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Online Study Materials on
**JUDAISM AND JEWISH
PHILOSOPHY**

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**JUDAISM, JEWS AND
HOLOCAUST THEOLOGY**

JUDAISM

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people, based on principles and ethics embodied in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) and the Talmud. According to Jewish tradition, the history of Judaism begins with the Covenant between God and Abraham (ca. 2000 BCE), the patriarch and progenitor of the Jewish people. Judaism is among the oldest religious traditions still in practice today. Jewish history and doctrines have influenced other religions such as Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith.

While Judaism has seldom, if ever, been monolithic in practice, it has always been monotheistic in theology. It differs from many religions in that central authority is not vested in a person or group, but in sacred texts and traditions. Throughout the ages, Judaism has clung to a number of religious principles, the most important of which is the belief in a single, omniscient, omnipotent, benevolent, transcendent God, who created the universe and continues to govern it. According to traditional Jewish belief, the God who created the world established a covenant with the Israelites, and revealed his laws and commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of the Torah, and the Jewish people are the descendants of the Israelites. The traditional practice of Judaism revolves around study and the observance of God's laws and commandments as written in the Torah and expounded in the Talmud.

With an estimated 14 million adherents in 2006, Judaism is approximately the world's eleventh-largest religious group.

RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE AND PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

Historically, Judaism has considered belief in the divine revelation and acceptance of the Written and Oral Torah as its fundamental core belief, but Judaism does not have a centralised authority dictating religious dogma. This gave rise to many different formulations as to the specific theological beliefs inherent in the Torah and Talmud.

While some rabbis have at times agreed upon a firm formulation, others have disagreed, many criticising any such attempt as minimising acceptance of the entire Torah. Notably, in the Talmud some principles of faith (*e.g.*, the Divine origin of the Torah) are considered important enough that rejection of them can put one in the category of “*apikoros*” (heretic).

Over the centuries, a number of clear formulations of Jewish principles of faith have appeared, and though they differ with respect to certain details, they demonstrate a commonality of core ideology. Of these, the one most widely considered authoritative is Maimonides’ thirteen principles of faith. These principles were controversial when first proposed, evoking criticism by Hasdai Crescas and Joseph Albo. The thirteen principles were ignored by much of the Jewish community for the next few centuries. (Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought, Menachem Kellner). Over time two poetic restatements of these principles (“*Ani Ma’amin*” and “*Yigdal*”) became canonised in the Jewish prayer book, and eventually became widely held. Today most Orthodox authorities hold that these beliefs are obligatory, and that Jews who do not fully accept each one of them are potentially heretical:

1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is not a body, and that He is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the first and the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him.

6. I believe with perfect faith that all the works of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both of those who preceded him and of those who followed him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be any other Law from the Creator, blessed be His name.
10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, knows all the deeds of human beings, and all their thoughts, as it is said: “[He] that fashioned the hearts of them all, [He] that comprehends all their actions.”
11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, rewards those that keep His commandments and punishes those that transgress them.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may tarry, with all this I wait everyday for his coming.
13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, blessed be His name, and exalted be His Name forever and ever.

Some, such as Rabbi Joseph Albo and the Raavad, criticised Maimonides' list as containing too many items that, while true, were not fundamentals of the faith, and thus placed too many Jews in the category of “heretic”, rather than those who were simply in error. Many others criticised any such formulation as minimising acceptance of the entire Torah (see above). As noted however, neither Maimonides nor his contemporaries viewed these principles as encompassing all of Jewish belief, but rather as the core theological underpinnings of the acceptance of Judaism. Along these lines, the ancient historian Josephus emphasised practices and observances rather than religious beliefs, associating apostasy with a failure to observe Jewish law and maintaining that the requirements for conversion to Judaism included circumcision and adherence to traditional customs.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS TEXTS

Rabbinic Literature

Jews are often called the “People of the Book,” and with good reason: Judaism has an age-old intellectual tradition of text-based Torah study. The following is a basic, structured list of the central works of Jewish practice and thought. For more detail, see Rabbinic literature.

- Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and commentaries
 - Mesorah
 - Targum
 - Jewish Biblical exegesis (also see Midrash below)
- Works of the Talmudic Era (classic rabbinic literature)
 - Mishnah and commentaries
 - Tosefta and the minor tractates
 - Talmud:
 - ◆ Jerusalem Talmud and commentaries
 - ◆ The Babylonian Talmud and commentaries
- Midrashic literature:
 - Halakhic Midrash
 - Aggadic Midrash
- Halakhic literature
 - Major Codes of Jewish Law and Custom
 - ◆ Mishneh Torah and commentaries
 - ◆ Tur and commentaries
 - ◆ Shulchan Aruch and commentaries
 - Responsa literature
- Jewish Thought and Ethics
 - Jewish philosophy
 - Kabbalah
 - Hasidic works
 - Jewish ethics and the Mussar Movement
- Siddur and Jewish liturgy
- *Piyyut* (Classical Jewish poetry)

Jewish Legal Literature

The basis of Jewish law and tradition (“*halakha*”) is the Torah (also known as the Pentateuch or the Five Books of Moses). According to

rabbinic tradition there are 613 commandments in the Torah. Some of these laws are directed only to men or to women, some only to the ancient priestly groups, the Kohanim and Leviyim (members of the tribe of Levi), some only to farmers within the land of Israel. Many laws were only applicable when the Temple in Jerusalem existed, and fewer than 300 of these commandments are still applicable today.

While there have been Jewish groups whose beliefs were claimed to be based on the written text of the Torah alone (*e.g.*, the Sadducees, and the Karaites), most Jews believed in what they call the oral law. These oral traditions were transmitted by the Pharisee sect of ancient Judaism, and were later recorded in written form and expanded upon by the rabbis.

Rabbinic Judaism has always held that the books of the Torah (called the written law) have always been transmitted in parallel with an oral tradition. To justify this viewpoint, Jews point to the text of the Torah, where many words are left undefined, and many procedures mentioned without explanation or instructions; this, they argue, means that the reader is assumed to be familiar with the details from other, *i.e.*, oral, sources. This parallel set of material was originally transmitted orally, and came to be known as “the oral law”.

By the time of Rabbi Judah haNasi (200 CE), after the destruction of Jerusalem, much of this material was edited together into the Mishnah. Over the next four centuries this law underwent discussion and debate in both of the world’s major Jewish communities (in Israel and Babylonia), and the commentaries on the Mishnah from each of these communities eventually came to be edited together into compilations known as the two Talmuds. These have been expounded by commentaries of various Torah scholars during the ages.

Halakha, the rabbinic Jewish way of life, then, is based on a combined reading of the Torah, and the oral tradition—the Mishnah, the halakhic Midrash, the Talmud and its commentaries. The *Halakha* has developed slowly, through a precedent-based system. The literature of questions to rabbis, and their considered answers, is referred to as *responsa* (in Hebrew, *Sheelot U-Teshuvot*.) Over time, as practices develop, codes of Jewish law are written that are based on the *responsa*; the most important code, the Shulchan Aruch, largely determines Orthodox religious practice today.

Jewish Philosophy

Jewish philosophy refers to the conjunction between serious study of philosophy and Jewish theology. Major Jewish philosophers include

Solomon ibn Gabirol, Saadia Gaon, Maimonides, and Gersonides. Major changes occurred in response to the Enlightenment (late 1700s to early 1800s) leading to the post-Enlightenment Jewish philosophers. Modern Jewish philosophy consists of both Orthodox and non-Orthodox oriented philosophy. Notable among Orthodox Jewish philosophers are Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and Yitzchok Hutner. Well-known non-Orthodox Jewish philosophers include Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Mordecai Kaplan, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Emmanuel Lévinas.

JEWISH IDENTITY

Distinction Between Jews and Judaism

According to Daniel Boyarin, the underlying distinction between religion and ethnicity is foreign to Judaism itself, and is one form of the dualism between spirit and flesh that has its origin in Platonic philosophy and that permeated Hellenistic Judaism. Consequently, in his view, Judaism does not fit easily into conventional Western categories, such as religion, ethnicity, or culture. Boyarin suggests that this in part reflects the fact that most of Judaism's 4,000-year history predates the rise of Western culture and occurred outside the West. During this time, Jews have experienced slavery, anarchic and theocratic self-government, conquest, occupation, and exile; in the Diasporas, they have been in contact with and have been influenced by ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenic cultures, as well as modern movements such as the Enlightenment and the rise of nationalism, which would bear fruit in the form of a Jewish state in the Levant. They also saw an elite convert to Judaism (the Khazars), only to disappear as the centers of power in the lands once occupied by that elite fell to the people of Rus and then the Mongols. Thus, Boyarin has argued that "Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity, because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these, in dialectical tension."

What Makes a Person Jewish?

According to traditional Jewish Law, a Jew is anyone born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism in accord with Jewish Law. American Reform Judaism and British Liberal Judaism accept the child of one Jewish parent (father or mother) as Jewish if the parents raise the child with a Jewish identity. All mainstream forms of Judaism today are open to sincere converts. The conversion process is evaluated by an authority, and the convert is examined on his sincerity and knowledge.

Traditional Judaism maintains that a Jew, whether by birth or conversion, is a Jew forever. Thus, a Jew who claims to be an atheist or converts to another religion is still considered by traditional Judaism to be Jewish. Thus, one's Jewishness is a technical measure, made in accordance with a standard definition. However, the Reform movement maintains that a Jew who has converted to another religion is no longer a Jew, and the Israeli Government has also taken that stance after Supreme Court cases and statutes.

The question of what determines Jewish identity in the State of Israel was given new impetus when, in the 1950s, David Ben-Gurion requested opinions on *mihu Yehudi* ("who is a Jew") from Jewish religious authorities and intellectuals worldwide in order to settle citizenship questions. This is far from settled, and occasionally resurfaces in Israeli politics.

Jewish Demographics

The total number of Jews worldwide is difficult to assess because the definition of "who is a Jew" is problematic as not all Jews identify themselves as Jewish, and some who identify as Jewish are not considered so by other Jews. According to the *Jewish Year Book* (1901), the global Jewish population in 1900 was around 11 million. The latest available data is from the World Jewish Population Survey of 2002 and the Jewish Year Calendar (2005). In 2002, according to the Jewish Population Survey, there were 13.3 million Jews around the world. The Jewish Year Calendar cites 14.6 million. Jewish population growth is currently near zero per cent, with 0.3% growth from 2000 to 2001. Inter-marriage and the declining birthrate are taking their toll on Jewish population figures, although conversion to Judaism may help to offset this slightly.

JEWISH DENOMINATIONS

In the late Middle Ages, when Europe and western Asia were divided into Christian and Islamic countries, the Jewish people also found themselves divided into two main groups. Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, namely in Germany and Poland, were called Ashkenazi. Sephardic Jews can trace their tradition back to the Mediterranean countries, particularly Spain and Portugal under Muslim rule. When they were expelled in 1492, they settled in North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean, the Far East, and northern Europe. The two traditions differ in a number of ritual and cultural ways, but their theology and basic Jewish practice are the same.

Over the past two centuries the Ashkenazi Jewish community has divided into a number of Jewish denominations; each has a different understanding of what principles of belief a Jew should hold, and how one should live as a Jew. To some degree, these doctrinal differences have created schisms between the Jewish denominations. Nonetheless, there is some level of Jewish unity. For example, it would not be unusual for a Conservative Jew to attend either an Orthodox or Reform synagogue. The article on Relationships between Jewish religious movements discusses how different Jewish denominations view each other. Many non-Ashkenazi Jews, especially in the United States, are members of congregations affiliated with the various movements, although they may not specifically identify themselves as members of that denomination. They frequently do so out of convenience, and are likely to describe their religious practice as “traditional” or “observant”, as opposed to “Orthodox” or “Conservative”.

- Orthodox Judaism holds that both the Written and Oral Torah were divinely revealed to Moses, and that the laws within it are binding and unchanging. Orthodox Jews generally consider commentaries on the *Shulchan Aruch* (a condensed codification of *halakha* that largely favored Sephardic traditions) such as the Moses Isserlis’s *HaMapah* and the *Mishnah Berurah*, to be the definitive codification of Jewish law, and assert a continuity between the Judaism of the Temple in Jerusalem, pre-Enlightenment Rabbinic Judaism, and modern-day Orthodox Judaism. Most of Orthodox Judaism holds to one particular form of Jewish theology, based on Maimonides’ 13 principles of Jewish faith. Orthodox Judaism broadly (and informally) shades into two main styles, Modern Orthodox Judaism and Haredi Judaism. The philosophical distinction is generally around accommodation to modernity and weight placed on non-Jewish disciplines, though in practical terms the differences are often reflected in styles of dress and rigor in practice. According to most Orthodox Jews, Jewish people who do not keep the laws of Shabbat and Yom Tov (the holidays), kashrut, and family purity are considered non-religious. Any Jew who keeps at least those laws would be considered observant and religious.
- Modern Orthodox Judaism emphasises strict observance of religious laws and commandments but with a broad, liberal approach to modernity and living in a non-Jewish or secular environment. Modern Orthodox women are gradually

assuming a greater role in Jewish ritual practice, which is not acceptable in the Haredi community.

- Haredi Judaism (also known as “ultra-Orthodox Judaism,” although some find this term offensive) is a very conservative form of Judaism. The Haredi world revolves around study, prayer and meticulous religious observance. Some Haredi Jews are more open to the modern world, perhaps most notably the Lubavitch Hasidim, but their acceptance of modernity is more a tool for enhancing Jewish faith than an end in itself.
 - ◆ Hasidic Judaism is a stream of Haredi Judaism based on the teachings of Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer (The Baal Shem Tov). Hasidic philosophy is rooted in the Kabbalah, and Hasidic Jews accept the Kabbalah as sacred scripture. They are distinguished both by a variety of special customs and practices including reliance on a Rebbe or supreme religious leader, and a special dress code particular to each Hasidic group.
- Conservative Judaism, known as Masorti Judaism outside of the United States and Canada, developed in Europe and the United States in the 1800s as Jews reacted to the changes brought about by the Enlightenment and Jewish emancipation. It is characterised by a commitment to following traditional Jewish laws and customs, including observance of Shabbat and kashrut, a deliberately non-fundamentalist teaching of Jewish principles of faith, a positive attitude toward modern culture, and an acceptance of both traditional rabbinic modes of study along with modern scholarship and critical text study when considering Jewish religious texts. Conservative Judaism teaches that Jewish law is not static, but has always developed in response to changing conditions. It holds that the Torah is a divine document written by prophets inspired by God, but rejects the Orthodox position that it was dictated by God to Moses. Similarly, Conservative Judaism holds that Judaism’s Oral Law is divine and normative, but rejects some Orthodox interpretations of the Oral Law. Accordingly, Conservative Judaism holds that both the Written and Oral Law may be interpreted by the rabbis to reflect modern sensibilities and suit modern conditions, although great caution should be exercised in doing so.
- Reform Judaism, called Liberal or Progressive in many countries, originally formed in Germany in response to the Enlightenment.

(Note that in the United Kingdom, there are two distinct congregational unions, Reform and Liberal. The former is significantly more traditional than the latter, but both hold to similar theoretical positions.) Its defining characteristic with respect to the other movements is its rejection of the binding nature of Jewish ceremonial law as such and belief instead that individual Jews should exercise an informed autonomy about what to observe. Reform Judaism initially defined Judaism as a religion, rather than as a race or culture, rejected most of the ritual ceremonial laws of the Torah while observing moral laws, and emphasised the ethical call of the Prophets. Reform Judaism developed an egalitarian prayer service in the vernacular (along with Hebrew in many cases) and emphasised personal connection to Jewish tradition over specific forms of observance. Today, many Reform congregations encourage the study of Hebrew and traditional observances, while a smaller number continue to espouse the liberal ethos of the classical reformers of the nineteenth century.

- Reconstructionist Judaism started as a stream of philosophy by Mordechai Kaplan, a Conservative rabbi, and later became an independent movement emphasising reinterpreting Judaism for modern times. Like Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism does not hold that Jewish law, as such, requires observance, but unlike Reform, Reconstructionist thought emphasises the role of the community in deciding what observances to follow.
- Jewish Renewal, a recent North American movement, was begun by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a Hassidic rabbi, in the 1960s. Jewish Renewal focuses on spirituality and social justice, but does not address issues of Jewish law. Men and women participate equally in prayer.
- Humanistic Judaism. A small nontheistic movement that emphasises Jewish culture and history as the sources of Jewish identity. Founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, it is centered in North America and Israel but also has affiliated groups in Europe and Latin America.

Jewish Denominations in Israel

Even though all of these denominations exist in Israel, Israelis tend to classify Jewish identity in ways that are different than diaspora Jewry. Most Jewish Israelis classify themselves as “secular” (*hiloni*),

“traditional” (*masorti*), “religious” (*dati*) or *Haredi*. The term “secular” is more popular as a self-description among Israeli families of western (European) origin, whose Jewish identity may be a very powerful force in their lives, but who see it as largely independent of traditional religious belief and practice. This portion of the population largely ignores organised religious life, be it of the official Israeli rabbinate (Orthodox) or of the liberal movements common to diaspora Judaism (Reform, Conservative).

The term “traditional” (*masorti*) is most common as a self-description among Israeli families of “eastern” origin (*i.e.*, the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa). This term, as commonly used, has nothing to do with the official Masorti (Conservative) movement.

There is a great deal of ambiguity in the ways “secular” and “traditional” are used in Israel. They often overlap, and they cover an extremely wide range in terms of ideology and religious observance.

The term “Orthodox” is not popular in Israeli discourse, although the percentage of Jews who come under that category in Israel is far greater than in the diaspora. Various methods of measuring this percentage, each with its pros and cons, are the proportion of religiously observant Knesset members, the proportion of Jewish children enrolled in religious schools, and statistical studies on “identity.”

What would be called “Orthodox” in the diaspora includes what is commonly called *dati* (religious) or *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) in Israel. The former term includes what is called “Religious Zionism” or the “National Religious” community, as well as what has become known over the past decade or so as *haredi-leumi* (nationalist *haredi*), or “Hardal,” which combines a largely *haredi* lifestyle with nationalist ideology.

Haredi applies to a populace that can be roughly divided into three separate groups along both ethnic and ideological lines: (1) “Lithuanian” (non-hasidic) *haredim* of Ashkenazic origin; (2) Hasidic *haredim* of Ashkenazic origin; and (3) Sephardic *haredim*. The third group is the largest, and has been the most politically active since the early 1990s.

Alternative Judaism

Other expressions of Jewish identity fall outside of this conservative-liberal continuum.

