How did Judaism begin?

Judaism began about 4000 years ago with the Hebrew people in the Middle East. Abraham, a Hebrew man, is considered the father of the Jewish faith because he promoted the central idea of the Jewish faith: that there is one God. At the time many people in the Middle East worshipped many gods. It is said that Abraham and his wife Sarah, who were old and childless, were told by God that their children would be as plentiful as the stars in the sky and that they would live in a land of their own -- the Promised Land. This gradually came true.

Abraham's son, Isaac had a son, Jacob, also called Israel. In this way the descendants of Abraham came to be known as the Israelites. God promised the Israelites he would care for them as long as they obeyed God's laws. While still traveling, the Hebrews lived in Egypt where they were enslaved. Moses, a Hebrew, was chosen by God to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt. Moses led the Hebrew people out of the Sinai Desert toward the promised land. At Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the Law which would guide the Israelites to today. The laws were called the Ten Commandments and form the basis of the Torah, the book of Jewish law.

It took many years for the Israelites to finally get to what they thought was the Promised Land - Canaan. After some fighting the Jews established the Israelite kingdom. After many years, Canaan was conquered by the Assyrians, the Babylonians and then eventually the Romans. The Israelites once again found themselves enslaved, this time by Babylonians. The Israelites were then taken over by Romans who destroyed much of what had been built in Jerusalem by the Israelites. Most of the Jews were scattered all over the region and eventually moved from place to place to avoid persecution which continues to this day. The dispersion of the Jews is called the Diaspora.

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Location



What do Jewish people believe?

Jewish people believe in the Torah, which was the whole of the laws given to the Israelities at Sinai. They believe they must follow God's laws which govern daily life. Later legal books, written by rabbis, determine the law as it applies to life in each new place and time.

The Ten Commandments, as written in the Torah, are:

Worship no other God but me.
Do not make images to worship.
Do not misuse the name of God. Observe the Sabbath Day (Saturday).
Keep it Holy.
Honor and respect your father and mother.
Do not murder.
Do not commit adultery.
Do not steal.
Do not accuse anyone falsely. Do not tell lies about other people.
Do not envy other's possessions.

Reading Comprehension

Answer the following sentences:

1. Who is the father of Judaism?
2. Write at least 3 different important moments in the beginning of the history of Judaism.
3. What do you think about the 10 commanders, are they important? How you think they help the leader to manage the Jewish people?
4. What is the name of the book where the laws of the Jewish people are written?
5. What is the name of the person in charge of the Jewish people?

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