

## The Nature of God: The Almighty

### God is One

Judaism is a monotheistic religion. This means the belief in one God.

God is a single, whole being that cannot be divided.

God as One is best expressed in the first two verses of the **Shema**, an important Jewish prayer.

Therefore, God is everlasting and beyond something that humans can understand because of how great God is.

This means He is the only thing that should be praised as He alone has the power over all things. He is almighty.

### The Shema

#### Deuteronomy 6: 4-5

The prayer which expresses the oneness of God. It is said in the morning and at night.

### God as Creator

Genesis tells Jews that God is the One creator of the whole world.

God created the universe out of nothing, exactly how He wanted it to be.

Therefore, God has a major effect and influence on the world and people's place within it.

God expects loyalty from his people for giving them the gift that is earth and because he sustains the world in which they live.

He has almighty power over the world as He was the one to create it.

## God as Law-giver and Judge

God gave laws to help people exercise their free will in the correct way.

The basis of the Jewish law is the 10 Commandments.

God judges people especially at **Rosh Hashanah** (the Jewish new year) and after death.

The Torah contains 613 laws. These are called the **mitzvot**. They form the basis of the **Halakhah** which is the code of conduct for Jewish life.

God judges everyone on how they follow these laws. He judges them on their beliefs and actions.

## Why are these characteristics important to Jews today?

The names of the Almighty help bring Jews closer to Him by understanding His strength and greatness.

Jews worship a single God although they have plural names for Him. He is more complex than a single part.



Understanding God as a Creator, Lawgiver and Judge helps Jews act 'in the image of God' with justice and mercy.

Reciting the Shema twice a day (a prayer about the oneness of God) reinforces the importance of worshipping only One God.

## Shekinah

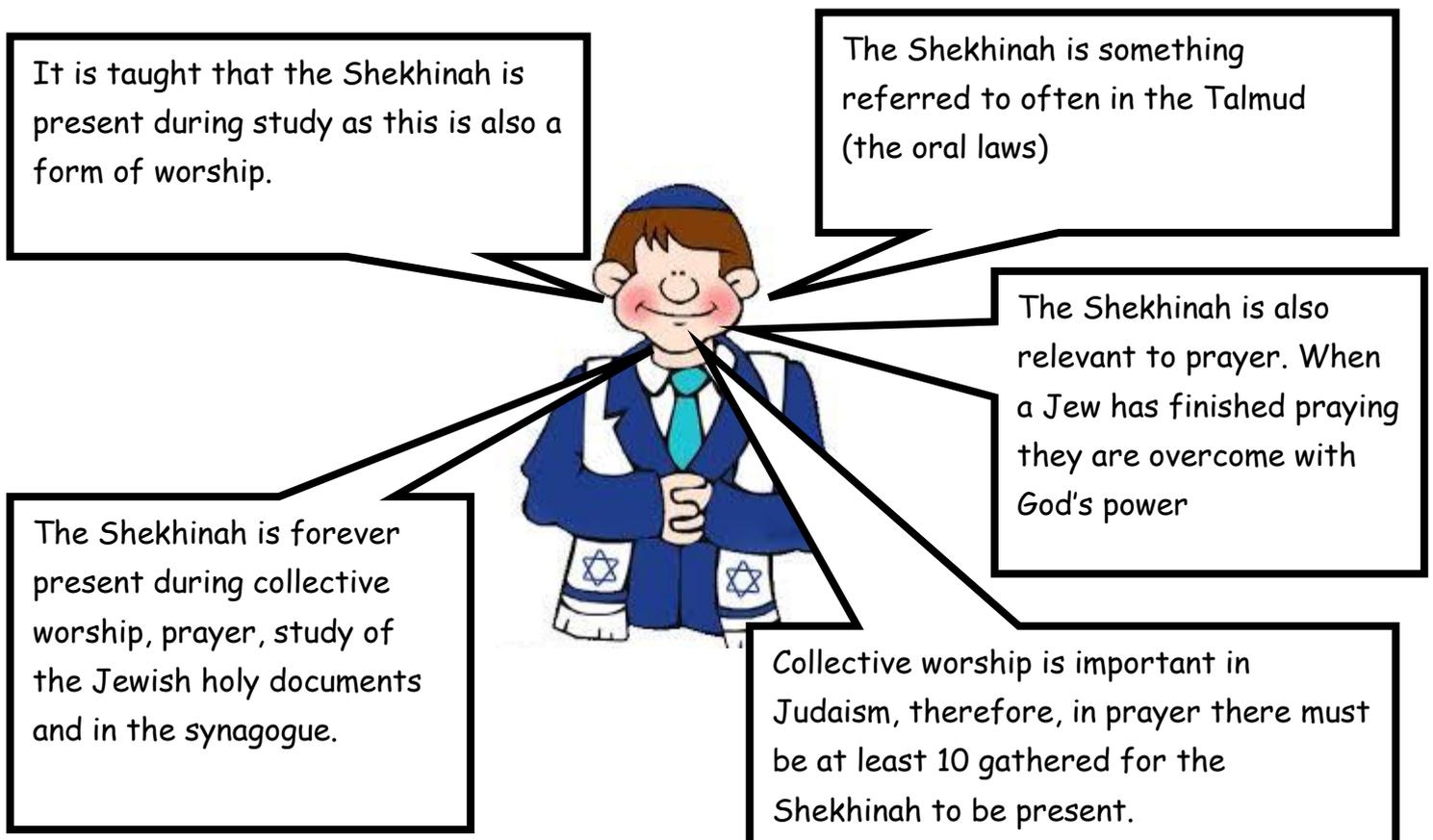
**Shekinah means 'God's divine presence'.**

