

HANDOUT: JUDAISM FACT SHEET

Birthed: Approximately 15th century BCE

Adherents: 14 million, about .2-percent of the world population

Ranking: Eighth, behind Christianity, Islam, Atheism/Agnosticism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Taoism. Nevertheless, Judaism is considered one of the "Big Five" world faiths with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Judaism is less than four percent the size of Buddhism, which has 360 million adherents. The other three have 900 million or more.

Prophets: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Moses, Miriam, Joshua, Jonah, many more. All Old Testament books named after people are named for Jewish prophets.

Texts:

- Torah — The first five books of Hebrew scripture (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), are also called the Pentateuch.
- Tanakh — Hebrew scripture, including the Torah, Prophets (scripture including God's direct messages to the Hebrew prophets), and Writings (writings of the prophets guided by God). The Tanakh is sometimes referred to as the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament.
- Talmud or Oral Torah — consists of two parts: the Mishnah (explanations of Torah committed to writing after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem) and Gemara (centuries' worth of rabbinical questions, discussions, and commentaries on Torah).
- Midrash — a body of oral and written narrative that represents rabbis' and scholars' contributions over centuries to flesh out or illuminate the stories in the Torah.

Clergy: Rabbis ("teachers" in Hebrew) are self-selected. They can prepare by a combination of private study, individual mentoring, formal education including Jewish seminaries, and work in ministry. Continuous lifelong education is expected of Jewish religious leaders. Institutionalized movements in U.S. Judaism—Reform Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, etc.—each ordain clergy; their requirements for preparation and schooling vary. Traditionally, a private gathering of three rabbis can ordain a rabbi within their own Jewish community. There is no rabbinic hierarchy in Judaism, though a large congregation may have a senior rabbi and one or more assistant rabbis.

Symbols: Star of David, menorah (seven-candle candelabra), yarmulke (male head covering), synagogue (house of worship), tallit (fringed prayer shawl)

Terms and Fundamental Precepts:

- *Shabbat*—Jewish Sabbath, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.
- *Mitzvah* (plural mitzvot)—literally "commandment"—may refer literally to one of the Torah's 613 commandments or instructions to the Jewish people, or, more generally, to a kind or righteous deed.
- *Kosher*—literally "fit"—describes food that is in keeping with Jewish law. There are laws applying to kinds of food, food combinations, slaughter, preparation, and serving.
- *Rosh Hashanah*—Jewish New Year; begins the period of High Holy Days that concludes with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Rosh Hashanah is observed on the first two days of the Jewish year, a time of celebration, worship focused on giving thanks and taking personal stock of how one has kept covenant with God and with others over the

course of the preceding year. Jews eat sweets (in European tradition, apples and honey) in symbolic herald of a sweet new year.

- *Yom Kippur*—the Day of Atonement, the most solemn holy day of the Jewish calendar. A day of fasting, reflection, and prayer. Expected mitzvot for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are to "come clean," to engage in the difficult effort to make things right with those you have wronged or offended.
- *Channukah or Hannukah*—"Festival of Lights" celebrating a miracle of Jewish history.
- *G-d*—the way the name of the deity appears in Jewish scripture and other writings. Writing the name of God is seen as presumptuous and risky: presumptuous because we are only human, and risky because if it is written and subsequently crumpled or destroyed it would be blasphemy.
- *Passover*—High Holy Days celebrating God's deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. The term "Passover" specifically relates to God's sparing, or passing over, Jewish families in the tenth and final plague, Plague of the Firstborn, when God killed all firstborn sons in the land of Egypt. After this event, the Pharaoh allowed the Jews to leave. Passover is the most observed holiday in the Jewish calendar, frequently celebrated even by nonobservant Jews.
- *Exodus*—Departure of Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Exodus cannot be dated with certainty. Most commonly placed at 1440 BCE or 1290 BCE; the 15th-century date is more consistent with biblical narrative, while the later date is more consistent with archaeological findings. However, there are discrepancies in each case.
- *Orthodox, Conservative, Reform*—Three branches of modern Judaism that vary by how strictly adherents observe Jewish law. Orthodox Jews try to live strictly within the exact, literal specifications of the commandments; Conservative Jews try to adhere to the most important commandments and to maintain the spirit of the commandments throughout their lives; Reform Jews try to uphold the spirit of the commandments to revere life without feeling they must follow the letter of the law. Interpretations can vary from a person hardly ever thinking about obeying the commandments to someone who thinks of their faith constantly and adapts every facet of their lives to keeping the commandments. There is often tension among the branches, yet always recognition of their shared cultural heritage.
- *Mezuzah*—Hebrew blessing mounted on a Jewish household's doorframe as a reminder of the household's covenant with God and God's blessing on their home.

