

VII Judaism

A. Origins of Judaism

1. Judaism is the oldest monotheistic religion in the world
2. Originated around 2000 BCE in the Semitic heart (Palestine)
3. Judaism grew out of the belief system of a tribe in Southwest Asia known as the Jews, whose HQ became Jerusalem.

B. Diffusion of Judaism

1. The Roman Empire destroyed Jerusalem, then after the Jews scattered throughout the world known as the Jewish diaspora (the scattering of an ethnic group.)
2. The Jews moved into Central Europe and towards the Iberian Peninsula.

3. Many Jews now live in Israel, the only country in which Judaism is not a minority religion.

4. Israel was declared the official Jewish homeland in 1948 a declaration that triggered a war with its Arab neighbors.

5. The largest population of Jewish is found in the U.S. but Judaism is also prominent in major cities of Western Europe.

C. Primary Branches of Judaism

1. Orthodox Judaism seeks to retain the original teaching of the faith.

2. Reform Judaism developed in the 1800's is a branch attempting to adjust the religion to fit more modern times.

3. Conservative Judaism is the most recent of the branches and is more moderate in its approach to religion than either Reform or Orthodox.

D. Cultural Landscape Features of Judaism

1. Judaism's holiest teachings are contained in the Torah, which consists of Old Testament teachings and the Talmud, the collection of rabbinical and historical teachings passed down from one generation to the next.

2. Perhaps the most prominent feature in the Jewish-influenced cultural landscape is the synagogue, or Jewish house of worship and community gathering. Though architecturally varied, all synagogues have an ark housing their sacred book, the Torah, written in Hebrew.

3. An important symbol in Judaism is the six-pointed star.

4. Perhaps the holiest site to Jews is Jerusalem's Western Wall which is believed by Jews to be the westernmost remaining side of the Temple Mount complex, which once housed two Jewish temples.

5. Many Jews try to make pilgrimages to the Temple Mount to see the Western Wall and offer prayers and recite the dedication of their holy temples.

6. Importantly, the Muslims' holy Dome of the Rock is only feet from the Jews' holy Western Wall.

* led to centuries long conflict.