

The most important difference between Judaism and Christianity concerns Jesus.

# Say “*Shalom*” to Your Jewish Friends!

by Tal and Barbara Davis

“Look at all the pretty Christmas lights on the houses!” shouted Mark as his family drove through their neighborhood one late December night.

“They sure are neat,” echoed his sister Abby. “Look at Joey Benjamin’s house; it’s really beautiful; all the lights are blue.”

“Why don’t they have a Christmas tree?” asked Mark. “And what are those candles burning in the window?”

“Joey’s family is Jewish and follows the religion of Judaism,” said their dad as he drove down the street. “They don’t celebrate Christmas. Instead, they observe an eight-day festival called Hanukkah. The blue lights are part of it. Each night they light one candle to remember God’s work in Jewish history.”

## Jewish History—The Short Version

Perhaps you have friends in your neighborhood or school who are Jewish. You may have wondered what they believe. Judaism is an ancient faith that traces its teachings to the Old Testament in the Bible, as written in the Hebrew language. Not all Jewish people believe the same things. Traditional Judaism teaches that the Jewish people had a special relationship to God, beginning with Abraham and later through the nation of Israel. In the year A.D. 70, the Roman army destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and scattered the people throughout the world.

For over 1,900 years, a small number

of Jewish people kept their heritage and faith alive in many lands. Today there are about 14 million Jewish people in the world. About 6 million Jews reside in the United States and Canada. In 1948, the modern state of Israel was established restoring the Jewish homeland where about 5 million Jews now live.

Judaism and Christianity share many beliefs since they both recognize the Old Testament as God’s Word. Both faiths affirm that there is only one true God.

The most important difference between Judaism and Christianity concerns Jesus, who was Jewish. Christians believe Jesus was the Son of God, the one the Old Testament promised to be the Messiah (Hebrew for “anointed one”) of Israel and Savior of the world. Jewish people,

generally, do not follow the New Testament nor accept Jesus as their Messiah, although some Jewish people have accepted Jesus as their personal Messiah and Savior.

A favorite Hebrew word among Jewish people is *shalom*. It means “peace” and is used often as a friendly greeting. Perhaps you can say “*shalom*” to your Jewish friends and help them learn about Jesus! Some ways to do this might include:

- ✓ Be their friend.
- ✓ Get to know their customs, songs, and celebrations.
- ✓ Invite them to attend church with you.
- ✓ Tell them what Jesus has done in your life.
- ✓ Pray for them. ☞