Unlike the above denominations, which were ideological reactions that resulted from the exposure of traditional rabbinic Judaism to the

radical changes of modern times, Karaite Judaism did not begin as a modern Jewish movement. The followers of Karaism believe they are the remnants of the non-Rabbinic Jewish sects of the Second Temple period, such as the Sadducees, though others contend they are a sect started in the 8th and 9th centuries. The Karaites (or “Scripturalists”) accept only the Hebrew Bible and what they view as the Peshat: “Plain or Simple Meaning”; and do not accept non-biblical writings as authoritative. Some European Karaites do not see themselves as part of the Jewish community, while most do. It is interesting to note that the Nazis often did not associate Karaites with Jews, and therefore several Karaite communities were spared in WWII and exist to this day even in places such as Lithuania where Jewish communities were completely devastated. In other areas, such as Greece, the Nazis deemed Karaites as belonging to a greater Jewish tradition and abused them accordingly.

Another historical division among ethnic Jews are the Samaritans, who maintain a distinct cultural and religious identity from mainstream Judaism, and are located entirely around Mount Gerizim in the Nablus/Shechem region of the West Bank and in Holon, near Tel Aviv in Israel.

JEWISH OBSERVANCES

Religious Clothing

A *kippah* is a slightly-rounded brimless skullcap worn by many Jewish men while praying, eating, reciting blessings, or studying Jewish religious texts, and at all times by some Jewish men. Some Jewish women have also begun to wear *kippot*. *Kippot* range in size from a small round beanie that covers only the back of the head, to a large, snug cap that covers the whole crown.

Tzitzit are special knotted “fringes” or “tassels” found on the four corners of the *tallit* (Hebrew: תְּצִיטֹת) (Ashkenazi pronunciation: *tallis*), or prayer shawl. The *tallit* is worn by Jewish men and some Jewish women during the prayer service. Customs vary regarding when a Jew begins wearing a *tallit*. In the Sephardi community, boys wear a *tallit* from bar mitzvah age. In some Ashkenazi communities it is customary to wear one only after marriage. A *tallit katan* (small tallit) is a fringed garment worn under the clothing throughout the day. In some Orthodox circles, the fringes are allowed to hang freely outside the clothing.

Tefillin known in English as phylacteries are two square leather boxes containing biblical verses, attached to the forehead and wound around the left arm by leather straps. They are worn during week-day morning prayer by observant Jewish men and some Jewish women.

A *kittel* a white knee-length overgarment, is worn by prayer leaders and some observant traditional Jews on the High Holidays. It is traditional for the head of the household to wear a *kittel* at the Passover seder, and some grooms wear one under the wedding canopy. Jewish males are buried in a *tallit* and *kittel* which are part of the *tachrichim* (burial garments).

Prayers

Traditionally, Jews recite prayers three times daily, with a fourth prayer added on Shabbat and holidays. At the heart of each service is the *Amidah* or *Shemoneh Esrei*. Another key prayer in many services is the declaration of faith, the *Shema Yisrael* (or *Shema*). The *Shema* is the recitation of a verse from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4): *Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad* — “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God! The Lord is One!”

Most of the prayers in a traditional Jewish service can be said in solitary prayer, although communal prayer is preferred. Communal prayer requires a quorum of ten adult Jews, called a *minyan*. In nearly all Orthodox and a few Conservative circles, only male Jews are counted toward a *minyan*; most Conservative Jews and members of other Jewish denominations count female Jews as well.

In addition to prayer services, observant traditional Jews recite prayers and benedictions throughout the day when performing various acts. Prayers are recited upon waking up in the morning, before eating or drinking different foods, after eating a meal, and so on.

The approach to prayer varies among the Jewish denominations. Differences can include the texts of prayers, the frequency of prayer, the number of prayers recited at various religious events, the use of musical instruments and choral music, and whether prayers are recited in the traditional liturgical languages or the vernacular. In general, Orthodox and Conservative congregations adhere most closely to tradition, and Reform and Reconstructionist synagogues are more likely to incorporate translations and contemporary writings in their services. Also, in most Conservative synagogues, and all Reform and Reconstructionist congregations, women participate in prayer services

on an equal basis with men, including roles traditionally filled only by men, such as reading from the Torah. In addition, many Reform temples use musical accompaniment such as organs and mixed choirs.

Jewish Holidays

Jewish holidays celebrate central themes in the relationship between God and the world, such as creation, revelation, and redemption.

Shabbat

Shabbat, the weekly day of rest lasting from shortly before sundown on Friday night to shortly after sundown Saturday night, commemorates God's day of rest after six days of creation. It plays a pivotal role in Jewish practice and is governed by a large corpus of religious law. At sundown on Friday, the woman of the house welcomes *the* Shabbat by lighting two or more candles and reciting a blessing. The evening meal begins with the Kiddush, a blessing recited aloud over a cup of wine, and the Mohtzi, a blessing recited over the bread. It is customary to have challah, two braided loaves of bread, on the table. During *Shabbat*, Jews are forbidden to engage in any activity that falls under 39 categories of *melakhah*, translated literally as "work." In fact the activities banned on the *Shabbat* are not "work" in the usual sense: They include such actions as lighting a fire, writing, using money and carrying in the public domain. The prohibition of lighting a fire has been extended in the modern era to driving a car, which involves burning fuel, and using electricity.

Three Pilgrimage Festivals

Jewish holidays (*haggim*) celebrate landmark events in Jewish history, such as the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah, and sometimes mark the change of seasons and transitions in the agricultural cycle. The three major festivals, Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot, are called "regalim" (derived from the Hebrew word "regel," or foot). On the three regalim, it was customary for the Israelites to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the Temple.

- Passover (*Pesach*) is a week-long holiday beginning on the evening of the 14th day of Nisan (the first month in the Hebrew calendar), that commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. Outside Israel, Passover is celebrated for eight days. In ancient times, it coincided with the barley harvest. It is the only holiday that centers on home-service, the Seder. Leavened products (*chametz*) are removed from the house prior to the holiday, and are not

consumed throughout the week. Homes are thoroughly cleaned to insure no bread or bread by-products remain, and a symbolic burning of the last vestiges of chametz is conducted on the morning of the Seder. Matzo is eaten instead of bread.

- Shavuot (“Pentecost” or “Feast of Weeks”) celebrates the revelation of the Torah to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Also known as the Festival of Bikurim, or first fruits, it coincided in biblical times with the wheat harvest. Shavuot customs include all-night study marathons known as Tikkun Leil Shavuot, eating dairy foods (cheesecake and blintzes are special favorites), reading the Book of Ruth, decorating homes and synagogues with greenery, and wearing white clothing, symbolising purity.
- *Sukkot* (“Tabernacles” or “The Festival of Booths”) commemorates the Israelites’ forty years of wandering through the desert on their way to the Promised Land. It is celebrated through the construction of temporary booths called *sukkot* (sing. *sukkah*) that represent the temporary shelters of the Israelites during their wandering. It coincides with the fruit harvest, and marks the end of the agricultural cycle. Jews around the world eat in *sukkot* for seven days and nights. *Sukkot* concludes with Shemini Atzeret, where Jews begin to pray for rain and Simchat Torah, “Rejoicing of the Torah,” a holiday which marks reaching the end of the Torah reading cycle and beginning all over again. The occasion is celebrated with singing and dancing with the Torah scrolls.

High Holydays

The High Holidays (*Yamim Noraim* or “Days of Awe”) revolve around judgment and forgiveness.

- Rosh Hashanah, (also *Yom Ha-Zikkaron* or “Day of Remembrance,” and *Yom Teruah*, or “Day of the Sounding of the Shofar”). Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year (literally, “head of the year”), although it falls on the first day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, Tishri. Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the 10-day period of atonement leading up to Yom Kippur, during which Jews are commanded to search their souls and make amends for sins committed, intentionally or not, throughout the year. Holiday customs include blowing the shofar, or ram’s horn, in the synagogue, eating apples and honey, and saying blessings over a variety of symbolic foods, such as pomegranates.

- Yom Kippur, (“Day of Atonement”) is the most solemn day of the Jewish year. It is a day of communal fasting and praying for forgiveness for one’s sins. Observant Jews spend the entire day in the synagogue, sometimes with a short break in the afternoon, reciting prayers from a special holiday prayerbook called a “Mahzor.” Many non-religious Jews make a point of attending synagogue services and fasting on Yom Kippur. On the eve of Yom Kippur, before candles are lit, a prefast meal, the “seuda mafseket,” is eaten. Synagogue services on the eve of Yom Kippur begin with the Kol Nidre prayer. It is customary to wear white on Yom Kippur, especially for Kol Nidre, and leather shoes are not worn. The following day, prayers are held from morning to evening. The final prayer service, called “Ne’ilah,” ends with a long blast of the shofar.

Other Holidays

Hanukkah

Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is an eight-day Jewish holiday that starts on the 25th day of Kislev (Hebrew calendar). The festival is observed in Jewish homes by the kindling of lights on each of the festival’s eight nights, one on the first night, two on the second night and so on.

The holiday was called *Hanukkah* meaning “dedication” because it marks the re-dedication of the Temple after its desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Spiritually, *Hanukkah* commemorates the “Miracle of the Oil”. According to the Talmud, at the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem following the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucid Empire, there was only enough consecrated oil to fuel the eternal flame in the Temple for one day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days—which was the length of time it took to press, prepare and consecrate new oil.

Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Bible and was never considered a major holiday in Judaism, but it has become much more visible and widely celebrated in modern times, mainly because it falls around the same time as Christmas and has national Jewish overtones that have been emphasised since the establishment of the State of Israel.

Purim

Purim is a joyous Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Persian Jews from the plot of the evil Haman, who sought to

exterminate them, as recorded in the biblical Book of Esther. It is characterised by public recitation of the Book of Esther, mutual gifts of food and drink, charity to the poor, and a celebratory meal (Esther 9:22). Other customs include drinking wine, eating special pastries called hamantashen, dressing up in masks and costumes, and organising carnivals and parties.

Purim is celebrated annually on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar, which comes out in February-March.

Torah Readings

The core of festival and *Shabbat* prayer services is the public reading of the Torah, along with connected readings from the other books of the Tanakh, called Haftarah. Over the course of a year, the whole Torah is read, with the cycle starting over in the autumn, on Simchat Torah.

Synagogues and Religious Buildings

Synagogues are Jewish houses of prayer and study, they usually contain separate rooms for prayer (the main sanctuary), smaller rooms for study, and often an area for community or educational use. There is no set blueprint for synagogues and the architectural shapes and interior designs of synagogues vary greatly. The Reform movements mostly refer to their synagogues as temples. Some traditional features of a synagogue are:

- The ark (called *aron ha-kodesh* by Ashkenazim and *hekhal* by Sephardim) where the Torah scrolls are kept (the ark is often closed with an ornate curtain (*parochet*) outside or inside the ark doors);
- The elevated reader's platform (called *bimah* by Ashkenazim and *tebah* by Sephardim), where the Torah is read (and services are conducted in Sephardi synagogues);
- The eternal light (*ner tamid*), a continually-lit lamp or lantern used as a reminder of the constantly-lit menorah of the Temple in Jerusalem
- The pulpit, or *amud* (Hebrew, a lecturn facing the Ark where the hazzan or prayer leader stands while praying.

In addition to synagogues, other buildings of significance in Judaism include yeshivas, or institutions of Jewish learning, and mikvahs, which are ritual baths.

Dietary Laws: *Kashrut*

The laws of *kashrut* (“keeping kosher”) are the Jewish dietary laws. Food in accord with Jewish law is termed kosher, and food not in accord with Jewish law is termed *treifah* or *treif*. The Torah cites no reason for the laws of *kashrut*, but the rabbis have offered various explanations, including ritual purity, teaching people to control their urges, and health benefits. *Kashrut* involves the abstention from consuming birds and beasts that prey on other animals, and creatures that roam the sea floor eating the excretions of other animals. Major prohibitions exist on eating pork, which is considered an unclean animal, and seafood. Meat is ritually slaughtered, and meat and milk are not eaten together, based on the biblical injunction against cooking a kid in its mother’s milk.

Although hygiene may have been a factor, the deeper purpose of *kashrut* is to lend a spiritual dimension to the physical act of eating. The idea is that Jews should not put anything into their mouths that involves spiritual “negatives” such as pain, sickness, uncleanliness, or cruelty to animals.

Family Purity

The laws of *niddah* (“menstruant”, often referred to euphemistically as “family purity”) and various other laws regulating the interaction between men and women (e.g., *tzniut*, modesty in dress) are perceived, especially by Orthodox Jews, as vital factors in Jewish life, though they are rarely followed by Reform or Conservative Jews. The laws of *niddah* dictate that sexual intercourse cannot take place while the woman is having a menstrual flow, and she has to count seven “clean” days and immerse in a *mikvah* (ritual bath) following menstruation.

Life-cycle Events

Life-cycle events, or rites of passage, occur throughout a Jew’s life that serve to strengthen Jewish identity and bind him/her to the entire community.

- Brit milah—Welcoming male babies into the covenant through the rite of circumcision on their eighth day of life. The baby boy is also given his Hebrew name in the ceremony. A naming ceremony intended as a parallel ritual for girls, named *zeved habat*, enjoys limited popularity.
- Bar mitzvah and Bat mitzvah—This passage from childhood to adulthood takes place when a female Jew is twelve and a male

Jew is thirteen years old among Orthodox and some Conservative congregations. In the Reform movement, both girls and boys have their bat/bar mitzvah at age thirteen. This is often commemorated by having the new adults, male only in the Orthodox tradition, lead the congregation in prayer and publicly read a “portion” of the Torah.

- Marriage—Marriage is an extremely important life-cycle event. A wedding takes place under a *chupah*, or wedding canopy, which symbolises a happy house. At the end of the ceremony, the groom breaks a glass with his foot, symbolising the continuous mourning for the destruction of the Temple, and the scattering of the Jewish people.
- Death and Mourning—Judaism has a multi-staged mourning practice. The first stage is called the *shiva* (literally “seven”, observed for one week) during which it is traditional to sit at home and be comforted by friends and family, the second is the *shloshim* (observed for one month) and for those who have lost one of their parents, there is a third stage, *avelut yud bet chodesh*, which is observed for eleven months.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Classical Priesthood

The role of the priesthood in Judaism has significantly diminished since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, when priests attended to the Temple and sacrifices. The priesthood is an inherited position, and although priests no longer have any but ceremonial duties, they are still honored in many Jewish communities. Many Orthodox Jewish communities believe that they will be needed again for a future Third Temple and need to remain in readiness for future duty.

- Kohen (priest)—patrilineal descendant of Aaron, brother of Moses. In the Temple, the *kohanim* were charged with performing the sacrifices. Today, a Kohen is the first one called up at the reading of the Torah, performs the Priestly Blessing, as well as complying with other unique laws and ceremonies, including the ceremony of redemption of the first-born.
- Levi (Levite)—Patrilineal descendant of Levi, the son of Jacob. In the Temple in Jerusalem, the levites sang Psalms, performed construction, maintenance, janitorial, and guard duties, assisted the priests, and sometimes interpreted the law and Temple ritual

to the public. Today, a Levite is called up second to the reading of the Torah.

Prayer Leaders

From the time of the Mishnah and Talmud to the present, Judaism has required specialists or authorities for the practice of very few rituals or ceremonies. A Jew can fulfil most requirements for prayer by himself. Some activities—reading the Torah and *haftarah* (a supplementary portion from the Prophets or Writings), the prayer for mourners, the blessings for bridegroom and bride, the complete grace after meals—require a *minyan*, the presence of ten adults (Orthodox Jews and some Conservative Jews require ten adult men; some Conservative Jews and Reform Jews include women in the minyan).

The most common professional clergy in a synagogue is:

- Rabbi of a congregation—Jewish scholar who is charged with answering the legal questions of a congregation. This role requires ordination by the congregation’s preferred authority (*i.e.* from a respected Orthodox rabbi or, if the congregation is Conservative or Reform, from academic seminaries). A congregation does not necessarily require a rabbi. Some congregations have a rabbi but also allow members of the congregation to act as *shatz* or *baal kriyah* (see below).
 - Hassidic *Rebbe*—rabbi who is the head of a Hasidic dynasty.
- Hazzan (note: the “h” denotes voiceless pharyngeal fricative) (cantor)—a trained vocalist who acts as *shatz*. Chosen for a good voice, knowledge of traditional tunes, understanding of the meaning of the prayers and sincerity in reciting them. A congregation does not need to have a dedicated hazzan.

Jewish prayer services do involve two specified roles, which are sometimes, but not always, filled by a rabbi and/or hazzan in many congregations. In other congregations these roles are filled on an *ad hoc* basis by members of the congregation who lead portions of services on a rotating basis:

- Shaliach tzibur or *Shatz* (leader—literally “agent” or “representative”—of the congregation) leads those assembled in prayer, and sometimes prays on behalf of the community. When a *shatz* recites a prayer on behalf of the congregation, he is *not* acting as an intermediary but rather as a facilitator. The entire congregation participates in the recital of such prayers by saying *amen* at their conclusion; it is with this act that the *shatz’s*

prayer becomes the prayer of the congregation. Any adult capable of reciting the prayers clearly may act as *shatz*. In Orthodox congregations and some Conservative congregations, only men can be prayer leaders, but the Conservative and Reform movements now allow women to serve in this function.

- The *Baal kriyah* or *baal koreh* (master of the reading) reads the weekly Torah portion. The requirements for being the *baal kriyah* are the same as those for the *shatz*. These roles are not mutually exclusive. The same person is often qualified to fill more than one role, and often does. Often there are several people capable of filling these roles and different services (or parts of services) will be led by each.

Many congregations, especially larger ones, also rely on a:

- Gabbai (sexton)—Calls people up to the Torah, appoints the *shatz* for each prayer session if there is no standard *shatz*, and makes certain that the synagogue is kept clean and supplied.

The three preceding positions are usually voluntary and considered an honor. Since the Enlightenment large synagogues have often adopted the practice of hiring rabbis and hazzans to act as *shatz* and *baal kriyah*, and this is still typically the case in many Conservative and Reform congregations. However, in most Orthodox synagogues these positions are filled by laypeople on a rotating or *ad hoc* basis. Although most congregations hire one or more Rabbis, the use of a professional hazzan is generally declining in American congregations, and the use of professionals for other offices is rarer still.

Specialised Religious Roles

- *Dayan* (judge)—An ordained rabbi with special legal training who belongs to a *beth din* (rabbinical court). In Israel, religious courts handle marriage and divorce cases, conversion and financial disputes in the Jewish community.
- Mohel—Ritual circumciser who performs the *brit milah* (circumcision). An expert in the laws of circumcision who has received training from a qualified *mohel*.
- Shochet (ritual slaughterer)—In order for meat to be kosher, it must be slaughtered by a *shochet* who is an expert in the laws of kashrut and has been trained by another *shochet*.
- Sofer (scribe)—Torah scrolls, *tefillin* (phylacteries), *mezuzot* (scrolls put on doorposts), and *gittin* (bills of divorce) must be written by a *sofer* who is an expert in Hebrew calligraphy and has undergone rigorous training in the laws of writing sacred texts.

