

When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

Genesis 1: 1–5.

Chapter Six

Judaism

6

Look at the photograph and consider the following questions:

1. Define the word *creation*. (Use a dictionary if necessary.)
2. What is the significance of the separation of “light” from “dark” in the passage from Genesis?

Introduction

Of the recognized major world religions, Judaism is by far the smallest. The worldwide population of Jews is about 14 million. In light of this fact, the question might be: Why does a religious group with a global membership of less than half the population of Canada warrant a full chapter in a book on world religions? The answer to this question is twofold. First, Judaism has made overwhelming contributions to the development of Western religious thinking and philosophy. Second, no other religious group in the history of the world has undergone so much persecution based on its beliefs. For these reasons, Judaism is an essential component in any study of the world’s religions.

Chronologically, Judaism is the first of the world’s three great **monotheistic** religions. Dating back approximately 4000 years, Judaism marks the starting point of a history embraced by three separate faiths. From the story of Adam and Eve to the emergence of Abraham and Moses, Judaism gives roots to both Christianity and Islam. In fact, many of the prophets revered in the Hebrew Scriptures are also revered in the Christian and the Muslim traditions. Judaism has also maintained a tradition of scholarship that is unparalleled among the world’s faiths, considering the size of the Jewish population. From Biblical scholarship to philosophy to science, Jews have offered ideas and made discoveries that have changed the way people see the world.

The tragic side of the Jewish experience is that its followers have been subjected to unprecedented persecution. From the Babylonian Captivity to the Spanish Inquisition, Jews were the target of people’s disdain and hatred. The persecution of Jews reached its horrifying peak in the twentieth century when the Nazis murdered approximately 6 million Jews—one-third of the world’s Jewish population.

Judaism offers the world an idea of God that is shared by other faiths. It also provides a challenge to the collective conscience of humanity. As we bear witness to the inspiring and tragic history of Judaism, we are struck by the suffering that the Jewish people have endured as well as the rich love of wisdom inherent in the Jewish faith.

Learning Goals

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- identify the origins and beliefs of Judaism
- identify the major personalities who contributed to the formation of the Jewish faith, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Maimonides, and Judah the Prince
- examine the major influences in the development of Judaism
- describe Jewish worship and religious movements from the era of the temple to the emergence of the synagogue
- analyze how Jewish leaders influenced events, created movements, and challenged the status quo of their times
- describe the beliefs of the Jewish faith
- identify and state the importance of Jewish beliefs related to the ideas of the chosen people, the Promised Land, and the Messiah
- describe the historic relationships between religion and the State in Judaism
- identify the origins and significance of the various practices, rituals, symbols, and festivals of Judaism
- develop an understanding of the emergence of the sacred writings of Judaism: Torah, Tanakh, and Talmud
- describe and understand the significance of the Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reconstructionist branches of Judaism
- effectively communicate the results of your inquiries, using written reports and essays
- defend a thesis, using appropriate style, structure, argument, and documentation
- identify ways in which Jews are represented in Canada



• **1700–1280? BCE**
Patriarchal and Mosaic period; Jews leave Egypt (1280)

• **1000? BCE** King David/King Solomon—Solomon's Temple built

• **721–538 BCE**
Northern Kingdom taken by Assyrians (721), Hebrew population disperses; Southern Kingdom taken by Babylonians (586), Babylonian exile; Solomon's Temple destroyed; Cyrus of Persia defeats Babylonians (538), allows exiles to return

• **332 BCE** Alexander the Great conquers Israel, Diaspora Hellenism begins

• **164 BCE–70 CE**
Maccabean uprising, temple rebuilt (164 BCE); Roman siege of Jerusalem, temple destroyed (70 CE)

• **200–425 CE**
Mishnah compiled by Judah the Prince; Talmud compilation completed (425)





• **1135–1204 CE**

The life of Maimonides—
philosopher and rabbinic
scholar

• **1700–1800 CE**

Tension between Hasidim
and traditional legalists

• **1768 CE** First
synagogue in Canada

• **1800s CE** First
wave of Jewish
immigration to the
Americas



• **1948 CE**

Declaration of the modern
State of Israel

• **1933–1945 CE**

Rise of Nazism and the
Holocaust (Shoah); *St.*
Louis incident (1939)

• **1945–CE**

Post-Holocaust
immigration to
Canada

• **1980** First woman rabbi
in Canada—Joan Friedman

• **2001** 250 official
Jewish synagogues in
Canada



Timeline

Judaism



Figure 6.1

The birthplace of Judaism is also important to two other religions: Christianity (Chapter 7) and Islam (Chapter 8). Without a full understanding of Judaism, one cannot grasp the origins and teachings of Christianity.

ORIGINS

The narrative of the Hebrew Bible describes the nature of God's relationship with humanity. From the rich imagery of creation to the moral lessons of the flood, the Bible is the instrument through which Jewish religious truth is recorded and communicated. While one might assume that this study should begin with Adam and Eve, it is more historically precise to begin with the patriarch of the Hebrew faith, Abraham. We start with Abraham because he represents the first steps taken in the formation of Hebrew religious practice that would eventually evolve into Judaism.

The Patriarch of the Covenant: Abraham

According to Hebrew scriptures, around 2000 BCE, Abraham received a vision from God that instructed him to leave his home in the Mesopotamian city of Ur and move to Haran and later to Canaan. The vision that Abraham received did not come from one of the many gods of polytheistic Mesopotamia; instead, he received revelation from the one God. Thus, the monotheistic tradition of the Hebrew faith came to be. In the vision, God said to Abraham:

Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.

I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you;

I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing.

Genesis 12: 1–2



Figure 6.2

What was the nature of God's promise to Abraham?

Abraham was instructed to move to a special land to raise a nation. He did what God commanded, eventually settling in Canaan.

At this point in the history of the religion, two ideas emerged that would develop into Judaism. First, the idea arose that the Jews represented God's **chosen people**. Amid a society characterized by polytheism and idolatry, God chose Abraham and promised to bless him and make of him a "great nation." On this basis, Jews refer to themselves as God's chosen people. Second, the idea of a **Promised**

Land was established. While the idea took on added significance at the time of Moses, it was Abraham, and later his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, who sought to keep the covenant with God and develop a community in the Promised Land.

These two ideas are the foundation of the **covenant** that God made with Abraham. A covenant is a solemn and binding agreement, similar to a contract. The covenant between God and Abraham—and, by extension, humanity—is the key to the Jewish faith. It established God as the creator and governor of all things, and the chosen people as those who would honour God's covenant.

The Law and the Covenant: Moses

According to Jewish tradition, the covenant between God and the Hebrew people took on new significance during the time of Moses. The patriarchal period of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had seen the establishment of a covenant wherein God agreed to love humanity and humanity agreed to love God rather than the many gods of polytheistic Mesopotamia. The Mosaic period would see God provide his people with the commandments that would allow them to keep his covenant.

When a severe drought struck Canaan, the descendants of Abraham were forced to move to Egypt. Eventually, the Egyptians turned on the Hebrews and enslaved them. By the time Ramses II became Pharaoh, slavery was a fact of Hebrew life, with liberation a distant, idealistic dream.

Often, idealistic dreams can become reality, and, as the Hebrew people longed for liberty, a liberator did emerge. Moses was born of Hebrew slaves, but was later adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and grew to manhood in the imperial court. He was favoured by Pharaoh until Moses killed an Egyptian who was harassing a Hebrew slave. Fearing the wrath of Pharaoh, Moses fled to Midian where he was received into the home of Jethro, a priest of Midian.

One day, while tending Jethro's flock of sheep, Moses came to Mount Horeb, called the mountain of God in the Book of Exodus. While at Horeb, Moses encountered God through a burning bush. God revealed that the cries of the Israelites had been heard and that they would be set free through the person of Moses. God said that they would be brought out of bondage into a "Promised Land"; indeed, it would be "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3: 8). Moses knew that the Israelites would wonder who sent him, so he asked God what he should say. God responded by saying, "*Ehyeh-asher-Ehyeh*." The exact meaning of this name for God is uncertain, but it can be translated as one of the following: "I am in the process of becoming" or "I will be who I will be." This translation suggests that Moses would come to know God more and more as their relationship evolved.

Moses embarked on his mission and, despite the overwhelming strength of the Pharaoh and his army, led the Hebrews out of bondage.

According to tradition, God brought ten plagues on the Egyptians in order to convince the Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people go. The tenth plague called on the angel of death to descend on Egypt and take the first-born of all who lived in the region. God instructed Moses to tell the Hebrews that they could escape this plague by smearing lamb's blood over their doors. In this way, death would "pass over" their homes because the blood would be a sign that the house belonged to a descendant of Abraham. This event is celebrated in the Jewish festival of Passover (see page 235). It was the tenth plague and the death of his son that convinced the Pharaoh to set the Hebrews free.

Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt across the Red Sea (literally, the Reed Sea) into the region of the Sinai peninsula (Figure 6.1). This mass emigration is known historically as the **Exodus**. The word *exodus* means "going out" or "departure." In this case, the Israelites left the bondage of slavery in Egypt for freedom and hope in a new land.

On Mount Sinai, God appeared to Moses again, this time sharing with him the Ten Commandments (see page 239). The Commandments emphasized the nature of God's existence as well as the laws that the people would need to follow in order to keep their covenant with God.

The Passover, the Exodus, and the Ten Commandments served as a specific renewal of the covenant between God and the people. Now, the Hebrews could draw inspiration from the example of Moses and marvel at the wonder of God, who chose to

reveal his wisdom to Moses, and whom the Hebrews, in turn, chose to worship and honour. They could also conduct their lives according to the absolute laws, established by God in the Commandments, in order to live as a peaceful and faithful people.

Judges, Kings, and Prophets

The Israelites lived a nomadic existence in the Sinai for forty years until they reached the land of Canaan. This marked the beginning of the Biblical period of Judges and Kings. First, the Israelites were led by people referred to as Judges ("judges" is a translation of the Hebrew *shofetim*). Judges were like tribal leaders or chieftains who led the people through periods of crisis. They were charismatic and inspiring people—both men and women—who helped the Israelites establish a sense of identity.