After God told Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt in search of the promised land (Israel), he also instructed him to build a tabernacle, a portable temple, which God would dwell within as they travelled. It is a key belief in Judaism that God led the Jews out of Egypt.

The Tabernacle kept the presence of God with the Jews as they travelled, and maintained their connection with him.

This connection has continued through worship today in the synagogue. As God directed, a light burns in front of the Ark within the synagogue. This represents God's divine presence.

### What is the Shekinah?



### Why is the Shekinah important?

1. The Tenakh references the Shekinah being at the temple, Mount Zion and Jerusalem which is what makes it special for some Jews.

2. When Moses received the Torah he was surrounded by the Shekinah which means the Mitzvot comes directly from God.
3. The Shekinah teaches that God's presence is in the world and therefore believers may come across it at any time.
4. The Shekinah shows that the prophets of the Tenakh were truly inspired by God and so their message must be true

As an Orthodox Jew, the Torah is the primary focus of some of our yeshiva schools. This will take place in the morning with other subjects such as english, maths and science taking place in the afternoon as a secondary focus. Some Hassidic Jews, who are considered more strict, reject non-religious (secular) study and concentrate solely on textual learning.



### Why is the TeNaK important for Jews today?

The Tenakh references the Shekinah being at the temple, Mount Zion and Jerusalem which is what makes it special for some Jews.

When Moses received the Torah he was surrounded by the Shekinah which means the Mitzvot comes directly from God.



The Shekinah shows that the prophets of the Tenakh were truly inspired by God and so their message must be true.

The Shekinah teaches that God's presence is in the world and therefore believers may come across it at any time.

## Sources of Wisdom and Authority

### 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

#### The Dedication of the Temple

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and **the glory of the Lord filled the temple.** <sup>2</sup> The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. <sup>3</sup> When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying,

"He is good;  
his love endures forever."

#### Quiz!

*Answer the following questions on this sheet*

1. Where can the Shekinah be found?
2. How did it help the Jews of the past?
3. How many people need to be gathered for the Shekinah to be present?
4. Where do Orthodox Jews believe it is present?
5. Give one reason why the Shekinah is important.

#### Exam Questions

- b) Explain two reasons the Shekhinah is important (4)
- c) Explain two ways Jews connect with the Shekinah (5)

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

#### Messiah

##### The Origins of the Messiah

- The word 'Messiah' (anointed one) was originally used in the TeNaKh to refer to the kings of Israel.
- The first king was Saul. In preparation for his role as King the prophet Samuel anointed him to show that he was chosen by God.

## What is the Messiah?

Messiah means 'Anointed One' and refers to the ancient practice of anointing kings with oil when they took the throne.

Some Jews believe the Messiah will be a **great political leader**, descended from King David.



Jews also believe that he will be a **powerful leader**, **inspiring others** to follow his example. Know the Jewish Law and follow the Commandments.

