

Filmtext: Judaism – The Promised Land

PRESENTER

Judaism is the professed religion of about 14 million people in the world today. Its followers, the Jews, were dispersed to many countries during most of their long history.

NARRATOR

But since 1948, when the State of Israel was founded, Jews have returned to the land of their ancient forefathers. Around four million live in Israel, which is a small country on the Mediterranean coast in between Egypt and Syria. Israel is the only country where Judaism is the dominant religion.

PRESENTER

Jews refer to their country as “the Promised Land.” Why is that?

NARRATOR

Judaism is one of the oldest living religions. Its origins can be traced back to a shepherd called Abraham who lived about 4000 years ago in Chaldea, in what is now Iraq. The people of Chaldea believed in many gods. They made idols, or statues of the gods, and prayed to them. Abraham taught that there is only one invisible God. The belief in one God is called monotheism. But the people wouldn't listen to Abraham. They wanted to continue to worship their idols.

Finally Abraham left Chaldea and travelled to Haran before finally settling in Canaan, the area is where Israel is today. According to The Bible God promised Abraham that his seed would inherit the land forever. As the Jews are descended from Abraham they see this land as their Promised Land.

When the crops failed and famine threatened, Abraham's grandson, Jacob, decided to move to Egypt with his family. The Jews prospered in Egypt until they were enslaved by the pharaohs – the rulers of Ancient Egypt. The Jews at this time were known as Hebrews. They were slaves for about 400 years. The Pharaohs made them build pyramids and other huge monuments to glorify them.

PRESENTER

One of the Hebrews was a man called Moses. God spoke to him from a burning bush and chose him as his messenger.

NARRATOR

Moses went to the pharaoh and asked him to allow the Hebrews to leave the country as free men. But the pharaoh refused. As punishment God sent 10 plagues to Egypt. For several days a violent storm engulfed the country. A plague of flies swept across the land creating havoc in the homes of the Egyptians. For the final plague God sent an angel to kill the 1st born child in every Egyptian household. The Angel passed by every Hebrew house as God had told them to smear lambs blood on the doors of their homes.

At last the pharaoh agreed to let the Hebrews go. Moses told them to leave quickly before the pharaoh changed his mind. The pharaoh immediately regretted allowing the Hebrews to leave. He sent his army in hot pursuit of them. The Hebrews couldn't pass over the Red Sea and the pharaoh's army was fast approaching. The Bible recounts that at that moment God parted the sea and the Hebrews walked safely to the other side. But when the pharaoh's army tried to follow them the waves came crashing down, drowning them.

Moses led his people through the wilderness to Mount Sinai. Where it is said he received the Ten Commandments, the laws of God that had been inscribed on two stone tablets. This event marked the beginning of the agreement, or covenant between God and the Hebrews. Over the next 40 years the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. Eventually Moses led the Hebrews to the border of Canaan.

This migration of the Hebrews is known as The Exodus and is one of the most significant events in Jewish history. Towards the end of his life Moses predicted the coming of another divine messenger. He would be known as The Messiah, which means The Anointed One: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him."

PRESENTER

After the passing of Moses, the Hebrews were finally able to enter the Promised Land. King David made Jerusalem the capital and his son, Solomon built a magnificent temple in the city. This was the golden age of the Hebrew civilization.

NARRATOR

After Solomon died, the country broke into two kingdoms, Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. This made it much more difficult to defend. Enemy armies invaded the country and conquered it. The Hebrews were either killed or exiled. Centuries later, the Hebrews were allowed to return to Judah, and build another Temple at Jerusalem. Judah was renamed Judea. From this time the Hebrews began to be known as Jews.

In 63 B.C.E the Roman Empire took control of Judea and installed Herod as the king. King Herod rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem. It became known as Herod's temple. In 70 A.D. the Jews revolted against the Roman occupation. The Romans responded by besieging Jerusalem. Herod's temple was destroyed and thousands of people were killed. A group of Jews took refuge on a mountain at Masada close to the Dead Sea. When the Roman army was finally able to enter the fort they found that all the Jews had chosen to commit suicide, rather than be captured. In 132 C.E the Jews revolted again. The punishment was brutal. Thousands of Jews were killed and the rest were exiled to many countries.

This dispersal of the Jewish people became known as the Diaspora. The Jews often experienced persecution in the countries where they settled. The worst atrocities happened during the Second World War when about six million Jews were killed in the Nazi concentration camps. After the war, the United Nations decided that the Jews should be allowed to establish their own country. This became a reality in 1948 when the State of Israel was established. The Knesset is the seat of the Israeli parliament in Jerusalem. On its roof flies the flag of Israel, adorned with the Star of David. The Jews had finally returned to their Promised Land.

PRESENTER

According to Jewish tradition, the words God first spoke to Moses form the basis of the Hebrew bible.