By around 1000 BCE, the Hebrew people began to long for a king to lead them. Initially, God was reluctant to grant the people a king, but eventually agreed to give Saul the status of king because of growing threats from the Philistines. Saul was succeeded by David, whose kingship marked the high point of Jewish imperial history. David scored a number of military victories over his enemies and eventually established Jerusalem as his capital city. His son, Solomon, built a temple that would serve as the centre of worship for the Jewish faith for the next millennium. However, after the death of Solomon, the kingdom broke up. Around 921 BCE, the northern tribes separated from the southern tribes, taking on the name "Israel." The southern tribes, centred around

Jerusalem, became known as “Judah.” The era of kings was coming to an end; outside forces would soon impose themselves on the Hebrews again.

Figure 6.3

The head of the sculpture of David, by Michelangelo. According to tradition, God favoured David by allowing him to defeat the Philistine giant, Goliath, with a sling and stone. The Philistines then retreated in shock and fear.



The end of this era was predicted by the prophets. In modern usage, the word prophet has two meanings: one who speaks on behalf of God, and one who predicts the future. In the Jewish tradition, a prophet is a person who receives a message from God and delivers that message to God’s people. The message itself belongs to God; the prophet acts as God’s messenger. Usually, in the Bible, the Hebrew prophets warned of a coming crisis based on the inability of the people to be true to their covenant with God.

The prophetic tradition is one that Judaism shares with Christianity and Islam. Prophecies are found throughout the Bible. They involve the belief that, at certain times, God uses specific people to deliver his divine message. The word of God, as spoken through the prophets, survives in the holy

scriptures of Judaism, the **Tanakh**. The prophetic writings are a combination of practical advice, social criticism, and poetic beauty. Their ongoing refrain is, “Love God and keep the covenant with him.”

The Exile

Jewish independence and autonomy would be dramatically altered by two military conquests. In 721 BCE, the Assyrians invaded and captured the territory of Israel. The invading troops not only took the land but also evicted many of the region’s citizens, scattering Israel’s population. Then, in 586 BCE, Babylonian invaders captured Judah and destroyed Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. Upward of 10 000 Jewish community leaders were taken prisoner and sent into exile in Babylon. This event is known as the Exile or the Babylonian Captivity. They were held there until Cyrus the Great of Persia released them in 538 BCE, when he defeated the Babylonians.

The period of the Exile marked a shift in the manner in which the Hebrews would worship. With Solomon’s Temple destroyed, the people, as a community, needed to find a new way to honour God. Sometime during the Exile, places for congregational worship, now known as **synagogues**, had been created. They grew in importance in the period after the destruction of the temple. The Exile also marked the beginning of intense scholarly analysis of scripture and the emergence of revered teachers known as **rabbis**. The rabbis sought to interpret scripture in a manner that would make the stories of the Bible more

comprehensible to the average person. The emergence of the rabbis would have a profound effect on Judaism in the years to come. Finally, the period of the Exile saw the development of a belief in a divine kingship characterized by a **Messiah**, which means “anointed one.” The Jews, living in captivity, hoped for the coming of a great king who would lead them out of oppression.

After the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, the Jewish captives were encouraged to return to their homeland. The Jewish leadership, under the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah, co-operated with the Persians to facilitate the return. In 515 BCE, a second temple was completed—an outward sign of the renewal of the covenant.

During the Exile, the religion of the Jews evolved from a tribal faith to a world faith. The Jewish God acted as a force in world history, and not simply within the confines of the ancient kingdom of Israel. From this point on, the text speaks of Jews and Judaism rather than Hebrews and Israelites.

The Diaspora

Diaspora is a Greek word meaning “sowing of seed” or “dispersal.” In the context of Jewish history, “the **Diaspora**” is the term used when referring to the Jewish population living outside of Israel. By the third century BCE, the majority of Jews lived in the Diaspora, so they created a new set of standards for their faith tradition. The Jews who chose to remain in Babylon rather than return from exile formed a sizable population in the region. Practical worship centred around the synagogue, and scholarly

analysis of scripture continued under the direction of the rabbis. Other pockets of Jewish population sprang up in communities on the perimeter of the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great conquered much of the known world including Persia, Egypt, and India. Thus, the Jewish people, particularly those in the Diaspora, fell under the influence of Greek culture, a process called **Hellenization**. Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, embraced Greek architecture, dress, and names. The Bible was translated into Greek. According to legend, seventy of Egypt’s greatest Jewish scholars, independent of one another, translated the Bible into Greek. Miraculously, all seventy scholars produced independent translations of the Bible that were identical to those of their counterparts! While legendary, the story does provide a backdrop for the first translation of the Bible into Greek. This translation, known as the Septuagint, served the Jewish community of the Diaspora for centuries. Eventually, a tradition of analysis, compilation, and commentary emerged that would see the Bible reorganized into the distinct divisions of law, prophecy, poetry, and writings.

The Maccabean Revolt

The next significant event in the history of the Jews came in 168 BCE. Antiochus IV Epiphanes converted the temple into a shrine to the Greek god Zeus and installed his own candidate to the Jewish high priesthood. Drawing on the growing dissatisfaction with Greek rule among the Jewish population, a group of rebels called the Maccabees started a revolt.

Figure 6.4

A Hanukkah menorah. The events of the Maccabean revolt are celebrated each year in the festival of Hanukkah (see page 234).



By 164 BCE, the Maccabees were in control of Jerusalem, and the temple

was rededicated to God. The dynasty initiated by the Maccabees would rule until the Roman conquest of Israel.

The Romans

In 64 BCE, the Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem as part of a campaign to expand the Roman Empire. Once again, Jews were subject to foreign domination. By this time, several distinct Jewish sects had emerged, as shown in Figure 6.5. The growing sophistication of Jewish

Figure 6.5
Sects in Judea,
64 BCE

Sect	Description
Sadducees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> believed in co-operation with the Romans provided that religious worship was not severely restricted represented the aristocracy and wealthy people read the Torah literally (see page 238) strictly followed the teachings of the Torah; rejected the prophetic writings associated with temple life believed they were the priestly descendants of Zadok, a priest from the time of David
Pharisees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> believed in co-operation with the Romans provided that religious worship was not severely restricted represented the common people allowed for broad interpretation of the Torah encouraged commentary and interpretation of the Scriptures associated with synagogue worship sought to make Jewish law practical and compassionate
Zealots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not believe in co-operation with the Romans under any circumstances and sought the overthrow of Roman rule inspired by historical victories (Maccabees, David) over invading forces initiated the revolt of 66 CE (see page 223)
Essenes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lived in separate, segregated communities followed purification rites and rituals viewed as a priestly caste interpreted the Torah as a model for the future beliefs centred on the coming of God's final judgment were in possession of the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947
Samaritans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> descendants of the northern tribes accepted the Torah; rejected Prophets and Writings

belief, combined with the harshness of Roman rule, led to a renewed emphasis on the coming of a Messiah—one anointed by God to lead the Jews out of oppression.

Rabbinic Judaism



Figure 6.6

King Herod's palace at Masada was built in the first century BCE. The plateau was a Jewish stronghold in the Zealots' revolt against the Romans from 66 to 73 CE. This photograph shows the ruins of the palace on the mountain overlooking the southwest shore of the Dead Sea.

Jerusalem, the city was taken and the temple was destroyed. It has never been rebuilt. To this day, the only part remaining is the Western Wall, which continues to be a place of devotion and prayer for Jews (see page 225).

With the temple ruined and Jewish

A series of incidents posed a serious threat to the faith and fortitude of the Jews. First, the Jews had endured tremendous hardship at the hands of the Romans. Heavy taxation, unfair administration of justice, and Roman control of both the temple and the high priest soon proved too much to bear. In 66 CE, the Jews in Jerusalem revolted, eventually gaining control of the Temple Mount (the second temple) and, in time, the Roman fortress at Antonia just north of the temple. Jews outside Jerusalem also challenged Roman authority by attacking the occupiers in their cities.

The Romans responded with force. In 70 CE, after a five-month siege of

resistance destroyed, the Jewish faith was once again faced with a potential dual fate: disintegration or reformation. The possibility of reformation came when Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai convinced the Romans to allow him to relocate the Sanhedrin (the supreme judicial body of the Jews) to the town of Yavneh. This provided the Jews with the opportunity to preserve their way of life and redefine themselves. In Yavneh, the Jews maintained their scriptures, wrote commentaries on the law, and developed a Jewish calendar. In other words, despite the apparent destruction of the Jews at the hands of the Romans, their will to survive prevailed.

Web Quest

A detailed timeline of the history of Judaism is provided at

<http://www.usisrael.org/jsource/History/timeline.html>

Click on “Judaism after the Babylonian Exile” to find out more about the second temple, Diaspora Hellenism, the Macabbean revolt, and other details of this era.

The stage was set for the emergence of rabbinic Judaism. Since the Sadducees were a priestly caste without a temple, and the institution of the Pharisees was in need of restructuring, a new group of leaders was required to reform Judaism. The priests of old were replaced by rabbis. Synagogues, an established tradition since the Exile, became the main venue for congregational worship. Prayer practices, formerly part of temple life, found new life in the synagogues and Jewish homes. The tradition of praying three times daily while facing Jerusalem was also preserved.

The most significant contribution of the rabbinic movement was the Judaism of the dual laws: the written Torah and the interpretative tradition of the **Mishnah**, and, later, the **Talmud**. Commentary on the Bible had been a long-established tradition in Judaism. By 100 CE, the rabbis had compiled a substantial body of commentary on the Bible known as **Midrash** (which means “interpretation” or “to search out”). Midrash looks at puzzling situations presented

in the Bible and poses possible explanations for these problems.

Eventually, rabbinical interpretation was extended to the law; this is where the work of the rabbis stands out. Through intense study of the Scriptures, the rabbis were able to write commentary on the law. Their interpretations were considered to be as valid as the laws written in the Torah. By around 200 CE, the Mishnah had been compiled by Judah the Prince, creating a body of commentary on the law to guide the Jews. Later, the Mishnah was expanded to form the Talmud, a vast document of Jewish law that has survived and is used to the present.

The Jewish experience from the Exile to the Roman occupation is one of inspiring fortitude and an unflinching will to preserve the faith. Behind the worldly experience of oppression, the Jews immersed themselves in coming to terms with God and the covenant. By the Middle Ages, Judaism had established deep intellectual and spiritual roots that would ensure its survival.

Check Your Understanding

1. Explain the covenant that God made with Abraham in the Bible.
2. How were the Ten Commandments a renewal of the covenant?
3. Briefly describe the role of the judges, kings, and prophets.
4. What is the significance of the Exile and the Diaspora for Judaism?
5. In your view, what is the most significant event in the early history of Judaism? Explain.

