

Judaism Pocket Guide



Shabbat



Menorah



Mezuzah



Tree of Life

על שלשה דברים העולם עומד:
על התורה, על העבודה, ועל
גמילות חסדים

On three things the world stands:
Torah, work, and acts of kindness.

Ethics of the Fathers

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 Alpert Jewish
Community Center
Long Beach *Your Center For Life*

Life



What is Judaism?

Judaism is, first and foremost, a religion. Jews have a belief in God whose origin goes back to the Biblical Abraham and Sarah, who lived over 4,000 years ago.

Judaism is also a culture. There are Jewish foods, Jewish music, Jewish dances, and a Jewish language called Hebrew.

Judaism is also a “peoplehood,” a connection, a sense of oneness with Jews all over the world.

Judaism is a rich tapestry woven of religious beliefs, practices and prayer, the ethics of the Prophets and sages, the folkways of our ancestors, a shared historical experience, a common language of prayer, and a way of life.

Central to Judaism are the concepts of God, Torah, and Israel

God

Judaism teaches that one God created the universe and all that is in it. Furthermore, Judaism teaches that the Creator/God has expectations of humans. Namely, that we are to conduct Ethical Monotheism. Judaism teaches that humans were created to be God’s partners in the process of creation.

Torah

Torah literally means “teaching” and refers to the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Jewish Scripture is composed of the Torah, The Prophets, and The Writings. Jews refer to their Bible as the Tanach, an acronym of the three divisions (Torah, Prophets, and Writings). The Tanach is the foundation upon which Jewish tradition is built through a rich process of commentary that spans over 2,000 years.

Israel

The word Israel has many meanings. It refers to the modern State of Israel, a country that existed for more than 2,000 years, from the time of the Biblical King David to the Roman conquest. Israel also refers to the Jewish people, and thus connotes the peoplehood aspect of Judaism. In the Torah, Jacob is renamed Israel and is told the name means “one who wrestles with beings divine and human.” Being Israel means being one who struggles, struggles for deeper meaning, struggles to make the world better, struggles in the process of becoming a better human being.

Key to Judaism

Judaism teaches that the entire world exists in a state of potential holiness and the human being is needed as God’s agent to create holiness. Thus, all of the Jewish holidays and lifecycle events are focused on creating holiness through our deeds and actions.