
UNIT 2 JUDAISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we deal with one of the oldest monotheistic religions, Judaism, though it does not fit easily into conventional western categories such as religion, ethnicity or culture. Here we explain origin and history of Judaism, monotheism of Moses, their beliefs and practices, and various offshoots of Judaism until modern time.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Appreciate the uniqueness of Judaism as a religion and its beliefs and practices;
- Present a historical picture of the evolution of Judaism; and
- Find the continuity from Judaism to Christianity.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Judaism in the strict sense designates religious beliefs and practices of the Jews and broadly speaking it is the oldest monotheistic religion in the world. It has a written history of over 4000 years. It began as the faith of the ancient Hebrews in the Middle East and its sacred scripture is the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). Yet, Judaism does not fit easily into conventional Western categories such as religion, ethnicity, or culture. Judaism, like Hinduism, does not have a founder and it is unable to pin point a time in history as the starting point. But, many believe that the root of Judaism is patriarch Abraham.

Though Jews claim that the doctrine concerning the one true God was communicated to Adam and this was passed on through an unbroken chain of ancestors such as Seth, Noah etcetera down to Abraham, the Book of Joshua testifies that Abraham too worshipped strange gods in Chaldea (24:2, 15). In other words, the religion of the tribe of Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldeans and migrated first by way of Haran

to Canaan and then to Egypt. It is this tribe that was later transformed into the religion of Judaism.

2.2 MONOTHEISM OF MOSES

The covenant with Abraham takes nationalistic overtones and historical transformation with the exodus from Egypt (Amos 3:2; 9:7). After impressing the Egyptian Pharaoh with magic tricks, Moses acquired liberty for the Jews in Egypt. Now it was Moses' task to lead the Jews out of Egypt to the holy land of Israel. He took the responsibility of making wise laws to maintain proper relations among the antagonistic tribes. With this aim he gave the "Ten Commandments." 1) I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me and you shall not make unto you any graven image. 2) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. 3) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy 4) Honor your father and your mother. 5) You shall not kill. 6) You shall not commit adultery. 7) You shall not steal. 8) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 9) You shall not covet your neighbor's house. 10) You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. While deities of Egypt, Babylonia, Phoenicia demanded that the devotees should erect temples in their honor and bring a multitude of sacrifices, the deity of Judaism demanded high moral behavior and ethical conduct. God asked them to be humane and civilized.

Debates abound on the question whether monotheism or monolatry existed during Mosaic time. Monotheism denies the existence of other gods whereas monolatry presupposes existence of other gods (Exo 15:11), but advocated worship of one god (Exo 20:3). Majority of scholars believe Moses tried his level best to introduce monotheism. This is further corroborated by the fact that the Phoenicians, Aramaeans, Babylonians and Egyptians spontaneously increased the number of deities and grouped them into male and female whereas in Hebrew tradition not even a word for goddess is extant. Though in some quarters, goddess Ashera was considered to be wife of Yahweh, her altars were destroyed as idolatrous. Yahweh was without peers. (Deut 4:35-39; 6:4; Ps 18:32).

2.3 CONQUEST, SETTLEMENT AND EVOLUTION OF JUDAISM

Moses died before reaching the people to Canaan. Joshua took over the leadership. The Book of Joshua affirms that the land of Canaan was conquered militarily by Israelites. But, the Book of Judges testifies that it was a gradual settlement and not a sudden conquest. Archaeology conducted in Jericho too favors the latter. A possible reconstruction of history could be done by taking a compromise position. When the fugitives from Egypt (Moses' group) entered the high lands of Canaan, they met there people migrated from the coastal lands due to frequent wars between different city states. Slavery, famine and wars prompted them to seek safer places for habitation. Hill areas were safer because of two reasons: the main weapon of war in those days was chariots and these cannot climb steep cliffs and those on the top of the hill had the advantage. Therefore, there was relative peace in the high lands and this is symbolized by the phrase "land flowing with milk." Secondly, Mountainous areas provided food in the form of wild honey, fruits and animals. This relative prosperity is symbolized by the phrase "land flowing with honey." Thus, the high lands attracted two groups of people namely the coastal tribal people (Canaanites) and Moses' group. They shared

their experiences and discovered that they had the same god liberated them from oppressive powers. They decided to form a Tribal Confederation agreeing basically on three things: One God, One People and One Land.

