What Defines a People?

Abraham’s Journey from Ur to Canaan, painting by József Molnár, 1850, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

Supporting Questions

1. Who were the Ancient Hebrews?
2. What are the principles of Judaism?
3. How do the beliefs and history of Judaism connect to Israel?
4. How do religious practices vary among different populations within Judaism?
# 6th Grade Religion Inquiry

## What Defines a People?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Content Standard &amp; C3 Framework Indicator</th>
<th>CCS.6.3. Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Ancient Hebrews. D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staging the Question</td>
<td>Students create a graphic organizer where they show the factors (i.e., places, ideas, beliefs.) that are a part of their identities.</td>
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### Supporting Question 1
**Who were the ancient Hebrews?**

**Formative Performance Task**
Complete a graphic organizer identifying and describing major figures and beliefs in Hebrew history.

**Featured Sources**
- **Source A**: Ted-Ed, “World Religions”
- **Source B**: Jewish Virtual Library timeline
- **Source C**: “Religion: Three Religions, One God”

### Supporting Question 2
**What are the principles of Judaism?**

**Formative Performance Task**
Add the principles of Judaism to the graphic organizer.

**Featured Sources**
- **Source A**: Maimonides’ 13 Principles of Belief
- **Source B**: “Jewish Beliefs”
- **Source C**: BBC Bitesize – GCSE, “Judaism”

### Supporting Question 3
**How do the beliefs and history of Judaism connect to Israel?**

**Formative Performance Task**
Write 1-2 paragraphs describing how Israel connects to the beliefs and history of Judaism and the Hebrew people.

**Featured Sources**
- **Source A**: SHOW, Mapping Worlds
- **Source B**: Video Jerusalem: Sacred and Contentious
- **Source C**: Lyrics to Israeli National Anthem

### Supporting Question 4
**How do religious practices vary among different populations within Judaism?**

**Formative Performance Task**
Make a claim supported by evidence about the different ways Judaism is practiced among different populations.

**Featured Sources**
- **Source A**: Description of Passover
- **Source B**: Images of Passover Traditions

### Summative Performance Task
**ARGUMENT** What defines a people? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical and contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.

**EXTENSION** Conduct a Socratic dialogue that addresses the compelling question.

### Taking Informed Action
**UNDERSTAND** Determine the factors that compose the local community’s identity.

**ASSESS** Identify ways that these factors vary among those in the community.

**ACT** Create a school-wide display that celebrates the similarities and differences across community members.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of ancient Hebrew history and Judaism by using various sources that consider the historical and theological foundations, as well as issues related to geography and place. By investigating the compelling question, students examine the history of the ancient Hebrew people, the principles that form the foundation of Judaic thought, the connection of history and religion to Israel, and the geographic variance in religious practices. By completing this inquiry, students begin to understand issues revolving around the factors that help to form a people's identity, as well as the fluidity of defining a group within any predetermined criteria.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Inquiries are not scripts, so teachers are encouraged to modify and adapt them to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “What defines a people?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, “What defines a people?” teachers can have students create a graphic organizer where they show the factors (i.e. places, ideas, beliefs, etc.) that are a part of their identities. Discussion can include why they chose certain things and why their individual responses are similar to and different from their classmates’ responses.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“Who were the ancient Hebrews?”—helps students understand the historical and theological foundations of Hebrew and Judaic identity. The formative performance task has students create a graphic organizer identifying and describing major figures and beliefs in Hebrew history. The first featured source for this question is a brief video clip from TED-Ed on world religions. The pertinent portion relating to the inquiry is indicated below. Featured Source B is a detailed timeline of Jewish history from the Jewish Virtual Library. In Featured Source C, an article excerpt from PBS, students will get a brief overview of Jewish history in consideration as to how it intersects with religion and identity.
Supporting Question 2

