

Basic Beliefs of Judaism

God

Judaism is a monotheistic religion. Jews believe there is one God who created and rules the world. This God is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (in all places at all times). God is also just and merciful.

People

It is believed that each person is created in the image of one God. Therefore, all people are created equal.

Furthermore, our likeness to God is in our intellectual ability to understand. Judaism believes that people have freewill and are responsible for the choices made.

Judaism is an ethical religion. When the Israelites accepted the Ten Commandments from God at Mount Sinai, they committed themselves to following a code of law which regulates both how they worship God and how they treat other people.

Holy Book

The Torah is the primary document of Judaism. Torah, which means "teaching", is God's revealed instructions to the Jewish People.

Jews learn from the Torah how to act, think and even feel about life and death. The stories in the Torah teach about God's relationship with the Jewish People. In addition, the Torah contains 613 commandments from God (mitzvot). The Ten Commandments are considered the most important commandments of the Torah.

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God
2. You shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain
4. Remember the day of shabbat to keep it holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. Do not give false testimony against your neighbor
10. You shall not covet your fellow's possessions

Land

Judaism believes the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael) was part of the covenant made between God and the Jewish People at Mount Sinai. Since the time of Abraham, there has been a continual Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

Messiah

Jews believe the Messiah (Mashiach) will be a person (not a god), from the family of King David, who will lead the world to unity and peace. Jews do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Principles of Judaism

Rambam's thirteen principles of faith is the most widely-accepted list of Jewish beliefs.

1. God exists.
2. God is one and unique.
3. God is incorporeal.
4. God is eternal.
5. Prayer is to be directed to God alone.
6. The words of the prophets are true.
7. Moses was the greatest prophet, and his prophecies are true.
8. The Torah was given to Moses.
9. There will be no other Torah.
10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
12. The Messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.

Essence of Judaism

The following famous story from the Talmud best summarizes the essence of Judaism. A non-Jew asked Rabbi Hillel to teach him all about the Torah while standing on one foot. Rabbi Hillel said: "What is hateful to you, don't do unto your neighbor. The rest is commentary. Now, go and study."

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