Political glory, intellectual contribution and religious fervor reached zenith in the time of David and Solomon. David was successful in blending spiritual powers with political, which found its expression in the divine election of David to be the royal line and it was confirmed by the prophetic testament (2 Sam 7). This was immediately followed by the selection of Mount Zion as the dwelling-place of Yahweh and David transferred the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem making it the capital of the theocratic state of Israel. Eventually, Jerusalem became the religious and political capital of Judaism. Solomon converted Jerusalem as the Temple city and this paved the way for the gradual disappearance of shrines in other parts of the country.

The earth was considered to be consisting of three continents namely Asia, Africa and Europe descending from the three sons of Noah namely Sem, Ham and Japheth. Asians (Semitic) descend from Sem, Africans from Ham and Europeans from Japheth. The center of the earth is Jerusalem and the worship of Yahweh was centered on the temple of Jerusalem.

In BC 921, with the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided into two: Israel the Northern Kingdom (comprising ten tribes namely Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, as well as Ephraim and Manasseh, today known as “ten lost tribes”) and Judah the Southern Kingdom (made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). Jerusalem was the capital of Judah and Rehoboam ruled over it. Division was both politically and religiously disastrous. The centralizing tendencies of Saul, David and Solomon were thwarted. To prevent his subjects going to Jerusalem, Jeroboam, the king of Israel erected many shrines in the north and allowed heathen practices to creep in and this paved way for religious syncretism. Though the images of heifers (calves) were originally intended to represent Covenant-God Yahweh, the worship turned out to be inferior compared to the worship in Jerusalem, which did not have any images. The dynasty of Omri in Israel established a new capital in Samaria and openly favored introduction of Phoenician idolatry. Queen Jezebel, wife of Ahab, even succeeded in erecting in the new capital a magnificent temple in honor of her god Baal. But, the prophets of Israel denounced idolatrous practices and the kings could not turn a blind ear to their agitations.

The eighth century prophets like Amos, Hosea and Isaiah of Jerusalem highlighted the interior meaning of the Mosaic covenant in terms of fulfillment of the duties and love toward fellow-beings and denounced empty *cultus*. This shift of focus from *opus operatum* of rituals (mechanical performance of religious rites) to sound ethical life is without any parallel in the Semitic religions. There were some attempts of reformation of pure religion (Yahweh-cultus at Jerusalem) during the pious kings such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah.

The Assyrians conquered Israel and Samaria fell in BC 721. The Assyrians brought native people and made them settle in Samaria and forced them to into mixed marriages. This strategic move gave rise to a mixed generation, later known as Samaritans. They believed that real worship should be conducted in Mount Gerizim.

The Babylonians defeated the Assyrians in 605, and attacked Judah in 597 and 587. Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and subsequent exile of the Jews led to hopes of a future national restoration under the leadership of a Messiah, a

religious-political-military leader. He was thought to be a personal Messiah, a descendant from the house of David.

The deportation of the wealthier and better educated Jews to the heathen and of Babylonia and their sojourn there for over a period of 50 years brought drastic changes in Judaism. It was a time of spiritual purification. Cut off from their homeland, Jeremiah and Ezekiel emphasized the value of the religion of individual even without a temple and external sacrificial system. They began to collect diligently their literature such as the Torah, prophetic and historical books, and parts of Psalter. The exilic prophets spoke of a “remnant” of the people, who would receive fulfillment of God’s promises in the better times (messianic times).

Cyrus, the Persian ruler conquered Babylonians in BC 539 and allowed the Jews to return to their homeland of Palestine in 537. Some remained in Persia whereas many returned to Jerusalem. Jews began to reflect on the life of gentiles too. The worshippers of Yahweh felt themselves more akin to Persians than to the Babylonians since the former served God without images. If the creation stories of the Bible are heavily influenced by Babylonian mythology, the concept of Satan, resurrection of the dead, angelology and magic art etcetera crept into Judaism by the impact of Parsiism and continued to exert their weight in Christian era too.

