

Year 8 Knowledge Organizer 3—Judaism in daily life

You are a Jew if your mother was Jewish, but some Jews choose not to follow the rules for being Jewish or celebrate the festivals or rituals.

For practising Jews the Torah provides the rules or MITZVOT that you have to follow. If you are an ORTHODOX Jew you will try and keep all of the rules, while REFORM Jews will be less strict but will follow many of the laws.

Keeping the Mitzvot effects all aspects of a Jew's life from what they can do on the Shabbat (sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday) what a Jew can and can't eat, how they should pray and what materials they can wear.



How are Torah laws interpreted for modern day

The Torah contains 613 laws or Mitzvot but were written at least 2,500 years ago. In order that the principles in the Torah are explained and can be interpreted to tell Jews how to behave in a number of circumstances they wrote supporting documents called the MISHNA and GEMARA which together are known as the TALMUD.

One law in the Torah says "Keep the Shabbat Holy"

SHABBAT is the holy day for the Jews starting at sunset on Friday and goes onto sunset on a Saturday. Rabbis said keeping the Shabbat Holy means doing no work on the Shabbat. In the TALMUD this is then explained giving a list of 39 MELACHOT or principles counted as being work. One of these says that Jews may not tie or untie knots on the Shabbat. So, this means today that Jews cannot wear laced up shoes or a tie on the Shabbat.

Another Torah law says "you shall not kill"

Today we have new medical procedures that the writers of the Torah could not have known. One such procedure is IVF where embryos are created outside the body of the women in labs for couples who are finding it difficult to get pregnant in the usual manner. Multiple embryos are made and several are implanted at the same time in the mother. If all the embryos implant the mother might be carrying multiple babies and it is usual to selectively abort some to make the pregnancy manageable. For an Orthodox Jew (very strict) this would be unacceptable as they believe life begins at conception and therefore this would be breaking the Mitzvot "you shall not kill"

A less complex example of a Mitzvot is "you shall not cook a kid (young goat) in its mother's milk"

For a Jew today this means they could not eat foods like Lasagne where there is both meat and dairy. Jews have to leave 3 hours between eating any food that has either a meat or dairy quality. So it is very important that a Jew knows exactly what ingredients are in any food they eat or drink.

Jewish clothing for prayer

Jews wear a Tallit of prayer shawl for prayer and rap it round themselves symbolising God's love. It has 613 little tassels to represent the 613 Mitzvot. Some of the tassels are tied into 5 knots in each corner to symbolise the 5 books of the Torah.



Jews also wear the Tefillin which are 2 leather boxes which are kept in place by leather straps. In each box are passages from the Torah. These are worn for the prayers 3 times a day except for the Shabbat as they can not tie knots on the Shabbat.



One important prayer said by Jews daily is the SHEMA. This is "Hear Oh Israel the Lord your God, the Lord is One and you will love the Lord your God with all your hearts, souls and mind"

Kosher Food

A way Jewish identity is shown is by following the dietary rules found in the Torah.

Jews can only eat animals that chew the cud and have completely split hooves.

Animals must be killed in a particular way by trained religious slaughtermen who will draw a VERY sharp knife across the animal's throat and will say a prayer over the animal.

Fish can be eaten if they have scales and fins

Jews cannot mix meat and dairy but leave 3 hours between consuming something that has a dairy content and or a meat content.

All plants can be eaten.

Insects cannot be eaten, so some foods need close checking.

Eggs must be checked for any blood spots as this would make them unclean.