Shared with Unitarian Universalism:

- Values behavior over professions of faith: "Deeds, not creeds"
- Disproportionate effect on culture and history relative to their percentage of the population
- Value education and lifelong learning
- Great emphasis on personal choice and responsibility
- Strong commitment to social justice work
- In *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993), readings 450, 453, 467, 497, 507, 629-637, 641-644, 707, 708, 710, and 711 and hymn 89 are from the Jewish tradition.

HANDOUT: JEWISH HOLY DAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Holy Day/Holiday: Rosh Hashanah

- Celebrates: New Year (Rosh Hashanah, two days), beginning of High Holy Days period
- Observed by: Two-day period of worship including sounding the shofar (ram's horn trumpet); dipping apples in honey; abstaining from work; tashlich ceremony, or symbolically casting off of sins by throwing bread crumbs in the river.

Holy Day/Holiday: Yom Kippur

- Celebrates: Day of Atonement, most holy of the High Holy Days; conclusion of the High Holy Days period
- Observed by: Much of the day is spent in synagogue in prayer. Fasting; repentance; sounding of the shofar.

Holy Day/Holiday: Sukkot

- Celebrates: Harvest festival that also commemorates the forty years of wandering in the desert between leaving Egypt and reaching the Promised Land
- Observed by: Building and decorating a sukkah, a temporary shelter outdoors; use of the four species (palm, willow, myrtle, and citrus branches) in worship services.

Holy Day/Holiday: Simchat Torah

- Celebrates: The Torah as a tree of life for the Jewish people; affirmation of lifelong study; conclusion of the year's weekly Torah readings and starting a new cycle of reading the Torah from the beginning.
- Observed by: Joyful celebration; Torah scrolls are taken from the ark and carried or danced around the synagogue seven times. During the service, the concluding section of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of Torah, is read, followed immediately by the opening section of Genesis, or B'reishit as it is called in Hebrew.

Holy Day/Holiday: Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)

- Celebrates: The rededication of the Temple after it was defiled in ancient times
- Observed by: Eight days of celebration include lighting candles on a hanukiah (a nine-candle menorah); playing with a dreidel (toy top); eating latkes (potato pancakes) or sufganiyot (sugared donuts); some Jews living in majority Christian societies give gifts.

Holy Day/Holiday: Purim

- Celebrates: Esther, a Jewish queen of Persia, saving her people from death
- Observed by: Reading the Book of Esther aloud (the megillah) and sounding a noisemaker each time the story's villain (Haman) is mentioned; performing the Purim story in costume; merrymaking

Holy Day/Holiday: Passover (Pesach)

- Celebrates: The story of the Exodus, the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt; God's "passing over" Jewish households during the tenth plague of Egypt
- Observed by: A seven- or eight-day period that begins the evening before the first day with a seder (ritual meal) and the reading of the Haggadah, the story of the Exodus; eating matzoh instead of leavened bread; observant Jews may clean their homes of all foods not allowed during Passover; in worship services, beginning the counting of the 49-day Omer period (in preparation for Shavuot, the holiday which marks the Jews' receiving of the Torah from God at Mount Sinai).

Holy Day/Holiday: Shavu'ot (Festival of Weeks)

- Celebrates: The Jewish people's receiving of the Torah
- Observed by: Reading the Torah and the Book of Ruth; all-night Torah study at a synagogue; completing the counting of the Omer; a celebration with dairy foods.

Holy Day/Holiday: Shabbat (Sabbath)

- Celebrates: Doing the mitzvah (God's commandment) of rest from work on the seventh day of the week, freedom, time spiritual learning
- Observed by: Abstaining from work; sharing a Friday evening meal with family and visitors which may include blessings over candles, a beverage, and food; studying Torah, attending worship services, or taking time for spiritual learning; quiet time with family.

HANDOUT: TEN HEBREW PROPHETS

Category: Daniel

- Was carried off to Babylon at a young age
- Served as a dream interpreter in the royal court of King Nebuchadnezzar; predicted Armageddon
- Interpreted the "handwriting on the wall" which foretold the destruction of King Belshazzar's kingdom: "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and will end it, He has weighed you on the scales and found you wanting, your kingdom will be divided and portioned off to others" (this is where the phrase "the handwriting on the wall" comes from)

Category: Deborah

- Only female judge of Israel
- Her story is told in the Book of Judges
- Delivered judgments beneath a palm tree
- Was a poet
- Fought alongside Barak and other men and women against enemies of Israel, who they conquered

Category: Elijah

- Convinced the people of Israel to stop worshipping the god Baal, and to worship the one true God
- Expected by some believers to return to earth before the Messiah
- Traditionally, invited to every Passover seder by an open door and a place set at the table

Category: Isaiah

- Prophesied restoration of the nation of Israel
- Predicted events 700 years in the future
- The subject of stories on which Handel based his "Messiah" symphony
- Went barefoot and naked three years to get people to pay attention to his prophecies
- Predicted a future "servant of the lord" or Messiah