- Rosh yeshiva—A Torah scholar who runs a yeshiva.
- Mashgiach of a yeshiva—Supervises the emotional and spiritual welfare of students in a *yeshiva*, and gives lectures on *mussar* (Jewish ethics).
- Mashgiach—Supervises manufacturers of kosher food, importers, caterers and restaurants to ensure that the food is kosher. Must be an expert in the laws of kashrut and trained by a rabbi, if not a rabbi himself.

HISTORY

Origins

Traditional View

At its core, the Bible is an account of the Israelites' relationship with God from their earliest history until the building of the Second Temple (c. 350 BCE). This relationship is often a contentious one, as the Israelites struggle with their faith in God and attraction to other gods. Among the larger-than-life figures we meet in the Bible are the Patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who wrestled with their beliefs — and Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egypt.

Abraham, hailed as the first Hebrew and the father of the Jewish people, rejected the idolatry that he saw around him and embraced monotheism. As a reward for this act of faith in one God, he was promised many offspring: "Look now toward heaven and count the stars/So shall be your progeny." (Genesis 15:5) Abraham's first child was Ishmael and his second son was Isaac, whom God said would continue Abraham's work and inherit the Land of Israel (then called Canaan), after having been exiled and redeemed. God sent the patriarch Jacob and his children to Egypt, where after many generations they became enslaved. God later commanded Moses to redeem the Israelites from slavery, leading to the Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites gathered at Mount Sinai in 1313 BCE (Jewish Year 2448) and received the Torah—the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books, together with *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* are known as *Torah Shebikhtav*: literally the "Written Torah," as opposed to the Oral Torah, which refers to the Mishna and the Talmud. Eventually, God led them to the land of Israel.

God designated the descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother, to be a priestly class within the Israelite community. They first officiated in the tabernacle (a portable house of worship), and later their descendants were in charge of worship in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Once the Israelites had settled in the land of Israel, the tabernacle was planted in the city of Shiloh for over 300 years during which time God provided great men, and occasionally women, to rally the nation against attacking enemies, some of which were sent by God as a punishment for the sins of the people. This is described in the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges. As time went on, the spiritual level of the nation declined to the point that God allowed the Philistines to capture the tabernacle in Shiloh.

The people of Israel then told Samuel the Prophet that they had reached the point where they needed to be governed by a permanent king, as were other nations, as described in the Books of Samuel. Samuel grudgingly acceded to this request and appointed Saul, a great but very humble man, to be their King. When the people pressured Saul into going against a command conveyed to him by Samuel, God told Samuel to appoint David in his stead.

Once King David was established, he told the Prophet Nathan that he would like to build a permanent temple, and as a reward for his actions, God promised David that he would allow his son to build the temple and the throne would never depart from his children (David himself was not allowed to build the temple because he had been involved in many wars, making it inappropriate for him to build a temple representing peace). As a result, it was David's son Solomon who built the first permanent temple according to God's will, in Jerusalem, as described in the Books of Kings.

Rabbinic tradition holds that the details and interpretation of the law, which are called the *Oral Torah* or *oral law*, were originally an unwritten tradition based upon what God told Moses on Mount Sinai. However, as the persecutions of the Jews increased and the details were in danger of being forgotten, these oral laws were recorded by Rabbi Judah haNasi (Judah the Prince) in the Mishnah, redacted *circa* 200 CE. The Talmud was a compilation of both the Mishnah and the Gemara, rabbinic commentaries redacted over the next three centuries. The Gemara originated in two major centers of Jewish scholarship, Palestine and Babylonia. Correspondingly, two bodies of analysis developed, and two works of Talmud were created. The older compilation is called the Jerusalem Talmud. It was compiled sometime during the fourth century in Israel. The Babylonian Talmud was compiled from discussions in the houses of study by the scholars Ravina I, Ravina II, and Rav Ashi by 500 C.E., although it continued to be edited later.

Critical Historical View

Critical scholars (who may or may not be observant Jews), reject the claim that sacred texts, including the Hebrew Bible were either dictated by God or divinely inspired. Instead, they see these texts as authored by humans and meaningful in specific historical and cultural contexts. Many of these scholars accept the general principles of the documentary hypothesis and suggest that the Torah consists of a variety of inconsistent texts edited together in a way that calls attention to divergent accounts.

These scholars have various theories concerning the origins of the Israelites and Israelite religion. Most agree that the people who formed the nation of Israel during the First Temple era had origins in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, although some question whether any or all of their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt. Many suggest that during the First Temple period, the people of Israel were henotheists, that is, they believed that each nation had its own god, but that their god was superior to other gods. Some suggest that strict monotheism developed during the Babylonian Exile, perhaps in reaction to Zoroastrian dualism.

In this view, it was only by the Hellenic period that most Jews came to believe that their God was the only God (and thus, the God of everyone), and that the record of His revelation (the Torah) contained within its universal truths. This attitude reflected a growing Gentile interest in Judaism (some Greeks and Romans considered the Jews a most “philosophical” people because of their belief in a God that cannot be represented visually), and growing Jewish interest in Greek philosophy, which sought to establish universal truths, thus leading—potentially—to the idea of monotheism, at least in the sense that “all gods are One.” It was also at this time that the notion of a clearly bounded Jewish nation identical with the Jewish religion formed. According to one scholar, the clash between the early Christians and Pharisees that ultimately led to the birth of the Christian religion and Rabbinic Judaism reflected the struggle by Jews to reconcile their claims to national particularism and theological universalism.

Antiquity

The United Monarchy was established under Saul and continued under King David and Solomon with its capital in Jerusalem. After Solomon’s reign the nation split into two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Israel (in the north) and the Kingdom of Judah (in the south). The

Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian ruler Sargon II in the late 8th century BCE with many people from the capital Samaria being taken captive to Media and the Habor valley. The Kingdom of Judah continued as an independent state until it was conquered by a Babylonian army in the early 6th century BCE, destroying the First Temple that was at the center of ancient Jewish worship. The Judean elite were exiled to Babylonia and this is regarded as the first Jewish Diaspora. During this captivity the Jews in Babylon wrote what is known as the "Babylonian Talmud" while the remaining Jews in Judea wrote what is called the "Palestinian Talmud". These are the first written forms of the Torah and the Babylonian Talmud is the Talmud used to this day. Later many of them returned to their homeland after the subsequent conquest of Babylonia by the Persians seventy years later, a period known as the Babylonian Captivity. A new Second Temple was constructed, and old religious practices were resumed.

During the early years of the Second Temple, the highest religious authority was a council known as the Great Assembly, led by Ezra of the Book of Ezra. Among other accomplishments of the Great Assembly, the last books of the Bible were written at this time and the canon sealed. Hellenistic Judaism spreads to Ptolemaic Egypt from the 3rd century BC, and becomes a notable *religio licita* throughout the Roman Empire, until its decline in the 3rd century parallel to the rise of Gnosticism and Early Christianity.

After a Jewish revolt against Roman rule in 66 CE, the Romans all but destroyed Jerusalem. Following a second revolt, Jews were not allowed to enter the city of Jerusalem and most Jewish worship was forbidden by Rome. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Jews, Jewish worship stopped being centrally organised around the Temple, prayer took the place of sacrifice, and worship was rebuilt around rabbis who acted as teachers and leaders of individual communities (see Jewish diaspora).

Historical Jewish Groupings (to 1700)

Around the first century CE there were several small Jewish sects: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes, and Christians. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, these sects vanished. Christianity survived, but by breaking with Judaism and becoming a separate religion; the Pharisees survived but in the form of Rabbinic Judaism (today, known simply as "Judaism"). The Sadducees rejected the divine inspiration of the Prophets and the Writings, relying only

on the Torah as divinely inspired. Consequently, a number of other core tenets of the Pharisees' belief system (which became the basis for modern Judaism), were also dismissed by the Sadducees.

Like the Sadducees who relied only on the Torah, some Jews in the 8th and 9th centuries rejected the authority and divine inspiration of the Oral Law as recorded in the Mishnah (and developed by later rabbis in the two Talmuds), relying instead only upon the Tanakh. These included the Isunians, the Yudganites, the Malikites, and others. They soon developed oral traditions of their own, which differed from the rabbinic traditions, and eventually formed the Karaite sect. Karaites exist in small numbers today, mostly living in Israel. Rabbinical and Karaite Jews each hold that the others are Jews, but that the other faith is erroneous.

Over time Jews developed into distinct ethnic groups — amongst others, the Ashkenazi Jews (of central and Eastern Europe), the Sephardi Jews (of Spain, Portugal, and North Africa), the Beta Israel of Ethiopia and the Yemenite Jews, from the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. This split is cultural, and is not based on any doctrinal dispute, although the distance did result in minor differences in practice and prayers.

Persecutions

Anti-semitism arose during the Middle Ages, in the form of persecutions, pogroms, forced conversion, expulsions, social restrictions and ghettoization. This was different in quality to any repressions of Jews in ancient times. Ancient repression was politically motivated and Jews were treated no differently than any other ethnic group would have been. With the rise of the Churches, attacks on Jews became motivated instead by theological considerations specifically deriving from Christian views about Jews and Judaism.

Hasidism

Hasidic Judaism was founded by Yisroel ben Eliezer (1700-1760), also known as the *Ba'al Shem Tov* (or *Besht*). It originated in a time of persecution of the Jewish people, when European Jews had turned inward to Talmud study; many felt that most expressions of Jewish life had become too "academic", and that they no longer had any emphasis on spirituality or joy. His disciples attracted many followers; they themselves established numerous Hasidic sects across Europe. Hasidic Judaism eventually became the way of life for many Jews in Europe. Waves of Jewish immigration in the 1880s carried it to the United States.

Early on, there was a serious schism between Hasidic and non-Hasidic Jews. European Jews who rejected the Hasidic movement were dubbed by the Hasidim as *Mitnagdim*, (lit. “opponents”). Some of the reasons for the rejection of Hasidic Judaism were the overwhelming exuberance of Hasidic worship, its untraditional ascriptions of infallibility and alleged miracle-working to their leaders, and the concern that it might become a messianic sect. Since then differences between the Hasidim and their opponents have slowly diminished and both groups are now considered part of Haredi Judaism.

The Enlightenment and Reform Judaism

In the late 18th century CE, Europe was swept by a group of intellectual, social and political movements known as the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment led to reductions in the European laws that prohibited Jews to interact with the wider secular world, thus allowing Jews access to secular education and experience. A parallel Jewish movement, *Haskalah* or the “Jewish Enlightenment,” began, especially in Central Europe, in response to both the Enlightenment and these new freedoms. It placed an emphasis on integration with secular society and a pursuit of non-religious knowledge such as reason. The thrust and counter-thrust between supporters of *Haskalah* and more traditional Jewish concepts eventually led to the formation of a number of different branches of Judaism: *Haskalah* supporters founded Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism, while traditionalists founded what is called Orthodox Judaism, and Jews seeking a balance between the two sides founded *Masorti* and Conservative Judaism. A number of smaller groups came into being as well.

The Holocaust

The Holocaust was the genocide of millions of Jews under Nazi Germany in World War II. The state-led systematic persecution and genocide of the Jews (and other minority groups) of Europe and European Colonial North Africa during World War II by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. The persecution and genocide were accomplished in stages. Legislation to remove the Jews from civil society was enacted years before the outbreak of World War II. Concentration camps were established in which inmates were used as slave labour until they died of exhaustion or disease. Where the Third Reich conquered new territory in eastern Europe, specialised units called *Einsatzgruppen* murdered Jews and political opponents in mass shootings. Jews and Roma were crammed into ghettos before being transported hundreds

of miles by freight train to extermination camps where, if they survived the journey, the majority of them were killed in gas chambers. Every arm of Germany's bureaucracy was involved in the logistics of the mass murder, turning the country into what one Holocaust scholar has called "a genocidal nation."

Judaism Today

In most industrialised nations with modern economies, such as the United States, Israel, Canada, United Kingdom, Argentina and South Africa, a wide variety of Jewish practices exist, along with a growing plurality of secular and non-practicing Jews. For example, in the world's second largest Jewish community, that of the United States, according to the 2001 edition of the National Jewish Population Survey, 4.3 million out of 5.1 million Jews had some sort of connection to the religion. Of that population of connected Jews, 80 per cent participated in some sort of Jewish religious observance, but only 48 per cent belonged to a synagogue.

Religious (and secular) Jewish movements in the USA and Canada perceive this as a crisis situation, and have grave concern over rising rates of intermarriage and assimilation in the Jewish community. Since American Jews are marrying later in life, and are having fewer children, the birth rate for American Jews has dropped from over 2.0 to 1.7 (the replacement rate is 2.1). (*This is My Beloved, This is My Friend: A Rabbinic Letter on Intimate relations*, p. 27, Elliot N. Dorff, The Rabbinical Assembly, 1996). Intermarriage rates range from 40-50 per cent in the US, and only about a third of children of intermarried couples are raised as Jews. Due to intermarriage and low birth rates, the Jewish population in the US shrank from 5.5 million in 1990 to 5.1 million in 2001. This is indicative of the general population trends among the Jewish community in the Diaspora, but a focus on total population obscures growth trends in some denominations and communities, such as Haredi Judaism.

The Baal teshuva movement is a movement of Jews who have "returned" to religion or become more observant. While interest in religion may be on the rise, it has not been sufficient to offset the general demographic loss resulting from intermarriage and acculturation.

JUDAISM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Christianity and Judaism

Historians and theologians regularly review the changing relationship between some Christian groups and the Jewish people; the article on Christian-Jewish reconciliation studies one recent issue.

Islam and Judaism

Islam and Judaism have a complex relationship. Traditionally Jews living in Muslim lands, known as dhimmis, were allowed to practice their religion and to administer their internal affairs, but subject to certain conditions. They had to pay the jizya (a per capita tax imposed on free adult non-Muslim males) to Muslims. Dhimmis had an inferior status under Islamic rule. They had several social and legal disabilities such as prohibitions against bearing arms or giving testimony in courts in cases involving Muslims. Many of the disabilities were highly symbolic. The most degrading one was the requirement of distinctive clothing, not found in the Qur'an or hadith but invented in early medieval Baghdad; its enforcement was highly erratic. Jews rarely faced martyrdom or exile, or forced compulsion to change their religion, and they were mostly free in their choice of residence and profession. Indeed, the period 712-1066 under the Ummayyads and the Abbasids has been called the Golden Age of Jewish culture in Spain. The notable examples of massacre of Jews include the killing or forcibly conversion of them by the rulers of the Almohad dynasty in Al-Andalus in the 12th century. Notable examples of the cases where the choice of residence was taken away from them includes confining Jews to walled quarters (mellahs) in Morocco beginning from the 15th century and especially since the early 19th century. There were some forced conversions in the 12th century under the Almohad dynasty of North Africa and Al-Andalus as well as in Persia. Standard antisemitic themes have become commonplace in the propaganda of Arab Islamic movements such as Hizbullah and Hamas, in the pronouncements of various agencies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and even in the newspapers and other publications of Refah Partisi.

Judaism and Zoroastrianism

For part of its early history, Jews lived under the Zoroastrian Persian Empire. Some scholars believe Judaism started off as a western branch of Zoroastrianism, as evidenced by the fact that Cyrus the Great, the first king of the Persian empire, and subsequent Iranian kings funded the construction of the second temple.

Syncretic Beliefs Incorporating Judaism

There are some organisations that combine elements of Judaism with those of other religions. The most well-known of these is the Messianic Judaism movement (closely related to Hebrew Christianity), groups of ethnic Jews and gentiles (non-Jews), historically sponsored

by Christian organisations, who promote the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jew-to-Gentile ratio of adherents is unknown and can vary widely between bodies of believers. These groups typically combine Christian theology and Christology with a thin veneer of Jewish religious practices. The most controversial of these groups is the American Jews for Jesus which actively proselytizes ethnic Jews through numerous missionary campaigns in major American cities.

Other examples of syncretism include Judeo-Paganists, a loosely-organised set of Jews who incorporate pagan or Wiccan beliefs; Jewish Buddhists, another loosely-organised group that incorporates elements of Asian spirituality in their faith; and some Renewal Jews who borrow freely and openly from Buddhism, Sufism, Native American religion, and other faiths. Some Rastafarian traditions emphasize a connection to Judaism and believe that Black Africans are the true “lost tribe” of Israel.

AN OVERVIEW OF JUDAISM

EARLY HISTORY OF JUDAISM

Circa 2000 BCE, the G-d of the ancient Israelites established a divine covenant with Abraham, making him the patriarch of many nations. From his name, the term Abramic Religions is derived; these are the three religions which trace their roots back to Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The book of Genesis describes the events surrounding the lives of the four patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Moses was the next leader. He led his people out of captivity in Egypt, and received the Law from G-d. After decades of wandering through wilderness, Joshua led the tribes into the promised land, driving out the Canaanites through a series of military battles.

The original tribal organisation was converted into a Kingdom by Samuel; its first king was Saul. The second king, David, established Jerusalem as the religious and political center. The third king, Solomon built the first temple there.

Division into the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah occurred shortly after the death of Solomon in 922 BCE. Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BCE; Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587 BCE. The temple was destroyed. Some Jews returned from captivity under the Babylonians and started to restore the temple in 536 BCE. Alexander the Great invaded the area in 332 BCE. From circa 300 to 63 BCE, Greek became the language of commerce, and Greek culture

had a major influence on Judaism. In 63 BCE, the Roman Empire took control of Palestine.

Three religious sects had formed by the 1st century AD: the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes. Many anticipated the arrival of a Messiah who would drive the Roman invaders out and restore independence. Christianity was established initially as a Jewish sect, centered in Jerusalem. Paul broke with this tradition and spread the religion to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Many mini-revolts led to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 CE. The Jewish Christians were wiped out or scattered at this time. The movement started by Paul flourished and quickly evolved into a separate religion. Jews were scattered throughout the known world. Their religion was no longer centered in Jerusalem; Jews were prohibited from setting foot there. Judaism became decentralised and stopped seeking converts. The local synagogue became the new center of Jewish life, and authority shifted from the centralised priesthood to local scholars and teachers, giving rise to Rabbinic Judaism.

The period from the destruction of the temple onward give rise to heavy persecution by Christians throughout Europe and Russia. The latter held the Jews continuously responsible for the execution of Jesus. In the 1930s and 1940s, Adolf Hitler and the German Nazi party drew on centuries of anti-Semitism (and upon their own psychotic beliefs in racial purity) when they organised the Holocaust, the attempted extermination of all Jews in Europe. About 6 million were killed in one of the world's greatest examples of religious and racial intolerance.