Those who returned to their homeland decided to re-establish theocracy. But, this is a period that was characterized by strict religious legalism. People were exceedingly zealous in observing the old ordinances. Though prophets like Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi insisted on healthy ethical life, external matters of religion were emphasized. The leaders like Zerubabel, Ezra and Nehemiah nourished antagonistic attitude towards neighboring gentiles who did not live under the Law of Moses. Their intolerance of Samaritans can be understood from the principle of the self-preservation of the people of Yahweh.

Jewish exclusiveness found a dangerous enemy from the days of Alexander the Great, who invaded Palestine in BC 332 and imposed Greek language. Hellenistic philosophy, language, culture, customs, and the world-view overwhelmed Palestine. Though the pious Jews (Hasidim) took measures to shield themselves from Hellenism, the secular minded Jews were attracted to this new philosophy. Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to suppress Judaism but was strongly opposed by the Hasmoneans. The Book of Maccabees in the Bible bears testimony to this holy war. But, when Jonathan Maccabeus attempted usurpation of the high priesthood, the ultra-orthodox Jews made a retreat to the caves in Qumran and dedicated themselves in the study, research and copying of the sacred scriptures. This group (formerly the Hasidim) was called the Essenes of Qumran. Some of the Essenes remained celibate. They held a philosophy of dualism such as the war between sons of light and children of darkness (this is not a *jihad*, but a spiritual dualism).

Eventually, there arose two other groups within the people of Israel itself, one was strict and the other lax with regard to the observance of the Mosaic Law. The strict group was known as “Pharisees,” which means “Separatists” and the lax group was Sadducees, mostly the priestly class, who were ready to compromise with demands of the times. The Sadducees accept the written Torah as normative whereas Pharisees assert the authority of Oral Torah too.

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century AD, mentions in his book *Antiquities of the Jews* another group namely the Zealots, who followed the so

called Fourth Philosophy (an armed war against foreign domination).

It is to be noted that there were friendly exchange between Hellenism and Judaism. For example, in Alexandria a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek was conducted in the second century BC, and this translation is known as Septuagint. Yet, the Wisdom literature especially Wisdom of Solomon defends wisdom of revelation contained in the Torah as superior to the Epicurean worldly-wisdom of Hellenism attained through reason. But, Wisdom of Solomon borrowed many ideas from Platonism and Stoicism, two branches of Hellenism. Net result was that the *hokma* (wisdom of the Hebrew civilization) was Hellenized. Philo, the Alexandrian Jew adapted Judaism to Greek civilization and to humanism. Thus, national Hebraism was adapted to Hellenistic universalism through allegorical interpretation of the sacred texts, which was contrary to orthodox rabbinical interpretation which clung tenaciously to the letter of the sacred scriptures.

The Roman general Pompey invaded Palestine in BC 63 and from then on till the New Testament period it was under Roman domination. The Temple was ultimately destroyed and burned in 70 AD and the Jews were dispersed all over the world (the Diaspora).

2.4 BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF JUDAISM

Judaism underwent evolution during the course of its 4000 years of turbulent history. Yet, Judaism professes to this day the belief in one, asexual, eternal creator God, who is a righteous and compassionate king, judge and father. The basis of Judaism is the faith in one God, and believes in the unity and oneness of the universal Creator. In all Sabbath, festivals and daily prayers, the Jews recite the *Shema* prayer (Deut 6:4): Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Its uniqueness consists, perhaps, in its understanding of God as a living personal God, holy and merciful, and his relation to the world in a dynamic manner. Judaism purified and spiritualized itself because of its own inner strength. It also suffered a lot of relapses, but maintained its uniqueness.

Jews are often called *the People of the Book*. They lay great stress on sacred scriptures, their study and interpretation. The Hebrew Bible is the foundation of Judaism. In Jewish circles, it is known as *TaNaKh*, the acronym for *Torah* (first five books of the Bible), *Nebiim* (the Prophets) and *Khetubim* (other writings). The process of fixing the official list of inspired books started in 90 AD by the Jamnia Rabbis and therefore, the number of the books in Khetubim was not fixed in New Testament period.

