

STUDIES OF RELIGION

The sacred texts of Judaism are paramount in explaining the the principal beliefs of the religion. The documentations provide a comprehensive guide on expected behaviours and beliefs of Jewish people in order to fulfil their responsibility in the covenant, of which forms the core of the Jewish faith. Derived from various sections of the Tanakh and the Talmud, the principal beliefs of Judaism comprise of the belief in one God, the moral law prescribed by God, and the idea of the covenant.

Through the forefather, Abraham, the establishment of Judaism introduced the idea of monotheism for the first time in human history. Central to the faith is the basic notion of a God of revelation and justice, whom intervenes in human history through the Jewish people. He is believed to be omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, a core tenet which is discussed throughout the Tanakh, and in particular, within the Torah. 'You shall have no other Gods before me' (Exodus 20:6) The belief in one God is fundamental to Judaism, and is presented in various sacred texts. The central belief forms the basis of the Shema, a prayer of daily significance in the lives of Jewish adherents. The prayer encourages adherents to consolidate their monotheistic tenet. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4) Additionally, the Jewish God is incorporeal and supreme in nature, a belief which is consolidated by the morning prayer, Shacharit. 'He is one....He has no semblance of a body.' He is transcendent, beyond anything of mankind, his name too sacred to say. Jewish adherents traditionally refer to God, of whom when asked for his name responded 'I am who I am,' (Exodus 3:15) as Yahweh, Ha-Shem, or written as G-d, demonstrating their belief in an omnipotent God. The sacred texts are vital to demonstrate the principal belief in one god, which is foundational to Judaism.

Contrasting the Gods of contemporary cultures, which were indifferent and immoral to the human world, Judaism teaches a God of morality, law, power and revelation. It is believed God demonstrates holy and ethical behaviour, and it is expected Jewish adherents follow in his lead, which is explored through a number of sacred Jewish texts. Within the Torah are the 10 Commandments, of which form the core code of ethical behaviour, stating laws regarding both relationships with god, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in Vain,' and relationships with mankind, 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.' Also within the Torah is the 613 Mitzvot, a sacred text which provides extensive guidance regarding every aspect of Jewish life. The text discusses both what and what not to do in order to fulfill the ongoing covenant first established with Abraham, stating a multitude of ethical laws. The belief in a moral law prescribed by God provides Jewish adherents with a sense of purpose throughout their lives. He revealed himself as just and moral, which is affirmed through the Talmud, a sacred text originating 2nd century CE which comprised of documentations and interpretations of the written law. This text, composed by highly respected Rabbis, is subdivided into two sections, the Mishnah and the Gemara, both of which discuss how to live in the moral manner expected by God. They provide adherents with practical applications to the written law, exploring the expectations regarding all aspects of life, including prayer, agriculture, traditions, relationships, finance and sacrifices. The belief in a God of morality, presented in the Torah and highlighted by the Talmud, is central to the Jewish faith.

The idea of the covenant, an ongoing mutual agreement between God and his people, is the foundation of traditional Judaism, expressed in the Torah. Abraham, the forefather of Judaism, was called to 'Leave your country, your family...go to the land I will show you.' (Genesis 12:1) In the promised land referred to, Abraham sacrificed several animals and committed to circumcision for all Jewish boys at eight days old. In return, he was blessed with land, 'descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky' (Genesis 15:5) and status. Generations later, Moses was given the Torah, the Mosaic Law, on Mount Sinai - direct word

from God which lays at the heart of Judaism. It continued to develop as God influenced Kings and Prophets, forming the core of Judaism. These laws complement the principal belief of a God of morality and justice, and form the Halacha - the Jewish jurisprudence comprising the legal part of the Talmud. By following the laws of the Torah, Jewish adherents receive God's protective mercy and justice. Through the covenant, they are given the freedom to decide their own destiny, whilst receiving guidance regarding personal injuries, social responsibilities, protection of properties, justice and mercy, as expressed in Leviticus 26:3,12. 'If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully...I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.' The principal belief of the covenant, as expressed through the Torah, is fundamental to Judaism.

Sacred texts are of great significance in the lives of Jewish adherents as they explain and discuss the principal beliefs of the religion. The belief in one omnipresent God is explored in the Torah and consolidated through prayer. The belief in a moral law prescribed by God is established in the Torah and discussed in the Talmud, providing adherents guidance in all aspects of life. Finally, the belief in the ongoing covenant with God is expressed in the Torah and is fundamental to Jewish adherents. Through the extensive sacred texts of Judaism, the principal beliefs become coherent and a dynamic, living religion is formed.