A Zionist movement was a response to persecution. Their initial goal was create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The state of Israel was formed on May 18, 1948. There are currently about 18 million Jews throughout the world; about 7 million live in North America.

JEWISH TEXTS

The Tanakh corresponds to the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) in the Christian bible. It is composed of three groups of books:

- the Torah Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- the Nevi'im, the Prophetic books of Isaiah, Amos, etc.
- the Ketuvim, the "Writings" including Kings, Chronicles, etc.

The Talmud contains stories, laws, medical knowledge, debates about moral choices, etc. It is composed of material which mainly comes from two sources:

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- the Mishnah, 6 chapters containing a series of laws from the Hebrew Scriptures, arranged about 200 CE.
 - the Gemara (one Babylonian and one Palestinian) which is an assembly of comments from hundreds of Rabbis from 200–500 CE, along with a passage from the Mishnah.

JEWISH BELIEFS

They include:

- G-d is the creator and absolute ruler of the universe
- Jewish belief is unlike the Christian concept of original sin (the belief that all people have inherited Adam and Eve's sin when they disobeyed G-d's instructions in the Garden of Eden). Judaism affirms the inherent goodness of the world and its people as creations of G-d. Believers are able to sanctify their lives and draw closer to G-d by fulfilling mitzvot (divine commandments). No saviour is needed as an intermediary.
- The Jews are G-d's chosen people
- The Ten commandments, as delineated in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21, form the core of Jewish life
- The need to follow the many dietary and other laws of the Torah
- Boys reach the status of Bar Mitzvah (literally son of the commandment) on their 13th birthday; girls reach Bat Mitzvah (daughter of the commandment) on their 12th birthday. This means that they are recognised as adults and are personally responsible to follow the Jewish commandments and laws; they are allowed to lead a religious service; they are counted in a "minyan" (a quota necessary to perform certain parts of religious services); they can sign contracts; they can testify in religious courts; theoretically, they can marry, although the Talmud recommends 18 to 24 as the proper age for marriage.

JEWISH PRACTICES

They include:

- Observation of the Sabbath (day of rest), starting at sundown on Friday evening.
- Strict religious discipline governs almost all areas of life
- Regular attendance at Synagogue
- Celebration of the annual festivals including:

The Passover, which is held each Spring to recall their deliverance out of slavery in Egypt. A ritual Seder meal is eaten in each observing Jewish home at this time. Some Passover dates are: 11th April, 1998—1st April, 1999, 20th April 2000.

The 10 days from Rosh Hashanah (New Year) to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) which are days of fasting and penitence. Some Rosh Hashanah dates are: 21 September, 1998, 11th September, 1999, 30th September, 2000.

- Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies are commonly held to recognize the coming-of-age of a Jewish youth. Shortly after their birthday, (13th for a male; 12th for a female), they recite a blessing during a Saturday Shabbat service. In most cases, they might handle additional functions, like reading the assigned text from the Torah, or leading the congregation in prayer. etc. They often make a speech which, by tradition, starts with "Today I am a man." The youth's father often recites a blessing in appreciation for no longer being burdened with the responsibility of his child's sins. Within Orthodox and Chasidic practice, women are not allowed to take leadership roles in religious services. For them, a Bat Mitzvah celebration is basically a party.
- The local synagogue is governed by the congregation and led by a rabbi who has been chosen by the congregation. The Chief Rabbis in France and Great Britain have authority only by the agreement of those who accept it. Two Chief Rabbis in Israel have civil authority in areas of family law.

JEWISH SECTS

There are five main forms of Judaism in the world today:

- Conservative Judaism: This began in the mid-nineteenth century as a reaction against the Reform movement. It is a mainline movement midway between Reform and Orthodox.
- Humanistic Judaism: This, is a small group, mainly composed of atheists and agnostics, who regard mankind as the measure of all things.
- Orthodox Judaism: This the oldest and most conservative form of Judaism. They attempt to observe their religion as close to its original forms as possible. They look upon every word in their sacred texts as being divinely inspired.
- Reconstructist Judaism: This is a new liberal movement started by Mordecai Kaplan as an attempt to unify and revitalize the

religion. They reject the concept that Jews are a uniquely favored and chosen people. They have no connection at all with Christian Reconstructionism, which is an ultra-conservative form of Christianity.

- Reform Judaism: They are a liberal group, who follow the ethical laws of Judaism, but leave up to the individual the decision whether to follow or ignore the dietary and other traditional laws. They use modern forms of worship.

Holydays in Judaism

1. 1st of Tishri, Rosh Hashanah; "Head of the Year", The Jewish New Year, and the anniversary of the completion of creation.
2. 10th of Tishri, Yom Kippur; "Day of Atonement", A day of fasting and praying which occurs 10 days after the first day of Rosh Hashanah. The holiest day in the year.
3. 15th of Tishri, Sukkot; "Season of our rejoicing; Feast of Tabernacles", The Feast of Booths is an 8-day harvest festival; a time of thanksgiving. This was considered the most important Jewish festival in 1st cent.
4. 25th of Kislev, Hanukkah, Chanukah; "Feast of Dedication", The Feast of Lights is an 8-day Feast of Dedication. It recalls the war fought by the Maccabees in the cause of religious freedom.
5. 14th of Adar, Purim; "Feast of Lots", The Feast of Lots recalls the defeat by Queen Esther of the plan to slaughter all of the Persian Jews, circa 400 BCE.
6. 15th Nissan, Pesach; "Passover", The 8-day festival recalls the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt circa 1300 BCE. A holiday meal, the Seder, is held at home.
7. 6th of Sivan; 50 days after Pesach, Shavouth; "Festival of Weeks", Pentacost (a.k.a. Feast of Weeks) recalls God's revelation of the Torah to the Jewish people.

JEW

A Jew is a member of the Jewish people, an ethnoreligious group originating in the Israelites or Hebrews of the ancient Middle East. The ethnicity and the religion of Judaism, the traditional faith of the Jewish nation, are strongly inter-related, and converts to Judaism are both included and have been absorbed within the Jewish people throughout the millennia.

The Jews have suffered a long history of persecution in many different lands, and their population and distribution per region has fluctuated throughout the centuries. Today, most authorities place the number of Jews between 12 and 14 million. According to the Jewish Agency, for the year 2007 there are 13.2 million Jews worldwide; 5.4 million (40.9%) in Israel, 5.3 million (40.2%) in the United States, and the remainder distributed in communities of varying sizes around the world. These numbers include all those who consider themselves Jews whether or not affiliated, and, with the exception of Israel's Jewish population, do not include those who do not consider themselves Jews or who are not Jewish by *halakha*. The total world Jewish population, however, is difficult to measure. In addition to *halakhic* considerations, there are secular, political, and ancestral identification factors in defining who is a Jew that increase the figure considerably.

JEWS AND JUDAISM

The origin of the Jews is traditionally dated to around 1800 BCE with the biblical account of the birth of Judaism.

The Merneptah Stele, dated to 1200 BCE, is one of the earliest archaeological records of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, where Judaism, the first monotheistic religion, developed. According to Biblical accounts, the Jews enjoyed periods of self-determination first under the Biblical judges from Othniel through Samson, then in (c. 1000s BCE), King David established Jerusalem as the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah (the United Monarchy) and from there ruled the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

In 970 BCE, David's son Solomon became king of Israel. Within a decade, Solomon began to build the Holy Temple known as the First Temple. Upon Solomon's death (c. 930 BCE), the ten northern tribes split off to form the Kingdom of Israel. In 722 BCE the Assyrians conquered the Kingdom of Israel and exiled its Jews, starting a Jewish diaspora. At a time of limited mobility and travel, Jews became some of the first and most visible immigrants. Then as now, immigrants were treated with suspicion.

The First Temple period ended around 586 BCE as the Babylonians conquered the Kingdom of Judah and destroyed the Jewish Temple. In 538 BCE, after fifty years of Babylonian captivity, Persian King Cyrus the Great permitted the Jews to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the holy temple. Construction of the Second Temple was completed in 516 BCE during the reign of Darius the Great seventy years after

the destruction of the First Temple. When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, the Land of Israel fell under Hellenistic Greek control, eventually falling to the Ptolemaic dynasty who lost it to the Seleucids. The Seleucid attempt to recast Jerusalem as a Hellenized polis came to a head in 168 BCE with the successful Maccabean revolt of Mattathias the High Priest and his five sons against Antiochus Epiphanes, and their establishment of the Hasmonean Kingdom in 152 BCE with Jerusalem again as its capital. The Hasmonean Kingdom lasted over one hundred years, but then as Rome became stronger it installed Herod as a Jewish client king. The Herodian Kingdom also lasted over a hundred years. Defeats by the Jews in the First revolt in 70 CE, the first of the Jewish-Roman Wars and the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE notably contributed to the numbers and geography of the diaspora, as significant numbers of the Jewish population of the Land of Israel were expelled and sold into slavery throughout the Roman Empire. Since then, Jews have lived in almost every country of the world, primarily in Europe and the greater Middle East, surviving discrimination, oppression, poverty, and even genocide (see: anti-Semitism, The Holocaust), with occasional periods of cultural, economic, and individual prosperity in various locations (such as Spain, Portugal, Germany, Poland and the United States).

Until the late 18th century, the terms Jews and adherents of Judaism were practically synonymous, and Judaism was the prime binding factor of the Jewish people regardless of the degree of adherence. Following the Age of Enlightenment and its Jewish counterpart Haskalah, a gradual transformation occurred during which many Jews came to view being a member of the Jewish nation as separate from adhering to the Jewish faith.

The Hebrew name “Yehudi” (plural Yehudim) originally referred to the tribe of Judah. Later, when the Northern Kingdom of Israel split from the Southern Kingdom of Israel, the Southern Kingdom of Israel began to refer to itself by the name of its predominant tribe, or as the Kingdom of Judah. The term originally referred to the people of the southern kingdom, although the term B’nei Yisrael (Israelites) was still used for both groups. After the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom leaving the southern kingdom as the only Israelite state, the word Yehudim gradually came to refer to people of the Jewish faith as a whole, rather than those specifically from the tribe or Kingdom of Judah. The English word Jew is ultimately derived from Yehudi (see Etymology). Its first use in the Bible to refer to the Jewish people as a whole is in the Book of Esther.

ETYMOLOGY

There are many different views as to the origin of the English language word Jew. The most common view is that the Middle English word Jew is from the Old French *giu*, earlier *juieu*, from the Latin *iudeus* from the Greek *Ioudaios*. The Latin simply means Judaeans, from the land of Judaea.

The etymological equivalent is in use in other languages, *e.g.*, “Jude” in German, “juif” in French, “jøde,” in Danish, etc., but derivations of the word “Hebrew” are also in use to describe a Jewish person, *e.g.*, in Spanish (*Hebreo*), in Italian (*Ebreo*), and Russian (*Yevrey*). The German word “Jude” is pronounced *yoodeh* and is the origin of the word Yiddish. (See Jewish ethnonyms for a full overview.)

WHO IS A JEW?

Judaism shares some of the characteristics of a nation, an ethnicity, a religion, and a culture, making the definition of who is a Jew vary slightly depending on whether a religious or national approach to identity is used. Generally, in modern secular usage, Jews include three groups: people who practice Judaism and have a Jewish ethnic background (sometimes including those who do not have strictly matrilineal descent), people without Jewish parents who have converted to Judaism; and those Jews who, while not practicing Judaism as a religion, still identify themselves as Jewish by virtue of their family’s Jewish descent and their own cultural and historical identification with the Jewish people.

Historical definitions of Jewish identity have traditionally been based on halakhic definitions of matrilineal descent, and halakhic conversions. Historical definitions of who is a Jew date back to the codification of the oral tradition into the Babylonian Talmud. Interpretations of sections of the Tanach, such as Deuteronomy 7:1-5, by learned Jewish sages, are used as a warning against intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews because “[the non-Jewish male spouse] will cause your child to turn away from Me and they will worship the gods of others.” Leviticus 24:10 says that the son in a marriage between a Hebrew woman and an Egyptian man is “of the community of Israel.” This contrasts with Ezra 10:2-3, where Israelites returning from Babylon, vow to put aside their gentile wives and their children. Since the Haskalah, these halakhic interpretations of Jewish identity have been challenged.

JEWISH CULTURE

Judaism guides its adherents in both practice and belief, and has been called not only a religion, but also a “way of life,” which has made drawing a clear distinction between Judaism, Jewish culture, and Jewish nationality rather difficult. In many times and places, such as in the ancient Hellenic world, in Europe before and after the Enlightenment (see Haskalah), and in contemporary United States and Israel, cultural phenomena have developed that are in some sense characteristically Jewish without being at all specifically religious. Some factors in this come from within Judaism, others from the interaction of Jews with their surroundings, others from the inner social and cultural dynamics of the community, as opposed to from the religion itself.

ETHNIC DIVISIONS

Within the world’s Jewish population, which is considered a single self-identifying ethnic group, there are distinct ethnic divisions, most of which are primarily the result of geographic branching from a founding Israelite population, and subsequent independent evolutions.

An array of Jewish communities were established by Jewish settlers in various places around the Old World, often at great distances from one another resulting in practical isolation from other Jewish communities. During the millennia of the Jewish diaspora each community would evolve under the influence of their local environments; political, cultural, natural and anthropological. The differences which are today manifested among each Jewish ethnic division includes, but is not limited to, Jewish cultural expressions, Jewish linguistic diversity, and admixture among Jewish populations.

Historically, the ethnic divisions among Jews have been dominated by two major groups: the Ashkenazim, or “Germans” (Ashkenaz meaning “Germany” in Medieval Hebrew, denoting their Central European base), and the Sephardim, or “Spaniards” (Sefarad meaning “Spain” or “Iberia” in Hebrew, denoting their Spanish and Portuguese base). The Mizrahim, or “Easterners” (Mizrach being “East” in Hebrew), that is Middle Eastern and North African Jews, could constitute a third major group.

Smaller Jewish groups include the Georgian Jews and Mountain Jews from the Caucasus; Indian Jews including the Bene Israel, Bnei Menashe, Cochin Jews and Bene Ephraim; the Romaniotes of Greece; the Italkim or Bené Roma of Italy; the Teimanim from the Yemen and

Oman; various African Jews, including most numerous the Beta Israel of Ethiopia; the Bukharan Jews of Central Asia; and Chinese Jews, most notably the Kaifeng Jews, as well as various other distinct but now extinct communities.

The division between all these groups are rough and their boundaries aren't solid. The Mizrahim for example, are a heterogeneous collection of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish communities which are often as unrelated to each other as they are to any of the earlier mentioned Jewish groups. In modern usage, however, the Mizrahim are also termed Sephardi due to similar styles of liturgy, despite independent evolutions from Sephardim proper. Thus, among Mizrahim there are Iraqi Jews, Egyptian Jews, Berber Jews, Lebanese Jews, Kurdish Jews, Libyan Jews, Syrian Jews, and various others. The Teimanim from the Yemen and Oman are sometimes included, although their style of liturgy is unique and they differ in respect to the admixture found among them to that found in Mizrahim. Additionally, there is a differentiation made between the pre-existing Middle Eastern and North African Jewish communities as distinct from the descendants of those Sephardi migrants who established themselves in the Middle East and North Africa after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492, and a few years later from the expulsion decreed in Portugal.

Despite this diversity, Ashkenazi Jews represent the bulk of modern Jewry, with at least 70 per cent of Jews worldwide (and up to 90 per cent prior to World War II and the Holocaust). As a result of their emigration from Europe during the wartime periods, Ashkenazim also represent the overwhelming majority of Jews in the New World continents and in countries previously without native Jewish communities, such as the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Argentina, Australia, Brazil and South Africa. In France, emigration of Mizrahim from North Africa has led them to outnumber pre-existing European Jews. Only in Israel is the Jewish population representative of all groups, a melting pot independent of each group's proportion within the overall world Jewish population.

POPULATION

Significant Geographic Populations

There are an estimated 13 million Jews worldwide. The table below lists countries with significant populations. Please note that these populations represent low-end estimates of the worldwide Jewish population, accounting for around 0.2 per cent of the world's population.

<i>Country or Region</i>	<i>Jewish population</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>% Jewish</i>	<i>Notes</i>
United States	5,300,000 to 6,155,000	301,469,000	1.8%-1.9	(est.)
Israel	5,393,400	7,116,700	75.8%	
Europe	2,000,000	710,000,000	0.3%	(less than)
Belgium	30,000	10,419,000	0.3%	(est.)
France	494,000	64,102,140	0.8%	(est.)
Russia	228,000	142,400,000	0.15%	(Territory of the former Soviet Union. (est.) Some estimates are much higher.)
United Kingdom	267,000	60,609,153	0.4%	(2001 census)
Germany	220,000	82,310,000	0.3%	(2004 est.), over 100,000 who are members of a synagogue
Ukraine	103,591	46,481,000	0.2%	(2001 Census) 250,000 to 500,000 (Local Jewish agency estimate)
Italy	30,000	58,883,958	0.05%	(Jewish communities est.)
Canada	371,000	32,874,400	1.1%	(est.)
Turkey	30,000	72,600,000	0.04%	(2001 census)
Argentina	250,000	39,921,833	0.6%	(est.)
Brazil	130,000	188,078,261	0.07%	(est.)
South Africa	106,000	47,432,000	0.2%	(est.)
Australia	126,000	20,788,357	0.6%	(est.)
Asia (excl. Israel)	50,000	3,900,000,000	0.001%	(est.)
Iran	20,405	68,467,413	0.03%	(est.)
Mexico	—	40,000–50,000	108,700,000	0.04% (est.)
Total	15,871,000	6,453,628,000	0.25%	(est.)

State of Israel

Israel, the Jewish nation-state, is the only country in which Jews make up a majority of the citizens. Israel was established as an independent democratic state on May 14, 1948. Of the 120 members in its parliament, the Knesset, currently, 12 members of the Knesset are Arab citizens of Israel, most representing Arab political parties and

one of Israel's Supreme Court judges is a Palestinian Arab. Between 1948 and 1958, the Jewish population rose from 800,000 to two million. Currently, Jews account for 76.4 per cent of the Israeli population, or 5,600,000 of the citizens. The early years of the state of Israel, were marked by the mass immigration of Holocaust survivors and Jews fleeing Arab lands. Israel also has a large population of Ethiopian Jews, many of whom were airlifted to Israel in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Between 1974 and 1979 nearly 227,258 immigrants arrived in Israel about half from the Soviet Union. This period also saw an increase in immigration to Israel from Western Europe, Latin America, and the United States. A trickle of immigrants from other communities has also arrived, including Indian Jews and others, as well as some descendants of Ashkenazi Holocaust survivors who had settled in countries such as the United States, Argentina and South Africa. Some Jews have emigrated from Israel elsewhere, due to economic problems or disillusionment with political conditions and the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict. Jewish Israeli emigrants are known as *yordim*.