For the second supporting question—“What are the principles of Judaism?”—students build on their historical knowledge of the ancient Hebrews with further exploration of Jewish theology. The formative performance task has students add principles of Judaism to their graphic organizer from the first performance task. In addition to the previous task’s sources, the featured sources help explain the belief system. However, teachers should keep in mind that despite common principles, there is not a well-defined dogma of Judaism as there is in other religions. The first featured source for this question is the Thirteen Principles of Belief, articulated by Maimonides, an influential Medieval-era rabbi. The second featured source is an article from the BBC, which discusses various aspects of Judaic belief. The final featured source also comes from the BBC, which provides more insight into how Judaism views various concepts and issues, both in historical and contemporary contexts.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“How do the beliefs and history of Judaism connect to Israel?”—asks students to consider the role of place in one’s identity, specifically how Judaism’s history and theology is connected to Israel, in particular Jerusalem. Students write 1-2 paragraphs describing how Israel connects to the beliefs and history of Judaism and the Hebrew people. In addition to the previous featured sources, the resources for this task further illuminate the ways in which Israel is a considerable feature in Jewish history and identity. The first featured source for this question is an interactive website that graphically shows geography scaled to chosen data. For this task, students focus on a representation of Jewish populations. Featured Source B, a video from a documentary series through PBS, discusses the importance of Jerusalem to the three Abrahamic religions. The last Featured Source, the lyrics to the Israeli National Anthem, further emphasizes the importance of place within Judaism.

Supporting Question 4

For the fourth supporting question—“How do religious practices vary among different populations within Judaism?”—students consider how religious practices may vary across different cultural and geographic contexts. The formative task asks students to make a claim supported by evidence about the ways Judaism is practiced among different populations. The featured sources focus on Passover, however, teachers can choose other holidays or practices, as well as use this task as a research opportunity. Featured Source A is a description of the common features of Passover celebrations, while also discussing differences among cultures. The second featured source is an image gallery of Passover traditions from a variety of geographic locations.

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined various factors that impact a group’s identity using Judaism as a case study. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct evidence-based
arguments using multiple sources to answer the compelling question: “What defines a people?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- The traditions from a shared history create a common identity among those who practice Judaism.
- Though they share a common history, what unites practitioners of Judaism is the religious symbolism rooted in meanings and moral foundations.
- Connection to Israel is central to Jewish identity, as it is rooted in religious meaning and history.
- Practices among adherents of Judaism have become reflective of many different geographic and cultural contexts, transcending any single definition.

To extend their arguments, teachers may have students conduct a Socratic dialogue addressing the compelling question.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by drawing on their understandings of the various factors that can impact identity. To understand, students determine the factors that contribute to their local community’s identity. To assess, students identify ways that these factors vary among individuals within their community. To act, students create a school-wide display that celebrates the similarities and differences.
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See portion, 2:20-4:20

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Accessed from: [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/timeline.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/timeline.html)
Supporting Question 1

Three of the world's major religions -- the monothestic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam -- were all born in the Middle East and are all inextricably linked to one another. Christianity was born from within the Jewish tradition, and Islam developed from both Christianity and Judaism.
While there have been differences among these religions, there was a rich cultural interchange between Jews, Christians, and Muslims that took place in Islamic Spain and other places over centuries.

Judaism
A brief history of Judaism
Judaism is the oldest surviving monotheistic religion, arising in the eastern Mediterranean in the second millennium B.C.E. Abraham is traditionally considered to be the first Jew and to have made a covenant with God. Because Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize Abraham as their first prophet, they are also called the Abrahamic religions.
While there was always a small community of Jews in historic Palestine, in 73 C.E. the Roman Empire dispersed the Jews after an insurrection against Roman authority. Most Jews then lived in Diaspora, as minorities in their communities, until the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.
When Jews from all over the world came to settle in modern Israel, they found that various subcultures had developed in different areas with distinctive histories, languages, religious practices, customs, and cuisine.