Holy Places

The Western Wall

There is no site in the world that carries so much significance for Jews as the **Western Wall** in Jerusalem. Also called the Wailing Wall, it is the part remaining after the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. The term *Wailing Wall* was coined by European travellers who witnessed the mournful prayers that were being recited there.

It is believed that the site of the temple is near the location where Abraham built an altar on which to sacrifice his son Isaac. Three temples have occupied this site: Solomon's Temple, built around 950 BCE and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE; Zerubbabel's Temple, built in 515 BCE and plundered in 54 BCE by the Roman general Crassus; and, finally, Herod's Temple (the reconstruction of the second temple), completed in 64 CE, only six years before its total destruction by the Romans.

During the almost 2000 years of Jewish exile, the wall has stood as a symbol of the indestructibility of the Jewish people. It has become a place of prayer and pilgrimage. Prayers are also written on pieces of paper, which are then placed between the stones of the wall. Other activities, such as bar mitzvahs, take place at the wall.

There are several reasons why the wall is considered to be holy. The temple, which was inside the wall, was seen as the spiritual centre of the world for Jewish people. It is mentioned in prayer daily, and is a permanent reminder of God's presence—the fact that the Jews will never be destroyed. When the temple was still standing, Jews made three pilgrimages a year; today, the site remains a place of pilgrimage. It is the focus of prayers for Jews, as instructed in the Talmud, particularly for those living in the West, who direct their prayers toward the Western Wall. The wall also symbolizes heroism—the stones are a reminder to Jewish people that they are still thriving.

Several festivals are based on the existence of the temple. Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the temple; Pesach (Passover), Sukkot (the autumn harvest and thanksgiving festival), and Shavout (the spring harvest festival) are the three pilgrimage holidays. While the temple was still standing, Yom Kippur was the only day when the high priest was allowed within its holiest areas.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the Western Wall often referred to as the Wailing Wall?
2. What is the significance of the Western Wall for Jews?



Figure 6.7

BELIEFS

Jewish belief centres on the idea of the oneness of God and the compassion God shares with creation in the form of the covenant. If one can understand the Jewish vision of God and the nature of the covenant, one can understand Jewish beliefs. But first we must answer some questions.

Who Are the Jews?

A Jew is a person who is either born Jewish or converts to Judaism. In the case of birthright, Jewish heritage generally follows the matrilineal descent of the child. In other words, if a child's mother is Jewish, then the child is Jewish. In the case of some Reform and Reconstructionist Jews, as long as one of the child's parents is Jewish, the child is considered to be a Jew.

People can also choose to convert to Judaism. The process of conversion is known as *gerut*. As part of the *gerut*, candidates must reveal knowledge of Judaism, confirm their Jewish beliefs, demonstrate a will to act ethically, and show a connection with the Jewish people.

Figure 6.8
Beliefs concerning God

Sometimes, people identify themselves as Jews even though they do not follow the religious tenets of Judaism. They embrace the cultural aspects of Jewish life, such as art, food, and folk traditions, but do not participate in Jewish religious life.

Historically, persecution of the Jews has been based on the premise that the Jews are a genetically linked people. However, the fact that people from many different backgrounds convert to Judaism is evidence that this is a mistake.

What Do Jews Believe?

Jewish belief centres on God as the creator of everything. God governs the universe with justice and honour. Nothing happens without God, therefore humanity has an obligation to worship God. God is immaterial (not composed of material such as flesh and bones) and indivisible. Thus, the core Jewish belief is that God is One.

These beliefs concerning God can be summarized succinctly by looking at three important sources, as outlined in Figure 6.8.

Teaching	Source	Belief
<i>Shema</i> (the Jewish creed of faith)	Torah—Deuteronomy 6: 4–9	“Hear, O Israel, The Lord is our God, the Lord is One.”
Five Fundamental Concepts	The philosopher Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE–50 CE)	According to Philo, a Jew believes the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a God. 2. There is only one God. 3. God created the world, but the world will not last forever. 4. There is only one universe. 5. God cares for the world and all of its creatures.
Thirteen Articles of Faith	The philosopher Maimonides (1135–1204 CE)	Of the Thirteen Articles of Faith, three have been accepted as absolute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is one God. • God is perfect Unity. • God is immaterial.

Living My Religion

Leora Wise

Leora Wise attends McGill University, majoring in Latin American studies and minoring in Jewish studies. When she was a child, Leora's parents wanted to ensure that she understood her Jewish heritage, so she attended the Baliak Hebrew Day School, a private Jewish parochial school in Toronto. In grade 8, she transferred to the Claude Watson Arts Program at Earl Haig Secondary School, majoring in visual arts. Leora would like to work in Latin America, advancing social justice and democracy. In the future,



Figure 6.9

Leora is considering “making **aliyah**,” or moving to Israel.

Being Jewish is very complex because so many people have different ideas on what it means to be Jewish. Some people identify with Judaism entirely as a religion, others see Judaism as a culture, and still others see Judaism as a nationality dating back to Biblical times. To me, Judaism is a combination of all three.

*Though I am not an Orthodox Jew, as I do not keep **kosher** (see page 232) nor am I Shabbat [Sabbath]-observant, Judaism is always at the forefront of my mind. Ever since I was a child, Jewish practices have been a part of my routine. I received a Jewish education, attended Jewish summer camp, and had a bat mitzvah—experiences that undoubtedly helped to shape me as a Jew. Now I choose which aspects of Judaism I am going to partake in. For example, I am*

accustomed to having Shabbat dinner with friends and family on Friday night, and even though I am living away from home at university, I always have special plans for Shabbat. For me, the customs of eating challah [egg bread, often braided] and lighting the candles, and the sense of community created by Shabbat are important aspects of Jewish culture.

My connection to Israel is an important and daily part of my experience as a Jew. I love Israel and have visited several times. I study Hebrew literature and, consequently, Israeli culture in school. I organized an Israeli Culture Day at McGill University, the aim of which was to embrace Israeli culture separately from the Middle East politics that are often all that people know about the wonderful country. At the same time, I have a vested interest in the political situation in Israel; I studied the Arab-Israeli conflict in school and I keep myself informed.

Another facet of my Judaism is being part of a Jewish community. Being Jewish is being part of a nation, from the Exodus to the Inquisition to the shtetl [eastern European villages] and the pioneers [Jews who set up communities in Palestine after the return from exile]. Jewish nationhood is an inherent feeling. I know that wherever I am in the world, in any type of crisis, the Jewish community will always support me. Jewish solidarity transcends national borders, and the Jewish community is a security blanket for Jews worldwide.

My Jewish identity is a part of who I am. I feel hollow when there is no Jewish presence in my life, and replenish by involving myself in the religion, history, or people. There are so many facets to Judaism, and it is so unconsciously a part of my daily life, that even when there is no Jewish presence actively involving me in Judaism, I always know that I am Jewish.

QUESTIONS

1. For Leora, what is the importance of the Shabbat dinner?
2. What is the greatest benefit of being Jewish for Leora?
3. Why might a young Jew consider “making aliyah”?

The three sources in Figure 6.8 demonstrate that God is One, and not many as in the case of polytheism. This is an important distinction because if individuals are to grasp the unity of creation, they must be able to grasp the unity and oneness of God. Judaism asserts that God is responsible for all creation, is immaterial, and cares for humanity. To show this caring, God made a covenant with humanity that essentially said, “Honour Me and I shall honour you.” In turn, humanity became a junior partner in God’s creation.

How Do Jews Honour God?

Mitzvah

Judaism teaches that the covenant is a fact of life for all creation. It speaks to the reality that people are all connected and that, if they want fulfillment in life, they must treat life as an ongoing covenant. God created certain commandments to help people keep the covenant. Judaism holds that following the commandments allows one to see how everything is interconnected. It also provides the opportunity for individuals to actively demonstrate their devotion to God through study of the Torah, prayer, and good deeds including charity.

In the Jewish tradition, the act of performing a good deed is called a **mitzvah** (plural—**mitzvot**). More specifically, a mitzvah is a commandment from God that gives people direction on how to live ethically while honouring God. The Bible contains a total of 613 mitzvot: 248 positive, or “do,” commandments and 365 negative, or “do not,” commandments. For

the Jews, it is essential that one strives to keep the covenant with God. The way to do this is by following God’s commandments, particularly the Ten Commandments.

How Does God Show Commitment to the Covenant?

God has a personal relationship with humanity. According to Judaism, this was demonstrated when Moses encountered God at the burning bush. In this encounter, the name of God was revealed to Moses. The name of God is of particular significance to the Jews. The Bible refers to God as YHWH, though no one knows the exact meaning or pronunciation of YHWH. As mentioned previously, one of the interpretations of the name given to Moses at the burning bush was “I am in the process of becoming.”

When Jews write or read the name of God, they use the words *Lord* or *Adonay* as substitutes, demonstrating the reverence with which they regard the name of God. Furthermore, it has become common practice to substitute the word *name* in order to avoid saying “God.” There are many other names for God that have emerged over the course of the history of the Jewish faith. The names tend to be masculine in origin, which is why God is sometimes referred to as “he.”

Judaism holds that, by stating his name, God was saying to humanity, “I know you, and I care for you.” God demonstrated this by providing circumstances and messages that would allow people to keep their covenant with God, as illustrated in Figure 6.10.

Message	Description
Chosen People	<p>The covenant is a sign that God chose the descendants of Abraham to be God’s people. In the Bible, God appeared to Abraham and gave him the message that he is the one God and that many nations would come from Abraham’s family line. This event demonstrates the idea of a people chosen by God to do God’s will, which necessarily means that the people must, in turn, choose to do the will of God. Therefore, the concept of “chosen” is reciprocal, with God choosing humanity and humanity choosing God.</p> <p>Some of the anti-Semitism (see page 250) that has emerged throughout history has been based, at least in part, on this idea of chosen people. The concept itself does not imply superior status; instead, it suggests a partnership between God and his people—making humanity the guardians of God’s creation.</p>
Promised Land	As part of the covenant, God promised a land to his people. Jews believe this “promised land” is Israel (Figure 6.11).
Messiah	Jews believe that God will send a great leader to the world who will bring harmony and peace. They characterize the time of the Messiah to be a period of “divine kingship” wherein the reign of God will be clearly evident.
World to Come	The Jewish faith also maintains the belief that God will provide a future time of peace and prosperity for the Jewish people.

Figure 6.10
Demonstration of
the covenant



Figure 6.11
Among Israel’s 6 million
people, almost 80 per cent
are Jews—over half native
born, and the rest from
approximately seventy
countries around the world.

