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**JUDAISM (answers)**

* Judaism is more than just a religion: is an entire culture, history and civilization of the Jewish people—way of living, thinking, body of literature, society history going back 4000 years.
* Built upon a code of **beliefs**, **laws** and **teachings**.
* Three basic principles of faith at heart of Judaism: **God**, (believe there is only one God, Creator, eternal, all-powerful; all-knowing) [Monotheistic] the **Torah—**word of God—revealed directly to the prophet Moses on Mount Sinai—written down as five books of the Torah [first five books of Hebrew Bible], and **Israel** (granted to Israelites by God as a Promised Land).
* Believe everyone (Jews and non-Jews) created in God’s image.
* Believe that death is part of life: immortality of the soul.
* Believe in the coming of a Messiah—means anointed one. Jesus is not seen as the Messiah.
* Jewish Holy Writings: Jewish Bible=Tanakh—collection of 39 books divided into three parts: Torah, The Prophets, and the Writings.
* Torah: contains many of the laws that Jews live by, especially the Ten Commandments. Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. (Known to Christians as the Old Testament or Pentateuch). Torah is changeless because it was revealed by God directly to Moses. Torah=teaching.
* The Prophets: people who received God’s word directly and so spoke with divine inspiration. Expressed God’s will for the people. Comprises historical texts, speeches and instruction by the Hebrew prophets. Also appear in the Christian Old Testament.
* The Writings: contain 13 books of poems, songs, historical stories, and wise sayings. Also appear in the Christian Old Testament.
* Mishnah=oral teachings and traditions.
* Gemara=completion
* Mishnah and Gemara together are known as the Talmud (instruction)—a guide to Jewish law and traditional Jewish life (interpretation).
* Jewish Law is called Halakhah—begins with the Torah—interpreted in the Talmud—but has evolved and grown since then.
* All Jewish laws still apply today, but some of them are impossible to observe now, because they relate to activities, situations or places that no longer exist. Includes laws governing sacrifices.
* Origins of Judaism: trace roots back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (known as the Patriarchs) in the ancient lands of the eastern Mediterranean. History is one of famine, slavery, war and invasion.
* Main Jewish Traditions: Rites of passage—ceremonies to mark important milestones in life: birth, marriage and death. One either day of life, boys ritually circumcised — commemorate Abraham’s circumcision of himself and his sons to make their covenant with God.
* Marriage and Family Life: important to Jews. Can be held in a synagogue but not necessary. Jewish marriage is a civil contract between man and woman—usually Rabbi is present with witnesses. Marriage contact is read out listing couple’s obligations to each other. Blessings are said.
* Death: For 30 days after death, mourners do not go to parties or listen to music. Memorial prayer is recited for 12 months by parents. Candle is lit on anniversary of death to remember the person.
* Bar Mitzvah: boys take responsibility for their own actions from age of 13—Bar Mitzvah=son of a Commandment. Synagogue, boy reads from Torah.
* Bat Mitzvah: girls—age of 12.
* Branches of Judaism:
1. Orthodox—most traditional. Conduct services in Hebrew; observe the laws of the Torah to the letter. Hassidic Jews are most traditional (wear black coats and hats.)
2. Reform—quite traditional in most respect, but relaxed about some of the laws. Do not follow all the dietary laws or those relating to working on the Sabbath. Uses the local language for services and allows for more prominent role for women. Women can become Rabbis.
3. Liberal—least traditional in following the laws and customs of Judaism. Have integrated into modern culture.

In ancient times, Jews spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. In Europe, spoke mixture of Hebrew and German (Yiddish)

* Synagogues—play important role in education—worship and teaching about the law. Children can usually attend a religious school at their synagogue.
* Synagogue—center of the Jewish religious community. Place of prayer and reflection.
* Rabbi=teacher; educated in Jewish Law and is therefore able to settle disputes that require interpretation of religious law.
* Sabbath: a special day of rest, worship, reflection and spiritual enrichment. Seventh day when God rested from His labors in creating the Heavens and the Earth. Saturday=in Hebrew “Shabbat.”
* Five major Jewish festivals are:

1. Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)

2. Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)—most sacred day of year to Jews.

3. Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles)

4. Pesach (Passover)—celebrates the deliverance of the Israelites people from slavery of Egypt.

5. Shavuot (the Festival of Weeks)

* Observance of these five feasts is required by the Torah.
* Jewish dietary laws—Torah lays down strict rules for the types of food that Jews may eat and how they should be prepared. Kosher foods are allowed. (Foods that have been hygienically prepared according to the law).
* Around 14 million people worldwide who define themselves as religious Jews.

Israel=only country with a Jewish majority, but more Jews live in the US (about 6 million) than in Israel (about 4 million)