Although the Torah does not make reference to the 'Messiah', it does make several references to the 'End of Days' which is the time of the Messiah - or the '**Messianic Age**'

The Messiah is therefore believed to be the one that will be **anointed as King** at the 'End of Days'

## Why is the Messiah important?

For many Jews the ideal world will come with the Messianic Age - this is the time when God will send the Messiah to put the world right.

Jews look forward to the coming of the Messiah - God's messenger of peace. Everyone will obey God's commandments and the world will be at peace.



Jews believe that the Messiah will come for one of two reasons:

- 1) The world will get better and be ready for the Messiah
- 2) It will get worse and need the Messiah to put it right

There are many different Jewish beliefs about what the Messiah will be like: some believe it is a man - an ideal ruler. Other Jews believe that the Messiah is a spiritual force rather than one special man. The world will eventually become good and peaceful 'Golden Age'. However, all Jews agree that whether Messiah is a man or an age the world will be much better.

## Covenant

### Genesis 9: 1-17

<sup>1</sup> Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup> The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. <sup>3</sup> Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

<sup>4</sup> “But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. <sup>5</sup> And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

<sup>6</sup> “Whoever sheds human blood,  
by humans shall their blood be shed;  
for in the image of God  
has God made mankind.

<sup>7</sup> As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

<sup>8</sup> Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: <sup>9</sup> “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

<sup>12</sup> And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: <sup>13</sup> I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. <sup>16</sup> Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

<sup>17</sup> So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

### The Covenant at Mount Sinai

God's covenant with Moses at Mount Sinai followed numerous covenants with many of the main patriarchs of Judaism including Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As centuries passed, the descendants of these leaders became slaves to the Egyptians and suffered greatly as a result of the Pharaohs. Moses was chosen by God to lead the Jewish people out of slavery and to the promised land.

# The Covenant at Mount Sinai

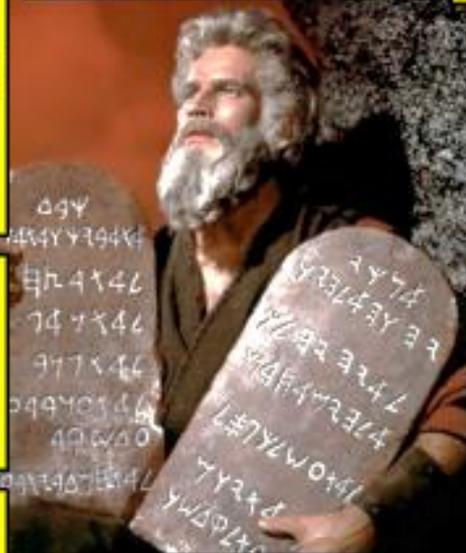
Moses was rescued in a basket from River Nile by Pharaoh's wife. He had to leave Egypt after killing an Egyptian. Moved to Midian for 40 years

God appeared as Burning Bush - told Moses to return to Egypt to lead the Hebrews to freedom. Spoke to Pharaoh and triggered ten plagues

According to Jewish tradition, every Jewish soul that would ever be born was present at that moment, and agreed to be bound by this covenant.

According to Jewish tradition, Moses was also given the Oral law - which was later written down as the Talmud.

God gave the Torah to the Hebrews to help them live an obedient life



After the final plague (Angel of Death), Pharaoh let the people go. They crossed the Red Sea and walked towards Mount Sinai.

At Sinai, God made covenant with the Hebrew people with a difference! Any Hebrews not following the earlier covenants would be punished

Covenant identifies Hebrews as the chosen people of God. 'Chosen for responsibility'.

The most important instructions were the 10 Commandments (the Decalogue) which Moses carved into stone tablets

## Why is the Covenant at Sinai important to Jews today?



The Torah is the most important part of the Tenakh for Jews as it contains the laws of the covenant and was given to the Hebrews. These are still a Jewish guide for living

Jews believe they are bound to follow the teachings in the Torah because of the Covenant. Obedience will be blessed and disobedience will be punished

Torah scrolls are still made today for use in the synagogue for prayer and worship. They are stored in the Ark.

Studying the Torah is part of Jewish life and forms a significant amount of Jewish education

## The 10 Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are the first ten of the 613 commandments given by God to the Jewish people.