Check Your Understanding

1. Analyze Figure 6.8. What do the three sources have in common? How are they different?
2. What is a mitzvah? Give an example.
3. List the four messages given to the Jewish people as a sign that God cares for them. Which one do you think is most important? Why?

PRACTICES, RITUALS, SYMBOLS, AND FESTIVALS

Practices and Rituals

The Jewish tradition is one that is rich in its worship and prayer practices. Worship is certainly not confined to the synagogue; the home is an important venue for worship as well.

The Synagogue

This is the communal place of worship for Jews and is considered a place of gathering, of prayer, and of study or

learning. Some Jews refer to the synagogue as *shul*, which is a Yiddish word derived from the German word for “school.” This emphasizes the synagogue’s role as a place of study.

The Torah Scroll

The **Sefer Torah**, or Torah scroll, is the text of the five books of Moses written on parchment. It is the most sacred object of Jewish life and is essential for worship. It is always kept in a place of honour in the synagogue and is read at specific times during the service. While every synagogue needs at least one Torah scroll, most synagogues have at least three because certain rituals call for readings from two or three different sections of the Torah. This avoids delaying the service while the Torah scroll is rolled from section to section. Each scroll is either wrapped in a beautiful covering or kept in a gold or silver container. The parchment of the Torah cannot be touched while being read, so the reader uses a pointer to follow the words in the text.

According to Jewish tradition, when the Hebrews received the Ten Commandments in the desert, they were told to make an ark in which to place them. This is called the **Ark of the Covenant**. Today, the **Holy Ark** (a cabinet-like structure) sits on a raised platform in the synagogue and contains the Torah scrolls. During the service, the Torah scroll is taken from the Ark and placed on a special table called the *schulchan*, where it is unrolled and read. The *schulchan* is usually covered with a piece of decorative silk or velvet.

Figure 6.12

In addition to doors, some Holy Arks have an inner curtain. When certain prayers are recited, the doors and/or curtain of the Ark may be opened or closed by a member of the congregation. It is considered an honour when a congregant is given this responsibility.



Clergy and Laypersons

While any Jew who is knowledgeable, trained, and capable can conduct and lead a worship service, it is generally the master of prayer who does so. This is usually the rabbi. A rabbi is a trained scholar, a teacher, an interpreter of Jewish law, a counsellor, and an officiant of special ceremonies such as a bar mitzvah (see page 236). Many synagogues also have a cantor, a singer who chants the worship service and may also serve as prayer master.

Worship

Blessings

Berakhah means “blessing,” which is the foundation of Jewish prayer. Through blessing, Jews believe they acknowledge, praise, thank, and petition God. It is the basis of communal worship, although it is certainly a part of private prayer as well. There are three types of blessings. The first is a blessing of thanks to God for the enjoyment of the five senses. A well-known example is the **kiddush**, a blessing recited when people drink wine that has been specially sanctified for the Sabbath or a holy day. Another type of blessing is one that is recited before performing a mitzvah to acknowledge that the commandment is divinely given and to thank God for the chance to fulfill a religious precept. A third type of blessing is recited to praise, thank, or petition God. This blessing is recited at the beginning of each festival.

Services

When Jewish people pray communally, a *minyan*, or a quorum of ten

males over the age of thirteen, is required. (Reform and Reconstructionist Jews count women in a *minyan*.) There are three daily worship services held in the evening, the morning, and the afternoon. In the Jewish tradition, the day begins and ends with sunset, so the evening service is the first of the day. The morning service can be recited any time after dawn until 10 a.m. The afternoon service is a much shorter version of the morning service.

The Torah reading is the central part of certain worship services during the week. The Torah is divided into fifty-four sections. One portion is read each week (two weeks of the year have a double portion) so that the entire Torah is read from beginning to end in the course of a year. The completion of the reading cycle and the beginning of the next cycle takes place on the festival of Simkhat Torah, which celebrates this cycle.



Figure 6.13

When they worship or study, Jewish men wear a head covering known as a **yarmulke**, or kippah, to show their respect for God. They also wear a shawl, or **tallis**, while praying. The fringes of the tallis are a reminder of God's commandments and the necessity of keeping these commandments. **Tefillin** are either of two small leather boxes containing parchment scrolls of Biblical text. Jewish men wear the tefillin, one on the forehead and one on the arm, every day during morning prayer except on the Sabbath. Do you wear certain clothing to indicate your beliefs? Explain.



Figure 6.14

Rabbi Harry Newmark, a full-time kosher food checker, monitors the food-manufacturing process. Kosher laws determine what foods may and may not be eaten, and how foods should be prepared and served.

Kashruth

An active expression of adherence to the commandments is the practice of keeping kosher (Figure 6.14). The Jewish dietary laws of Kashruth serve a number of purposes. First, they establish the Jews as an identifiable group. The idea of kosher foods identifies the distinctiveness of Jews to others. Second, kosher food laws speak to the humanity and humility of the Jewish people. Humanity is revealed in the prescribed method of killing animals in the most humane manner possible. Humility enters into the equation when one considers the level of thoughtfulness and gratitude the Jews give to God for the food provided to them.

Shabbat

The Shabbat, or Sabbath, is perhaps the most important ritual of the Jewish people. It is based on the creation stories of Genesis. The Sabbath is a time to put aside work, shopping, housework, even homework! However,

it is not a period of restriction, but of rejuvenation. It is an opportunity to set aside time for the important things in life—prayer, family, and friends.

At sunset on Friday, Jews go to the synagogue, where the service opens with the lighting of candles as a reminder of creation—the first act of creation was, “Let there be light.” Once they return home, families sit down to the Shabbat dinner, which begins with the *kiddush* (the prayer over wine). Challah, a special egg bread, is blessed and eaten at the meal. Following the meal, particular songs are sung and the prayer of thanksgiving is recited.

Sabbath morning is spent at the synagogue in prayer and worship. At sundown, the Sabbath ends with a brief service that separates the holy Sabbath from the rest of the week. This service is often held at home. As it concludes, people greet each other by saying, “*Shavua tov*” (“May it be a good week”).

The Sabbath has played an enormous role in the Jewish religion. No matter where Jews have lived, and no matter what their circumstances or conditions, the Sabbath has always sustained them as a people.

Symbols

Religious symbols are an outward representation of God. For many people, symbols help to strengthen their relationship with God. Certainly, they manifest the invisible in a visible manner. The Jewish people have numerous symbols that richly reflect their history.

Web Quest

For more information about the symbols, on page 233 go to

<http://www.jewfaq.org/toc.htm>

and click on “Signs and Symbols.” You can also learn about other symbols, such as the *mezuzah*, the *chai*, and the hamesh hand at this site.

Symbols

Star of David



Figure 6.15

Perhaps the best-known symbol of Judaism is the **Star of David**, also known as Magen David (shield of David). It is a six-pointed star, formed from two interlocking triangles. It is thought that this was the shape of King David's shield. While the symbol may have been used for magical and ornamental purposes in ancient times, it was not exclusively Jewish. Most experts believe that it was not until the nineteenth century that the symbol became officially accepted by Judaism.

The Star of David became even more closely identified with Judaism when it was adopted by Zionists (see page 248) as a marker of Jewish nationality in the twentieth century. Jews today see the Star of David as a symbol of the will to survive and as a source of pride in their Jewish identity. It is prominently featured on the blue and white Israeli flag. As well, in Israel, the Red Shield of David is equivalent to the Red Cross in Christian nations and the Red Crescent in Muslim countries.

Menorah

The **menorah** is a very ancient source of light. When the temple was built in Jerusalem, the seven-branched menorah became a central ritual object. After the second temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the menorah was carried off to Rome. Today, many non-Jewish people think of the menorah as the nine-branched candelabrum that is used in celebration of Hanukkah. But it is the seven-branched menorah, one branch for each of the six days of creation and one for the Sabbath, that is the authentic Jewish symbol. It is also used as the logo of the modern State of Israel.



Figure 6.16

QUESTIONS

1. What appear to be the origins of the Star of David?
2. In your opinion, is the Star of David a religious or a political symbol? Explain.
3. Why is the menorah significant to Jews?

Festivals

Festivals serve to remind people of their history and to distinguish them as a faith community. Think for a moment about the numerous events that your family celebrates. Some of these are religious in nature; others are secular, such as your birthday. Whatever the event, there is usually some planning involved; special foods are prepared, family and friends are invited, and gifts are often exchanged. For Jews, festivals mark the Jewish year and are a time for family, tradition, joy, and reflection.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, falls in September or early October. It begins a ten-day period of repentance, ending with the festival of **Yom Kippur**. The two days of Rosh Hashanah and the eight days that follow concentrate on an assessment of conduct and behaviour in the previous year. Jews request forgiveness from God and from other human beings for their mistakes and transgressions. On the Saturday evening before Rosh Hashanah, a forgiveness service is held at the synagogue. An important

ritual at this service is the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn (Figure 6.17). In Biblical times, the **shofar** was used to call people together.

Also known as the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur is the most solemn religious day of the Jewish year, marked by a twenty-five-hour fast and prayers of repentance. Since the task of repentance is so important, regular activities are avoided on this day. Signs of comfort and luxury are not allowed; for example, women often do not wear makeup. Sexual relations between a husband and wife are not permitted. No food or drink is allowed in order to demonstrate that this day is better spent on prayer.

Hanukkah

Hanukkah, perhaps the best-known of the Jewish holidays, is the festival of dedication, or the festival of lights. This eight-day period, which usually falls in December, celebrates the events of the Maccabean revolt (see pages 221 to 222). After the small army had reclaimed the temple in Jerusalem, the ceremonies rededicating the temple took place over eight days. When the people tried to rekindle the sacred lamp in the temple, they discovered that there was only enough oil to last one day. According to legend, the oil continued to burn in the temple lamp for eight days.

As part of the celebration of Hanukkah, a candle is lit for each of the eight days in a special candelabrum, or menorah (Figure 6.4). The menorah has nine branches—one for each of the eight nights of Hanukkah and a ninth for the candle known as

Figure 6.17

One of the most important observances of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar in the synagogue. There are four different types of shofar notes; a total of 100 notes are sounded each day.



the *shammus* (servant), which is often placed in the centre and used to light the other candles. Each night, families gather to light the candles and recite special blessings. In North America, it has become customary to exchange gifts.

Pesach

The feast of Passover is usually held in April over seven or eight days. This is an extremely important holiday because it commemorates the freeing of the Hebrews from slavery—the Exodus (see page 219).

