

Summary of judaism

Religion



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Judaism Religion is a set of beliefs, which vary depending on the culture, which connects humans spiritually and morally. Various religions exist all over the world, bringing people together or sometimes turning them against each other. As a child, I grew up with a Catholic father and a Jewish mother. My parents raised my sisters and I under both religions; however, we did not attend church or temple on a regular basis.

My mother and father were not religious; they were more spiritual and believed in a higher power. I chose to visit a conservative temple that some of my family members attended in order to gain a first-hand look at their weekly experiences. The B'Nai Torah Congregation is a conservative Jewish temple located in Boca Raton, Florida. Because I grew up in such a diverse household, attending a Jewish temple to conduct research on Judaism was the perfect choice, and provided ample amounts of history about the religion's origin, culture, and traditions.

First off, I never knew the main difference between Judaism and Christianity, all I heard as a child was the statement "Jesus was a Jew". After attending the Jewish synagogue and conducting research, both online and in person, I found out one of the major differences between Christianity and Judaism; Christians believe that their savior is Jesus Christ while Jews are still waiting for their savior, also known as the "messiah" (Davies). In the Judaism religion the messiah is described as a normal human being who fulfills certain requirements listed in scripture.

Some of the beliefs and requirements include the extinction of all weapons and death in the world upon the arrival of the messiah (Rich). They do not believe Jesus Christ fulfilled the requirements to become the messiah and

therefore continue to pray for the day when he arrives (Rich). The B'Nai Torah Congregation allows conservative Jews to gather and spread their beliefs through various services such as religious school, youth programs, and community outreach programs. They offer religious schooling for children as young as preschool and educate them all the way to high school graduation. BRUSY is the youth program held at the temple and contains three different programs based on grade level: USY (United Synagogue Youth) for high school, Bonim for elementary school and Kadima for middle school ("Bnai Torah Congregation"). All of these programs provide fun activities for the youth along with education. To start off my experience at the B'Nai Torah Congregation, I decided to attend the 9am temple service. This service is known as a Shabbat Service and was conducted by two Rabbis.

Each Rabbi wore long, black robes with shawls and a small, circular, head piece placed on their heads. The women who were in attendance wore shawls and, like the male members, wore distinct head pieces. The men wore small circular head pieces while the women wore headpieces that looked similar to that of a coffee liner. It threw me off guard at first; I am not used to seeing such structured dress at a service. Clothing had to cover the shoulders of everyone in attendance and little leg was allowed to show. Everyone was dressed in formal clothing with the head pieces; some men even wore long shawls as well.

After attending the service, I described the clothing to my mother and learned that the headpieces that the men and women wore are known as "kippahs", while the shawls worn within the temple are known as a "Tallit".

After conducting further research, I discovered that tallits are shawls worn by many married men and women; they contain fringe at the end of the pieces, known as "tzitzit", that the Torah instructs must be worn on the corners of all garments to represent the commandments that Jews are obligated to follow ("Jewish Attire").

The tallits that some of the men and women wore contained fine threading details, one common detail that I noticed was the color of the tallits. The common colors on all of the tallits were white, red, gold, and blue. I furthered my research and found out that the color white is associated with Abraham, red with Isaac, and blue with Jacob; the three patriarchs of Judaism. ("Ohr Somayach"). According to Jewish Celebrations, an online Judaism database, the kippahs worn in temple are simply a symbol of respect to God; in ancient times it was respectful to cover their heads and hair during prayer.

I noticed that the men and women attached the kippahs to their heads as they walked in for the service but removed them as the service was over. In Orthodox Judaism it is common to wear them at all times, however, in Conservative Judaism the head pieces are not required to be worn at all times. The clothing I observed sparked a sudden interest in why Jews wore what they wore. I attended a conservative temple; Conservative Judaism is just one movement of modern Judaism. According to Tracey R. Rich, Orthodox Jews believe that God gave Moses the whole Torah at Mount Sinai while Reform Jews do not believe that God wrote the Torah at all.

Rich says that Orthodox Jews follow the Ten Commandments and live by the Jewish law while Reform Jews believe that Torah was written by multiple sources and redacted together, living merely on ethics and morals.