These commandments are mentioned in order twice in the Torah, in Exodus 20:1-17 and then at Deuteronomy 5:4-21

### Exodus 20:3-14

1. You shall not recognise the gods of others in My presence
2. You shall not make yourself a carved image
3. You shall not take the name of Hashem, your God, in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it
5. Honour your father and your mother
6. You shall not kill
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against your fellow
10. You shall not covet your fellow's house...nor anything that belongs to your fellow



## Different Understandings of How and Why Decalogue is important for Jewish People Today

**The First Commandment** is important because Jewish people:

- Touch the mezuzah when they go into a room as it contains the Shema: 'One God'
- Pray 3 times a day to one God: the men wear tefillin which also contains the Shema (reminding them that they believe in one God).
- Say Grace before meals and many of the prayers refer to belief in one God.

**The Second Commandment** is important because Jewish people:

- Don't have any statues in the synagogue/home

**The Third Commandment** is important because Jewish people would not use God's name in a negative way. Many Jews don't even speak or write the word God.

**The Fourth Commandment** is important because Jewish people:

- Observe the Sabbath on this day. Orthodox Jews literally do not do anything classed as work.

**The Fifth Commandment** is important to Jewish people because:

- It helps them in their family life, they also support charities that care for the elderly.

**The Last 5 Commandments** are also important because Jewish people:

- Use them for moral guidance when making moral decisions.
- If Jewish people follow these guidelines they will have a good relationship with their neighbours.
- They reject violence
- They promote marriage and family life
- They will not lie, cheat, etc
- They reject all forms of greed and materialism.

As an Orthodox Jew, I believe that the entire Torah was given at Sinai. It is therefore binding for all time and should never be changed. We study the Torah carefully, discussing its meaning.



As a Reform Jew, I believe that the Torah Law - especially the Decalogue - is very important. However I don't believe that the whole of the Torah was given at Sinai, or that it was all given by God. I believe that as Jews we should work out which parts are significant for today. We are more flexible about how the Torah should be applied today.

### Why is Abraham important?

Abraham founded Judaism. He, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob are known as the Patriarchs, and are both the physical and spiritual ancestors of Judaism. Jewish tradition suggests that Abraham was born with the name Abram in approximately 1800BC. His Father was an idol maker, but from his early childhood Abraham

questioned his father's faith and he came to believe that the universe was made by a single creator. This was unusual as most religions at the time were polytheistic.

## The Abrahamic Covenant

Genesis 12:1-4 = God calls to Abraham to leave his home and family. In return God said 'I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great. Abraham does all that God asks of him.



Abraham sealed the Covenant by circumcising himself and all the males in his family.

Abraham represents the Jewish faith so the covenant was between God and Jews.

Abraham was put through many tests to prove himself - leaving his family and home was first

Abraham and Sarah both very old with no children - God blessed them with a child: Isaac who would go on to have 12 sons - the tribes of Israel (the great nation)

God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac - both were willing to go through with it, but an Angel stopped them before he was sacrificed.

### Source of Wisdom

'I will ratify my covenant between me and you and between your offspring after you, throughout the generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to your offspring after you.' Genesis 17:7

## How does the Abrahamic Covenant affect Jewish life today?



Covenant is fundamental to all Jews. Three parts of the Covenant to still be fulfilled: a great nation, a blessing and redemption

Jewish men are still circumcised today as a symbol of their covenant

The Covenant at Sinai (next lesson!) provided rules for Jews to follow - they follow these rules also to help them fulfil the Abrahamic Covenant

The birth of Isaac to the elderly Abraham and Sarah shows Jews that God keeps his promise and intervenes when needed

## Pikuach Nefesh

The obligation to save life whenever possible. For example giving medical treatment on Shabbat

Jews believe only God can decide when you die.

What is the purpose of life?: Why is a person alive? What do they have to do in their life? What is the goal of life and the reason for living?

What do we mean by 'quality of life' - Is it how much a person gets out of their life? Is it a combination of physical and mental factors?

## What is Pikuach Nefesh?

The obligation to save life whenever possible

Jews often talk of human life as being sacred. They refer to the sanctity of life when considering issues such as abortion, euthanasia, embryo research, the care of disabled or the elderly.

