Judaism

One of the most important ideas in Judaism is the sense of a 'people' or nation. The sacred books of Judaism contain much about the conduct of a nation, as well as laws about how people are to work together and how they should settle their differences. Jews will study these texts carefully and try to apply them to modern situations.

The basic rules

"If there is found among you, within any of your towns which the Lord your God gives you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, and it is told you and you hear of it; then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abominable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring forth to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from the midst of you." [Deuteronomy 17:2–7]

Deciding difficult cases

"If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns which is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God will choose, and coming to the Levitical priests, and to the judge who is in office in those days, you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision." [Deuteronomy 17:8–9]

Torah and Talmud

These words are taken from the Torah, which is the basic authoritative text for Jews. Another book which has great authority in Judaism is the Talmud. It contains commentaries made by rabbis over a wide range of matters, interpreting the Torah.

The method of execution mentioned in Deuteronomy is by stoning. Other methods mentioned in the Bible are burning and strangling. The Talmud adds slaying by the sword.

Capital crimes

The Torah prescribes the death penalty for murder.

"Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death." [Exodus 21:12]

It also allows it for insulting or beating one's parents, adultery, incest, kidnapping, and working on the Sabbath.