Diaspora (Outside Israel)

The waves of immigration to the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century due to the pogroms in Russia, the massacre of European Jewry during the Holocaust, and the foundation of the state of Israel (and subsequent Jewish exodus from Arab lands) all resulted in substantial shifts in the population centers of world Jewry during the twentieth century.

Currently, the largest Jewish community in the world is located in the United States, with almost 5.7 million Jews. Elsewhere in the Americas, there are also large Jewish populations in Canada, Argentina and Brazil, and smaller populations in Mexico (45,000), Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, and several other countries (see *History of the Jews in Latin America*).

Western Europe's largest Jewish community can be found in France, home to 600,000 Jews, the majority of whom are immigrants or refugees from North African Arab countries such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (or their descendants). There are over 265,000 Jews in the United Kingdom. In Eastern Europe, there are anywhere from 500,000 to over two million Jews living in the former Soviet Union, but exact figures are difficult to establish. The fastest-growing Jewish community in the world, outside Israel, is the one in Germany, especially in Berlin, its capital. Tens of thousands of Jews from the former Eastern Bloc have settled in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Arab countries of North Africa and the Middle East were home to around 900,000 Jews in 1945. Fueled by anti-Zionism after the founding of Israel, systematic persecution caused almost all of these Jews to flee to Israel, North America, and Europe in the 1950s (see Jewish exodus from Arab lands). Today, around 8,000 Jews remain in Arab nations. Iran is home to around 25,000 Jews, down from a population of 100,000 Jews before the 1979 revolution. After the revolution some of the Iranian Jews emigrated to Israel or Europe but most of them emigrated (with their non-Jewish Iranian compatriots) to the United States (especially Los Angeles). Outside Europe, Asia and the Americas, significant Jewish populations exist in Australia and South Africa.

Population Changes: Assimilation

Since at least the time of the ancient Greeks, a proportion of Jews have assimilated into the wider non-Jewish society around them, by either choice or force, ceasing to practice Judaism and losing their Jewish identity. Some Jewish communities, for example the Kaifeng Jews of China, have disappeared entirely, but assimilation has remained relatively low over much of the past millennium, as Jews were often not allowed to integrate with the wider communities in which they lived. The advent of the Jewish Enlightenment (see Haskalah) of the 1700s and the subsequent emancipation of the Jewish populations of Europe and America in the 1800s, changed the situation, allowing Jews to increasingly participate in, and become part of, secular society. The result has been a growing trend of assimilation, as Jews marry non-Jewish spouses and stop participating in the Jewish community. Rates of interreligious marriage vary widely: In the United States, they are just under 50 per cent, in the United Kingdom, around 50 per cent, and in Australia and Mexico, as low as 10 per cent, and in France, they may be as high as 75 per cent. In the United States, only about a third of children from intermarriages affiliate themselves with Jewish religious practice. The result is that most countries in the Diaspora have steady or slightly declining religiously Jewish populations as Jews continue to assimilate into the countries in which they live.

Population Changes: Wars against the Jews

Throughout history, many rulers, empires and nations have oppressed their Jewish populations or sought to eliminate them entirely. Methods employed ranged from expulsion to outright genocide; within nations, often the threat of these extreme methods was sufficient to

silence dissent. The history of anti-semitism includes the First Crusade which resulted in the massacre of Jews; the Spanish Inquisition led by Torquemada and the *Auto de fé* against the Marrano Jews; the Bohdan Chmielnicki Cossack massacres in Ukraine; the Pogroms backed by the Russian Tsars; as well as expulsions from Spain, Portugal, England, France, Germany, and other countries in which the Jews had settled. The persecution reached a peak in Adolf Hitler's Final Solution, which led to the Holocaust and the slaughter of approximately 6 million Jews from 1942 to 1945.

According to James Carroll, "Jews accounted for 10 per cent of the total population of the Roman Empire. By that ratio, if other factors had not intervened, there would be 200 million Jews in the world today, instead of something like 13 million." Of course, there are many other complex demographic factors involved; the rate of population growth, migration, assimilation, and conversion could all have played major roles in the current size of the global Jewish population.

Population Changes: Growth

Israel is the only country with a consistently growing Jewish population due to natural population increase, though the Jewish populations of other countries in Europe and North America have recently increased due to immigration. In the Diaspora, in almost every country the Jewish population in general is either declining or steady, but Orthodox and Haredi Jewish communities, whose members often shun birth control for religious reasons, have experienced rapid population growth, with rates near 4 per cent per year for Haredi Jews in Israel, and similar rates in other countries.

Orthodox and Conservative Judaism discourage proselytisation to non-Jews, but many Jewish groups have tried to reach out to the assimilated Jewish communities of the Diaspora in order to increase the number of Jews. Additionally, while in principle Reform Judaism favors seeking new members for the faith, this position has not translated into active proselytism, instead taking the form of an effort to reach out to non-Jewish spouses of intermarried couples. There is also a trend of Orthodox movements pursuing secular Jews in order to give them a stronger Jewish identity so there is less chance of intermarriage. As a result of the efforts by these and other Jewish groups over the past twenty-five years, there has been a trend of secular Jews becoming more religiously observant, known as the *Baal Teshuva* movement,

though the demographic implications of the trend are unknown. Additionally, there is also a growing movement of Jews by Choice by gentiles who make the decision to head in the direction of becoming Jews.

JEWISH LANGUAGES

Hebrew is the liturgical language of Judaism (termed *lashon ha-kodesh*, “the holy tongue”), the language in which the Hebrew scriptures (Tanakh) were composed, and the daily speech of the Jewish people for centuries. By the fifth century BCE, Aramaic, a closely related tongue, joined Hebrew as the spoken language in Judea. By the third century BCE, Jews of the diaspora were speaking Greek. Modern Hebrew is now one of the two official languages of the State of Israel along with Arabic.

Hebrew was revived as a spoken language by Eliezer ben Yehuda, who arrived in Palestine in 1881. It hadn’t been used as a mother tongue since Tannaic times. For over sixteen centuries Hebrew was used almost exclusively as a liturgical language, and as the language in which most books had been written on Judaism, with a few speaking only Hebrew on the Sabbath. For centuries, Jews worldwide have spoken the local or dominant languages of the regions they migrated to, often developing distinctive dialectal forms or branching off as independent languages. Yiddish is the Judæo-German language developed by Ashkenazi Jews who migrated to Central Europe, and Ladino is the Judæo-Spanish language developed by Sephardic Jews who migrated to the Iberian peninsula. Due to many factors, including the impact of the Holocaust on European Jewry, the Jewish exodus from Arab lands, and widespread emigration from other Jewish communities around the world, ancient and distinct Jewish languages of several communities, including Gruzinic, Judæo-Arabic, Judæo-Berber, Krymchak, Judæo-Malayalam and many others, have largely fallen out of use.

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

Jews and Migrations

Throughout Jewish history, Jews have repeatedly been directly or indirectly expelled from both their original homeland, and the areas in which they have resided. This experience as both immigrants and emigrants (see: Jewish refugees) have shaped Jewish identity and religious practice in many ways. An incomplete list of such migrations includes:

- The patriarch Abraham was a migrant to the land of Canaan from Ur of the Chaldees.
- The Children of Israel experienced the Exodus (meaning “departure” or “exit” in Greek) from ancient Egypt, as recorded in the Book of Exodus.
- The Kingdom of Israel was sent into permanent exile and scattered all over the world (or at least to unknown locations) by Assyria.
- The Kingdom of Judah was exiled by Babylonia, then returned to Judea, and then many were exiled again by the Roman Empire.
- The 2,000 year dispersion of the Jewish diaspora beginning under the Roman Empire, as Jews were spread throughout the Roman world and, driven from land to land, and settled wherever they could live freely enough to practice their religion. Over the course of the diaspora the center of Jewish life moved from Babylonia to the Iberian Peninsula to Poland to the United States and to Israel.
- Many expulsions during the Middle Ages and Enlightenment in Europe, including: 1290, 16,000 Jews were expelled from England, see the (*Statute of Jewry*); in 1396, 100,000 from France; in 1421 thousands were expelled from Austria. Many of these Jews settled in Eastern Europe, especially Poland.
- Following the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, the Spanish population of around 200,000 Sephardic Jews were expelled by the Spanish crown and Catholic church, followed by expulsions in 1493 in Sicily (37,000 Jews) and Portugal in 1496. The expelled Jews fled mainly to the Ottoman Empire, the Netherlands, and North Africa, others migrating to Southern Europe and the Middle East.
- During the 19th century, France’s policies of equal citizenship regardless of religion led to the immigration of Jews (especially from Eastern and Central Europe), which was encouraged by Napoleon Bonaparte.
- The arrival of millions of Jews in the New World, including immigration of over two million Eastern European Jews to the United States from 1880-1925, see *History of the Jews in the United States* and *History of the Jews in Russia and the Soviet Union*.
- The Pogroms in Eastern Europe, the rise of modern Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and the rise of Arab nationalism all served to fuel

the movements and migrations of huge segments of Jewry from land to land and continent to continent, until they arrived back in large numbers at their original historical homeland in Israel.

- The Islamic Revolution of Iran, forced many Iranian Jews to flee Iran. Most found refuge in the US (particularly Los Angeles, CA) and Israel. Smaller communities of Persian Jews exist in Canada and Western Europe.

Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

Jews descend mostly from the ancient Israelites (also known as Hebrews), who settled in the Land of Israel. The Israelites traced their common lineage to the biblical patriarch Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. A United Monarchy was established under Saul and continued under King David and Solomon. King David conquered Jerusalem (first a Canaanite, then a Jebusite town) and made it his capital. After Solomon's reign, the nation split into two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Israel (in the north) and the Kingdom of Judah (in the south). The Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser V in the 8th century BCE and spread all over the Assyrian empire, where they were assimilated into other cultures and came to be known as the Ten Lost Tribes. The Kingdom of Judah continued as an independent state until it was conquered by a Babylonian army in the early 6th century BCE, destroying the First Temple that was at the centre of Jewish worship. The Judean elite was exiled to Babylonia, but later at least a part of them returned to their homeland after the subsequent conquest of Babylonia by the Persians seventy years later, a period known as the Babylonian Captivity. A new Second Temple was constructed funded by Persian Kings, and old religious practices were resumed.

Persian, Greek, and Roman Rule

The Seleucid Kingdom, which arose after the Persians were defeated by Alexander the Great, sought to introduce Greek culture into the Persian world. When the Greeks under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, supported by Hellenized Jews (those who had adopted Greek culture), attempted to convert the Jewish Temple to a temple of Zeus, the Jews revolted under the leadership of the Maccabees and rededicated the Temple to the Jewish God (hence the origins of *Hanukkah*) and created an independent Jewish kingdom known as the Hasmonaean Kingdom which lasted from 165 BCE to 63 BCE, when the kingdom came under influence of the Roman Empire. During the early part of Roman rule, the Hasmonaean family remained in power, until the family was annihilated

by Herod the Great. Herod came from a wealthy Idumean family and became a very successful client king under the Romans. He significantly expanded the Temple in Jerusalem.

Upon his death in 4 BCE the Romans directly ruled Judea and there were frequent changes of policies by conflicting and empire-building Caesars, generals, governors, and consuls who often acted cruelly or to maximize their own wealth and power. Rome's attitudes swung from tolerance to hostility against its Jewish subjects, who had since moved throughout the Empire. The Romans, worshipping a large pantheon, could not readily accommodate the exclusive monotheism of Judaism, and the religious Jews could not accept Roman polytheism. (It was in this tumultuous climate that Christianity first emerged, among a small group of Jews.) After a famine and riots in 66 CE, the Jews in Judea began a revolt against Rome. The revolt was smashed by Titus Flavius, the son and successor of the Roman emperor Vespasian. In Rome the Arch of Titus still stands, showing enslaved Judeans and a *menorah* being brought to Rome. It is customary for Jews to walk around, rather than through, this arch.

The Romans all but destroyed Jerusalem; only a single "Western Wall" of the Second Temple remained. After the end of this first revolt, the Jews continued to live in their land in significant numbers, and were allowed to practice their religion. In the second century the Roman Emperor Hadrian began to rebuild Jerusalem as a pagan city while restricting some Jewish practices. Angry at this affront, the Jews again revolted led by Simon Bar Kokhba. Hadrian responded with overwhelming force, putting down the revolt and killing as many as half a million Jews. After the Roman Legions prevailed in 135, Jews were not allowed to enter the city of Jerusalem and most Jewish worship was forbidden by Rome. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Jews, Jewish worship stopped being centrally organised around the Temple, and instead the rabbis took on a more prominent position as teachers and leaders of individual communities. No new books were added to the Jewish Bible after the Roman period, instead major efforts went into interpreting and developing the Halakhah, or oral law, and writing down these traditions in the Talmud, the key work on the interpretation of Jewish law, written during the first to fifth centuries CE.

Beginning of the Diaspora

Though Jews had settled outside Israel since the time of the Babylonians, the results of the Roman response to the Jewish revolt

shifted the center of Jewish life from its ancient home to the diaspora. While some Jews remained in Judea, renamed Palestine by the Romans, some Jews were sold into slavery, while others became citizens of other parts of the Roman Empire. This is the traditional explanation to the Jewish diaspora, almost universally accepted by past and present rabbinical or Talmudical scholars, who believe that Jews are almost exclusively biological descendants of the Judean exiles, a belief backed up at least partially by DNA evidence. Some secular historians speculate that a majority of the Jews in Antiquity were most likely descendants of converts in the cities of the Græco-Roman world, especially in Alexandria and Asia Minor. They were only affected by the diaspora in its spiritual sense and by the sense of loss and homelessness which became a cornerstone of the Jewish creed, much supported by persecutions in various parts of the world. Any such policy of conversion, which spread the Jewish religion throughout Hellenistic civilisation, seems to have ended with the wars against the Romans and the following reconstruction of Jewish values for the post-Temple era. DNA evidence of this theory has been spotty, however, some historians believe based on some historical records that at the dawn of Christianity as many as 10 per cent of the population of the Roman Empire were Jewish, a figure that could only be explained by local conversion. This theory could also solve the paradox of DNA studies noted above that show Ashkenazi Jews to be related to the peoples of the nations surrounding Israel and being relatively far from their European neighbours, despite physical features that sometimes are more closely resembles that of the peoples of southern and central Europe; as one explanation would be a large miscegenation millennia ago followed by almost no outside genetic contact thereafter. These types of assumptions are not supported by any historical account, and the extent of similarities in physical features between Ashkenazi Jews and non-Jewish Europeans is disputed.

During the first few hundred years of the Diaspora, the most important Jewish communities were in Babylonia, where the Babylonian Talmud was written, and where relatively tolerant regimes allowed the Jews freedom. The situation was worse in the Byzantine Empire which treated the Jews much more harshly, refusing to allow them to hold office or build places of worship. In the belief of restoration to come, the Jews made an alliance with the Persians who invaded Palestine in 614, fought at their side, overwhelmed the Byzantine garrison in Jerusalem, and for three years governed the city. But the Persians made their peace with the Emperor Heraclius. Christian rule was re-

established, and those Jews who survived the consequent slaughter were once more banished from Jerusalem.

The conquest of much of the Byzantine Empire and Babylonia by Islamic armies generally improved the life of the Jews, though they were still considered second-class citizens. In response to these Islamic conquests, the First Crusade of 1096 attempted to reconquer Jerusalem, resulting in the destruction of many of the remaining Jewish communities in the area. The Jews were among the most vigorous defenders of Jerusalem against the Crusaders. When the city fell, the Crusaders gathered the Jews in a synagogue and burned them. The Jews almost single-handedly defended Haifa against the Crusaders, holding out in the besieged town for a whole month (June-July 1099). At this time, a full thousand years after the fall of the Jewish state, there were Jewish communities all over the country. Fifty of them are known to us; they include Jerusalem, Tiberias, Ramleh, Ashkelon, Caesarea, and Gaza.

Middle Ages: Europe

Jews settled in Europe during the time of the Roman Empire, but the rise of the Roman Catholic Church resulted in frequent expulsions and persecutions. The Crusades routinely attacked Jewish communities, and increasingly harsh laws restricted them from most economic activity and land ownership, leaving open only money-lending and a few other trades. Jews were subject to expulsions from England, France, and the Holy Roman Empire throughout the Middle Ages, with most of the population moving to Eastern Europe and especially Poland, which was uniquely tolerant of the Jews through the 1700s. The final mass expulsion of the Jews, and the largest, occurred after the Christian conquest (*Reconquista*) of Iberia in 1492 (see History of the Jews in Spain and History of the Jews in Portugal). Even after the end of the expulsions in the 17th century, individual conditions varied from country to country and time to time, but, as rule, Jews in Western Europe generally were forced, by decree or by informal pressure, to live in highly segregated ghettos and shtetls. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most European Jews lived in the so-called Pale of Settlement, the Western frontier of the Russian Empire consisting generally of the modern-day countries of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and neighbouring regions.

Middle Ages: Islamic Europe, North Africa, Middle East

In the Iberian Peninsula, under Muslim rule, Jews were able to make great advances in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, chemistry

and philology. This era is sometimes referred to as the Golden age of Jewish culture in the Iberian Peninsula.

During early Islam, Leon Poliakov writes, Jews enjoyed great privileges, and their communities prospered. There was no legislation or social barriers preventing them from conducting commercial activities. Many Jews migrated to areas newly conquered by Muslims and established communities there. The vizier of Baghdad entrusted his capital with Jewish bankers. The Jews were put in charge of certain parts of maritime and slave trade. Siraf, the principal port of the caliphate in the 10th century CE, had a Jewish governor.

Throughout history, there have been numerous instances of pogroms against Jews. Examples include the 1066 Granada massacre, where the razing of the entire Jewish quarter in the Andalusian city of Granada in 1066. In North Africa, there were cases of violence against Jews in the Middle Ages, and in other Arab lands including Egypt, Syria and Yemen.

The Almohads, who had taken control of much of Islamic Iberia by 1172, far surpassed the Almoravides in fundamentalist outlook, and they treated the *dhimmi*s harshly. Jews and Christians were expelled from Morocco and Islamic Spain. Faced with the choice of either death or conversion, some Jews, such as the family of Maimonides, fled south and east to the more tolerant Muslim lands, while others went northward to settle in the growing Christian kingdoms.