They believe there is something special or holy about human life. Every human, Jews believe, is special to God.



God is described as creating the first humans. The Torah says, 'So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.' Genesis 1:27

Humans are the only part of God's creation described as being in the image of God. Jews don't believe we look like God. They believe being in the image of God means that we are somehow special, we have something of God's nature in us - or at least the capacity to show God's nature.

For Jews, death cannot be made to come more quickly than it would from natural causes

This rules out such practices as murder and euthanasia

While Jewish law states that people have a duty to preserve life, there are different opinions about what this means in practice



Advances in medical technology mean that making life and death decisions is more complex



Know the scripture quotes behind the SOL and its significance in the SOL debate

God created us in his image  
*Genesis 1:27*

'God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea....  
*Genesis 1:28*

Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the Earth and subdue it'. (*Genesis 1:28*). This implies that humans should have children and that is God's will.

'He who destroys one soul of a human being, the Scripture considers him as if he should destroy the whole world...'  
*Mishnah*

Throughout the Torah there are commands not to take life (Ten commandments). Taking life is seen as intrinsically evil and unborn life must be protected.

## A Holy and Sacred Gift from God

**So this means that:**



- At the beginning of the world life was a gift from God
- Life is sacred because God made humans in His own image
- Life is holy because God gave it. Everyone should try to value and protect life.

This argument, along with quotes from scripture, would help to explain the Jewish belief of Pikuach Nefesh and Sanctity of Life

## Preserving Life

- Pikuach nefesh takes precedence over other responsibilities and most Jewish law
- Even laws of the Sabbath can be overlooked in order to save a life
- The Talmud contains several instances where it is permissible to break Shabbat law in order to save life
- These include, rescuing a child from the sea and putting out a fire
- In more modern times it might include driving a sick person to hospital or performing a life saving operation

Give examples of when Jewish law might be broken or suspended to preserve life. Try to use some key words in your answer

# Free Will



Adam and Eve's disobedience in *Genesis* teaches Jews that God has allowed them to choose how they live their lives .

Free will means that choices will always have consequences.

Jews believe that you should not use **free will** as an excuse for doing wrong actions. It will not bring them closer to God.

Choosing to act in a way that pleases God should bring about a life of fulfilment and a guarantee that God will judge them well on the Day of Judgment.

Eve disobeyed God and persuaded Adam to do the same, the consequences were severe and continue to affect humankind today.

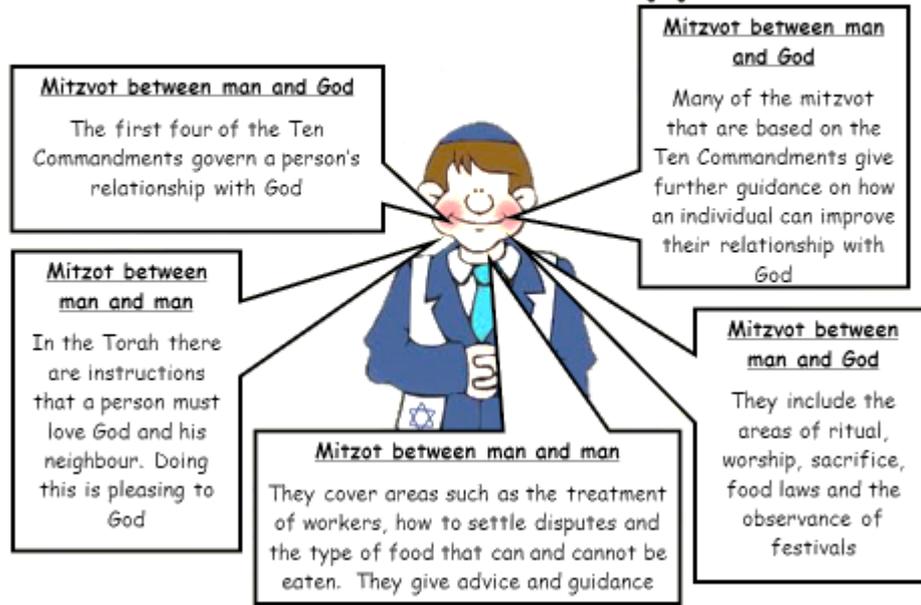
## Mitzvot (plural of mitzvah)

