

Judaism: What does Shabbat teach about responsibilities and relationships? How do Jews celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

Key Facts/Beliefs

Judaism is the oldest of the world's four biggest monotheistic religions (religions with only one god). It is also the smallest, with only about 12 million followers around the world.

Jewish history begins with the covenant established between God and Abraham around 1812 BC (over 3800 years ago), during the Bronze Age in the Middle East.

There are large Jewish populations in Israel and the U.S.

Jews believe that there is a single God who not only created the universe, but with whom every Jew can have an individual and personal relationship.

Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. Jews see Abraham as a symbol of trusting and obeying God. Abraham is also important to followers of Christianity and Islam.

Key Celebration: Shabbat

The most important day of the week is the Sabbath (Shabbat), which is a day made holy by refraining from weekday work.

The Jewish holy day starts at sunset on Friday and continues until sunset on Saturday. During the Sabbath, observant Jews do nothing that might be counted as work, including driving and cooking.

At the end of Shabbat, the family gathers for the havdalah ceremony. Havdalah means separation. The ceremony marks the end of Shabbat and the beginning of the ordinary working week. The first creative act is to light a braided candle - this is a reminder that, in Genesis, God first created light.



Artefacts and symbols

Shofar	A musical instrument which makes a loud piercing sound like a trumpet and reminds Jews of God's great power.
Apple dipped in honey	This is a way of wishing each other a sweet and happy New Year.
Pomegranate	Celebration of new and unusual experiences. It has 613 seeds, which coincide with the 613 commandments of the Torah.
Shema	The Shema is regarded by many Jews as the most important prayer in Judaism. This is because it reminds them of the key principle of faith - there is only one God.
Kiddush	A Jewish prayer, recited over a cup of wine immediately before the meal on the eve of Sabbath or on a festival.



Key Celebration: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival and commemorates the creation of the world. The festival begins with ten days of repentance and self examination, during which time God sits in judgement on every person.

Yom Kippur, the most sacred and solemn day of the Jewish year, brings the Days of Repentance to a close. As well as fasting for 25 hours, Jews spend the day in prayer, asking for forgiveness and resolving to behave better in the future.

Key Vocabulary

repent	Feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing.
solemn	Feeling of sadness.
custom	A traditionally and widely accepted way of behaving or doing something that is specific to a particular society, place or time.
Havdalah	Separation.

Important Jewish festivals

Jews celebrate the important events of Jewish history throughout the year. Some festivals celebrated by Jewish people include Passover, Sukkot and Hanukkah.