This holiday, more than any other, celebrates the Jewish people's identity as a people of God. During the entire week of **Pesach**, Jews do not eat anything *chametz*, or leavened, in order to commemorate the haste in which the Hebrews had to flee from their oppressor. On the eve of Pesach, a ceremonial search for *chametz* takes place. This is a last chance to find any that might have been missed in the preparations for Pesach. Today, an adult often hides *chametz* somewhere in the home, then the children search for it. When it is found, a blessing is said.

Another custom is for all first-born Jewish males to fast on the first day of the festival. This is a remembrance of the first-born Egyptian males who were killed so that the Hebrews could be freed from slavery. It is considered a fast to mark history and humility.

The **Seder**, a ritual service and ceremonial dinner, is held at home on the first night of Pesach. It includes songs, special food, and prayers of praise. The events of the Exodus are told, re-

enacted, and explained. The book used to explain these events is called the **Haggadah**. It is filled with Biblical quotes and interpretations of the events. It describes the rituals, symbols, objects, and food that are used during the Seder.

Check Your Understanding

1. Briefly describe the roles of a rabbi and a cantor.
2. Briefly explain the word *kosher*.
3. Why do you think it is important to Jewish people to celebrate the Sabbath?
4. Why is Pesach central to Jewish life?
5. In your opinion, which of the Jewish festivals described in this section is most important? Why?

MILESTONES

Naming a Child

In addition to a conventional name, a baby is given a formal Hebrew name, which is sometimes chosen in remembrance of a deceased relative. This signifies the importance the Jewish faith places on tradition. The formal name is usually only used in religious rituals, such as reading the Torah.

Jewish boys are circumcised on the eighth day after birth. The **circumci-**

sion is performed by a mohel, who is trained according to Jewish law. If a mohel is not present, then a trained rabbi or a doctor can perform the surgery. A boy is usually given his name during the circumcision ceremony, which takes place after morning prayers at the synagogue. Girls are given their names in the synagogue on a Sabbath shortly after their birth.

Coming of Age

When a boy turns thirteen, he celebrates his **bar mitzvah**, which means “son of the commandment.” He is now considered an adult in the Jewish religion. In the months leading up to the bar mitzvah, the boy studies and prepares for the day. The bar mitzvah usually happens on the first Sabbath after his thirteenth birthday. When a girl turns twelve, she celebrates her **bat mitzvah** (Figure 6.18), which means “daughter of the commandment.” Both religious services are followed by a joyful reception.

Marriage

The next big event in the life of a Jewish person is marriage. It is a very important part of life for Jewish people because the family plays such a predominant role within Jewish tradition. Although a Jewish person is not required to marry within the faith, it is usually thought to be preferable. It is believed that difficulties might arise if a Jew marries someone who does not understand and share his or her faith.

Most weddings take place in a synagogue and are conducted by a rabbi. The bride and groom stand under a special canopy called a *chuppah*, which is a symbol of the home they will share (Figure 6.22). It is often decorated with flowers. They drink from a glass of wine that has been blessed. The marriage contract, which states that the husband will look after his wife, is read and signed by the bridegroom. The groom then gives the bride a ring. At the end of the service, the groom crushes a

Figure 6.18

A member of a Conservative synagogue in Thornhill, Ontario, celebrates her bat mitzvah. In Orthodox congregations, the bat mitzvah is not always celebrated. In the Reform and Reconstructionist traditions, it is given the same importance as the bar mitzvah. During the year prior to their thirteenth birthday, boys and girls study a portion of the Torah to chant in front of the congregation. Often they also write an essay explaining their portion.



glass under his foot. This gesture is to remind the couple that they will experience bad as well as good things in their married life and must face them together. It also serves as reminder of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Divorce

Although Judaism does allow divorce, it tries very hard to discourage a couple from taking that final step. Friends and family will do their best to help the couple get through their difficulties. However, if all fails, the husband gives the wife a certificate of divorce called a *get*. If a *get* is not issued, then the marriage is not considered to be dissolved, even though the couple might be civilly divorced. Once a *get* is issued, each is free to remarry again in the Jewish religion.

Death

Funerals take place as soon as possible, usually within twenty-four hours after the death of a person. The funeral service is very simple. The body cannot be

cremated because the belief is that cremation destroys what God has made. Jews believe in life after death, but it is not a very important part of their faith. They feel it is more important to focus on the present.

Shiva is the seven-day period of mourning following the funeral. This is a time when family mourners are protected from everyday problems and responsibilities. Immediately following the funeral, a shiva candle is lit in the home to symbolize the soul of the deceased. Mourners then eat a small meal, known as the meal of consolation, which is prepared by friends and neighbours. This meal symbolizes the need to continue living and to begin the healing process. While sitting shiva, family mourners do not leave the house, so friends and relatives come to visit. The mourners recite the Kaddish, known as the mourner's prayer. In some homes, the mirrors are covered so that mourners do not look at themselves, thus avoiding vanity at this time.

Check Your Understanding

1. Why is it important for Jews to give their children a Hebrew name?
2. Why did your parents choose your name?
3. What is the age you consider someone to be mature? Explain.
4. What does the *chuppah* represent?
5. What is the purpose of the *chuppah*?
6. Compare the funeral traditions of Judaism with those that may be practised in your family.

SACRED WRITINGS

The Torah



Figure 6.19
Rabbi Shmuel Spero,
wearing a traditional
prayer shawl (tallis), reads
from the Torah at Anshei
Minsk Synagogue in
Toronto's Kensington
Market.

The sacred writings of Judaism are referred to as **Torah**. *Torah* is often translated as meaning “law,” but a more accurate translation is “revelation,” “teaching,” or “instruction.” The word *Torah* is used to refer to the Law of Moses, as well as to the entire belief system of the Jewish faith. The written Torah is primarily a description of the development of God’s relationship with his chosen people.

The way in which the sacred writings were assembled is interesting to note. These decisions were not taken lightly; intense study and debate preceded the selection or rejection of any book. Eventually, consensus was reached, and certain books were

deemed “sacred.” Coinciding with the acceptance of books into the Hebrew canon was the emergence of the body of commentary on the Scriptures known as Midrash (see page 224).

As discussed on page 224, commentary on law also emerged within Judaism dating from the time of the Exile up to approximately 500 CE. These commentaries came to be known as the Mishnah. In Babylon, the rabbis gathered both legal (Halacha) and non-legal (Haggadah) material into a compilation of literature known as the Gemara, or learning of the rabbis. Next, they combined the Gemara with the Mishnah to form the Babylonian Talmud. There is also a Palestinian Talmud that was compiled earlier, but the Babylonian Talmud has become the standard for the administration of Jewish law.

Check Your Understanding

1. What does the word *Torah* mean?
2. Briefly note the other major scriptures of Judaism.

Sacred Text

In addition to being a basic part of Judaism, the Ten Commandments have become, over time, the very foundation of the moral and legal principles that govern most nations in Western society. The tablets of the law, or *luchot*, are often used as symbols in synagogue architecture.

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20: 2–14

I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: You shall have no other gods beside Me.

You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord your God is giving to you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of these “laws” are considered important in Canada today? Why?
2. If you were asked to list these Commandments in order from most important to least important, how would you organize them? Be prepared to explain your choices.

Profile!

Maimonides (1135–1204)



Figure 6.20

The most distinguished philosopher in the history of Judaism was Maimonides. Born in Cordoba, Maimonides moved from Spain to Morocco to Palestine and, finally, to Cairo, Egypt.

Maimonides became the leading rabbi in Cairo; the local Jewish population referred to him as *nagid*, or head of the Egyptian Jewish community. In addition to his scholastic pursuits as a rabbi, Maimonides was the court physician for Saladin, the sultan of Egypt and Syria. His contribution to Jewish philosophy cannot be overstated. Maimonides formulated the Thirteen Articles of Jewish Faith, which clearly delineated what it meant to be a faithful Jew. He wrote *Mishnah Torah*, an exhaustive survey of Jewish law compris-

ing fourteen books and written in Hebrew. In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides also reconciled the perspective of rabbinic Judaism with the philosophy of Aristotle. His fame as a distinguished rabbi and scholar was paralleled by his noteworthy achievements as a physician.

The philosophical works of Maimonides brought focus to the belief system of medieval Judaism. In particular, his Thirteen Articles of Faith challenge Jewish people to know and believe in God. The Articles also call on them to recognize their responsibility to live as beings created by God in a universe created by God.

Maimonides came to be regarded as the “second Moses.” Through brilliant scholarship and a burning desire to make sense of Jewish philosophy, Maimonides provided clarity and a reformed sense of purpose to Judaism, while emphasizing and honouring the power and wonder of God. The Thirteen Articles of Faith were adopted by Jews in the fourteenth century. They are now included in poetic form in the Jewish prayer book and are recited daily in services.

QUESTIONS

1. Make a point-form list of Maimonides’s accomplishments.
2. Why is Maimonides referred to as the “second Moses”?

GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS

As with other major religions, Judaism has developed into different denominations. Unlike the Jewish sects of antiquity (see page 222), these divisions are of relatively recent origin. During the Middle Ages, Jewish communities in Europe were either forced into or voluntarily lived in **ghettos**. Most followed practices and worshipped in a manner that we would regard today as Orthodox. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, Jews in western Europe were gaining civil liberties and were more inclined to associate with Gentiles (non-Jews); in the process, the rabbis lost their tight control over the Jewish people. This was also the time of the Enlightenment, which presented an opportunity for Jews to join European life more fully. Some Jews felt that they should become more assimilated into European society.

For Jews contemplating this idea, there seemed to be three possibilities: keep the old ways, assimilate fully, or introduce changes and bring Judaism into the modern world. The old ways appeared to be in conflict with the modern world, and full assimilation meant losing one's Jewish identity. Thus, the last alternative—introducing changes—offered a solution. This marked the beginning of the division of Judaism into the Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist branches.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Jews accept without question that “the Torah is from Heaven.”

It is held to be “the word of God,” as revealed by him *to* the Jewish people. The nature of this revelation is a crucial issue in the division of Judaism because it is a fundamental reason for the differences among the branches. The Orthodox view is that the written and spoken Torah combined is an evolving communication of God's will. The Torah itself is, therefore, of divine origin and has not altered in 3000 years of Jewish history. It is a source of truth, as revealed by God, handed down from generation to generation. Orthodox Judaism roots itself in the two laws and denies that humans can individually change God's teaching to suit their will and needs.