A Jewish boy is circumcised on the eight day of his birth- this is the rite of *Brit-milah*. The naming of a Jewish girl on the eighth day is known as *zeved habat*. When the boy attains seven years of age, he is taken to a rabbi to study the scriptures. This continues up to the age of 12, when he takes a temporary vow to be a student of the Torah. At the age of 13, he becomes *bar-mitzwah* (literally “son of the commandment”), that is, a full member of the Jewish community. He chants a portion from the Bible at a special ceremony in the synagogue (when the temple existed, it was done there. Cf. Lk 2:41-51). In the modern times, Conservative and Reform Jews have a similar ceremony for girls called *bas-mitzwah* (daughter of the commandment).

An Orthodox Jew’s wedding begins with a *ketubah*, that is, a marriage contract signed by two witnesses, prepared for bride and groom. The document states groom’s

obligations toward his bride. The marriage takes place under a *huppa* or canopy, which symbolizes the union of bride and groom and their future home. They sip wine from a single cup to show the common life they share. At the end of the ceremony, the groom breaks a glass as a reminder, in the midst of his happiness, of the destruction of the Temple.

Jews observe certain rituals in connection with mourning. The members of the immediate family sit *Shiva* after funeral services (*shiva* in Hebrew means “seven”). They stay in their homes for seven days, but do not mourn on the Sabbath. Mourners recite the *Kaddish* prayer written in Aramaic. Orthodox Jews observe mourning for parents for one year, and repeat the *Kaddish* daily. They observe the *yahrzeit* or anniversary of the death and recite memorial prayers called *yizkor* on holy days.

Judaism celebrates creation, revelation and redemption in the form of festivals. Major pilgrim festivals are Passover (*Pesach*), Pentecost (*Shavuot*) and Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*). Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), Day of Remembrance (Yom Hashanah, New Year Day) are high holidays. Other feasts are Hanukkah, *Divali* of the Jews (festival of lights) and Purim (Lots). Weekly holiday is the Sabbath.

In the synagogue, they kept an Ark where the scroll of the Torah is placed, a *bimah* (platform) where the Torah is read, and *ner tamid* (eternal light) where a lamp is kept burning always. There was also an *amud* (pulpit) facing the Ark, where the *hazzan* (prayer leader) stands while praying. A Yeshiva is a Jewish school of learning and *mikvah* is the ritual bath.

Check Your Progress I

Note:

a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1)

What is the monotheism of Moses?

2)

Give two religious practices of Judaism.

2.5 NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM

The New Testament portrays the Christianity as the spiritual heir of Judaism. Jesus was a Jew, Peter was a Jew and Paul was a Jew. Christianity started as a new Jewish sect, who followed the teaching of Yeshua of Nazareth, now commonly called Jesus. They did not change their religion, but claimed to be another sect or denomination of Judaism, which we can name “Christian Judaism” (Rom 11:11-13).

2.6 RABBINIC JUDAISM AND LITERATURE

Rabbinic Judaism emerged in the New Testament period to replace the temple cult at Jerusalem. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, their religion was no longer centered in Jerusalem; Jews were prohibited from setting foot there. Judaism became decentralized and stopped seeking converts. The local synagogue became the new center of Jewish life. Animal sacrifice was abandoned. Authority shifted from the centralized priesthood to local scholars and teachers, giving rise to Rabbinic Judaism.

It became an existential necessity for the Jews to compile the oral teachings. Rabbi Judah ha Nasi (135-220 AD), a Palestinian scholar, undertook the task of collecting and editing the oral teaching of the rabbis especially Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Akiba who were active at Jamnia in the 90s, and this collection is known as Mishnah (literally “repetition, study”). It can be called “the Jewish oral law.” This is the first written compilation of Jewish laws after the Bible. Rabbis of Babylon compiled and edited some of the oral law. These collections and their later interpretations are called Talmud (literally “teaching,” “learning”). It is the book of law and lore, which advocates ethical conduct among all peoples.