NARRATOR

Which is known as the Tanakh. The first part, and the most important one, is The Torah. The name refers to the five books of Moses. The scrolls are kept in the Ark which is the holiest part of the synagogue. The Ark always faces towards Jerusalem. Torah scrolls are treated with great respect. A pointer is used to prevent dirt from the fingers smudging the scroll.

Many Jewish homes have a small box on the door of the house. It holds a parchment with a verse from the Torah, and the Shema, a prayer that the Jews say every day: "Listen Israel! The Lord is our God. The Lord is one!" The Torah contains many of the laws that Jews live by. The best known of these are the Ten Commandments.

1. I am the Lord your God.
2. You shall have no other gods before me.
3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord.
4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not desire anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The fourth commandment tells Jews to devote one day to God. This is the Sabbath, or Shabbat which starts on Friday night and ends 24 hours later. During the Shabbat Jews traditionally take a rest from work and dedicate time to spend with the family. The father blesses the wine, and the family eat bread that has been baked for the festival.

MAN

Shabbat Shalom!

PRESENTER

The historic city of Jerusalem is important to the followers of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The Jews consider The Temple Mount to be their most sacred place.

NARRATOR

It is the site of the Second Jewish Temple. Now there's a magnificent Muslim house of prayer on this holy site. Only the western side of the ancient Temple is still standing. Jews come here to pray and to show their grief over the destruction of the Temple. They also pray for the coming of the Messiah, the Promised One of Judaism, and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. The black outfits that these men are wearing indicate that they are orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews follow the laws of Moses very strictly. After the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, synagogues became the most important houses of worship for the Jews.

Jews come to the synagogue to praise God, to observe holy days and festivals and to participate in the activities of the congregation. The leader of the congregation is called a rabbi. He is in charge of the service and gives the sermon. In 1935 the first woman was ordained as a rabbi, and it is not unusual to see female rabbis in synagogues across the world.

PRESENTER

In Judaism the Coming of Age is an important event in the lives of Jewish boys. It happens when they turn 13. The occasion is marked by a ceremony known as a Bar Mitzvah.

NARRATOR

Bar Mitzvah means "the son of the Commandment", meaning that from now on he is considered an adult and must follow the commandments of Moses. This occasion marks the first time the boy is allowed to read from the Torah in the synagogue. In some Jewish communities there is also a similar ceremony for girls when they are twelve, called Bat Mitzvah. The ceremony is often celebrated with a party where family and friends dance and sing together.

PRESENTER

The Jewish Calendar has many important days that are observed throughout the year. Some of these are Holy Days that recognize important events in the bible. The festivals that are held during these Holy Days are a hallmark of Jewish culture and tradition.

NARRATOR

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is celebrated either in September or October. One of the traditions is to dip apples into honey to symbolize having a sweet year.

PEOPLE AT TABLE

Happy new year!

NARRATOR

Ten days later the Jews enter upon the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur. At this time the Jews repent for their sins and pray to God for assistance so that they can do better next year. Many fast for the whole day. Yom Kippur ends with a single blow on a Shofar, which is a ram's horn. Hanukkah, also known as the festival of lights, is celebrated every year. Usually it falls in between November and December. The many traditions of Hanukkah include making potato pancakes known as Latkes.

MOTHER

Happy Hanukkah

NOAH

Let's open some presents!

NARRATOR

Many Jewish parents give presents to their children during the Hanukkah festival.

NOAH

Whoah!

MOTHER

Hope you like it!

NOAH

Dad's gonna win. This it's not fair!

NARRATOR

It's also customary to play a game called dreidel.

NOAH

Now dad has to play doubles!

MOTHER

Oh no!

NOAH

I'm just gonna take all the big ones because they're nice!

NARRATOR

Hanukkah has been celebrated for over 2000 years. It celebrates a successful revolt by the Jews against a Syrian King who had invaded Jerusalem, sacked the Temple and banned Judaism. Hanukkah lasts for eight days. To recognize this a candle is lit each night of the festival.

These Jews are members of a congregation in Tel Aviv, Israel. They are gathering for the Purim festival, which is held in March, to listen to a reading from the Book of Ester. Ester was a Queen who lived in Persia during the fifth century B.C., which is now called Iran. She prevented Haman, the Prime Minister, from killing the Jews in the country. Each time Haman's name is mentioned in the story, the Jews shake rattles in defiance of him. The next day, the festival continues with a parade through the streets of Tel Aviv. The parade depicts some of the stories from the Bible, such as the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt.

During Passover, Jews eat a special meal to remember how God saved the Children of Israel when they were slaves in Egypt. They are dipping the plant into saltwater to illustrate the tears of the slaves. They are only allowed to eat unleavened bread during Passover. It was the only bread that the Israelites could take with them because they had to leave the country in a hurry. But the dream of one day living as free men in their own land, never died with them. The dream of the Promised Land.

MAN TALKING (IN HEBREW)

"This is the bread of sufferings which our ancestors ate in Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come and celebrate Passover with us. Now we are here. Next year we will perhaps be in Israel. Now we are slaves. Next year, we will perhaps be free men."