The adherence to tradition basically means that services are in Hebrew; the Sabbath is strictly observed, using the rules evolved in the interpretive tradition. Only kosher food is eaten, and traditional gender roles are often maintained whereby men are usually the leaders in worship and ritual. However, many modern North American synagogues are adapting these roles. While many Orthodox Jews have to live in today's world, they maintain Jewish practices and laws, although they may have adopted modern dress. An exception is the Hasidic community, in which many men wear beards, black hats, and long black coats, and many women cover their heads and dress very modestly.

Hasidism

The Hasidic movement started with Israel ben Eliezer (*c.* 1700–1760 CE), also known as Ba'al Shem Tov, or the “Good Master of the Name.” He travelled from place to place as a children's teacher and gained a reputation

as a miracle worker, healer, and mystic. Through his efforts, the Hasidic movement gained a large following, particularly in the Ukraine. The educated leaders of the Jewish communities in eastern Europe offered guidance that seemed aloof from the daily lives of their followers, who often were rural dwellers and uneducated. Ben Eliezer advised his followers to pay less attention to formal details; he believed that the best way to communicate with God was through humility, good deeds, and prayer. God's presence should be sought in everyday events—a true religion was knowledge of God in all creation. He encouraged his followers to find joy in their lives and not to mourn past miseries.

The Hasidic approach was less intellectually demanding than that of mainstream Orthodox Judaism and, therefore, more accessible. Followers became known as Hasidim, or “pious ones.” Today, there are Hasidic Jews in Israel, but the largest numbers are in the United States, and their headquarters are in Brooklyn, New York.

Reform Judaism

Unlike Orthodox Judaism, the Reform movement believes that both the written and spoken Torah are human creations, and that God allows for successive generations to have a different appreciation of the truth of the Torah.

Early in the eighteenth century, there was a reinterpretation of Judaism in light of new ideas circulating in western Europe, where such reinterpretation did not conflict with the basic principles of Judaism. The

leading voice in this new approach was Moses Mendelssohn, who believed that the Jews of Germany should absorb as much German culture as possible and enjoy the same intellectual freedoms as other Germans. This meant learning German and giving up Yiddish, studying secular subjects, acquiring a trade, and being ready to join the wider community. There was also a desire to revitalize Jewish public worship by introducing the vernacular (that is, the local language instead of Hebrew) into services and sermons, as well as choral and organ music.

The Reform movement spread throughout Germany and into other European countries. Today, it has followers in twenty-five countries. Reform Judaism came to North America with the immigration of European Jews. Here, in addition to using the vernacular in services, the Reform movement abolished the partition in synagogues that separated men and women. Reform accounts for 35 per cent of American Jews. In Israel, where the movement is growing, there are at least four Reform congregations and two Reform *kibbutzim* (collective farming settlements).

The first female rabbi, Regina Jonas, was ordained in Germany on 27 December 1935. However, it was not until 1972 that another woman, Sally Priesand, was ordained as a rabbi at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. In 1980, Joan Friedman of Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto became the first female rabbi to work in Canada.

In 1883, at a dinner celebrating the first graduates of Hebrew Union College, a non-kosher meal was served. It became known as the *terefah* banquet, and the outrage that resulted among traditionalists led indirectly to the development of the Conservative branch of Judaism.

Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism holds the middle ground between the Orthodox and Reform positions. It is a large branch and is centred in the United States. This branch recognizes the human element in revelation—that God revealed the Torah both *to* the people and *through* the people. Like Reform Jews, Conservative Jews wanted to alter the old-style Orthodoxy in order to meet the new realities of North American life. However, they could not approve of the Reform movement, which they thought was too quick to abandon practices and principles that were rooted in tradition.

Conservative synagogues maintain the traditional order of the services and conduct them mostly in Hebrew. While wanting to preserve the best of the Jewish traditions, the Conservative branch allows some flexibility in the interpretation of Jewish law. For example, men and women sit together in the synagogue; women can participate in services much as men do; and women can now become cantors as well as rabbis. At the age of twelve, a girl is permitted to become a bat mitzvah.

Reconstructionist Judaism

This is the youngest but the fastest growing of the American-centred Jewish movements. The movement, founded in the 1930s as an offshoot of Conservative Judaism, is based on the philosophy of Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983). Its aim is to “reconstruct” Judaism by making Jewish traditions more meaningful in today’s world—blending tradition with change. Reform Judaism argues that Judaism is an evolving faith and has adapted to the changing environment in the past. To explain their position, Reconstructionists say that “tradition has a vote but not a veto,” promoting the view that Judaism is a “work-in-progress” rather than a finished product.

Women in Judaism

For Orthodox Jews, Jewish law provides a basic structure within which individuals may express their own personalities. This supports the notion of being different but equal. Historically, the primary vehicle of religious expression and duty for Orthodox women



Figure 6.21

In 1985, Amy Eilberg became the first woman to be ordained a Conservative rabbi, at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Rabbi Eilberg is currently working in California. “Prayer is speech in its purest form. It is our heart speaking in its own voice, just as it needs to.” In your own words, explain what Rabbi Eilberg is saying.

Web Quest

For an in-depth look at Reconstructionist Judaism, visit <http://www.jrf.org>

Figure 6.22

In all branches of Judaism, the bride and groom stand beneath a chuppah, symbolic of the home they will share. The importance of the chuppah is so great that the wedding ceremony itself is sometimes referred to as the chuppah.



has been the occupation of wife and mother. Home life is seen as a divine service and a rich world, and dedication to others is considered a virtue. Contrary to widely held belief, women can have careers outside the home. Usually, women wear modest skirts or dresses; pants may be worn for certain jobs. Most married women cover their hair in the presence of men other than

their husband. Men and women do not mix during prayer because it is felt that the presence of the opposite sex could be distracting. Orthodox Judaism regards practices and activities in terms of duties and obligations, not in terms of equal rights for women. In the modern sense, most Orthodox synagogues do not claim to be egalitarian.

In the past thirty years, Conservative Judaism has changed its views on women's participation in the synagogue. Although these policies may vary by congregation, women may now publicly read the Torah, be part of a *minyan*, be called to the Torah, be ordained as a rabbi, serve as a cantor, and wear a tallis and tefillin.

The Reform movement believes in the equality of men and women and has introduced alternative mitzvot and rituals to address the religious needs of women. Reform also allows women to initiate divorce.

Check Your Understanding

1. What are the four main divisions of Judaism?
2. What factors caused the Reform movement to emerge?
3. How do the four main denominations differ on the nature and interpretation of the Torah?
4. What event caused the emergence of the Conservative movement, and why?
5. How do the denominations regard the role and status of women within Judaism?

Skill Path Writing an Essay

For many people, the thought of writing a formal essay may be somewhat intimidating. However, if you liken essay writing to a more familiar experience, it may help you to approach the assignment more confidently. For example, think of a courtroom drama series on TV, then compare the process of writing an essay to the process that the “lawyer” in the series uses to defend a case in court. Of course, in your “case,” the jury is the reader. Most of us are quite comfortable defending our point of view when necessary; essay writing is simply a more formal, written process.

An essay writer develops a thesis from a key question on a particular topic. A **thesis** is essentially an argument that you intend to prove, and the essay provides the platform for making that argument. In order to write an effective essay, you must know your topic thoroughly and carefully formulate your ideas. It is advisable to do your thinking and planning well in advance so that you can present your argument logically.

Steps in Writing an Essay

When developing your essay, follow the guidelines below, but remember that each essay topic requires a slightly different approach.

1. Analyze the question.

Read the essay question very carefully, highlighting keywords or phrases.

2. Conduct your research carefully.

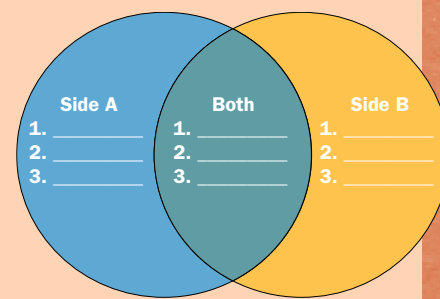
Refer to the On-Line Research Skill Path on pages 104 to 105, the Qualitative Research Skill Path on pages 175 to 176, and the Quantitative Research Skill Path on pages 152 to 153 for further information.

3. Identify key points.

Make a list of the key points that you will need to explore in the essay. As a general guideline, plan on writing one paragraph per point. Arrange the points in some logical order, for example, from general to specific. Make sure that you use the results of your research to support and/or expand on these points.

4. Use graphic organizers.

Use web diagrams, T-charts, or cards to help organize and arrange your ideas. If you are examining two sides of an argument, consider arranging your thoughts in a Venn diagram. Be creative! You may wish to develop new ways of organizing your ideas by inventing your own graphic organizer.



A Venn diagram is useful for comparing arguments and determining elements they hold in common.

5. Write the first draft.

An essay assignment usually includes instructions about length, for example, “Write a 1000-word essay on . . .” The structure of the essay often depends on the essay question. Although each topic requires a different approach, there are some basic structural elements that are common to all essays:

Introduction

- Start with a statement that hooks the reader and provides a context for the essay question.
- Introduce the reader to the topic, and refer to the essay question, as well as to your previously highlighted keywords and ideas (Steps 1 and 3).
- Make sure that you clearly state your thesis, usually in the last sentence of the first paragraph.

Body

- Work through the topics from the list or diagram that you created in Step 4.
- If your essay question requires that you examine two sides of an argument, consider one of these suggestions:
 - i) present all points for side A, providing supporting ideas and evidence. Then follow the same procedure for side B.
 - ii) create an organizer that shows the points for each side of the question. Work through the points one at a time for each side, that is, present a point for side A, then respond with the counterpoint from side B.
- Remember to maintain your focus. However, you may find that you have to explore a side issue. Sometimes these side issues support your main argument, while others offer alternative views or exceptions. Find ways of inserting these side issues effectively, without confus-

Credit Your Sources!

Any sources from which you have selected quotations or taken ideas must be properly credited. You may refer to the following for information on how to cite sources:

- ***The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing***. 2d. ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, in co-operation with Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997).
- ***The Chicago Manual of Style***, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993). <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/cmosfaq.html>

Note: Using thoughts and ideas from others' work and failing (intentionally or unintentionally) to cite the source is known as plagiarism. Plagiarism is an academic crime that results in penalties such as automatic failure in a course or dismissal from the workplace. Remember: when in doubt, cite the source.