Enlightenment and Emancipation

During the Age of Enlightenment, significant changes occurred within the Jewish community. The Haskalah movement paralleled the wider Enlightenment, as Jews began in the 1700s to campaign for emancipation from restrictive laws and integration into the wider European society. Secular and scientific education was added to the traditional religious instruction received by students, and interest in a national Jewish identity, including a revival in the study of Jewish history and Hebrew, started to grow.

The Haskalah movement influenced the birth of all the modern Jewish denominations, and planted the seeds of Zionism. At the same time, it contributed to encouraging cultural assimilation into the countries in which Jews resided. At around the same time another movement was born, one preaching almost the opposite of Haskalah, Hasidic Judaism. Hasidic Judaism began in the 1700s by Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, and quickly gained a following with its exuberant,

mystical approach to religion. These two movements, and the traditional orthodox approach to Judaism from which they spring, formed the basis for the modern divisions within Jewish observance.

At the same time, the outside world was changing. France was the first country to emancipate its Jewish population in 1796, granting them equal rights under the law. Napoleon further spread emancipation, inviting Jews to leave the Jewish ghettos in Europe and seek refuge in the newly created tolerant political regimes (see Napoleon and the Jews). Other countries such as Denmark, England, and Sweden also adopted liberal policies toward Jews during the period of Enlightenment, with some resulting immigration. By the mid-19th century, almost all Western European countries had emancipated their Jewish populations, with the notable exception of the Papal States, but persecution continued in Eastern Europe including massive pogroms at the end of the 19th century and throughout the Pale of Settlement. The persistence of anti-semitism, both violently in the east and socially in the west, led to a number of Jewish political movements, culminating in Zionism.

Zionism and Emigration from Europe

Zionism is an international political movement that supports a homeland for the Jewish People in the Land of Israel. Although its origins are earlier, the movement was formally established by Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl in the late nineteenth century. The international movement was eventually successful in establishing the State of Israel in 1948, as the world's first and only modern Jewish State. It continues primarily as support for the state and government of Israel and its continuing status as a homeland for the Jewish people. Described as a "diaspora nationalism," its proponents regard it as a national liberation movement whose aim is the self-determination of the Jewish people.

While Zionism is based in part upon religious tradition linking the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, where the concept of Jewish nationhood is thought to have first evolved somewhere between 1200 BCE and the late Second Temple era (*i.e.* up to 70 AD), the modern movement was mainly secular, beginning largely as a response by European Jewry to rampant anti-semitism across Europe.

In addition to responding politically, during the late 19th century, Jews began to flee the persecutions of Eastern Europe in large numbers, mostly by heading to the United States, but also to Canada and Western Europe. By 1924, almost two million Jews had emigrated to the US alone, creating a large community in a nation relatively free of the

persecutions of rising European anti-semitism (see History of the Jews in the United States).

The Holocaust

This anti-semitism reached its most destructive form in the policies of Nazi Germany, which made the destruction of the Jews a priority, culminating in the killing of approximately six million Jews during the Holocaust from 1941 to 1945. Originally, the Nazis used death squads, the Einsatzgruppen, to conduct massive open-air killings of Jews in territory they conquered. By 1942, the Nazi leadership decided to implement the Final Solution, the genocide of the Jews of Europe, and to increase the pace of the Holocaust by establishing extermination camps specifically to kill Jews. This was an industrial method of genocide. Millions of Jews who had been confined to diseased and massively overcrowded ghettos were transported (often by train) to “Death-camps” where some were herded into a specific location (often a gas chamber), then either gassed or shot. Afterwards, their remains were buried or burned. Others were interned in the camps where they were given little food and disease was common.

Israel

In 1948, the Jewish state of Israel was founded, creating the first Jewish nation since the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the majority of the 850,000 Jews previously living in North Africa and the Middle East fled to Israel, joining an increasing number of immigrants from post-War Europe (see Jewish exodus from Arab lands). By the end of the 20th century, Jewish population centers had shifted dramatically, with the United States and Israel being the centers of Jewish secular and religious life.

PERSECUTION

The Jewish people and Judaism have experienced various persecutions throughout Jewish history. During late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages the Roman Empire (in its later phases known as the Byzantine Empire) repeatedly repressed the Jewish population, first by ejecting them from their homelands during the pagan Roman era and later by officially establishing them as second-class citizens during the Christian Roman era. Later in medieval Western Europe, further persecutions of Jews in the name of Christianity occurred, notably during the Crusades—when Jews all over Germany were massacred—and a series of expulsions from England, Germany, France,

and, in the largest expulsion of all, Spain and Portugal after the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula from Muslim Moors. In the Papal States, which existed until 1870, Jews were required to live only in specified neighbourhoods called ghettos. In the 19th and (before the end of the Second World War) 20th centuries, the Roman Catholic church adhered to a distinction between “good anti-semitism” and “bad anti-semitism”. The “bad” kind promoted hatred of Jews because of their descent. This was considered un-Christian because the Christian message was intended for all of humanity regardless of ethnicity; anyone could become a Christian. The “good” kind criticised alleged Jewish conspiracies to control newspapers, banks, and other institutions, to care only about accumulation of wealth, etc.

Islam and Judaism have a complex relationship. Traditionally Jews living in Muslim lands, known as dhimmis, were allowed to practice their religion and to administer their internal affairs, but subject to certain conditions. They had to pay the jizya (a per capita tax imposed on free adult non-Muslim males) to Muslims. Dhimmis had an inferior status under Islamic rule. They had several social and legal disabilities such as prohibitions against bearing arms or giving testimony in courts in cases involving Muslims. Many of the disabilities were highly symbolic. The most degrading one was the requirement of distinctive clothing, not found in the Qur’an or hadith but invented in early medieval Baghdad; its enforcement was highly erratic. Jews rarely faced martyrdom or exile, or forced compulsion to change their religion, and they were mostly free in their choice of residence and profession. The notable examples of massacre of Jews include the killing or forcibly conversion of them by the rulers of the Almohad dynasty in Al-Andalus in the 12th century. Notable examples of the cases where the choice of residence was taken away from them includes confining Jews to walled quarters (mellahs) in Morocco beginning from the 15th century and especially since the early 19th century. There were some forced conversions in the 12th century under the Almohad dynasty of North Africa and Al-Andalus as well as in Persia. Standard anti-semitic themes have become commonplace in the propaganda of Arab Islamic movements such as Hizbullah and Hamas, in the pronouncements of various agencies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and even in the newspapers and other publications of Refah Partisi.

The most notable modern day persecution of Jews remains the Holocaust—the state-led systematic persecution and genocide of the Jews (and other minority groups) of Europe and European Colonial

North Africa during World War II by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. The persecution and genocide were accomplished in stages. Legislation to remove the Jews from civil society was enacted years before the outbreak of World War II. Concentration camps were established in which inmates were used as slave labour until they died of exhaustion or disease. Where the Third Reich conquered new territory in eastern Europe, specialised units called Einsatzgruppen murdered Jews and political opponents in mass shootings. Jews and Roma were crammed into ghettos before being transported hundreds of miles by freight train to extermination camps where, if they survived the journey, the majority of them were killed in gas chambers. Every arm of Germany's bureaucracy was involved in the logistics of the mass murder, turning the country into what one Holocaust scholar has called "a genocidal nation."

JEWISH LEADERSHIP

There is no single governing body for the Jewish community, nor a single authority with responsibility for religious doctrine. Instead, a variety of secular and religious institutions at the local, national, and international levels lead various parts of the Jewish community on a variety of issues.

FAMOUS JEWS

Jews have made contributions in a broad range of human endeavors, including the sciences, arts, politics, business, etc. The number of Jewish Nobel prize winners (approximately 160 in all), is far out of proportion to the percentage of Jews in the world's population.

JEWS AS A CHOSEN PEOPLE

In Judaism, chosenness is the belief that the Jews are a chosen people: chosen to be in a covenant with God. This idea is first found in the Torah (five books of Moses) and is elaborated on in later books of the Hebrew Bible. Much is written about this topic in rabbinic literature.

CHOSENNESS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

According to the Torah, Israel's character as the chosen people is unconditional as it says in Deuteronomy 14:2, "For you are a holy people to YHWH your God, and God has chosen you to be his treasured people from all the nations that are on the face of the earth."

Although the Torah also says, “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people,” God promises that He will never exchange the Jewish people with any other.

Although a parable of a man divorcing his unfaithful wife is described in the Prophets-Hoshea, God says, nevertheless, I can never “divorce” My people, and we find a drastic switch from, “Declare them no longer My nation because they are not Mine and I am not theirs” (1:9) and one verse later, God calls the Jewish people “sons of YHWH,” a new status (Sifrei, Balak)

Other Torah verses about chosenness, “For all the earth is mine: and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6). “The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your ancestors.” (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8).

The obligation imposed upon the Israelites is emphasised by the Prophet Amos (Book of Amos 3:2): “You only have I singled out of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.”

RABBINIC JEWISH VIEWS OF CHOSENNESS

The idea of chosenness has traditionally been interpreted by Jews in two ways: one way is that God chose the Israelites, while the other idea is that the Israelites chose God. Although collectively this choice was made freely, religious Jews believe that it created individual obligation for the descendants of the Israelites. Another opinion is that the choice was free in a limited context; that is, although the Jews chose to follow precepts ordained by God, Kabbalah and Tanya teach that even prior to creation, the “Jewish soul” was already chosen.

Crucial to the Jewish notion of chosenness is that it creates obligations exclusive to Jews, while non-Jews receive from God other covenants and other responsibilities. Generally, it does not entail exclusive rewards for Jews. Classical rabbinic literature in the Mishnah Avot 3:14 has this teaching:

Rabbi Akiva used to say, “Beloved is man, for he was created in God’s image; and the fact that God made it known that man was created in His image is indicative of an even greater love. As the verse states

[Genesis 9:6], 'In the image of God, man was created.')" The mishna goes on to say, "Beloved are the people Israel, for they are called children of God; it is even a greater love that it was made known to them that they are called children of God, as it said, 'You are the children of the Lord, your God. Beloved are the people Israel, for a precious article [the Torah] was given to them..."

Most Jewish texts do not state that "God chose the Jews" by itself. Rather, this is usually linked with a mission or purpose, such as proclaiming God's message among all the nations, even though Jews cannot become "unchosen" if they shirk their mission. This implies a special duty, which evolves from the belief that Jews have been pledged by the covenant which God concluded with the biblical patriarch Abraham, their ancestor, and again with the entire Jewish nation at Mount Sinai. In this view, Jews are charged with living a holy life as God's priest-people.

In the Jewish prayerbook (the Siddur), chosenness is referred to in a number of ways. The blessing for reading the Torah reads "Praised are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has chosen us out of all the nations and bestowed upon us his Torah."

In the "Kiddush", a prayer of sanctification in which the Sabbath is inaugurated over a cup of wine, the text reads "For you have chosen us and sanctified us out of all the nations, and have given us the Sabbath as an inheritance in love and favour. Praised are you, Lord, who hallows the Sabbath."

In the "Kiddush" recited on festivals it says, "Blessed are You... who have chosen us from among all nations, raised us above all tongues, and made us holy through his commandments."

The Aleinu prayer refers to the concept of Jews as a chosen people:

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to exalt the Creator of the Universe, who has not made us like the nations of the world and has not placed us like the families of the earth; who has not designed our destiny to be like theirs, nor our lot like that of all their multitude. We bend the knee and bow and acknowledge before the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, that it is he who stretched forth the heavens and founded the earth. His seat of glory is in the heavens above; his abode of majesty is in the lofty heights.

An earlier form of this prayer, in use during the medieval era, contained an extra sentence:

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to exalt the Creator of the Universe, who has not made us like the nations of the world and has

not placed us like the families of the earth; who has not designed our destiny to be like theirs, nor our lot like that of all their multitude, *who carry their wooden images and pray to a God who cannot give success.*

This sentence in italics is a quote from the Bible, Isaiah 45:20. “Come, gather together, Draw nigh, you remnants of the nations! No foreknowledge had they who carry their wooden images and pray to a God who cannot give success.” (New JPS) In the medieval era some within the Christian community came to believe that this line referred to Christians worshipping Jesus; they demanded that it be excised. Ismar Elbogen, a historian of the Jewish liturgy, held that the early form of the prayer pre-dated Christianity, and could not possibly have referred to it.

According to the Rabbis, “Israel is of all nations the most wilful or headstrong one, and the Torah was to give it the right scope and power of resistance, or else the world could not have withstood its fierceness.”

“The Lord offered the Law to all nations; but all refused to accept it except Israel.”

How do we understand “A Gentile who consecrates his life to the study and observance of the Law ranks as high as the high priest,” says R. Meïr, by deduction from Lev. xviii. 5; II Sam. vii. 19; Isa. xxvi. 2; Ps. xxxiii. 1, cxviii. 20, cxxv. 4, where all stress is laid not on Israel, but on man or the righteous one.

The Gemara states this regarding a non-Jew who studies Torah [his 7 mitzvot] and regarding this, see Shita Mekubetzes, Bava Kama 38a who says that this is an exaggeration. In any case, this statement wasn't extolling the non-Jew. The Rishonim explain that it is extolling the Torah.

Tosfos explains that the reason it uses the example of a kohen gadol (high priest) is because this statement is based on the verse, “y'kara hi mipnimim” (it is more precious than pearls) which is explained elsewhere in the Gemara to mean that Torah is more precious “pnimim” — which refer to “lifnai v'lifnim” — the Holy of Holies where the Kahon Gadol went.

In any case, in Midrash Rabba (Bamidbar 13:15) this statement is brought with an important addition: a non-Jew who converts and studies Torah etc.

Israel is likened to the olive. Just as this fruit yields its precious oil only after being much pressed and squeezed, so Israel's destiny is one

of great oppression and hardship, in order that it may thereby give forth its illuminating wisdom. Poverty is the quality most befitting Israel as the chosen people (Sag. 9b). Only on account of its good works is Israel among the nations "as the lily among thorns", or "as wheat among the chaff."

CHOSENNESS IS NOT SUPERIORITY

Views of superiority have been explicitly rejected by all Reform and Conservative Jews and by Modern Orthodox Jews and all Jews alike. Communal Jewish organisations such as the B'nai Brith, American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League reject discrimination against Gentiles as well as against Jews.

The Encyclopedia Judaica provides a secular, historical explanation of this belief, stating that "It would seem that the more extreme, and exclusive, interpretations of the doctrine of election, among Jewish thinkers, were partly the result of reaction to oppression by the non-Jewish world. The more the Jew was forced to close in on himself, to withdraw into the imposed confines of the ghetto, the more he tended to emphasize Israel's difference from the cruel gentile without. Only thus did his suffering become intelligible and bearable....When the Jew was eventually allowed to find his place in a gentile world, the less exclusivist aspect of the doctrine reasserted itself."

Examples of these minority strains within Jewish thought include:

A mystical version of this idea exists in parts of the Zohar, one of the primary works of Kabbalah, esoteric Jewish mysticism. The Zohar comments on the Biblical verse which states "Let the waters teem with swarms of creatures that have a living soul" as follows: "The verse 'creatures that have a living soul,' pertains to the Jews, for they are the children of God, and from God come their holy souls....And the souls of the other nations, from where do they come? Rabbi Elazar says that they have souls from the impure left side, and therefore they are all impure, defiling anyone who comes near them." (Zohar commentary on Genesis) This, however, is a gross perversion of the interpretation, and does not in any way suggest an inferiority of Gentiles. Such an interpretation is considered grounds for anti-Semitism and profound hatred of the Jewish people.

The *Raya Mehemna*, a somewhat later work printed with the Zohar, has a similar view. One section states: "Israel merited that God called them 'men,' as it is written 'But you My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men,' 'If any man of you brings an offering.' Why are they

called 'men'? For it is written 'And you who cling to the Lord your God'. This means you and not the other nations, and because of this 'you are men', you are called men..." (*Raya Mehemna*, commentary on Torah portion Yitro, page 86a)

The Kuzari, written by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi (c.1075–1141), is a fundamental Jewish philosophical work. It is universally accepted as a work that lays out our Jewish beliefs. (His poetry is famous and is incorporated in some of the Kinnos we will be reciting on Tisha B'Av as well as in our Machzorim.)

He states in 1st Maamar, os 95:

1. By the time the Jewish people had become a nation, with people such as Moshe, Aharon, Miriam, Betzalel, Yehoshua etc. even though there were sinners who were hated by God [for what they did], there is no doubt that they too were segula for from their root and nature they were segula, and in the future they would give birth to children who would be segula.
2. The children of Yaakov were all segula and were distinguished from the rest of mankind in their godly characteristics, for He made them as a distinct, angelic species [he actually writes, that asking why non-Jews cannot be like Jews is like asking why animals can't talk]

In his 5th Maamar, os 20 he sums up his position and writes that one must concede that:

3. In creation there are higher and lower levels. A being with awareness, grasp and senses is evidently higher than one without it... The lowest plant is higher than the most important inanimate item. The lowest of animals is higher than the highest plant. The lowest of humans is higher than the highest animal.

Similarly, the lowest among those who fulfill the mitzvot [who he explained earlier can only be the Jewish people] is higher than the greatest who do not have mitzvos.

4. Even a Jew who sins is better than one who lacks mitzvos [*i.e.* a non-Jew]... Furthermore, if offered the choice, a Jew would not choose to be on the level of those who lack mitzvos [*i.e.* non-Jew], just as a human being who is sick and suffers, if given the choice to be a horse or fish or bird, although these all live contentedly without suffering... would not choose this.

In the Tanya, chapter 1, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi writes, "The souls of the nations of the world, however, emanate from the other, unclean kelipos which contain no good whatever..."

When Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi was imprisoned by the czarist authorities after being slandered by Misnagdim, he was questioned regarding this point, among other topics. Although he freely responded to all other questions, he refused to respond to this allegation—smiling enigmatically as his only response.

It is clear, however, that Rabbi Shneur Zalman did not intend to advocate discrimination against gentiles, as he codified in his *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*. Rabbi Shneur Zalman and his successors were recognised by the Czars for their extreme devotion to the nation; Rabbi Menachem Mendel often received gentiles and urged respect and honor be accorded them as the halacha mandates.

VIEWS OF CHOSENNESS

The three largest Jewish denominations—Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism—maintain the belief that the Jews have been chosen by God for a purpose.

Modern Orthodox Views

Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, former Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue of Great Britain (Modern Orthodox Judaism), describes chosenness in this way:

Yes, I do believe that the chosen people concept as affirmed by Judaism in its holy writ, its prayers, and its millennial tradition. In fact, I believe that every people—and indeed, in a more limited way, every individual—is “chosen” or destined for some distinct purpose in advancing the designs of Providence. Only, some fulfill their mission and others do not. Maybe the Greeks were chosen for their unique contributions to art and philosophy, the Romans for their pioneering services in law and government, the British for bringing parliamentary rule into the world, and the Americans for piloting democracy in a pluralistic society. The Jews were chosen by God to be ‘peculiar unto Me’ as the pioneers of religion and morality; that was and is their national purpose.

