshipping their national god, among others.

**Late 8<sup>th</sup> C BCE:** increasing focus on sole loyalty to the national God; understood as God of all gods; the **One God**.

**Mid 5<sup>th</sup> C BCE:** Hebrews exiled in Babylon and after some years returned to Israel. In this time the **Torah**, historical and wisdom literature was revised to reflect **monotheism**.

**70 CE:** Temple of Jerusalem destroyed by Romans, Jews exiled from Israel.

**200 CE: Rabbi Judah ha Nasi**, leader of the Jewish community in Palestine. Created a Jewish Code of law and ethics, the **Mishnah**.

**6<sup>th</sup> C:** commentaries on the Mishnah, by unnamed scholars living in Palestine and Babylon, called the **Gemara**. This is the **Talmud**; the Mishnah plus the Gemara. 'The Talmud really is the heart of Judaism. After the Bible, it is the book most studied by Jews, and the Bible itself is read in its light' (Solomon, p. 35- 36).

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### **Jewish populations today**

## **A VERY BRIEF TIMELINE 2**

**Medieval Europe:** Jews in Europe were permitted to live in allocated areas, called Ghettos. They were rarely allowed to own land or property (Richarz, 77). Rulers protected their work in money-lending and finance as it was crucial to the economy. Jews were expelled from many European countries between 1100 and 1600. Forced conversions to Christianity and pogroms were also a feature of the Jewish experience in Medieval Europe.

**Late 18<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries:** following France, European countries removed restrictions on Jews in employment, education and participation and accorded greater rights of citizenship. This is called **Emancipation**.

**1917:** The subject of a Jewish homeland had long occupied Jewish communities. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans joined the first World War against France, Russia and Britain. In 1917 Lord **Balfour** of Britain declared the land should be a Jewish homeland. When the Ottoman Empire was divided between France and Britain at the end of WW1, this declaration was held to be binding.

**1940s- the Holocaust:** 6 million European Jews were exterminated by the Nazis

**1948:** In the aftermath of the Holocaust the United Nations wanted to create a Jewish state. After conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, the State of Israel was formed and declared the Jewish nation state.

# Impact of Judaism

## Influence of Judaism on the world

Monotheism: transcendence, idolatry

Judeo-Christian law: a nation under God

Ethics: love God, love your neighbour

## Influence on society

**Monotheism:** perhaps Judaism's most powerful impact on the world has been commitment to an historical, interventionist, all-powerful God. The Jews have a 'sacred history', in Bertrand Russell's words (Russell, 311).

Karen Armstrong suggests that the transcendent nature of God in Judaism is a radical departure from notions of the divine. (Armstrong, 51- 52). Moreover, a fierce loyalty to one God, the only true God, has led to the idea of idolatry (Armstrong, 61).

**Law:** Jewish law is the notion of civil law bound up with ethics; both community ethics and religious commitment. This is known as Judeo-Christian law. The phrase was expressed by George Orwell in 1939. European law has been heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian ethics, for example, in the creation of welfare states. Judeo-Christian law is most influential in the USA, in the notion of a nation under God. For example it is common to find images or statues depicting the 10 Commandments in courthouses and state buildings.

**Ethics:** Goodman suggests that Jewish ethics derives from 'a mutuality between humanity and God' (Goodman, p. 429). Ethics is based in Leviticus 19:2; *be righteous because your God is righteous*. This is developed to focus on others in the community in Leviticus 19: 18; *love others as yourself*. Thus the overall Jewish ethic, recognizable as the basis of Christian law and ethics: *love God, love others*.

## PLANNING SUGGESTIONS

### KS2: Is Judaism something you believe or something you do?

- 1) Learn about the land of Israel- look at pictures, look on a map, listen to some words spoken in Hebrew, listen to Israeli music, try some Israeli food.
- 2) Learn about Abraham- who was committed to monotheism in a polytheistic environment. Abraham lived in the area around Israel, his descendants settled in the land. Read some stories of Abraham's loyalty to the One God and God's covenant with Abraham.
- 3) Find out about one or two religious expectations on Jews: such as observing the Sabbath and kashrut laws. Find out why these are deemed important.
- 4) Look at how core Jewish beliefs still visible in Judaism today; it is monotheistic, Torah Ark in synagogues, kashrut laws still observed.
- 5) Answer the question; *is Judaism something you believe or something you do?*

## KS3: Jerusalem: The centre of the world

- 1) Learn about the Torah view of Israel as the promised land for Jews
- 2) Learn about the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. As an example of the centrality of the Temple to Jewish life learn about the three Foot Festivals. How will Judaism survive with no Temple and no land?
- 3) Learn how the Rabbinic tradition developed when Jews exiled after 70CE- for example; development of synagogues, Ark, how Judaism survived the Temple destruction.
- 4) Medieval Jews in Muslim regions- people of the book, status and conditions
- 5) Medieval Jews in Christian regions- largely persecuted and excluded
- 6) Development of Zionism
- 7) Balfour Declaration (1917): indication of a desire to create a Jewish homeland. Were Palestinian views considered?
- 8) Holocaust: cemented imperative to create a Jewish homeland
- 9) Arab/ Palestinian view of the state of Israel



## KS3: Do differences in Jewish practice reflect differences in belief?

- 1) Learn about the first Bat Mitzvah in New York 1922. A good way to introduce the Reconstructionist tradition developed by Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan
- 2) Leading to an understanding of the Progressive tradition generally- less traditional role of women, revelation seen as continuous
- 3) Learn about the Orthodox tradition; can be seen as reaction to Emancipation and Progressive strands. Traditional roles, revelation closed at Sinai.
- 4) Learn about Haredi roots and modern movements.
- 5) Response to key question: *do differences in practice reflect differences in belief?*