Jewish cultural groups
Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe were known as Ashkenazim (from "Ashkenazic" the Hebrew word for Germany). Yiddish, a fusion of German and Hebrew, was the spoken language of the Ashkenazi. In Europe, Jews had tended to be segregated -- voluntarily or not -- from the Christian population. From the late 19th and through first half of the 20th century, many Ashkenazi Jews came to Palestine to escape the persecution and discrimination they faced because of their religion.
Sephardic Jews trace their ancestry to the Iberian Peninsula (modern-day Spain and Portugal; "Sephardic" comes from the Hebrew word for Spain). They once spoke Ladino, a mixture of Hebrew and Spanish. Mizrahi Jews (from the Hebrew word for Eastern, also sometimes called Oriental Jews) trace their origin to North Africa and Asia. Mizrahi and Sephardic Jewish communities tended to be integrated into their respective societies.

Judaism in Israel and America
There is great difference of opinion among Israeli Jews over the role Jewish religious law should play in the state. Until recently, Orthodox Judaism was the only form of the religion formally and legally recognized in Israel. Although less conservative branches of Judaism now have partial recognition, Orthodoxy remains dominant politically and legally.
Many Israeli Jews describe themselves in terms of their degree of observance of Jewish law. About half call themselves secular; about 15 to 20 percent see themselves as Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox; and the rest describe themselves as traditionally observant, but not as strict as the Orthodox.
In the United States, debate over the necessity of observing Jewish law has led to the development of three major movements. Orthodox Jews believe that Jewish law is unchanging and mandatory. Conservative Jews argue that God's laws change and evolve over time. Reform and Reconstructionist Jews believe that these
laws are merely guidelines that individuals can choose to follow or not. In addition, there are many Jews in the United States who are secular or atheist. For them, their Judaism is a culture rather than a religion.

**What Jews believe**

Jews believe in one god and his prophets, with special respect for Moses as the prophet to whom God gave the law. Jewish law is embodied in the *Torah* (also known as the Pentateuch) and the Talmud (collected commentary on the Torah completed in the fifth-century C.E.). Judaism is more concerned with actions than dogma. In other words, observance of rules regulating human behavior has been of more concern than debates over beliefs in the Jewish tradition. According to Orthodox Judaism, Jewish law, or *halakhah*, includes 613 commandments given by God in the Torah, as well as rules and practices elaborated by scholars and custom. Jewish law covers matters such as prayer and ritual, diet, rules regulating personal status (marriage, divorce, birth, death, inheritance, etc.), and observance of holidays (like Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement; and Passover, the feast celebrating the exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt).

Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishnah, compiles what he refers to as the Shloshah-Asar Ikkarim, the Thirteen Articles of Faith, compiled from Judaism's 613 commandments found in the Torah.

The Thirteen Articles of Jewish faith are as follows:

1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, be He Blessed, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in G-d's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in G-d's noncorporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in G-d's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship Him exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that G-d communicates with man through prophecy.
7. The belief that the prophecy of Moses our teacher has priority.
8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah.
9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.
10. The belief in divine omniscience and providence.
11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.
12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.
13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

It is the custom of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles, in a slightly more poetic form, beginning with the words Ani Maamin - "I believe" - every day after the morning prayers in the synagogue.

In his commentary on the Mishnah (Sanhedrin, chap. 10), Maimonides refers to these thirteen principles of faith as "the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations."

Jewish faith and God

The relationship with God
Jews believe that there is a single God who not only created the universe, but with whom every Jew can have an individual and personal relationship. They believe that God continues to work in the world, affecting everything that people do. The Jewish relationship with God is a covenant relationship. In exchange for the many good deeds that God has done and continues to do for the Jewish People...

- The Jews keep God's laws
- The Jews seek to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives.

Judaism is the faith of a Community
Jews believe that God appointed the Jews to be his chosen people in order to set an example of holiness and ethical behaviour to the world. Jewish life is very much the life of a community and there are many activities that Jews must do as a community.

- For example, the Jewish prayer book uses WE and OUR in prayers where some other faiths would use I and MINE.

Jews also feel part of a global community with a close bond Jewish people all over the world. A lot of Jewish religious life is based around the home and family activities.