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Conservative Judaism formed as a happy-medium of the two movements, a mix of the two. They believe that the writings came from God but were transacted by humans. Conservative Jews, like the ones at the temple I attended, believe that the laws can adapt over time depending on time and culture.

This explains why the dress at the temple was somewhat strict but not completely enforced like it were to be in an Orthodox temple. Since conservative Jews do not believe in strictly following the Jewish law, these members keep their culture alive simply by wearing kippahs and tallits. Since the temple is a Conservative synagogue the service lasted about three hours and was conducted in Hebrew and English. Like Christian churches, the seats were long bench like rows and contained a bible behind every seat. During the service the Rabbi would recite prayers from different parts of the bible.

He spoke in a monotone voice and used various hand gestures to add emphasis on his words. The Rabbi used a lot of rhetorical questions, allowing the members to think among themselves. He would recite different sections of the Torah and then connect it with various moral stories. The Jewish bible is known to Christians as "The Old Testament" and is comprised of the Torah, the Writings, and the books of the prophets ("Qur'an Bible Torah Comparison"). However, a Christian bible not only contains the Hebrew bible, it also contains "The New Testament"; unlike Christians, Jews do not follow the New Testament.

I also noticed that the Jewish bible was read from right to left instead of the traditional left to right reading in most books. It is said that the Torah is read this way because the right side symbolizes greater spiritual revelation, as <https://assignbuster.com/summary-of-judaism/>

opposed to the left side, which symbolizes a "weaker" manifestation of spirituality ("Why Is Hebrew Read from Right to Left?"). The ceremony was conducted in mostly Hebrew but some parts were conducted in English; once I figured out that the readings were from right to left it made it a little easier to follow along.

The whole service was dedicated to prayer. There were times when the Rabbi asked us to stand and other times when the two large doors in the middle of the stage were opened to reveal scrolls. The Rabbi walked to the back of the temple and took the covering off the scroll; it took multiple people to open the doors and remove the scrolls. I learned that these scrolls were the different parts of the Jewish Bible and used for rituals such as Shabbat and bar mitzvahs. The Rabbi then walked around the temple and allowed for each member to kiss the scroll while simultaneously saying a prayer.

My favorite part of the whole experience was observing the beauty of the temple. The inside of the temple contained granite flooring, dim lights, and two giant menorahs on either side of the main stage. The colors were somewhat monochromatic, containing shades of brown. According to our textbook, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, every religion contains various symbols and signs that give meaning. They "indicate the existence-- past, present or future-- of a thing, event, or condition". The only symbols I saw inside the temple were the two large menorahs, stars, and the symbols in between them, above two large doors.

I always thought that menorahs contained nine branches; however, the menorahs in the temple only contained seven branches. The menorahs in

the temple represent the burning bush that Moses encountered on Mount Sinai; it is a representation of the light of God (Rich). I discovered that the menorah with nine branches is used during the holiday of Hanukkah, a holiday that celebrates “miracle” after Jewish revolt against the Syrians (Rich). One of the most prominent symbols that I saw around the temple was a star.

Unlike the five pointed star that I am used to seeing, this star had six points. I sat through the service trying to figure out the significance of the extra point. The star is known as the Star of David. It is used to represent the Jewish community as a whole and is the symbol of the flag for the country of Israel. The six sides represent God’s rule in six directions: north, south, east, west, up and down; it was once known as the shield of a man named King David, a military hero in Jewish history (Rich) I never realized how much history and symbolism there were in the Jewish culture.

I was not raised in any particular religious setting so this site visit was an eye opener for me and provided me with a lot of new knowledge about the religious practices of my family. Some of my family members are orthodox Jews while others are conservative. The various movements of Judaism showed me that everyone has their own beliefs and that ancient beliefs evolve over time. The people in attendance of this ceremony brought their own versions of the torah and almost all of them dressed in the traditional attire.

Judaism is one of the oldest and complex religions around; every symbol, color, and piece of clothing contains some type of meaning and historical background. Religion gives people something to believe in and a sense of

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hope. It holds morals and a lot of family history with it. This site visit taught me to appreciate the different religions in the world. It taught me not to judge someone just because they hold different beliefs than I do. Judaism is a complex religion and deserves the same respect as any other religion.

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