

# Judaism is NOT a religion!

How could that be?

Who are the Jews and what is Judaism,  
if not a religion?

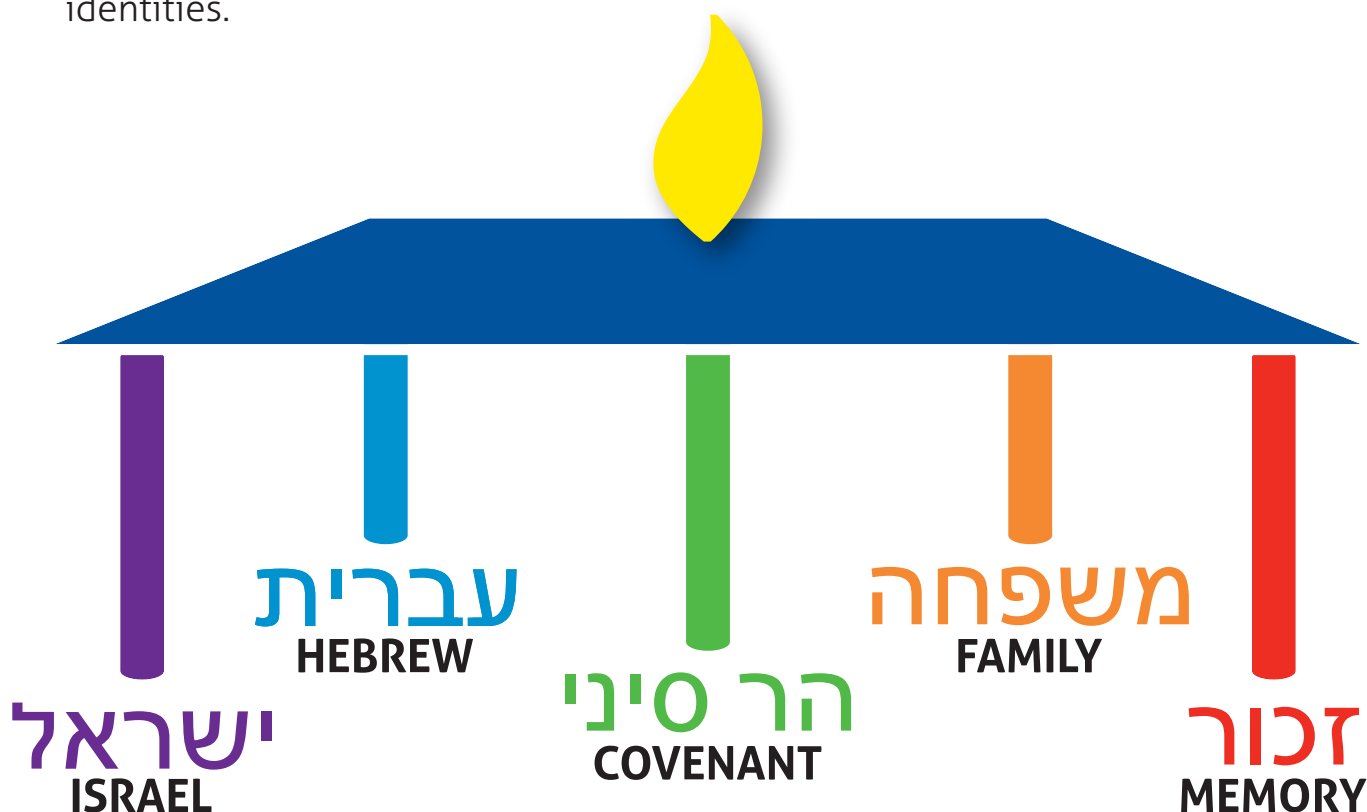
Avraham Infeld argues that Judaism  
is a civilization, a nation and a people,  
and not a religion.

"Being Jewish is like having a 5 legged table"

## BUILDING A STRONG TABLE

Choosing at least three of the components of Jewish identity, or "legs" provides a stable platform for living a Jewish life and contributing to the world. Less than three, and your "table" or platform of Jewish identity will topple over; more than three makes it more sturdy.

Choosing three also means that every Jew shares at least something with every other Jew, even though they may look different and have very different lifestyles, cultures and customs. Despite the difference in Jewish expression, Jews share some of these elements through the way they build their own identities.



# "Being Jewish is like having a 5 legged table"

## Leg 1 — MEMORY

*"Jews don't have history, they have memory!"*

While history is about what happened in the past, memory is about how that past drives our present and our future. As Avraham Infeld says, if history is prose, memory is poetry.

Jewish life and language is filled with opportunities to remember our past - "lizkor" and "zikaron" in Hebrew - so that the present can be a strong bridge to the future.

## Leg 2 — FAMILY - Jews are family

*"You may have a friend over there, but HERE you're mishpocha (family)!"*

Jews are one big family, tied together by a common past and a shared future. And how do we know that? Because the Torah refers to us as "Bnei Yisrael" - "The children of Israel", highlighting our family origins. Plus, we argue all the time!

And, just like in any family, the inevitable fights and differences of opinion are balanced by a sense of closeness, mutual responsibility and belonging. You may be able to choose your friends, but your family is what you are born into, or what you are adopted into. And once you are adopted, you are a full member of the tribe.

## Leg 3 — COVENANT - Mount Sinai

The Jewish people made an crucial stop on their way through the desert to Israel.

And what happened there? We are still debating that amongst ourselves, but Avraham Infeld thinks that we made three commitments:

- to recognize one God;
- to make the world a better place for all people;
- and to use certain rituals to define and shape Jewish time and space.

So, for Jews who observe any or all of the mitzvot, and those who are committed to Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), and those who serve the Jewish community, or move to Israel, the covenant established at Mount Sinai is still a tie that binds.

## Leg 4 — HEBREW

*"Why do Jews pray in Hebrew? Is it because God doesn't understand English?!"*

NO! The language of the Jewish People is Hebrew, because language is the way that every group transmits its culture to the next generation. And the Hebrew language contains Jewish values and beliefs that teach and sustain us.

Do Jews "fall in love"? No, we believe that we 'rise in love' and so we use the word 'lehitah-ev', which reflects mutuality and relationship.

And we know that the past and the future are connected, so the word for 'before', 'kedem', and 'forward', 'kadima', come from the same root. And these are just two examples of many.

## Leg 5 — ISRAEL — The Land / The State

*No more Jewish refugees, Making Alyah, the "Birkat",...*

Avraham Infeld believes that Israel is the place where Jews are writing the next chapters of the story of the Jewish People.

And there are other reasons too, including the fact that the Jewish People's rain, which Jews pray for from their homes all over the world, only falls in Israel!