CULTURAL IMPACT

The story of Jewish history is more about struggle than easy triumph. The loss of and search for a homeland bracket nearly 2000 years of Jewish history. The tragedies and triumphs of the Jews marked most of the twentieth century. Much of Jewish history has been lived far from the sources of the faith, usually in territories controlled by the related, sometimes hostile, religions of Christianity and Islam. The marriage of history and faith is a potent and defining theme in Judaism.

The Sources of Anti-Semitism

Why were adherents of Judaism the target of hatred and prejudice over so many centuries? The answers are complex, but they serve as a warning about the rekindling of such powerful, unreasoned hatred in our own society today, whether aimed at Jews or any other group.

- Lacking a homeland and forced to live in widely scattered communities as a small group, Jews were the perennial outsiders.
- With very different religious customs and clothing style, the Jews were seen as strange, different, and untrustworthy.

Jewish Nobel Prize Winners

Whether it is a result of centuries of historical challenge, the Judaic focus on the world, or the support of a closely knit community, members of the Jewish faith have attained pinnacles of achievement in proportions far beyond their relatively small numbers. One small example of the creativity and impact of Judaism is reflected in the number of Jews who have been awarded the Nobel Prize. The following is only a sample:

Name	Field
Albert Einstein	Science
Elie Wiesel	Peace
Niels Bohr	Physics
Milton Friedman	Economics
Yitzhak Rabin	Peace
Isaac Bashevis Singer	Literature
Nadine Gordimer	Literature
Saul Bellow (born in Canada)	Literature
Lev Landau	Physics
Franco Modigliani	Economics
Hans Bethe	Physics
Stanley Cohen	Medicine
David Lee	Physics
Harold Kroto	Chemistry

- Their interpretation of the Bible led some Christians to blame all Jews for the brutal murder of their saviour, Jesus Christ. Attacks on Jews were often heightened during Easter. This belief has deep roots and is harboured by a small minority of extremists, even today.
- Since Jews were frequently forbidden to own land or hold citizenship, they were often on the move and had little opportunity to establish themselves as integral members of communities.
- When calamities befell nations or communities, it was common to blame the Jews and use them as scapegoats for every real or imagined problem.
- In the Middle Ages, Christians, at times, were not allowed to lend money and charge interest; when Jews did this work, they were accused of being cheats and thieves who earned a dishonest living.
- Later, when Jews received more freedoms and liberties in Europe and began to earn success in a number of fields, they were viewed with jealousy and suspicion.

Zionism

In 1896, Theodore Herzl wrote about the need for a state where Jews could truly be at home and enjoy freedom from harassment. In 1897, the World Zionist Organization was founded, and the modern struggle to reclaim the Promised Land and build a Jewish state was launched. **Zionism** is the idea and promise of the return of the people of Israel to the Promised Land. The coming twentieth century would

see the fulfillment of the Zionist dream, but not before Jews faced the horrors of the Second World War and the bloody, continuing struggle to find peace in the Middle East. Zion was a dream that would be paid for in blood by both Jews and non-Jews.

The Twentieth Century

In Jewish history, the twentieth century is marked by two events of shattering magnitude and importance: the **Shoah**, or **Holocaust**, and the birth of the State of Israel. For a small community with such a long and troubled history, the twentieth century was a series of momentous, emotional events. The cultural impact of these two defining moments on both the world and Jewry continues to shape the modern world.

Perhaps the most notorious event of the twentieth century, the Holocaust (Figure 6.23) resulted in the calculated slaughter of 6 million Jews—one-half of European Jewry and one-third of world Jewry. Only the defeat of Hitler's Germany stopped the massacre. The opening of the death camps at the end of the war shocked the world, and a new term, **crimes against humanity**, was created to describe the horror.

One of the most direct and dramatic results of the Holocaust was the renewed push by Jews who survived the Holocaust to live the Zionist dream. By 1948, with increasing international support and by force of arms, the State of Israel was reborn out of Palestine. However, in the 2000 years since the Diaspora, other peoples had inhabited the region and were not

ready to accept being displaced and disenfranchised by the return of the Jews. This tragic situation has resulted in continuing warfare and atrocities in the region. At times, the world itself has been brought to the brink of war because of national and religious strife in the Middle East. The tragedy of the region is that reconciliation and peace seem far away, even unattainable.

Judaism in Canada

Judaism has a long history in Canada, and Jews have had a long struggle to be accepted and treated equally. Today, the Jewish community in Canada is thriving and is an important contributor to Canadian society. The largest communities are in Toronto and Montreal.

Jews arrived on Canadian shores with the creation of New France. The first synagogue was founded in Montreal in 1768, long before Canada was a nation. By 1882, the city had

three synagogues. According to the Canadian Jewish Congress, the largest wave of Jewish immigration came at the turn of the twentieth century. However, as with so many other newcomers to Canadian shores, some Jewish Canadians faced rejection and hostility (Figure 6.25). Although anti-Semitism in Canada was not like that suffered by Jews in Europe, for a country which prides itself on its multicultural roots and tolerance, Canadian history is not without the stains of prejudice and discrimination.



Figure 6.23

Aba Bayevsky's paintings of the Nazi death camps are profoundly moving. Some Jews believe that the Holocaust was both a test of faith for Jews and a commandment from God to survive.



Figure 6.24

Charles Bronfman is founding partner of birthright Israel, a worldwide project that provides the gift of a first trip to Israel for Jewish youth. The organization believes it is every Jewish person's "birthright" to have the opportunity to visit Israel. Through his CRB Foundation, Bronfman has provided a challenge grant of up to \$25 million to Historica, a new foundation dedicated to increasing awareness of Canada's history and people.

Figure 6.25

In 1933, a riot broke out at Toronto's Christie Pits playing field after a Nazi swastika banner was unfurled at a baseball game involving Jewish players. This scene is from the 1996 television documentary "The Riot at Christie Pitts."

**Anti-Semitism****The 1930s**

The tough times of the Great Depression spawned many hate groups eager to find targets to blame for the social and economic misery of the period. Several tiny Fascist parties were organized in Canada, and they imitated the Fascists in Europe with uniforms and cries of hate. The most powerful organization, the National Unity Party, was led by Adrien Arcand, a fanatical imitator of Hitler and the Nazis. Arcand was a virulent anti-Semite, who used his publishing house to spread his ideas. After the outbreak of the Second World War, Canadian Fascist organizations were made illegal, their newspapers suppressed, and Arcand was interned for the duration of the war.

In June 1939, the ocean liner *St. Louis* appeared off the east coast of Canada carrying Jewish refugees who were fleeing from Nazi-threatened Europe. They had first sought asylum

in Cuba and the United States but were refused entry. When they turned to Canada, the refugees were again denied entry. The Second World War broke out shortly after the ship returned to Europe, and about half of the 907 passengers later perished in the Holocaust. Although not all Canadian politicians were anti-Semitic, many feared anti-Semitic reaction against the Jews. The refusal to accept these refugees is one of Canada's saddest historical episodes.

The Post-War Period

When the true horrors of Hitler's campaign against the Jews were revealed by the discovery of the death camps, Canada and the world were more supportive of Jewish immigration and more concerned about the protection of human rights and the suppression of hate groups. Canada received a huge post-war wave of immigration that spurred the multiculturalism that we celebrate today, as

well as our human rights legislation. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has enshrined many of the fundamental rights of Canadians. Most provinces have organized police and legal forces that combat crimes of hate. Canada is a far more tolerant and vigilant society than it was in the past. However, it is also true that each generation must be prepared to eradicate crimes of hate against any group of Canadians.

Fighting Anti-Semitism

Seven of Canada's provinces have passed legislation that marks Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, as an official day on the provincial calendar. The purpose is not simply to commemorate the terrible tragedy of the Holocaust, but also to promote increased awareness of the true nature of social evils such as racism, anti-Semitism, prejudice, and discrimination. Given the multicultural nature of Canadian society and the general Canadian support for tolerance, this day signals the continued concern Canadians express about prejudice. Held sometime in April, the day is observed across Canada, with many students participating in special educational activities.

Holocaust Education Week usually takes place in the fall and features a range of educational programs for students and the general public. Events are organized throughout Canada to educate Canadians about the Holocaust and to make sure that this brutal reality is never forgotten or denied.

Check Your Understanding

1. What evidence is there that anti-Semitism has deep historical roots?
2. Briefly describe the two most important events in twentieth-century Jewish history.
3. What specific evidence exists that some Canadians practised anti-Semitism during the 1930s?
4. How is Canada combating anti-Semitism today?
5. How do you personally respond when you see examples of prejudice and discrimination?

Community Study

Beth Tzedec Congregation
Toronto, Ontario



Figure 6.26
*The sanctuary of Beth
Tzedec Synagogue*

Beth Tzedec was founded in 1952 by the amalgamation of two much older Jewish congregations, Goel Tzedec and Beth Hamidrash Hagadol. The synagogue was dedicated on 9 December 1955. With a congregation of 3000 families, Beth Tzedec is the largest Conservative congregation in North America. It is also multi-generational, comprising four generations—a fact that enriches the community immensely.

Beth Tzedec has a fivefold goal: to build an affirmative Judaism, to bring the miracle of the Bible into everyday lives, to cul-

tivate a love of the Jewish tradition, to inspire respect for religious life, and to promote religious affinity among the congregation. In addition to serving the religious needs of the community, Beth Tzedec addresses two other very important areas: education and service to the community.

Hebrew education is seen as the foundation of the community's religious structure, and religious living is considered the aim of the Beth Tzedec educational program. Its objectives are to teach members the value of Jewish traditions and the



Figure 6.27 Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl

importance of practising them. There are three parts to the educational program: the day school, which runs a full K–9 program for approximately 400 students; an after-school program, which teaches Hebrew studies to 250 students; and an adult-education program, with Bible-study and Jewish culture classes. In addition to classroom activities, school assemblies and children’s services are held in the Youth Chapel. The synagogue also houses a museum, which has an impressive collection of **Judaica** and is open to the public.

Service to the community is called *hesed*, a Hebrew word meaning “loving kindness” or “justice.” The Hesed Committee, made up of members of Beth

Tzedec, looks after home and hospital visits, bereavement calls, and rides to the synagogue, and ensures that seniors are cared for and their rights are protected. Members of the congregation who know of someone who needs help can call the (confidential) Hesed Hotline.

