



# Jewish Beliefs and Texts



# Jewish Beliefs Anchor Their Society

- Jewish society is founded upon religion. Judaism's main beliefs are beliefs in God, education, justice, and obedience.
- Judaism is the oldest known religion to practice **monotheism**, the belief in only one god.
- The Jews call this god Yahweh (YAH-way).



# God Guides the People

- The Jews say their history was guided through God's relationship with Abraham, Moses, and other leaders.
- Moral and religious laws, believed to be handed down from God, have guided Jewish society through their history and continue to do so today.

# Moses and the Golden Calf



According to the Hebrew Bible, when Moses returned from Mount Sinai, he found the Hebrews worshipping a statue of a golden calf. They had become impatient waiting for Moses and wanted to worship a god they could see. Moses was furious that they were worshipping a statue instead of God. In this Italian painting from the 1600s, the Hebrews are destroying the golden calf.



# Jewish Laws

- Besides the Ten Commandments, Jews believe that Moses recorded a whole set of laws governing Jewish behavior. These laws are called Mosaic law. These laws set down rules for everything including what to eat, when to work, and how to pray.
- Today Orthodox Jews continue to follow all of the Mosaic laws. Reform Jews choose not to follow many of the ancient rules. Conservative Jews fall in between.



# Texts List Jewish Beliefs

- The laws and principles of Judaism are written down in sacred texts.
- The most important text is the **Torah**. The five books of the Torah record most of the laws and the history of Judaism until the death of Moses.
- Every **synagogue**, or place of Jewish worship, has at least one Torah.

# The Torah



# Ancient Synagogue



# The Tanakh

- The Torah is one of the three parts of the Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh (TAH-NAKH).
- The second part contains messages from **prophets**, people who are said to receive messages directly from God.
- The third part is a collection of poems, songs, stories, lessons, and histories.



MS 206  
Hebrew square book script. Inag. 1st half of 11th c.

# The Tower of Babel



*The Book of Genesis also tells the story of the Tower of Babel. According to this story, everyone in the world once spoke the same language. In time, however, people became proud and tried to climb to heaven. To punish them for their pride, God scattered people throughout the world and changed their languages so that people could no longer understand one another.*



# The Talmud

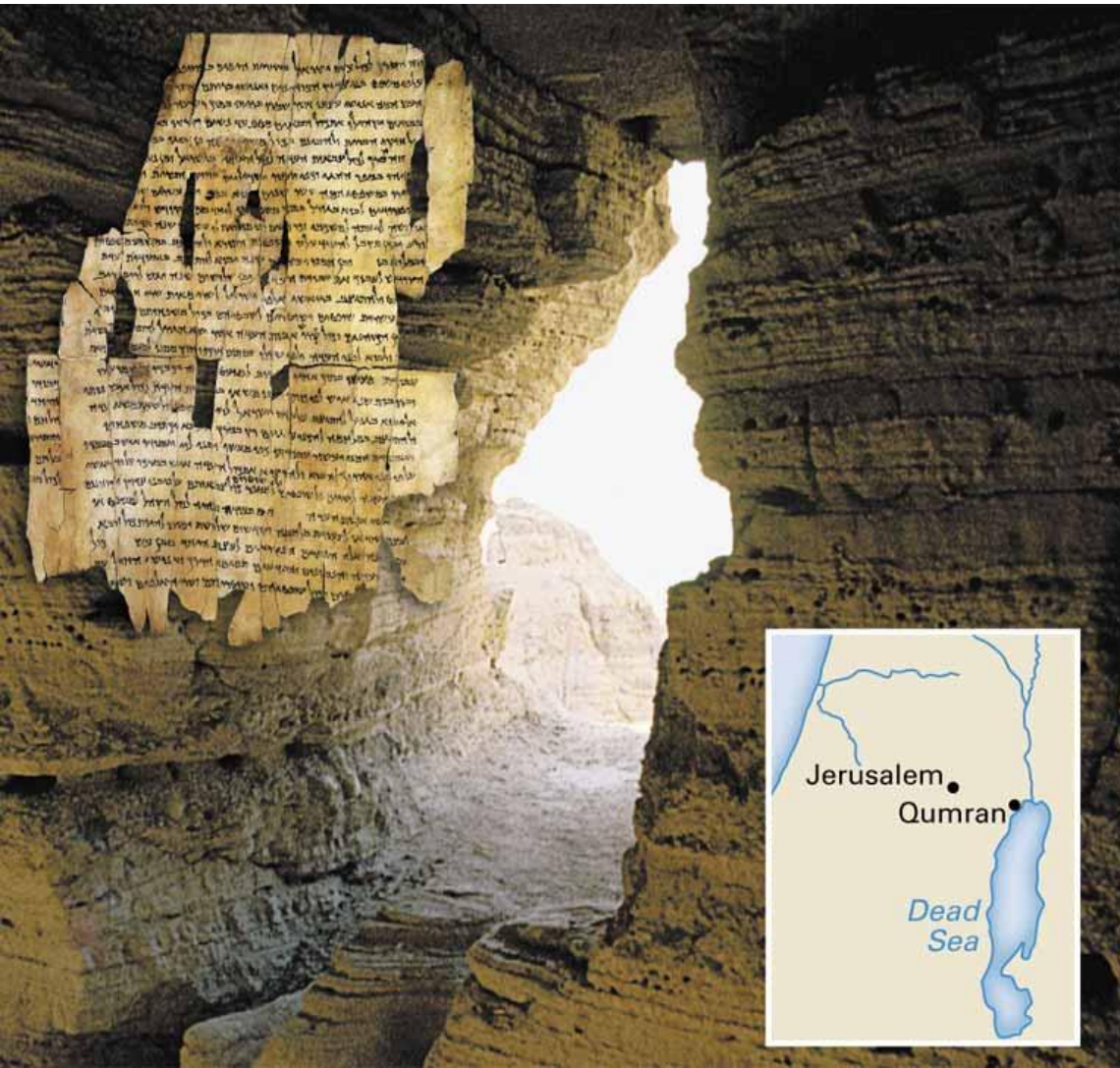
- The **Talmud** is a collection of commentaries, folktales, and stories written by scholars.
- These are intended to help people understand and analyze the laws described in the Hebrew Bible.



# Scrolls Reveal Past Beliefs

- Another set of ancient texts, the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, was discovered in 1947.
- These scrolls, written by Jewish scholars about 2,000 years ago, contain commentaries and stories, and offer more information about ancient Jewish life.

# The Dead Sea Scrolls



The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in this cave, and in similar caves, near Qumran. The hot, dry desert climate preserved the 2,000-year-old scrolls remarkably well. There is a picture of a cave with an entrance showing daylight on the left. An inset map identifies Qumran which is just southeast of Jerusalem. Qumran is on the border of the Dead Sea. There is also a picture of a page of manuscript that is very old. It has been pieced together from smaller remnants of manuscript. Credits: (tr) © West Semitic Res





# Judaism and Later Cultures

- Jewish ideas have helped shape two other major world religions, Christianity and Islam.
- The Ten Commandments are reflected in our laws and in modern society's rules of behavior.