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# Jews

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## Origins

Following the revolts and scattering of A.D. 70 and 132, Jews sought to preserve the teachings of the rabbis. Around A.D. 200 a body of work, the Mishna, was compiled, comprising the teaching and interpretation of the rabbis. Further material was later added, known as the Gemara. In the ensuing century, an expanded work, combining the Mishnah and Gemara, called the Talmud, was produced.

By the sixth century, a second version of the Talmud was produced by Jews living in Babylon. As the Middle Ages progressed, two distinct traditions, the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim, developed. The Ashkenazi Jews spread from the German states to other European countries, following persecution. They were renowned for their pious and strict approach to the Law and Talmud. The Sephardim derived from Jews in Spain and North Africa and were more receptive to secular culture. Kabbalah, the Jewish mystic tradition, had its strongest adherents amongst the Sephardim. A group known as the Hasidim, followers of the teachings of the eighteenth-century Israel ben Eliezer, who emphasised the importance of joy in worship, were particular advocates of Kabbalah. The nineteenth century saw the growth of Reform Judaism and also Zionism.

## Today

Orthodox Jews adhere closely to the Talmud. Modern Orthodoxy is more open to secular knowledge. The Conservative or Masorti movement also seeks to combine traditional Judaism with contemporary knowledge, but without fundamentalism. Reform Judaism, originating in Germany, advocates that Jewish law and practice should change with the times, for example advocating equality for women. Liberal Judaism is similar to Reform Judaism, but more radical.

## What the mainstream says

- God exists.
- God is one and unique.
- God is incorporeal.
- God is eternal.
- Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other.
- The words of the prophets are true.
- Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
- The Written Torah and Oral Torah (Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses.
- There will be no other Torah.
- God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
- God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
- The Messiah will come.
- The dead will be resurrected.

(Source: <http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm>)

## Suggested initial Scriptural approach

The words which Moses spoke, particularly in Deuteronomy 28, and their detailed fulfilment relating to Israel, is a helpful way of relating the Bible to present-day Israel, as well as history. With regard to Christ, the way he showed "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Lk. 24:44) is a pattern to follow, showing how the life of Christ recorded in the Gospels matches perfectly the Old Testament prophecies.