- Literally means commandment
- There are 613 in the Torah and others in the Talmud
- There are 248 positive mitzvot and 365 negative mitzvot
- They attempt to prevent the bond between humans and God being damaged

<p><u>Where is it?</u></p> <p>The concept of <b>free will</b> can be found in <i>Genesis 3</i></p>	<p><u>The Fall</u></p> <p><sup>3</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"</p> <p><sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"</p> <p><sup>4</sup> "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."</p> <p><sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.</p>
--	---

How will this story influence how a Jew might behave and why?  
Remember, God gave people the opportunity to make decisions for themselves

# There are two types



Adam and Eve's disobedience in Genesis teaches Jews that God has allowed them to choose how they live their lives

**Free will** means that choices will always have consequences.

Jews believe that you should not use **free will** as an excuse for doing wrong actions. It will not bring them closer to God.



Choosing to act in a way that pleases God should bring about a life of fulfilment and a guarantee that God will judge these people well on the Day of Judgment

Eve disobeyed God and persuaded Adam to do the same, the consequences were severe and continue to affect humankind today.

As an Orthodox Jew, I believe we should uphold every area of the mitzvot. All of the Jewish laws are important and we must follow them. The Ten commandments should be the basis of our lives.

We have this attitude because:

- The Torah is the word of God
- God's law must be obeyed
- God will judge us on how well we follow His law



As a Reform Jew, I believe the ritual side of Judaism can seem a bit outdated. I believe that many of the rules we have are not compatible with modern life. Therefore, much of this can be set aside to focus on more relevant rules.

I have this attitude because:

- Things change over time and we live in the modern world
- Mitzvot are a good guide to living but you can't keep to them all
- We don't have to take them literally.

## Summary of beliefs on the Afterlife

*There is little teaching about life after death in Jewish holy books; beliefs have developed over centuries, leading to differences between Jews.*

Some Jews believe that life after death will be a *physical* life.

Some Jews believe that life after death will be a *spiritual* life.

When a person dies, Jews make a blessing to God,  
"Blessed are You, Lord our God, king of the universe, the True Judge"

<b>Soul</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Created by God in all humans</li><li>- An undiminished expression of the creator himself</li><li>- The soul <i>refines</i> the body and the world around it</li></ul>	<b>Sheol</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A shadowy place where souls go down to after death</li><li>- Isaiah 38:18</li></ul>	<b>Resurrection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Dead returning to life (Isaiah 26:19)</li><li>- Awakening of the individual - leading into judgement</li></ul>
<b>Gan Eden</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Heaven</li><li>- A place of the dead</li><li>- Paradise</li></ul>	<b>Gehenna</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A place of the dead</li><li>- Punishment</li><li>- Hell</li></ul>	<b>Judgement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Last judgement by the Messiah</li><li>- Judgement takes place after the coming of the Messiah when souls and bodies reunited</li></ul>

### Sources of Wisdom

"Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to everlasting.

"Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to everlasting abhorrence."

"For the grave shall not thank You, nor shall death praise You; those who descend into the pit shall not hope for Your truth."

Gradually over time beliefs about **judgement** and **resurrection** emerged; Isaiah 26:19, "Your dead will come to life..." , and Daniel 12:2, " ...many will awaken, some to everlasting life, some to shame..."

Later still the Pharisees and Rabbis brought about the notion that the righteous will enter **Gan Eden** (a place of the dead in paradise - **Heave**

This was balanced by the belief that wicked people would go to **Gehinnom** (a place for a set time of temporary but not eternal purification of the soul, similar to the Christian purgatory) after judgement

**Orthodox Jews** believe the promised Messiah will come to lead a Messianic Age. The righteous will be resurrected and live in a restored Israel. It will be a time of peace when the Temple will be rebuilt. The Hebrew Scriptures speak about **Sheol** (Isaiah 38:18), a shadowy place where souls go down to after death



Some Liberal Reform Jews take a more modern and flexible approach to Rabbinic law and to Jewish life in general. Some Reform Jews believe they will be judged by God as soon as they die; this view is supported by Ecclesiastes 12:7, which suggests that judgement happens upon or shortly after death. They aim to live a good moral life in order to please God, however there is much less agreement among Reform Jews on exactly what will happen after death.