

Jew's religion or Judaism incorporates religious rituals and a moral code of conduct. It also lies on the Hebrew people's history on which celebrations and rituals are inspired. Today, Judaism brings together people of all races and nations.

The Torah is the basis of Judaism . It includes the first five books of the Bible ( Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy ). According to the Torah, there was an agreement ( Alliance ) between the Hebrew people and God through three of his patriarches : Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob who God renamed « Israel ». At a time where people worshipped many gods, Jews through this Alliance, pledged to acknowledge this « unique God » as their sole God.

We find in the heart of this Alliance the concept of « chosen people » because as Moses prompts from the Bible «...*For thou art an holy people unto the Lord, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth* ». (Deuteronomy 14:2) The « chosen people » status does not grant any privileges. It does mean that the Jewish people were entrusted the mission to transmit the word of God all over the world.

In virtue of this Alliance, God promised Abraham and his descendants a region known today as Israel-The Promised Land to make it their homeland. They took possession of it in 1200 B.C. In 70 B.C. , Roman conquerors destroyed Jerusalem's Temple, the heart of the Jewish religious life. In order to end the numerous rebellions, the Romans chased the Jews out of Israel. The Jews became stateless. This marked the beginning of an era known as the « Diaspora ». Many settled along the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean while others emigrated in the east.

Their arrival in America goes back to 1654. The first immigrants settled in New Amsterdam ( New York ). The new Jewish state Israel was created in 1948, three years after the end of the Holocaust where six million Jews were massacred.

In Judaism before the Diaspora, religious authority was carried out by priests who were hereditarily assigned. They celebrated the Temple of

Jerusalem' s services. Their message was based on the ethical teachings of several prophets. After the Temple's destruction , the master Rabbis succeeded to priests in the exercise of their power. Today, women as well as men have access to rabbinate except for the Orthodox branch of Judaism.

We may distinguish four great theological currents in Modern Judaism : the **Reformist** ( clearly progressist ), the **Reconstructionist** ( rather progressist ), the **Conservative** and the **Orthodox** ( the latter includes many fundamentalist groups like the Hassidim ).

The Orthodox call their place of worship a synagogue while the Reformist name it a temple or synagogue.

*(Recherche : Claude Marcil)*