

THE GOLDEN RULE: Each religion is different, but all teach people to be good. They teach the "Golden Rule": that we should treat others the way we'd like to be treated. Here's a Jewish version of the Golden Rule...

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour – that is the basic law, all the rest is commentary.

– Rabbi Hillel, Talmud.

Dignity for everyone in the human race

Our look at Singapore's religions continues with Judaism and its belief in human rights.

Back in colonial times, many people in Singapore were treated poorly because of the colour of their skins or the languages they spoke. Most people believed this was normal. They had been taught to think that they were inferior.

Luckily for us, some people refused to accept this. One of them was the lawyer who became Singapore's first Chief Minister, Mr David Marshall. He believed passionately that everyone was equal. This sounds like a very modern idea. But, he got it from two of the world's ancient religions.

According to his widow, Mrs Jean Marshall, he was influenced by his own Jewish heritage as well as his Christian school, St Andrew's. These influences taught him to give importance to "individuals' essential worth", Mrs Marshall told *What's Up*.

In this series, we've given many examples of how Singaporeans are inspired by their religions to do charity work. Religions also help by teaching good values – which then form and strengthen Singapore's shared values. Today, we believe that "Every Singaporean Matters". Religions teach the same thing: that each person possesses human dignity that nobody else can take away. At the heart of Jewish

teaching is the idea that all human beings are created equally in the image of God.

In history, Jewish people often made up a very small community where they lived. Sometimes, they were persecuted by the people in charge. This history of suffering has made many Jewish people believe even more strongly that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of race, language or religion.

They realise that the only way to make sure that the weak are protected is to spread the idea that everyone matters. These Jews believe that the Jewish faith isn't supposed to benefit only its followers, but also the whole human race.

Mr Marshall wasn't the only Jewish person to fight for the rights of all Singaporeans. Another Jewish lawyer, Mr Harry Elias, started up the Legal Aid society, which gives free legal services for Singaporeans who can't afford to hire a lawyer.

Since not everyone has the same advantages in life, the Jewish community also uses charity to lift up those who need help. The Singapore Jewish Welfare Board frequently organises charity events.

Outside of Singapore, other Jewish people fought for the equality of all people. For example, René Cassin helped to write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

More about the Jewish people



Religion inspires people to create beautiful things that reflect the beauty of their beliefs. Holy books like the Jewish Torah (above) are often works of art (although the meaning within them is what people find most inspiring).



Jewish kids in Singapore studying the Torah.

ROOTS OF JUDAISM: Jews are believers in the religion known as Judaism. They – like Christians and Muslims – believe in the God who was worshipped by the prophets Abraham and Moses thousands of years ago. Jews follow God's teachings as revealed to Moses, which were later laid out in the holy book, the Torah.

HOLY DAY: Saturday is their holy day of rest, called the Sabbath. Their temple is called a synagogue (say "sin-a-gog").

HOLY LAND: Jews all over the world have a special attachment to Israel, which they believe is the land that God promised them when their ancestors were homeless. Their holiest place in the city of Jerusalem, which also holds special meaning for Christians and Muslims.

BOOKS OF BEAUTY: The holy book of Judaism is the Torah, which means "law" or "teachings". Making a Torah is like creating a work of fine art. The scribe uses special inks and eagle feather quills to write in beautiful Hebrew script. The scroll itself contains no illustrations, but it is contained in an elaborate case, often decorated with precious metals. Some of the most beautifully produced books in the world are holy books, like Torahs, Christian Bibles and the Muslims' Korans. Nowadays, modern technology makes them easy to print. But, in the past, they were handmade, with gorgeous calligraphy and decorations.

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