Rabbi Norman Lamm, a leader of Modern Orthodox Judaism writes:

The chosenness of Israel relates exclusively to its spiritual vocation embodied in the Torah; the doctrine, indeed, was announced at Sinai. Whenever it is mentioned in our liturgy—such as the blessing immediately preceding the Shema....it is always related to Torah or Mitzvot (*commandments*). This spiritual vocation consists of two complementary functions, described as “Goy Kadosh,” that of a holy nation, and “Mamlechet Kohanim,” that of a kingdom of priests. The first term denotes the development of communal separateness or differences in

order to achieve a collective self-transcendence.... The second term implies the obligation of this brotherhood of the spiritual elite toward the rest of mankind; priesthood is defined by the prophets as fundamentally a teaching vocation.

Numerous Haredi Jews hold a differing point of view. Based on teachings in the Kuzari, Zohar, and Tanya they hold that Jews have spiritual advantages over non-Jews. This view of Lamm has been said to be accepted by the mainstream Haredi community, and supported with a quote from Rabbi Malkiel Kotler, dean of the Haredi Lakewood Yeshiva, who said:

Our philosophy asserts that every human being is created in the image of the Lord and the primacy of integrity and honesty in all dealings without exception. I strongly repudiate any assertions in the name of Judaism that do not represent and reflect this philosophy.

What is omitted is that this was a response in the face of an attack and Rabbi Kotler diplomatically referred to the first part of the mishna quoted above which says "Beloved is man, for he was created in God's image."

In fact, in his earlier endorsement of the book, he said the author had written "on the subjects of the Exile, *the Election of Israel and her exaltation above and superiority to all of the other nations, all in accordance with the viewpoint of the Torah, based on the solid instruction he has received from his teachers.*"

Conservative Views

Conservative Judaism and its Israeli counterpart Masorti Judaism, views the concept of chosenness in this way:

Few beliefs have been subject to as much misunderstanding as the "Chosen People" doctrine. The Torah and the Prophets clearly stated that this does not imply any innate Jewish superiority. In the words of Amos (3:2) "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth—that is why I will call you to account for your iniquities". The Torah tells us that we are to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" with obligations and duties which flowed from our willingness to accept this status. Far from being a license for special privilege, it entailed additional responsibilities not only toward God but to our fellow human beings. As expressed in the blessings at the reading of the Torah, our people have always felt it to be a privilege to be selected for such a purpose. For the modern traditional Jew, the doctrine of the election and the covenant of Israel offers a purpose for Jewish existence which transcends its own self interests. It suggests that because of our special history and

unique heritage we are in a position to demonstrate that a people that takes seriously the idea of being covenanted with God can not only thrive in the face of oppression, but can be a source of blessing to its children and its neighbours. It obligates us to build a just and compassionate society throughout the world and especially in the land of Israel where we may teach by example what it means to be a “covenant people, a light unto the nations.”

Rabbi Reuven Hammer of Masorti Judaism comments on the excised sentence in the Aleinu prayer mentioned above:

Originally the text read that God has not made us like the nations who “bow down to nothingness and vanity, and pray to an impotent god,”...In the Middle Ages these words were censored, since the church believed they were an insult to Christianity. Omitting them tends to give the impression that the Aleinu teaches that we are both different and better than others. The actual intent is to say that we are thankful that God has enlightened us so that, unlike the pagans, we worship the true God and not idols. There is no inherent superiority in being Jewish, but we do assert the superiority of monotheistic belief over paganism. Although paganism still exists today, we are no longer the only ones to have a belief in one God.

Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism views the concept of chosenness in this way:

Throughout the ages it has been Israel’s mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, Justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal.

In 1999 the Reform movement stated:

We affirm that the Jewish people are bound to God by an eternal covenant, as reflected in our varied understandings of Creation, Revelation and Redemption....We are Israel, a people aspiring to holiness, singled out through our ancient covenant and our unique history among the nations to be witnesses to God’s presence. We are linked by that covenant and that history to all Jews in every age and place.

Criticism of chosenness: Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism rejects the concept of chosenness. Its founder, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, said that the idea that God chose the Jewish people leads to racist beliefs among Jews, and thus must be excised from Jewish theology. This rejection of chosenness is made explicit in the movement’s siddurim (prayer books).

For example, the original blessing recited before reading from the Torah from contains the phrase “asher bahar banu mikol ha’amim”; “Praised are you Lord our God, ruler of the Universe, *who has chosen us from among all peoples* by giving us the Torah.” The Reconstructionist version is rewritten as “asher kervanu la’avodato”, “Praised are you Lord our God, ruler of the Universe, *who has drawn us to your service* by giving us the Torah.”

In the mid-1980s the Reconstructionist movement issued its *Platform on Reconstructionism*. It states that the idea of chosenness is “morally untenable”, because anyone who has such beliefs “implies the superiority of the elect community and the rejection of others.”

Not all Reconstructionists accept this view. The newest siddur of the movement, *Kol Haneshamah*, includes the traditional blessings as an option, and some modern Reconstructionist writers have opined that the traditional formulation is not racist, and should be embraced.

An original prayer book by Reconstructionist feminist poet Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings* has been widely accepted by both Reform and Reconstructionist Jews. Falk rejects all concepts relating to hierarchy or distinction; she sees any distinction as leading to the acceptance of other kinds of distinctions, and thus leading to prejudice. She writes that as a politically liberal feminist, she must reject distinctions made between men and women, homosexuals and heterosexuals, Jews and non-Jews, and to some extent even distinctions between the Sabbath and the other six days of the week. She thus rejects idea of chosenness as unethical. She also rejects Jewish theology in general, and instead holds to a form of religious humanism. Falk writes:

The idea of Israel as God’s chosen people...is a key concept in rabbinic Judaism. Yet it is particularly problematic for many Jews today, in that it seems to fly in the face of monotheistic belief that all humanity is created in the divine image—and hence, all humanity is equally loved and valued by God... I find it difficult to conceive of a feminist Judaism that would incorporate it in its teaching: the valuing of one people *over and above* others is all too analogous to the privileging of one sex over another.

Reconstructionist author Judith Plaskow also criticises the idea of chosenness, for many of the same reasons as Falk. A politically liberal lesbian, Plaskow rejects most distinctions made between men and women, homosexuals and heterosexuals, and Jews and non-Jews. In contrast to Falk, Plaskow does not reject all concepts of differences as inherently leading to unethical beliefs, and holds to a more classical form of Jewish theism than Falk.

A number of responses to these views have been made by Reform and Conservative Jews; they hold that these criticisms are against teachings that do not exist within liberal forms of Judaism, and which are rare in Orthodox Judaism (outside certain Haredi communities, such as Chabad). A separate criticism stems from the very existence of feminist forms of Judaism in all denominations of Judaism, which do not have a problem with the concepts of chosenness.

CHARGES OF RACISM

Many books and websites promote the idea that Judaism is inherently racist. Hundreds of websites offer authoritative quotes from rabbinic literature, all attempting to prove that Jews hate non-Jews and perceive them as non-human.

These books and websites generally attempt to prove their thesis through one technique; Quote-mining, the deliberate sifting of hundreds, or thousands, of years of a literature to find a small group of quotes, and then presenting these quotes out of their historical context in order to present the beliefs of Jews. Writings such as the Talmud, which contain arguments immediately followed by refuting counterarguments, are particularly subject to such abuses.

According to a report by the Anti-Defamation League,

By selectively citing various passages from the Talmud and Midrash, polemicists have sought to demonstrate that Judaism espouses hatred for non-Jews (and specifically for Christians), and promotes obscenity, sexual perversion, and other immoral behaviour. To make these passages serve their purposes, these polemicists frequently mistranslate them or cite them out of context (wholesale fabrication of passages is not unknown)...

In distorting the normative meanings of rabbinic texts, anti-Talmud writers frequently remove passages from their textual and historical contexts. Even when they present their citations accurately, they judge the passages based on contemporary moral standards, ignoring the fact that the majority of these passages were composed close to two thousand years ago by people living in cultures radically different from our own. They are thus able to ignore Judaism's long history of social progress and paint it instead as a primitive and parochial religion.

Those who attack the Talmud frequently cite ancient rabbinic sources without noting subsequent developments in Jewish thought, and without making a good-faith effort to consult with contemporary Jewish authorities who can explain the role of these sources in normative Jewish thought and practice.

Gil Student, an expert on exposing anti-semitic misuse of Talmud, writes:

Anti-Talmud accusations have a long history dating back to the 13th century when the associates of the Inquisition attempted to defame Jews and their religion [see Yitzchak Baer, *A History of Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. I pp. 150-185]. The early material compiled by hateful preachers like Raymond Martini and Nicholas Donin remain the basis of all subsequent accusations against the Talmud. Some are true, most are false and based on quotations taken out of context, and some are total fabrications [see Baer, ch. 4 f. 54, 82 that it has been proven that Raymond Martini forged quotations]. On the Internet today we can find many of these old accusations being rehashed...

Books and websites that charge the Jewish people with collective racism generally rely on the above mentioned fabricated or out-of-context quotes, and ignore explicit statements on the topic from representatives of mainstream Jewish denominations. Each of the modern mainstream denominations of Judaism is on record as opposing any form of racism.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik wrote:

Even as the Jew is moved by his private Sinaitic Covenant with God to embody and preserve the teachings of the Torah, he is committed to the belief that all mankind, of whatever colour or creed, is "in His image" and is possessed of an inherent human dignity and worthiness. Man's singularity is derived from the breath "He [God] breathed into his nostrils at the moment of creation" (Genesis 2:7). Thus, we do share in the universal historical experience, and God's providential concern does embrace all of humanity.

Such misuse of Talmud by the Soviet authorities was exposed in a 1984 hearing record before the Sub-committee on Human Rights and International Organisations in the US Congress concerning the Soviet Jewry,

This vicious anti-Semitic canard, frequently repeated by other Soviet writers and officials, is based upon the malicious notion that the "Chosen People" of the Torah and Talmud preaches "superiority over other peoples," as well as exclusivity. This was, of course, the principal theme of the notorious Tsarist *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

HOLOCAUST THEOLOGY

Holocaust theology refers to a body of theological and philosophical debate, soul-searching, and analysis, with the subsequent related literature, that attempts to come to grips with various conflicting views

about the role of God in this human world and the dark events of the European Holocaust that occurred during World War II (1939-1945) when around 11 million people, including 6 million Jews were subjected to genocide by the Nazis and their cohorts. "Holocaust theology" is also referred to as "*Theologie nach Auschwitz*" ("Theology after Auschwitz" in German), due to the common practice of using "Auschwitz" as a shorthand for the Holocaust as a whole.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam traditionally have taught that God is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnibenevolent (all good). These claims seem to be in jarring contrast with the fact that there is much evil in the world. Perhaps the most difficult question that monotheists have confronted is how can we reconcile the existence of this view of God with the existence of evil? This is the problem of evil.

Within all the monotheistic faiths many answers (theodicies) have been proposed. However, in light of the magnitude of evil seen in the Holocaust, many people have re-examined classical views on this subject. Many people have asked, "How can people still have any kind of faith after the Holocaust?"

JEWISH THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Here are some of the major responses that Jews have had in response to the Holocaust:

- No new response is needed. The Holocaust is like all other horrific tragedies. This event merely prompts us again to investigate the issue of why bad things sometimes happen to good people. The Holocaust shouldn't change our theology.
- Rabbinic Judaism has a doctrine from the books of the prophets called *mi-penei hataeinu*, "because of our sins we were punished". During Biblical times when calamities befell the Jewish people, the Jewish prophets stressed that suffering is a natural result of not following God's law, and prosperity, peace and health are the natural results of following God's law. Therefore, some people in the Orthodox community have taught that the Jewish people in Europe were deeply sinful. In this view, the Holocaust is a just retribution from God.
- The Holocaust is an instance of the temporary "Eclipse of God". There are times when God is inexplicably absent from history.
- "God is dead". If there were a God, He would surely have prevented the Holocaust. Since God did not prevent it, then

God has for some reason turned away from the world, and left us to ourselves forever more. God is therefore no longer relevant to humanity.

- Terrible events such as the Holocaust are the price we have to pay for having free will. In this view, God will not and cannot interfere with history, otherwise our free will would effectively cease to exist. The Holocaust only reflects poorly on humanity, not God.
- Perhaps the Holocaust is in some way a revelation from God: The event issues a call for Jewish affirmation for survival.
- The Holocaust is a mystery beyond our comprehension. God has reason for what He does, but human understanding can't begin to understand His reason.
- The Jewish people become in fact the "suffering servant" of Isaiah. The Jewish people collectively suffer for the sins of the world. (Also mentioned by Reform Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum proposed that the Holocaust is the ultimate form of vicarious atonement. *The Face of God After Auschwitz*, pages 35 and 36.)
- God does exist, but God is not omnipotent. This view is similar to Process theology and Open Theism. All of the above arguments are based on the assumption that God is omnipotent and, consequently, could have interfered to stop the Holocaust. What if this is not so? In this view, the Holocaust only reflects poorly on humanity, not on God. This is a view promoted by many liberal theologians, including Rabbi Harold Kushner.
- God or any other supernatural deity does not exist.
- Looking back at the Torah it is interesting to note that the Holocaust mirrors the enslavement in Egypt. Having to live in horrible conditions, doing forced labour, and being forced to kill all the babies. The events afterward also mirror what happened after the exodus from Egypt with many Jews going to Israel, a reacceptance of the torah the (Baal Teshuvah Movement), and Israel's victories in war. It is said that what happened to the patriarchs, is a precursor to what every Jew will experience.

Orthodox and Haredi Jewish Responses

Many within Haredi Judaism blame the Holocaust on the abandonment of many European Jews of traditional Judaism, and their embrace of other ideologies such as Socialism, Zionism, or various non-Orthodox Jewish movements. Others suggest that God sent the

Nazis to kill the Jews because Orthodox European Jews did not do enough to fight these trends, or did not support Zionism. In this Haredi theodicy, the Jews of Europe were sinners no longer protected by the Torah and faith, and the actions of God which allowed this were righteous and just.

- Satmar leader and Holocaust survivor Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum writes:

Because of our sinfulness we have suffered greatly, suffering as bitter as wormwood, worse than any Israel has known since it became a people...In former times, whenever troubles befell Jacob, the matter was pondered and reasons sought—which sin had brought the troubles about—so that we could make amends and return to the Lord, may He be blessed...But in our generation one need not look far for the sin responsible for our calamity...The heretics have made all kinds of efforts to violate these oaths, to go up by force and to seize sovereignty and freedom by themselves, before the appointed time... [They] have lured the majority of the Jewish people into awful heresy, the like of which as not been seen since the world was created...And so it is no wonder that the Lord has lashed out in anger...And there were also righteous people who perished because of the iniquity of the sinners and corrupters, so great was the [divine] wrath. [Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (1996 by The University of Chicago), p. 124.]

- There were redemptionist Zionists, at the other end of the spectrum, who also saw the Holocaust as a collective punishment for a collective sin: ongoing Jewish unfaithfulness to the Land of Israel. Rabbi Mordecai Atiyah was a leading advocate of this idea. Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook and his disciples, for their part, avoided this harsh position, but they too theologically related the Holocaust to the Jewish recognition of Zion. Kook writes “When the end comes and Israel fails to recognize it, there comes a cruel divine operation that removes [the Jewish people] from its exile. [Aviezer Ravitzky, *ibid.*]
- Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, in 1939, stated that the Nazi persecution of the Jews was the fault of non-Orthodox Jews (Achiezer, volume III, Vilna 1939), in the introduction. This is discussed in “Piety & Power: The World of Jewish Fundamentalism” by Orthodox author David Landau (1993, Hill & Wang).

- Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler had similar views, also discussed in Landau's book.
- A few Haredi rabbis today warn that a failure to follow Orthodox interpretations of religious law will cause God to send another Holocaust. Rabbi Elazar Shach, a leader of the Lithuanian yeshiva Orthodoxy in Israel until his death in 2001 made this claim on the eve of the 1991 Gulf War. He stated that there would be a new Holocaust in punishment for the abandonment of religion and "desecration" of Shabbat in Israel.

Modern Orthodox Jewish Views

Most Modern Orthodox Jews reject the idea that the Holocaust was God's fault. Modern Orthodox rabbis such as Joseph Soloveitchik, Norman Lamm, Randolph Stolzman, Abraham Besdin, Emanuel Rackman, Eliezer Berkovits and others have written on this issue; many of their works have been collected in a volume published by the Rabbinical Council of America: *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust* (edited by Bernhard H. Rosenberg and Fred Heuman, Ktav/RCA, 1992).

WORKS OF IMPORTANT JEWISH THEOLOGIANS

Prof. Richard Rubenstein's original piece on this issue, "After Auschwitz", held that the only intellectually honest response to the Holocaust is the rejection of God, and the recognition that all existence is ultimately meaninglessness. There is no divine plan or purpose, no God that reveals His will to mankind, and God does not care about the world. Man must assert and create his own value in life. This view has been rejected by Jews of all religious denominations, but his works were widely read in the Jewish community in the 1970s.

Since that time Rubinstein has begun to move away from this view; his later works affirm of form of deism in which one may believe that God may exist as the basis for reality. His later works include Kabbalistic notions of the nature of God. Holocaust theology—Richard Rubenstein Prof. Richard Rubenstein's original piece on this issue, "After Auschwitz", held that the only intellectually honest response to the Holocaust is the rejection of God, and the recognition that all existence is ultimately meaninglessness. There is no divine plan or purpose, no God that reveals His will to mankind, and God does not care about the world. Man must assert and create his own value in life. This view has been rejected by Jews of all religious denominations, but his works were widely read in the Jewish community in the 1970s.

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Holocaust theology—Emil Fackenheim Emil Fackenheim is known for his understanding that people must look carefully at the Holocaust, and to find within it a new revelation from God. For Fackenheim, the Holocaust was an “epoch-making event”. In contrast to Richard Rubenstein’s most well-known views, Fackenheim holds that people must still affirm their belief in God and God’s continued role in the world. Fackenheim holds that the Holocaust reveals unto us a new Biblical commandment, “We are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories”.

Holocaust theology—Ignaz Maybaum in a rare view that has not been adopted by any sizable element of the Jewish or Christian community, Ignaz Maybaum has proposed that the Holocaust is the ultimate form of vicarious atonement. The Jewish people become in fact the “suffering servant” of Isaiah. The Jewish people suffer for the sins of the world. In his view: “In Auschwitz Jews suffered vicarious atonement for the sins of mankind.”

