

# Lessoncard

## Introduction to synagogue and Judaism



**Theme:** Judaism  
**Subject:** The Synagogue and Judaism  
**Domain:** Identity and culture  
**Virtual Experience:** <https://edu.nl/4bcd4>

# Introduction to the synagogue and Judaism

## Introduction

What's so special about Judaism is that it's both a religion and a people and their culture. So, Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. It's the oldest monotheistic religion. That means they believe in one God (this is the same in Islam and Christianity). Judaism originated two to three thousand years BC. Religious Jews closely observe their traditions dating back all those years.

The Jewish people have been living in the area we now know as Palestine for three thousand years. After a revolt against the Roman rulers, the Jews were expelled. They eventually spread out across the world. Through Syria, they spread into North Africa, Europe, Asia, and later the Americas too. This is called a diaspora, which means a vast spread of a people all over the world.

## What do the Jews believe?

Jews believe in one God, who created the universe, the world and mankind. They believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and refer to him by the sacred word Yahweh. But they never say the name out loud. Jews are waiting for the Messiah, the Redeemer, who will bring peace and restore their relationship with God. They also believe a person's soul is pure at birth, and that people have free will. Jews do not have one single religious belief that all agree on. They're connected through their history, rules of living, and traditions.

## Did you know?

Jewish faith started from the moment Abraham began to worship one god instead of the many gods his father worshipped.



## Virtual visit to the Synagogue

Here's your chance to virtually visit a Synagogue. Experience the Virtual Tour by clicking the following link: <https://edu.nl/4bcd4> or by scanning the QR code.



Do you have VR goggles? Then open this link in your goggle browser, and experience the tour as if you're really there!



## Did you know?

Their faith forbids Jews from eating certain things. The foods that are allowed, are called kosher. This is directed by the kashrut: the food laws of the Jewish faith.

## Holy Scripture

According to the Jewish faith, Moses wrote the Thora, consisting of the first five books of what Christians call the Old Testament. All books of the Hebrew Bible together form the Tanakh. There are two more holy books, the Mishnah and the Talmud. The Mishnah contains oral explanations of the written Torah, which have been written down over the centuries. The Talmud is a holy comment on the Mishnah. This commentary, the so-called, Gemarah, loosely translates as study or education.

## The State of Israel

Jews have been prosecuted throughout their existence. You may have heard of the term 'antisemitism', which is another word for 'Jew hate'. In the Second World War, Jews were persecuted terribly. Only then did many people realise what Jews have had to endure all those centuries.

It was important they would get a safe space, in the country they once came from. In 1947, the United Nations advised that Palestine should be separated into two states: a Jewish and an Arabic one. The Arabs did not like it at all. The state was formed anyway, and until today, it is the cause of many conflicts and violence between Jews and Arabs.

## Conclusion

It's important to learn about each other. This helps to understand each other better, and strengthen respect and mutual acceptance. Let us learn of the past together, so that we can live together in a better way in the future.

## Questions?

1. What does it mean that Judaism is both a religion and a people and their culture?
2. What are the main holy books in Judaism and what is their significance?
3. What was the role of the diaspora in the spread of the Jewish people around the world?

## Task

For Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike, Jerusalem is a holy city. You can find a a video about Jeruzalem, the city of religions, [here](#) (4:12 min).

Write a short story from the perspective of a visitor to Jerusalem who is exploring the city's religious sites. The visitor can be from any of the three religions (or a neutral observer) and should reflect on the city's diverse religious heritage as seen in the video.