

Who are the Jews?

In Judaism G-d is written without the 'o'. Jews should never erase or dispose of G-d's name once written. By writing G-d's name in this way they will avoid violating this law. G-d is English term, not the Hebrew, which is YHWH. It is a way of showing reverence and respect.

History of Judaism

Started about 4000 years ago. Jews were originally known as Israelites. They were tribal and nomadic, wandering the Middle Eastern deserts. They were kept in slavery by an Egyptian Pharaoh. Once free they went to Israel, which they believe is their homeland.



Today Judaism is a global religion.

Israel: 7.8 million

USA: 5.7 million

UK: 270, 000 (2/3 in London)



Books of Judaism

- **TORAH**: First five books of the Old Testament.
- **TALMUD**: Commentary on the Torah. Its aim is to teach. Made up of- **MISHNAH**: Written version of the oral law AND **GEMARA**: The record of the discussions following the writing of the Mishnah.
- **TENAKH** The five books of Moses, the Nevi'im (prophets) and Ketuvim (writings) 24 books total.
- **HALAKAH**: Collection of Jewish Laws, based on the written and oral Torah, including the 613 mitzvot.

Rules

The rules followed by Jews come from a number of places.



- The 7 LAWS OF NOAH
- The 10 LAWS OF MOSES
- The 613 oral laws- MITZVOT Oral laws: not recorded in the five books of Moses.

Mitzvot (singular mitzvah): 613 commandments covering religious and moral conduct.

Jewish Groups

- **Orthodox**: the written law of the Torah given by G-d to Moses has total authority in modern life. The Talmud also has total authority. Very traditional. Strictly observe the Sabbath. In Britain 50% of Jews are Orthodox.
- **Reform/ Progressive**: started in 19th century Germany. Their aim was to bring traditional Judaism in line with modern life. They don't feel the need to follow the laws to the letter. They believe in G-d, the Torah and Israel. The Torah is revealed continuously allowing Judaism to move with modern times. Have given females a bigger role in the faith, e.g. Female Rabbis.
- **Conservative**: Middle ground between Orthodox and Reform Traditional Judaism but practised in a spirit of open minded enquiry and tolerance, that is open to the modern world.
- **Liberal**: more radical than reform Judaism. They think religious law should be reassessed alongside the modern world. The Torah is G-d inspired but human written so can contain mistakes. So we must interpret according to modern issues.

Rabbi: leader of the Jewish community, leads service in the synagogue.