Even by BC 450-400 the ordinary Jews did not understand Hebrew language in which the Old Testament was written. We read in Neh 8:7 that the Levites translated the Torah into Aramaic for the people while Ezra, a Persian lawyer read it in Hebrew. These Aramaic translations became loose interpretations of the Torah, and the collection of these translations is called the *Targum*. E.g. Jesus read the Scriptures in Hebrew and interpreted them in Aramaic in Lk 4:18-30.

Through this new dispensation, Jews carried on their culture and religion through a tradition of scholarship and strict observance of the Mosaic Law. It was believed that the Torah was given to Moses by God through an angel. It took two forms namely the oral and written tradition. Sacred scriptures contain the written tradition. Oral traditions were handed down by rabbis through rabbinical writings like Targum, Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud, Gemara, Tosephta etcetera. The oral tradition took two forms namely Halakkah (literally “way,” and it contains rules for life) and Haggada (anecdotes explaining the rules). Thus the tradition of the elders or “fathers of the Judaism” became very significant in Jewry (Cf. Mt 15:2). In AD 1871, Jewish scholar H. Graetz concluded that the Hebrew canon was finally closed only with the Mishnah, which he dated 189 AD.

Midrash (“to seek, inquire,”) is a research on the Hebrew Scriptures. Midrashim in the plural denotes the collections of rabbinic commentaries on the Bible. Gemara (literally “completion,” “tradition”) is the later rabbinic discussions on the Mishnah. Tosefta (Aramaic term meaning “addition”) is a collection of laws parallel to the Mishnah. It is said to have been collected by Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Oshaia in 3rd and 4th century AD.

2.7 JUDAISM IN THE MIDDLE AND MODERN AGE

The synagogue is the Jewish place of worship and the center of Jewish education and communal affairs. A cantor leads the services. Selected portions from the Hebrew Bible are read on the Sabbath, on holy days (*Yom Tov*), and on Mondays and Thursdays. The Sabbath begins at sunset Friday and lasts until sunset Saturday.

The rabbi, chosen by each congregation, serves as spiritual leader, teacher and interpreter of the Jewish law and scriptures. Judaism has no single head dictating religious dogma and no international body with authority over religious practice.

The Orthodox Jews (Modern Orthodox Judaism and Haredi Judaism, in USA and Canada alone there are 3 million spread over 3000 congregations) believe that every word of the Torah came from God on Mount Sinai. They also rely on the laws stated in the *Shulhan Aruk* (a Halakhic literature), the book of codes and decisions of recognized and learned rabbis. Out of the Thirteen Principles of Faith proposed by Maimonides in 13th century, two –*Ani Ma'amin* and *Yidgal*- are held by many Orthodox Jews. Men wear skull caps or hats (*kippah*) at all times as sign of respect to God. Some orthodox men wear beards and sideburns. They keep Sabbath as a complete day of rest, study, prayer and devotion. They do not work, travel or carry money on the Sabbath. They place a small *mezuzah* as a reminder of God's presence at the upper section of the right doorpost of home. The *mezuzah* is wooden metal or glass case of three inches which contains parchment inscribed with 15 verses from the Bible.

An Orthodox Jew wears *tefillin* (phylacteries) during his weekday morning prayers. These are small boxes containing parchments with four passages from the Bible. A leather strap connects one box to the head. Another strap attaches the second box to the left arm near the heart (Deut 6:8). A Jew, when he prays, wears a prayer shawl called *tallit* with *tzitzit* (tassels) on four corners. There are 613 precepts in the Torah to regulate the daily life of every Jew and this number is symbolized in the threads of the prayer shawls. A prayer leader wears a special garment called *kittel*. Communal prayer requires a quorum of ten adult Jews, called a *minyan*.

An Orthodox Jew follows all dietary regulations strictly. They do not eat pork or pork products. They eat meat of those animals that chew their cuds and have cleft hooves, such as cattle and sheep. They do not eat shellfish, such as oysters, but only those fish that have scales and fins. They eat beef not strangled, but slaughtered in a special way. They free meat of blood before eating it. They keep milk and milk products separately and do not serve them at the same meal. Food prepared in accordance with the Jewish dietary laws is called *kosher*, meaning "proper for use" (The laws of *kashrut* -keeping *kosher*- are the Jewish dietary laws). Men and women sit separately in the synagogues.

