

Name:

Date:

Judaism

Judaism is the oldest religion of the western world and has influenced Christianity and Islam. The Hebrews were the ancestors of the Jewish people. The Hebrews were different from others of their time because the Hebrews were monotheistic; they believed in only one God. The Hebrews believed they had a special relationship with their God and that they were God's chosen people.

The Hebrews trace their ancestry to Abraham. Hebraic tradition says that Abraham left his home in the Mesopotamian city of Ur about 2200BC. Abraham's grandson, Jacob, established a nation called Israel on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. About 1300BCE, many Hebrews moved to Egypt to escape a famine. A famine is a great hunger. At first, the Hebrews were treated well in Egypt, but in time the Hebrews were enslaved by the Egyptians. According to Hebraic tradition, God sent ten deadly plagues to Egypt when the Egyptians would not release the Hebrew slaves. When the Hebrews did escape, tradition states that Moses, the leader of the Hebrews, parted the Red Sea for just enough time to allow the Hebrews to pass. Once the Hebrews reached the other side of the Red Sea, tradition states that the waters returned and the Egyptian army drowned. After their escape across the Red Sea about 1250BCE, God revealed Ten Commandments to Moses. The Ten Commandments formed the basis of Mosaic Law and are the model for both Jewish and Christian moral thought.

The Hebrews returned to Israel, but they were conquered by Babylon in 586BC and were exiled, or forced from their home. The Hebrews were able to return to Israel, but the Roman conquered Israel and in 66BC, the Romans forced the Hebrews into exile once



again. The Hebrews were then forced to live as minorities in many different lands in a period known as the Diaspora. The Diaspora ended with the creation of the modern nation of Israel in 1948.

Jewish people have often faced severe mistreatment. European Jews were exiled from Spain in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella. The Jews also faced organized massacres called pogroms in many nations, particularly in Eastern Europe. In the last century, as many as six million Jews were murdered in what we now call the Holocaust, where the Nazi party in Germany attempted genocide. Genocide is the planned killing of a whole group of people because of their religion or nationality.

Jews worship in synagogues led by a rabbi. Rabbi is a Hebrew word that means "master." Their holiest period is the weekly Shabbat, which lasts from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Other important Jewish holidays include Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (a Day of Atonement or confession), Simchat Torah (celebrating receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai), Chanukah (a celebration of a military victory), and Passover (a remembrance of the time the Hebrews lived in Egypt).

The Torah is the most holy book of Judaism. The Torah is also holy to Christians, who include it as the Old Testament of their Bible. The Talmud is another holy book in Judaism. The Talmud is a collection of the laws and customs of the Jewish people.

There are approximately fifteen million Jews throughout the world. Two-thirds of the Jewish population is concentrated in the United States and Israel. Europe was once home to millions of Jewish people, but most of the survivors of the Holocaust emigrated to Israel, the United States or other nations.

Answer in complete sentences

1. What is the oldest religion of the western world? About how old is the faith?

2. Who were the Hebrews? How was the religious faith of the Hebrews different than most other people in ancient history?

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Fill in the Blanks

The beliefs of Christianity and *Islam are rooted in J__d__i__m, the o__d__st religion of the western world. The J_____ are the descendants of the H__b__e__s. The Hebrews trace a__c__s__ry to A__r__h__m, who left his home in U__, in M__s__p__t__m__a about _____ years ago. The Hebrews believed in one God, so they were m__n__t__e__s__ic. The Hebrews believed they had a special r__l__t__o__s__ip with their god, and that they were his c__o__en people.

The H__b__e__s left their home in I__r__el to escape a famine. M__s__s led them back home. Moses is often called the “law-giver” because both J_____ and *C__r__s__i__ns believe God revealed Ten C__m__a__d__e__ts to M__s__s about _____ years ago. The T____ Commandments are the model for both J__w__sh and Christian m__r__l thought.

The H__b__e__s were eventually conquered by others, and were forced to leave I__r__el by the R__m__ns. Since then, Jews have lived as *m__n__r__t__es in many countries, but they remained united through the T__r__h, the written law of the Jewish faithful.

Jews have been persecuted many times in their history. F__r__i__a__d and I__a__e__la forced the Jews to leave S_____ at the end of the fifteenth *c__n__u__y. Jews also faced organized massacres, or p__g__o__s, particularly in E__s__e__n Europe. In the last century, the N_____ party of G__r__a__y attempted g__n__c__de by killing as many as six million J_____ in the H__l__c__u__t.

Jews worship in s__n__g__g__es led by a r__b__i or “t__a__h__r.” Their h_____ period lasts from s__n__et Friday to sunset S__t__r__ay. The Jewish holidays include their New Year, R_____, H_____; Yom Kippur, the D____ of A__o__e__e__t; a celebration of a military victory in C_____; and P__s__o__er, an observance of the time the J_____ lived in E__y__t.

The United States is home to about ____ percent of the world’s J_____. Europe was once home to millions of Jews, but most of the s__r__i__o__s of the Holocaust e__i__r__t__d to other nations.

Answer in complete sentences

3. What is the most holy book of Judaism?

4. What is the Talmud?

5. What was the Diaspora?

6. What does rabbi mean?