Category: Jeremiah

- Was sent by God to warn the Jews that they had broken their covenant with God by worshipping false idols
- Prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and hardship for the Jewish people for years to come
- Predicted that someday all nations would join in accepting God's sovereignty
- Thought by some to be the author of the Book of Lamentations—five poems that tell the story of Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians
- Known as "the weeping prophet"

Category: Jonah

- Told by God to preach to people of Ninevah, but ran away from God
- Sailed on a ship which was struck by a destructive storm, then asked to be thrown overboard so the sailors on board could live
- Survived three days in the belly of a fish
- Accepting God's charge, traveled to Ninevah to prophesy the city's doom; the people repented and God spared them
- Was angry that God was so forgiving

Category: Joshua

- Leader of Israelites after Moses
- Prophesied that God would protect God's people as they conquered the land that was to be Israel
- Led the Israelites around the big wall surrounding the city of Jericho. They marched around the wall for seven days. On the last day, the Israelites marched around the city seven times, blew a ram's horn, shouted, the wall fell down and the city was conquered.
- In a battle, asked God to stop the sun so the battle could continue in daylight

Category: Miriam

- Led the women in dancing to praise God after leaving Egypt
- Followed baby sibling Moses along river until Pharaoh's daughter found the baby
- Was struck with a skin disease after questioning God's special relationship with Moses; was cured after being exiled for seven days
- Has a name that was the source of the common Christian name "Mary"
- Sometimes is celebrated at Passover with a cup or an orange on the seder table

Category: Noah

- Prophesied a flood that lasted 120 years
- Collected a male and female of every animal to carry onto a wooden ark (boat)
- First tiller of the soil
- Planted the first vineyard

Category: Samuel (Shmuel)

- Was a judge, at a time when Jews had no kings, but judges
- Was told by God to appoint Saul as the first king. Saul was the first to start building a kingdom of Jerusalem and preparing for first temple; Saul was succeeded by son-in-law David, who was succeeded by Solomon, who finally built the temple.

HANDOUT: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Traditional adaptations from Hebrew scripture, Exodus 20:2-14.

Jewish Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your G-d.
2. You shall have no other gods before me; You shall not make for yourself an idol.
3. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your G-d.
4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (lie).
10. You shall not covet anything belonging to your neighbor.

Protestant Ten Commandments

Preface: I am the Lord your God.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make unto you any graven images.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness.
10. You shall not covet anything belonging to your neighbor.

HANDOUT: LAWS OF KASHRUT

"Kashrut" means "fitness." Food that has been prepared according to the laws of kashrut is kosher—"fit"—for consumption by an observant Jew. Many Reform Jews do not keep kosher; Orthodox Jews eat only kosher food; Conservative Jews usually follow the laws of kashrut but less strictly than their Orthodox counterparts. NOTE: Sometimes restaurants will call a dish "kosher style" but this is a misnomer. "Kosher" refers to a process—the how, not the what. Any style of food (Chinese, Indian, Mexican, etc.) may be prepared kosher or non-kosher.

Kosher (permitted)	Trayf (forbidden)
Animals that chew their cud, have cloven hooves, are not diseased or flawed, and have been ritually slaughtered (e.g., cattle, sheep, goats, deer)	Pork (ham, pork bacon, pork sausage, pepperoni), camel, rabbit, rodents, reptiles, any animal that died of natural causes or was killed by another animal
Domesticated fowl: chicken, turkey, quail, geese, ducks	Birds of prey and scavengers (eagle, hawk, vulture)
Sea animals with fins and scales, such as salmon, tuna, carp, herring, cod	Sea animals lacking either fins or scales (all shellfish: crab, lobster, shrimp, clam, octopus, swordfish, sturgeon)
Meat or dairy, as long as they are eaten several hours apart	Meat eaten with dairy (e.g., a cheeseburger, tuna with a glass of milk)
Wine or grape juice made in a kosher facility (under rabbinic supervision)	Any other wine or grape juice
Soft cheese and kosher hard cheese	Most hard cheese
All fruits, vegetables, and grains are permitted except grape products (see above)	Insects

Food Preparation and Eating

Pots, pans, dishes and utensils carry the status of the food last heated in them. Kosher homes have at least two sets of cookware, dishes, and utensils, one set for preparing and eating meat and the other for dairy. Keeping kosher away from home requires making sure of ingredients as well as kosher preparation.

Foods sold in grocery stores are marked with specific symbols if they have been certified kosher by a rabbi or the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations. Most common of these are a "K" inside a circle (but not a "K" by itself), a "P" inside a circle (meaning fit for Passover), and "pareve", meaning "neutral." Pareve foods can be eaten with either meat or milk products.