In the middle ages, when Europe and Western Asia were divided into Christian and Islamic countries, the Jewish people also found themselves divided into two main groups. They are known as Sephardi and Ashkenazi. Sephardi Jews were centered in Spain and Portugal (under Muslim rule) and culturally linked to Babylonian Jews. When they were expelled in 1492, they settled in North Africa, the east Mediterranean, the Far East and Northern Europe.

Ashkenazi Jews were centered in France, Germany and Poland and linked to Jewish culture of Palestine and Rome. Over the past two centuries Ashkenazi Jews are divided

into numberless denominations. Mysticism (for example Kabbala) and a movement known as Hasidim began to appear (they wear black frock coats). Hasidic Judaism is a stream of Haredi Judaism based on the teachings of Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer (1700-1760) and they accept Kabbala as sacred scripture. They accept a supreme religious leader known as *Rebbe*. The 18th century marked Jewish Enlightenment known as Haskala.

In the 19th century, Conservative and Reform Judaism emerged as an effort of modifying the strictness of Orthodox Judaism (1.5 million, 800 congregations in USA and Canada). Though the authority of the Jewish law is accepted as a rule, Conservative Jews (Masorti Judaism) believe that the concept of revelation is subject to many interpretations. They teach that Jewish law is not static, but has always developed in response to changing conditions. It holds that the Torah is a divine document written by prophets inspired by God, but rejects the Orthodox position that it was dictated by God to Moses. Conservative Judaism advocates that varied interpretation of the scriptures or laws should not lead to division of the Jews. It also insists that it is important to recognize the role of other faiths in the salvation of mankind. Men and women may sit together in a synagogue.

Reform Judaism (Liberal Judaism), born as a reaction to Enlightenment in Germany (Haskala), believes that each generation has the right to accept, reject or modify the traditions it has received. It initially defined Judaism as a religion, rather than as a race or culture, rejected most of the ritual ceremonial laws of the Torah while observing moral laws, and emphasized the ethical call of the prophets. But, they follow the sacred calendar of Sabbath and holidays. They may or may not observe dietary rules. Men often do not wear skull caps or prayer shawls in their synagogue ceremonies and prayers are said in the vernacular, not in the sacred language of Hebrew. Women are given a greater role in the service. There are about one million Jews in USA and Canada, and over 700 congregations. Reform and Conservative Jews today speak not of a Messiah, but of a Messianic Kingdom of Justice. They believe that a period of freedom and justice will come, not miraculously, but with God's help and efforts of human beings.

As an outgrowth of reform, Zionism appeared by the end of the 19th century. Judaism in Europe suffered terribly during the holocaust, when Adolph Hitler attempted extermination of all Jews, and 6 millions of Jews were killed by the German Nazis. The Nazis often did not associate Karaites (scripturalists) with Jews, and therefore several Karaite communities were spared). This is one of the world's greatest examples of religious and racial intolerance. The Spanish inquisition let loose a reign of terror on the Jews living in Spain, when many Jews were burnt at the stake. This led to a rise of emigrants to Palestine and led to declaration of the State of Israel on May 18, 1948.

The original homeland called Palestine which was part of the Turkish Empire till 1917. Following Germany's defeat in the First World War, the British took a large part of it as the spoils of their victory. As a reward for helping them in defeating the Turks, they carved off Palestine and gave away the larger part to a Bedouin Arab, named Abdullah, who became the first Hashemite King of Transjordan (now Jordan). The remainder of Palestine was mandated by the British.

In 1947 Britain had to give up control over this part of Palestine which was divided into Israeli and Arab Zones. The Arab Zone went to Jordan. This division was accepted by the Jews but not by the Arabs. The Arabs went to war in 1948, they lost. The Arab states and the Arabs living in Israel could not accept the fact that Israel had been

created. But, the state of Israel achieved remarkable progress amidst oppressive conditions of the Middle East. Any other community would have easily withered away in the face of the challenges that Israel faced. The ancient history of the virile community is as glorious as its present. It has given us Abraham, Moses, Solomon, not to mention Jesus Christ, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein and many others.