Judaism is a family faith
Judaism is very much a family faith and the ceremonies start early, when a Jewish boy baby is circumcised at eight days old, following the instructions that God gave to Abraham around 4,000 years ago. Many Jewish religious customs revolve around the home. One example is the Sabbath meal, when families join together to welcome in the special day.

Who is a Jew?
Jews believe that a Jew is someone who is the child of a Jewish mother; although some groups also accept children of Jewish fathers as Jewish. A Jew traditionally can't lose the technical 'status' of being a Jew by adopting another faith, but they do lose the religious element of their Jewish identity. Someone who isn't born a Jew can convert to Judaism, but it is not easy to do so.

Judaism means living the faith
Almost everything a Jewish person does can become an act of worship. Because Jews have made a bargain with God to keep his laws, keeping that bargain and doing things in the way that pleases God is an act of worship. And Jews don't only seek to obey the letter of the law - the particular details of each of the Jewish laws - but the spirit of it, too.

A religious Jew tries to bring holiness into everything they do, by doing it as an act that praises God, and honours everything God has done. For such a person the whole of their life becomes an act of worship.
Being part of a community that follows particular customs and rules helps keep a group of people together, and it's noticeable that the Jewish groups that have been most successful at avoiding assimilation are those that obey the rules most strictly - sometimes called ultra-orthodox Jews.

Note: Jews don't like and rarely use the word ultra-orthodox. A preferable adjective is haredi, and the plural noun is haredim.

**It's what you do that counts...**
Judaism is a faith of action and Jews believe people should be judged not so much by the intellectual content of their beliefs, but by the way they live their faith - by how much they contribute to the overall holiness of the world.

**The Jewish view of God**

**A summary of what Jews believe about God**
- God exists
- There is only one God
- There are no other gods
- God can't be subdivided into different persons (unlike the Christian view of God)
- Jews should worship only the one God
- God is Transcendent:
  - God is above and beyond all earthly things.
- God doesn't have a body
  - Which means that God is neither female nor male.
- God created the universe without help
- God is omnipresent:
  - God is everywhere, all the time.
- God is omnipotent:
  - God can do anything at all.
- God is beyond time:
  - God has always existed
  - God will always exist.
- God is just, but God is also merciful
  - God punishes the bad
  - God rewards the good
  - God is forgiving towards those who mess things up.
- God is personal and accessible.
  - God is interested in each individual
  - God listens to each individual
  - God sometimes speaks to individuals, but in unexpected ways.

**The Jews brought new ideas about God**
The Jewish idea of God is particularly important to the world because it was the Jews who developed two new ideas about God:
- There is only one God
• God chooses to behave in a way that is both just and fair. Before Judaism, people believed in lots of gods, and those gods behaved no better than human beings with supernatural powers. The Jews found themselves with a God who was ethical and good.

God in the Bible

But how do Jews know this about God? They don't know it, they believe it, which is different. However, many religious people often talk about God in a way that sounds as if they know about God in the same way that they know what they had for breakfast.

• For instance, religious people often say they are quite certain about God - by which they mean that they have an inner certainty.
• And many people have experiences that they believe were times when they were in touch with God. The best evidence for what God is like comes from what the Bible says, and from particular individuals' experiences of God.

God in the Bible

Quite early in his relationship with the Jews, God makes it clear that he will not let them encounter his real likeness in the way that they encounter each other. The result is that the Jews have work out what God is like from what he says and what he does. The story is in Exodus 33 and follows the story of the 10 commandments, and the Golden Calf. Moses has spent much time talking with God, and the two of them are clearly quite close...

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Exodus 33

But after getting the 10 commandments Moses wants to see God, so that he can know what he is really like. God says no...

you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.
Then the LORD said,
There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.
Exodus 33

Two sides of God

Jews combine two different sounding ideas of God in their beliefs:

• God is an all-powerful being who is quite beyond human ability to understand or imagine.
• God is right here with us, caring about each individual as a parent does their child.

