



JUDAISM

Judaism is a monotheistic religion that originated over 3500 years ago in the ancient Near East. Judaism, like Christianity and Islam, is an Abrahamic religion. In addition to identifying as a religion, the Jewish people are also an ethnically and culturally distinct group. Their numbers are estimated at thirteen million and the faith is primarily practised throughout Israel, North America, and Europe. Judaism is characterized by a covenantal relationship between God and the children of Abraham.

There are several branches within modern Judaism: Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, Secular Humanistic, and Reconstructionist. The primary teachings of Judaism come from the Torah, which consists of 613 commandments from God, including The Ten Commandments, which are considered to be the most important. Another significant text is the Talmud, which includes rabbinic discussion about Jewish Law. There is no formal set of beliefs in Judaism, but Rambam's thirteen principles are accepted as common beliefs. There is no single body responsible for the central authority of the Jewish faith; authority is derived from the holy texts, laws, and a rabbi's interpretation of these works.

This list includes both High Holy Days and a selection of other important dates in the Jewish calendar. The Jewish calendar is a combined moon and sun calendar; therefore, the dates of festivals and High Holy Days vary each year.

ROSH HANUKKAH* (New Year): This is the Jewish New Year and it marks the creation of the world.

DAYS OF REPENTANCE: These 10 days fall between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is a chance for everyone to repent.

YOM KIPPUR* (Day of Atonement): This most sacred and solemn day of the Jewish year marks the end of the Days of Repentance.

HANUKKAH (Chanukah): The Festival of Lights is an eight-day celebration that marks the victory of the Jews over the Hellenist Syrians.

PESACH (Passover): One of the most important dates in the Jewish calendar, Passover celebrates Moses leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt.

*High Holy Days

ESSENTIAL NON-FICTION

ABRAMS, Judith Z. (2008). *The Secret World of Kabbalah*. Paw Prints. ISBN 9-78-143955792-1.
 Grades 7 to 9.

Thanks to Madonna and other celebrity followers, Kabbalah became a household word over the past decade. Yet despite its high profile, most people know very little about this trendy aspect of Judaism. The author demystifies Kabbalah by providing background information and answering questions about mysticism, angels, and reincarnation.

CORONA, Laurel. (2003). *Judaism*. Gale/Lucent. (Religions of the World Series). ISBN 1-5600-6987-2.
 Grades 6 to 10.

This introduction to Judaism places an emphasis on modern customs and practices. It includes a well-balanced look at the history and controversies within the faith as well as details about the Jewish culture.

FEINSTEIN, Edward. (2004). *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life*. Jewish Lights Publishing. ISBN 1-5802-3139-X. Grades 7 to 9.

Rabbi Feinstein created a book for adolescents to answer difficult questions such as, "Why should I believe in God?" "What is God?" and "Why do people hate Jews?" He helps teens to understand the place of Jewish theology and practice within modern life.

KLUG, Lisa Alcalay. (2008). *Cool Jew: The Ultimate Guide for Every Member of the Tribe*. Andrews McMeel. ISBN 9-78-074077113-2. Grades 9 and up.

Cool Jew is a smart and humorous book designed to make any Jewish teen proud to be a member of the tribe—and any non-Jew, a heebster-wannabe. Aside from the parody, this is an educational read that provides insight into the Jewish faith, symbols, holidays, and traditions.



© 2008 BY THE JEWISH LIGHTS PUBLISHING COMPANY