**Jewish speaker: Sarah**

Hi, my name is Sarah I am 35 years old and I am Jewish. So Judaism is one of the Abrahamic faiths and is a Monotheistic faith. Monotheism is believing in only 1 God and that is what the Jewish teachings teach Jews. There are lots of different strands of Judaism, like in many religions. I was brought up as a reformed Jew, so to me, being Jewish is a big part of being who I am. I do not practice all the traditions and laws like maybe some other more religious Jews do. So, for example, I do not keep Kosher, which is a Jewish rule around food, where some Jews will not eat pig or Shellfish.

The most important things for me about being Jewish is my reformed Jewish community. I am very involved in my Synagogue, which is a Jewish place of worship. I know lots of people there, and I feel very welcome, it's like a second home. I like to go to events and I also run activities myself, for others with young families like me, I have 2 young children.

I am going to talk to you today about one of my key beliefs that has come from being involved in my Jewish community. When I was younger, I spent a lot of time with my parents, volunteering at my Synagogue and helping out younger children as a youth leader where I organised activities and games for them.

The community spirit and the importance of helping each other is something I strongly believe in and I feel it has come from being a part of my reformed Jewish community. I was taught at Sunday school, where I was taught about Judaism on a Sunday morning, the importance of respect, this comes from the Torah, the Jewish Holy book, and I have a picture of the Torah for you to have a look at, and the Commandments, which are similar to many other faiths such as Christianity. This has helped me think about how I behave and to respect others. I try to make a difference to other's as it is important to me and it has led me to work with children, communities and now in interfaith work.

Although I've mentioned I am not very religious in terms of praying and going to Synagogue, I do like to celebrate lots of Jewish festivals with my family. I see these festivals as a great excuse to all get-together, eat lots of food and be reminded of tradition. One of my favourite Jewish festivals is Hanukkah, this is celebrated around the same time of Christmas in December. I have a special object to show you, which I use at this festival. So this is a hanukkiah, it's used at Hanukkah to celebrate the festival for lighting a candle for each night of the festival.

The festival lasts for 8 days, but there are actually 9 candles, that is because this candle here, it is sometimes in the middle, is used to light the other candles with. The tradition behind lighting the candles is to remind the Jews of a miracle that happened many years ago where there was some oil, that was only meant to last for one night, but the miracle was that lasted for 8 nights. We also eat lots of oily food, like doughnuts, at Hanukkah too. This hanukkiah is particularly special to me as it was bought for me by my parents as an engagement present and it was my first very own hanukkiah, which I now use with my husband and my own kids.

Hanukkah is special to me as it reminds me of when I was a child, lighting candles with my family, and getting presents. Many Jews around the world will own their own hanukkiah's, but some towns have big ones that get lit each night for the whole community, here is a picture here, I believe it might be Trafalgar Square, of a big community hanukkiah, which as you can see, is next to a big Christmas tree as well as it is the same time of year. I love getting to carry on this tradition with my own children and watch the joy they have from celebrating together.

My Jewish identity is important to me especially when it comes to feeling part of a community and celebrating Jewish festivals with my family. Learning the value of respecting others through my faith, has led me on a path to working with people and wanting to learn more about others, especially those who are different to me. Taking the time to listen to other people's stories I believe makes a difference in the world, so thank-you for listening to my story today.