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl became senior rabbi of the Beth Tzedec congregation in 1993. He emphasizes the need for everyone to be involved in Jewish life, and has a deep commitment to the provision of hesed to people who are sick, shut in, or bereaved. Since coming to the congregation, Rabbi Frydman-Kohl has “opened up” synagogue services to encourage more participation and has furthered the development of educational programs. In addition to his duties at Beth Tzedec, he is director of the Greater Toronto Jewish Federation. In 1992, the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life awarded him a Coolidge Fellowship to pursue research at the Divinity School at Harvard University.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the goal of the Beth Tzedec congregation?
2. Why is education stressed so much?
3. What does the Hesed Committee reveal about the Beth Tzedec congregation?
4. What changes has Rabbi Frydman-Kohl made to the operation of the Beth Tzedec congregation?

Exploring Issues: Nazi War Criminals in Canada

While the majority of Canadians are clearly opposed to racism, prejudice, and the ideology of Fascism, many wish that these atrocities could be consigned to the dustbin of history. They are often surprised that people who committed crimes against humanity were admitted into Canada during the post-war immigration boom. These suspected war criminals have lived a life of comfort and freedom that they so cruelly denied to others in the Second World War. Clearly, many have died or are old and infirm. Some have led exemplary lives in Canada, working hard, raising a family, and being solid members of the community. Most of their neighbours, and even close family members, are unaware of their bloody past. Some Canadians believe that “the past is the past,” and that these people should be left alone to finish out their lives and not be punished for crimes committed far away over fifty years ago.

On the other hand, these war criminals often lied or covered up their true identities when they came to Canada. They participated in crimes against humanity that saw millions of innocent people tortured and murdered. Have they “gotten away with murder”? In 1987, the Canadian government passed a law permitting the arrest and trial of war criminals in Canada. The War Crimes Unit was organized to track down

these criminals and launch legal action against them, or transfer them to countries where they are still wanted. This unit was given \$50 million in 1998 to strengthen and speed up investigations. However, it is a difficult process because the individuals have changed so much, and witnesses have died or their memories are not what they were. Trials can be long, difficult, and costly. Families and communities are often shocked and upset with the process. Some think the hunt for war criminals should stop; others believe that the only way to achieve even a limited justice for the victims is to bring their killers to trial.

This process is also part of the ongoing attempt to expose crimes of hate and **genocide** as one of the most despicable crimes. In fact, one result has been that Canada has pledged to bring to justice any Canadian citizen or resident suspected of war crimes in any part of the world. In 1997, it was reported that more than 300 suspected modern-day war criminals are living in Canada. Their alleged crimes were committed in places such as Rwanda, Vietnam, Cambodia the former Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, and Central America. Canadian immigration procedures have been tightened in order to prevent such undesirables from gaining entry into Canada and then seeking the protection of the Canadian justice system—actions that can make retribution a long, slow, difficult process.

QUESTIONS

- 1. What arguments are there for continuing and for ending the search for and punishment of Nazi war criminals living in Canada?**
- 2. If you found out that a senior citizen living on your street was suspected of committing war crimes during the Second World War, what would you do? Explain fully.**

Activities

Check Your Understanding

1. What was the nature of the covenant that God made with Abraham and Moses?
2. What was the impact of the Exile on Judaism?
3. Briefly describe the contributions of the rabbinic movement to Judaism.
4. What are the main sources of anti-Semitism?

Think and Communicate

5. Working in small groups, describe an “Exodus event” (a time when you felt you were making a new start) in your own life.
6. Which of the Ten Commandments do you think is the most difficult to follow? Explain.
7. In your opinion, how far should a religion go in making changes to its practices in order to keep up with changes in modern society? Write a brief opinion paper.
8. Judaism is seen as a religion by some people but also as a culture and a nationality by others. Prepare a position so that you can participate in a class discussion on this issue. Your answer does not necessarily have to be one of the above; you might want to argue that Judaism is a combination of two or three of these elements.
9. Working in small teams, design an ad campaign to remind people in your community about Holocaust Education Week. You might design radio ads, brochures, posters, and so on. Carefully choose and discuss your goals, and then create an effective campaign.
10. a) What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of marrying someone of your own religion?
b) Would it be important to you to marry someone who is of the same religion? Why?
c) How do you think your family would react if you married someone who was of a different religion?
11. One of the Ten Commandments is, “Honour your father and mother.” Evaluate how well you personally follow this Commandment and how useful a rule it is in your life.

Apply Your Learning

12. Using the Internet and the print media, research in detail Birthright Israel. For example: What are its goals? Who is eligible to go to Israel? How is the organization financed? Has it been successful? Are there any personal stories from people who have participated? How did they feel about the experience? What is your personal evaluation of the program?

13. Working with a partner, draw up a modern version of the Ten Commandments that you think today's Canadians could use to guide their conduct. How similar are your suggestions to the original Ten Commandments? Explain.

14. Contact your local police force and ask for information about hate crimes in your area and how you can help eradicate them. Consider inviting a member of the Hate Crimes Unit to visit your school to present a program.

15. Compose an essay on the history of the Middle East conflict, using the suggestions provided in this chapter's Skill Path feature. What lessons does this conflict reveal? Do you have any ideas for a workable solution to this tragic crisis? Explain.

Glossary

aliyah [olly AH]. Literally “going up,” immigrating to Israel; generally referred to in English as “making aliyah.”

anti-Semitism. Hostility and prejudice toward Jews.

Ark of the Covenant. The wooden chest that held the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments. The temple in Jerusalem became the home of the Ark.

bar/bat mitzvah [bar (or bat) MITS-VA]. The religious initiation ceremony of a Jewish boy who has reached the age of thirteen/a Jewish girl who has reached the age of twelve or thirteen. The term means “son/daughter of the commandment.”

chosen people. The idea that God chose the Jewish people to be the keepers of his covenant on earth. The concept of “chosen” is reciprocal, with God choosing humanity and humanity choosing God.

circumcision. The cutting off of the foreskin of the penis. Abraham and his family were the first to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant.

covenant. As used in the Bible, a solemn and binding agreement between God and humanity.

crimes against humanity. Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, persecution, or any other inhumane act committed against a civilian population or any other identifiable group.

Diaspora [die ASPER uh]. A Greek word meaning “sowing of seed” or “dispersal.” In the context of Jewish history, *Diaspora* is the word used when referring to the Jewish population living outside of Israel.

Exodus. The significant event in which Moses led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. The word *exodus* means “going out” or “departure.”

genocide. The mass extermination of a group of people, especially a race, religious group, or nation.

gerut [ger OOT]. The process of conversion to Judaism.

ghetto. An area of a city in which minority groups such as Jews were required to live. The first was in Venice in 1516.

Haggadah [ha GA dah]. The book used to explain the events of the Exodus.

Hanukkah [HONNA kuh]. The eight-day festival of lights, usually in December, commemorating the rededication of the temple.

Hellenization. The process of adopting Greek culture and language.

Holocaust. The mass murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War.

Holy Ark. A cabinet-like structure in a synagogue that houses the Torah scrolls.

Judaica. The literature, customs, ritual objects, artifacts, etc., which are of particular relevance to Judaism.

kiddush [KID oosh]. A blessing recited when people drink wine that has been specially sanctified for the Sabbath or a holy day.

kippah [KIPPA]. A small circular cap worn by Jewish men; also known as a yarmulke.

kosher [CO sher]. Fulfilling the requirements of the Jewish dietary laws of Kashruth.

menorah [men ORE uh]. A candelabrum with seven branches, used at home and in the synagogue on the Sabbath and holidays.

Messiah [muh SIGH uh]. Means “anointed one.” The Jews hope that a great king will come to lead them.

Midrash [MID rash]. Interpretation and commentary on the Bible. By 100 CE, the rabbis had compiled a sizable body of commentary on the Bible.

minyan [MIN yun]. The quorum of ten men (or men and women) over thirteen years of age required for worship.

Mishnah [MISH nuh]. Early rabbinic teachings on how to live a life in accordance with the Torah. It was compiled around 200 CE.

mitzvah [MITS vuh]. A commandment from God; the act of performing a good deed. The most well known mitzvot are the Ten Commandments.

monotheistic. Believing in only one God.

Pesach [PAY sack]. The Passover festival in spring commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Promised Land. The area of Canaan that the Hebrews believed was promised to them by God.

prophet. A person who receives a message from God and delivers that message to God’s people. The message belongs to God, with the prophet acting as God’s messenger.

rabbi. A Jewish scholar or teacher, especially of the law; a person appointed as a Jewish religious leader.

Rosh Hashanah [rosh huh SHONNA]. The festival celebrating the Jewish New Year.

Seder [SAY dur]. A ritual service and ceremonial dinner for the first night or first two nights of Passover.

Sefer Torah [SAY fur TORE uh]. The text of the five books of Moses handwritten on parchment. It is the most sacred object of Jewish life and is essential for worship.

shiva [SHIVVA]. A seven-day period of mourning for the dead beginning immediately after the funeral.

Shoah [SHOW ah]. A Hebrew term for the Holocaust meaning “destruction.”

shofar [SHOW fur]. A trumpet made of a ram's horn, used in religious ceremonies.

Star of David. A figure consisting of two interlaced equilateral triangles. It is used as a Jewish and Israeli symbol.

synagogue [SINNA gog]. A place for congregational worship that emerged during the Exile and became important in the period after the destruction of the temples in 586 BCE and 70 CE. Synagogues continue to be the central place of worship for Jews today.

tallis [TAL iss]. A prayer shawl.

Talmud [TAL mud]. Rabbinic teachings derived from the Mishnah. It is the main source of Jewish teaching from the medieval period to the present.

Tanakh [tuh NOCK]. The Jewish Bible, consisting of the Torah (the Law of Moses), the Prophets, and the Writings.

tefillin [tuh FILL in]. Either of two small leather boxes containing parchment scrolls of Biblical text, worn by Jewish men during morning prayer, except on the Sabbath.

Torah [TORE uh]. Refers to the Law of Moses as well as the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures and the entire belief system of the Jewish faith. The word *Torah* is often translated as meaning “law,” but a more accurate translation is “teaching” or “instruction.”

Western Wall. The remaining part of the wall of Herod's temple in Jerusalem where Jews traditionally pray and lament on Fridays.

yarmulke [YAR mull kuh]. A small circular cap worn by Jewish men; also known as a *kippah*.

Yom Kippur [yom ki POOR]. The most solemn religious day of the Jewish year, marked by fasting and prayers of repentance.

Zionism [ZYE in ism]. A movement originally for the re-establishment of a Jewish nation, and now for the development of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel.