

JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA

Judaism, or the Jewish religion, started almost 4,000 years ago in the land of Canaan, which later became known as the Land of Israel. It is the oldest religion that worships one God! There are many different types of Jewish people all around the world. All following the variety of beliefs, laws, and practices of the religion in different ways. Most people in these communities simply refer to themselves as Jewish.



Jewish people have been in America since before it was a country! Here are some facts you may not know and symbols you may have seen in your neighborhood from Judaism:

1 Hebrew is the language of prayer for the Jewish people as well as the primary spoken language of Israeli Jews. The Yiddish language was spoken primarily by Jews of Eastern Europe before WW2 and is currently used by some Hasidic/Ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups. Yiddish is a mix of German and Hebrew. Yiddish words and phrases are often used in English- like the words shlep and nosh. The Yiddish language is also making a comeback as a language to learn in colleges and universities.

4 The Jewish community comes together in a synagogue for prayer, worship, and learning. The term synagogue is from the Greek meaning "a place of assembly".



5 Temples, Congregations, Shuls (Yiddish), and Jewish Centers are other names used in describing a Jewish House of Worship or synagogue.

2 A Rabbi is the religious leader of a Jewish congregation. In non-Orthodox Judaism, women can also be rabbis!



3 A 6-pointed star called a Magen David, a Shield or Star of David, or a Jewish Star is the most commonly identified symbol of the Jewish people.

6 Have you seen a Jewish person wear a skull cap, small hat or head covering? That is called a Kippah or a Yarmulke. In traditional Jewish communities, only men wear kippot (plural). In

non-Orthodox communities some women also wear a kippah. It is not a Jewish law to cover ones' head, but it is considered a sign of respect for God.



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7 A Menorah is one of the oldest symbols in the Jewish faith. The candelabra with seven candle holders can be seen in Jewish Synagogues. It symbolizes the burning bush as seen by Moses on the top of Mount Sinai.



10 The Torah is the holiest book of the Jewish people. The Torah is believed to be the word of God and contains teachings, stories, and laws that help guide Jews in their daily lives. The Torah means the teachings in Hebrew!

8 The menorah for Chanukah, a Jewish holiday, has 9 candle holders (8 nights and a helper candle).



11 Can you believe no one can touch the words of the Torah? Each letter is carefully written by a special Rabbi calligraphist!



9 A Mezuzah is also a symbol of the Jewish people and can be seen on the doorposts of Jewish homes. A mezuzah contains a tiny scroll with writings from the bible.



12 Challah is a special loaf of bread that is braided. It is eaten on Shabbat and other holy days. On Rosh Hashana, to honor the New Jewish Year, round-shaped challah is eaten to symbolize the completeness of the year. Often raisins are added and after the blessing, the challah is dipped in honey in the hope of a Sweet New Year.

