The Torah

The Torah is the most important book in the Jewish religion. Many Jewish prayers and passages, used in worship, come from the Torah.

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The Torah is made up of the first five books of the Tenakh, or Hebrew Bible. The five books of the Torah are also called the Five Books of Moses. They are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

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Jews believe that God spoke the Torah to Moses and that Moses wrote the words down. The Torah contains many stories about how Jews should live. The best known of these are the Ten Commandments.

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The words of the Torah are hand-written on scrolls. These scrolls are the most precious possessions of any Jewish community. They are wrapped in velvet mantles and kept in the Ark, a special alcove at the front of the synagogue.

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When the scrolls are taken out of the Ark, they are paraded around the synagogue while prayers are sung. People bow as the scrolls pass, or kiss the corner of the mantles with their prayer shawls.

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A Prayer for the Torah

This ancient prayer on the next page is said in the evenings. It expresses the great sense of love Jews feel for the Torah. It reminds them of the importance of the commandments and laws God has given them.

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With everlasting love, You have loved Your people, the House of Israel. You have taught us Torah and commandments, laws and judgements. Therefore, O Lord our God, we will speak of Your laws when we lie down and when we rise up, rejoicing in the words of Your Torah and Your commandments for ever. For they are our life and the length of our days; We will meditate on them day and night. May You never take away Your love for us. Blessed are You, O lord, who loves His people Israel.

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