A great deal of Jewish study deals with the creative power of two apparently incompatible ideas of God.
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Accessed from: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/ztrqxn](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/ztrqxn)
Select “Judaism” to show a proportional representation of the population of those who are identified as Jews, according to data from the CIA Factbook.

## Supporting Question 3

|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

“The title of the Israeli national anthem is **Hatikvah**, which means “The Hope” in [Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language). It was written in Palestine in the early 1880’s by Naftali Herz Imber, a [Galician](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland%E2%80%93Ukraine_relations) Jew, and then set to music. **Hatikva** is about the undying hope of the Jewish people, through the long years of exile, that they would someday return to independence in their homeland.”

**Text of poem in anthem:**

In the Jewish heart  
A Jewish spirit still sings,  
And the eyes look east  
Toward Zion.

Our hope is not lost,  
Our hope of two thousand years,  
To be a free nation in our land,  
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem

Accessed from: [https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hatikva.html](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hatikva.html)
**Supporting Question 4**


Why is this holiday different from other holidays? On every Jewish holiday we remember the story associated with the holiday. On Passover, however, we use our five senses to recreate the experience of the Israelites’ passage from slavery to freedom, so that the words “when we were freed from Egypt” become real to us.

We do this at the ritual service of prayers, stories, and special foods known as the seder, which means “order,” as in order of events. The seder usually has 15 parts as set forth in the *Hagaddah*. *Hagaddah* means “telling,” and the seder is the telling of the Exodus story (Exodus 1: 8-15:21). It is important for each generation to pass down the story to the next. Many families pass down special traditions as well, both serious and funny. Sections such as the four questions and the hiding of the *afikomen* are designed to keep the children entertained. The *afikomen* is the middle of three pieces of matzah. Why do we have three pieces of matzah? At each Jewish holiday we are supposed to have two whole loaves of bread. On Passover we add a third, broken one—the bread of affliction.

Although there are different ways to have a seder, almost everyone includes the same main elements. You will notice a preponderance of fours—four questions, four sons, four cups of wine. That is because in Exodus, God promises four times to redeem the Israelites.

*The four sons*: Fours Sons ask about the seder—the wise son, the angry son, the simple-minded son, and the son who cannot ask. This is to ensure that everyone, even those who don’t know enough to ask, get to hear the historical tale.

*Four cups of wine*: During the seder adults are supposed to drink four full cups of wine. Many Jews add a fifth cup of wine at the seder to remember the oppression that still exists in the world, and we pray that the oppressed will soon be free. Some Jews add a new cup, one filled with water, to honor Miriam, Moses’ older sister, who helped save him when he was a baby by putting him in a basket in the river for Pharaoh’s daughter to find. It is said that wherever Miriam went, a well of pure water was found.

*Reciting the plagues*: As we recite the plagues we take a drop of wine out of our cup with our pinkies because in *midrash*, a rabbinic story, the angels are seen celebrating the safe passage of the Israelites but God, crying, mourns also for the Egyptians who died following Pharaoh’s orders. We do not celebrate at the expense of those innocents who are suffering.

Thinking of others and social change are themes that are made current by new additions to the seder. Some families include an orange on the seder plate, which clearly does not belong there, representing all who feel left out of society.

Seders in different parts of the world share a great many things, but they also differ. For example, Jews from Eastern Europe (Ashkenazim) do not eat rice nor include lamp in the holiday meal, while Jews from Arabic and African countries (Sephardim) include rice and serve lamb to remember the first night of the Exodus. During Passover we are not allowed the five main grains: wheat, barley, oats, rye, and spelt, and all liquids containing grain alcohol. Bread, leavened cakes, cookies, biscuits, crackers, cereals, beer, and whiskey are not permitted for those observing the laws of Passover. Canned and boxed items need to have a “kosher for Passover” label to be considered kosher. If it gets confusing—and it is for many of us—ask a rabbi.

The message of Passover and the seder is a universal and ageless one: Freedom makes everything—not just a single night—different.
## Supporting Question 4