According to a census of 2007, there are about 14.6 million Jews in the world, seven million in USA, and 4.5 million in Israel. Though, there are claims that there were trade relations between India and Palestine from BC 3000, we have proofs for Jewish settlement in India since the 1st century of our era. Most of the Jews were concentrated in Kerala in South India. There is a synagogue at Cochin. They also lived in Mumbai and Pune.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is New Testament Judaism?

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2) What is Rabbinic Judaism?

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

Judaism, as we have already seen, is a set of beliefs and practices originating in the Hebrew Bible as later further explored and explained in the Talmud and other texts. Judaism presents itself as the covenantal relationship between the Children of Israel (later, the Jewish nation) and God. It is considered either the first or one of the first monotheistic religions, and is among the oldest religions still being practiced today. Many of its texts and traditions are central to the other Abrahamic religions, with Jewish history and the principles and ethics of Judaism having influenced Christianity and Islam, as well as some non-Abrahamic religions. As the foundation of Western Christianity, many aspects of Judaism also correspond to secular Western concepts of ethics and civil law.

2.9 KEY WORDS

Decalogue	: Decalogue refers to Ten Commandments, a list of religious and moral imperatives given by Yahweh to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of two stone tablets.
Holocaust	: The Holocaust (from the Greek <i>holókauston</i> : <i>holos</i> , “whole” and <i>kaustos</i> , “burnt”) is the term generally used to describe the genocide of approximately six million European Jews during World War II as part of a program of deliberate and systematic state-sponsored extermination planned and executed by Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler.
Zionism	: <i>Zionism</i> is the international Jewish political movement that originally supported the reestablishment of a homeland for the Jewish People in Palestine.

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2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) After freeing the people of Israel from the Egyptian Pharaoh, it became Moses’ task to lead the Jews to the holy land of Israel. He took the responsibility of making wise laws to maintain proper relations among the antagonistic tribes. With this aim he gave the “Ten Commandments.”

Debates abound on the question whether monotheism or monolatry existed during Mosaic time. Majority of scholars believe Moses tried his level best to introduce monotheism.

It was Moses who created a holy shrine, the tabernacle, appointed sacred seasons, holy rituals, celebrations of sacrifices, customary festival days with special focus on the Sabbath and Passover, and also ordained a priestly family to preach Torah and guard the sanctuary.

- 2) A Jewish boy is circumcised on the eighth day of his birth- this is the rite of *Brit-milah*. The naming of a Jewish girl on the eighth day is known as *zeved habat*. When the boy attains seven years of age, he is taken to a rabbi to study the scriptures. This continues up to the age of 12, when he takes a temporary vow to be a student of the Torah. At the age of 13, he becomes *bar-mitzvah* (literally “son of the commandment”), that is, a full member of the Jewish community. He chants a portion from the Bible at a special ceremony in the synagogue

An Orthodox Jew’s wedding begins with a *ketubah*, that is, a marriage contract signed by two witnesses, prepared for bride and groom. The document states groom’s obligations toward his bride. The marriage takes place under a *huppa* or canopy, which symbolizes the union of bride and groom and their future home. They sip wine from a single cup to show the common life they share. At the end of the ceremony, the groom breaks a glass as a reminder, in the midst of his happiness, of the destruction of the Temple.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The New Testament portrays the Christianity as the spiritual heirs of Judaism. Jesus was a Jew, Peter was a Jew and Paul was a Jew. Christianity started as a new Jewish sect, who followed the teaching of Yeshua of Nazareth, now commonly called Jesus. They did not change their religion, but claimed to be another sect or denomination of Judaism, which we can name “Christian Judaism”.
- 2) Rabbinic Judaism emerged in the New Testament period to replace the temple cult at Jerusalem. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, their religion was no longer centred in Jerusalem; Jews were prohibited from setting foot there. Judaism became decentralized and stopped seeking converts. The local synagogue became the new centre of Jewish life. Animal sacrifice was abandoned. Authority shifted from the centralized priesthood to local scholars and teachers, giving rise to Rabbinic Judaism.