Holocaust theology—Eliezer Berkovits Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits (1908-1992) holds that man’s free will depends on God’s decision to remain hidden. If God were to reveal himself in history and hold back the hand of tyrants, man’s free will would be rendered non-existent. Many of Berkovits’ books will be republished by the Eliezer Berkovits Institute for Jewish Thought under the auspices of the Shalem Center, Jerusalem.

Holocaust theology—Harold Kushner Williams Kaufman and Milton Steiberg Rabbis Harold Kushner, William E. Kaufman, Milton Steinberg believe that God is not omnipotent, and thus is not to blame for mankind’s abuse of free will. Thus, there is no contradiction between the existence of a good God and the existence of massive evil by part of mankind. It is claimed that this is also the view expressed by some classical Jewish authorities, such as Abraham ibn Daud, Abraham ibn Ezra, and Gersonides. Holocaust theology—David Weiss Halivni Rabbi David Weiss Halivni is himself a Holocaust-survivor from Hungary.

Irving Greenberg—Rabbi Irving Greenberg is a Modern Orthodox rabbi who has written extensively on how the Holocaust should affect Jewish theology. Greenberg has an Orthodox understanding of God. Like many other Orthodox Jews, he does not believe that God forces

people to follow Jewish law; rather he believes that Jewish law is God's will for the Jewish people, and that Jews should follow Jewish law as normative.

Greenberg's break with Orthodox theology comes with his analysis of the implications of the Holocaust. He writes that the worst thing that God could do to the Jewish people for failing to follow the law is Holocaust-level devastation, yet this has already occurred. Greenberg is not claiming that God did use the Holocaust to punish Jews; he is just saying that if God chose to do so, that would be the worst possible thing. There really isn't much worse that one could do. Therefore, since God can't punish us any worse than what actually has happened, and since God doesn't force Jews to follow Jewish law, then we can't claim that these laws are enforceable on us. Therefore he argues that the covenant between God and the Jewish people is effectively broken and unenforceable.

Greenberg notes that there have been several terrible destructions of the Jewish community, each with the effect of distancing the Jewish people further from God. According to rabbinic literature, after the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem and the mass-killing of Jerusalem's Jews, the Jews received no more direct prophecy. After the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem and the mass-killing of Jerusalem's Jews, the Jews no longer could present sacrifices at the Temple. This way of reaching God was at an end. After the Holocaust, Greenberg concludes that God isn't responding to the prayers of Jews anymore.

Thus, God has unilaterally broken his covenant with the Jewish people. In this view, God no longer has the moral authority to command people to follow his will. Greenberg does not conclude that Jews and God should part way; rather he holds that we should heal the covenant between Jews and God, and that the Jewish people should accept Jewish law on a voluntary basis.

His views on this subject have made him the subject of much criticism within the Orthodox community.

WORKS OF IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS

Jürgen Moltmann

In "The Crucified God" Jürgen Moltmann speaks of a how in a "theology after Auschwitz" the traditional notion of God needed to be completely revised.

"Shattered and broken, the survivors of my generation were then returning from camps and hospitals to the lecture room. A theology which did not speak of God in the sight of the one who was abandoned and crucified would have had nothing to say to us then."

The traditional notion of an impassible "unmoved mover" had died in those camps and was no longer tenable. Moltmann proposes instead a "crucified God" who is both a "suffering" and "protesting" God. That is, God is not detached from suffering but willingly enters into human suffering in compassion.

"God in Auschwitz and Auschwitz in the crucified God—that is the basis for real hope that both embraces and overcomes the world".

This is in contrast both with the move of theism to justify God's actions and Atheism's move to accuse God. Moltmann's "Trinitarian theology of the cross" instead says that God is a protesting God who opposes the 'Gods of this world' of power and domination by entering into human pain and suffering on the cross and on the gallows of Auschwitz. Moltmann's "theology of the cross" was later developed into "Liberation Theologies" from suffering people under Stalinism in Eastern Europe and military dictatorships South America and South Korea.

Pope Benedict XVI

In the address given on the occasion of his visit to the extermination camp of Auschwitz, Pope Benedict XVI suggested a reading of the events of the Holocaust as motivated by a hatred of God Himself. The address begins by acknowledging the impossibility of an adequate theological response:

In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there can only be a dread silence—a silence which is itself a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent? How could you tolerate all this? In silence, then, we bow our heads before the endless line of those who suffered and were put to death here; yet our silence becomes in turn a plea for forgiveness and reconciliation, a plea to the living God never to let this happen again.

Nonetheless, he proposes that the actions of the Nazis can be seen as having been motivated by a hatred of God and a desire to exalt human power, with the Holocaust serving as a means by which to erase witness to God and His Law:

The rulers of the Third Reich wanted to crush the entire Jewish people, to cancel it from the register of the peoples of the earth. Thus, the words of the Psalm: "We are being killed, accounted as sheep for the slaughter" were fulfilled

in a terrifying way. Deep down, those vicious criminals, by wiping out this people, wanted to kill the God who called Abraham, who spoke on Sinai and laid down principles to serve as a guide for mankind, principles that are eternally valid. If this people, by its very existence, was a witness to the God who spoke to humanity and took us to himself, then that God finally had to die and power had to belong to man alone—to those men, who thought that by force they had made themselves masters of the world. By destroying Israel, by the Shoah, they ultimately wanted to tear up the taproot of the Christian faith and to replace it with a faith of their own invention: faith in the rule of man, the rule of the powerful.

Most coverage of the address was positive, with praise from Italian and Polish rabbis. The Simon Wiesenthal Center called the visit “historic”, and the address and prayers “a repudiation of anti-semitism and a repudiation of those... who refer to the Holocaust as a myth”. A few Jewish commentators (such as, *e.g.*, Daniel Goldhagen in “The Holocaust Was Not Christian”) objected to what they perceived as a desire to “Christianize” the Holocaust.



20

**ELEMENTS OF JEWISH THEOLOGY
AND ITS DIMENSIONS**

HALAKHA

Halakha is the collective corpus of Jewish religious law, including biblical law (the 613 *mitzvot*) and later talmudic and rabbinic law, as well as customs and traditions. Judaism classically draws no distinction in its laws between religious and ostensibly non-religious life. Hence, *Halakha* guides not only religious practices and beliefs, but numerous aspects of day-to-day life. *Halakha* is often translated as “Jewish Law,” though a more literal translation might be “the path” or “the way of walking.” The word is derived from the Hebrew root that means to go or walk.

Historically, *Halakha* served many Jewish communities as an enforceable avenue of civil and religious law. In the modern era, Jewish citizens may be bound to *Halakha* only by their voluntary consent. In the Land of Israel, though, certain areas of Israeli family and personal status law are governed by rabbinic interpretations of *Halakha*. Reflecting the diversity of Jewish communities, somewhat different approaches to *Halakha* are found among Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, Sephardi, and Yemenite Jews. Among Ashkenazi Jews, disagreements over *Halakha*, and over whether Jews should continue to follow *Halakha*, have played a pivotal role in the emergence of the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist streams of Judaism.

TERMINOLOGY

The name *Halakha* is derived from the Hebrew *halakh* which means “to walk” or “to go”; thus a literal translation does not yield “law”, but rather “the way to go”. The term *Halakha* may refer to a single law, to the literary corpus of rabbinic legal texts, or to the overall

system of religious law. The root may be Semitic *aqqa*, meaning “to be true, be suitable”.

The *Halakha* is often contrasted with the *Aggadah*, the diverse corpus of rabbinic exegetical, narrative, philosophical, mystical, and other “non-legal” literatures. At the same time, since writers of *Halakha* may draw upon the aggadic and even mystical literature, there is a dynamic interchange between the genres.

Halakha constitutes the practical application of the 613 *mitzvot* (“commandments”, singular: *mitzvah*) in the Torah, (the five books of Moses, the “Written Law”) as developed through discussion and debate in the classical rabbinic literature, especially the Mishnah and the Talmud (the “Oral law”), and as codified in the Mishneh Torah or Shulkhan Arukh (the Jewish “Code of Law”).

The *Halakha* is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of human life, both corporeal and spiritual. Its laws, guidelines, and opinions cover a vast range of situations and principles, in the attempt to realize what is implied by the central Biblical commandment to “be holy as I your God am holy”. They cover what are better ways for a Jew to live, when commandments conflict how one may choose correctly, what is implicit and understood but not stated explicitly in the Bible, and what has been deduced by implication though not visible on the surface.

Because *Halakha* is developed and applied by various halakhic authorities, rather than one sole “official voice”, different individuals and communities may well have different answers to halakhic questions. Controversies lend rabbinic literature much of its creative and intellectual appeal. With few exceptions, controversies are not settled through authoritative structures because during the age of exile Jews have lacked a single judicial hierarchy or appellate review process for *Halakha*. Instead, Jews interested in observing *Halakha* typically choose to follow specific rabbis or affiliate with a more tightly-structured community.

Halakha has been developed and pored over throughout the generations since before 500 BCE, in a constantly expanding collection of religious literature consolidated in the Talmud. First and foremost it forms a body of intricate judicial opinions, legislation, customs, and recommendations, many of them passed down over the centuries, and an assortment of ingrained behaviours, relayed to successive generations from the moment a child begins to speak. It is also the subject of intense study in *yeshivas*; see Torah study.

LAWS OF THE TORAH

Broadly, the *Halakha* comprises the practical application of the commandments (each one known as a mitzvah) in the Torah, as developed in subsequent rabbinic literature; see *The Mitzvot and Jewish Law*. According to the Talmud (Tractate Makot), there are 613 mitzvot (“commandments”) in the Torah; in Hebrew these are known as the *Taryag mitzvot* תרי"ג מצוות. There are 248 positive mitzvot and 365 negative mitzvot given in the Torah, supplemented by seven mitzvot legislated by the rabbis of antiquity; see *Rabbinical commandments*.

Categories

Classical Rabbinic Judaism has two basic categories of laws:

- Laws believed revealed by God to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai (e.g. the written Pentateuch and elucidations therefrom, *Halacha l’Moshe miSinai*);
- Laws believed to be of human origin but divinely inspired, including Rabbinic decrees, interpretations, customs, etc.

This division between revealed and rabbinic commandments (mitzvot) may influence the importance of a rule, its enforcement and the nature of its ongoing interpretation. Halakhic authorities may disagree on which laws fall into which categories or the circumstances (if any) under which prior Rabbinic rulings can be re-examined by contemporary rabbis, but all halakhic Jews hold that both categories exist and that the first category is immutable, with exceptions only for life-saving and similar emergency circumstances.

A second classical distinction is between the Written Torah (laws written in the Hebrew Bible, specifically its first five books), and Oral Law, laws believed transmitted orally prior to compilation in texts such as the Mishnah, Talmud, and Rabbinic codes.

Commandments are divided into positive and negative commands, which are treated differently in terms of Divine and human punishment. Positive commandments (of which tradition holds there are 248) require an action to be performed, and thus bring one closer to God. Negative commandments (traditionally 365 in number) forbid a specific action; thus violations create a distance from God. In striving to “be holy” as God is holy, one attempts so far as possible to live in accordance with God’s wishes for humanity, striving to more completely live with each of these with every moment of one’s life.

A further division is made between *chukim* (“decrees” — laws without obvious explanation, such as *kashrut*, the dietary laws), *mishpatim* (“judgments”) — laws with obvious social implications and *eduyot* — “testimonies” or “commemorations”, such as the Shabbat and holidays). Through the ages, various rabbinical authorities have classified the commandments in various other ways.

A different approach divides the laws into a different set of categories:

- Laws in relation to God (*bein adam la-Makom*), and
- Laws about relations with other people (*bein adam la-chavero*).

There is notion in *halakha* that violations of the latter are more severe, in certain ways, because of the requirement one must obtain forgiveness both from the offended person and from God in the latter case.

Sin

Judaism regards the violation of the commandments, the *mitzvot*, to be a sin. The term “sin” is theologically loaded, as it means different things to Jews and Christians. In Christianity a “sin” is an offense against God, by which one is separated from God’s love and grace, and for which one would suffer punishment, unless one repents (see Sin for a more complete comparison of sin from several viewpoints). Judaism has a wider definition of the term “sin”, and also uses it to include violations of Jewish law that are not necessarily a lapse in morality. Further, Judaism holds it as given that all people sin at various points in their lives, and hold that God always tempers justice with mercy.

The generic Hebrew word for any kind of sin is *aveira* (“transgression”). Based on the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) Judaism describes three levels of sin:

- *Pesha* — an “intentional sin”; an action committed in deliberate defiance of God
- *Avon* — a “sin of lust or uncontrollable emotion”. It is a sin done knowingly, but not done to defy God
- *Chet* — an “unintentional sin”

Judaism holds that no human being is perfect, and all people have sinned many times. However a state of sin does not condemn a person to damnation; there is always a road of *teshuvah* (repentance, literally:

“return”). There are some classes of person for whom this is exceedingly difficult, such as the one who slanders another.

In earlier days, when Jews had a functioning court system (the beth din and the Sanhedrin high court), courts were empowered to administer physical punishments for various violations, upon conviction by far stricter standards of evidence than are acceptable in American courts: corporal punishment, incarceration, excommunication. Since the fall of the Temple, executions have been forbidden. Since the fall of the autonomous Jewish communities of Europe, the other punishments have also fallen by the wayside. Today, then, one's accounts are reckoned solely by God.

Gentiles and Jewish Law

Judaism has always held that gentiles are obliged only to follow the seven Noahide Laws; these are laws that the Oral Law derives from the covenant God made with Noah after the flood, which apply to all descendants of Noah (all living people). The Noahide Laws are derived in the Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 57a), and are listed here:

1. Murder is forbidden.
2. Theft is forbidden.
3. Sexual immorality is forbidden.
4. Eating flesh cut from a still-living animal is forbidden.
5. Belief in and worship or prayer to “idols” is forbidden.
6. Blaspheming against God is forbidden.
7. Society must establish a fair system of legal justice to administer law honestly.

The details to these laws are codified from the Talmudic texts in the Mishneh Torah. They can be found mainly in chapters 9 and 10 of *Hilkhoth Melakhim u'Milhamothehem* in *Sefer Shoftim* of the *Mishneh Torah*.

Although not mentioning the Noahide Laws directly by name, the Christian convention of Apostles and elders in Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 15 appears to validate the idea that all gentiles follow the constraints established by the covenant of Noah. Supporting this idea, the list of constraints to be applied to the gentiles that are converted to Christianity, verse 15:20, is similar to the Noahide Laws.

THE SOURCES AND PROCESS OF HALAKHA

The boundaries of Jewish law are determined through the halakhic process, a religious-ethical system of legal reasoning. Rabbis generally base their opinions on the primary sources of *Halakha* as well as on precedent set by previous rabbinic opinions. The major sources and genre of *Halakha* consulted include:

- The foundational Talmudic literature (especially the Mishna and the Babylonian Talmud) with commentaries;
- The post-Talmudic codificatory literature, such as Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and the *Shulchan Aruch* with commentaries;
- Regulations and other "legislative" enactments promulgated by Rabbis and communal bodies:
 - *Gezeirah*: "preventative legislation" of the Rabbis, intended to prevent violations of the commandments
 - *Takkanah*: "positive legislation", practices instituted by the Rabbis not based (directly) on the commandments
- *Minhag*: Customs, community practices, and customary law, as well as the exemplary deeds of prominent (or local) Rabbis;
- The *she'eloth u-teshuvot* (responsa, literally "questions and answers") literature.
- *Dina d'malchuta dina* ("the law of the land is law"): an additional source of *Halakha*, being the principle recognising non-Jewish laws and non-Jewish legal jurisdiction as binding on Jewish citizens, provided that they are not contrary to any laws of Judaism. This principle applies especially in areas of commercial, civil and criminal law.

In antiquity, the *Sanhedrin* functioned essentially as the Supreme Court and legislature for Judaism, and had the power to administer binding law, including both received law and its own Rabbinic decrees, on all Jews — rulings of the *Sanhedrin* became *Halakha*; see Oral law. That court ceased to function in its full mode in CE 40. Today, the authoritative application of Jewish law is left to the local Rabbi, and the local rabbinical courts, with only local applicability. In branches of Judaism that follow *Halakha*, lay individuals make numerous *ad hoc* decisions, but are regarded as not having authority to decide definitively.

Since the days of the *Sanhedrin*, however, no body or authority has been generally regarded as having the authority to create universally recognised precedents. As a result, *Halakha* has developed in a somewhat

different fashion from Anglo-American legal systems with a Supreme Court able to provide universally accepted precedents. Generally, contemporary halakhic arguments are effectively, yet unofficially, peer-reviewed. When a rabbinic *posek* (“decisor”) proposes a new interpretation of a law, that interpretation may be considered binding for the *posek*’s questioner or immediate community. Depending on the stature of the *posek* and the quality of the decision, an interpretation may also be gradually accepted by Rabbis and members of similar Jewish communities.

Under this system, there is a tension between the relevance of earlier and later authorities in constraining halakhic interpretation and innovation. On the one hand, there is a principle in *Halakha* not to overrule a specific law from an earlier era, unless based on an earlier authority. On the other hand, another principle recognises the responsibility and authority of later authorities, and especially the *posek* handling a concurrent question. In addition, the *Halakha* embodies a wide range of principles that permit judicial discretion and deviation (Ben-Menahem). Generally speaking, a Rabbi in any one period will not overrule specific laws from an earlier era, unless supported by a relevant earlier precedent; see list below. There are important exceptions to this principle, which empower the *posek* (decisor) or *beth din* (court) responsible for a given opinion.

Notwithstanding the potential for innovation, Rabbis and Jewish communities differ greatly on how they make changes in *Halakha*. Notably, *poskim* frequently extend the application of a law to new situations, but do not consider such applications as constituting a “change” in *Halakha*. For example, many Orthodox rulings concerning electricity are derived from rulings concerning fire, due to its physical similarity with that other form of human-managed energy. In contrast, Conservative *Poskim* emphasize that electricity is physically and chemically more like turning on a water tap (which is permissible) than lighting a fire (which is not permissible) and therefore permitted its use on Shabbat. Conservative Judaism, in some cases, will also explicitly interpret *Halakha* to take into account its view of contemporary sociological factors. For instance, most Conservative rabbis extend the application of certain Jewish obligations and permissible activities to women. See below: How *Halakha* is viewed today.

Within certain Jewish communities, formal organised bodies do exist. Within Modern Orthodox Judaism, there is no one committee or leader, but Modern Orthodox Rabbis generally agree with the views

set by consensus by the leaders of the Rabbinical Council of America. Within Conservative Judaism, the Rabbinical Assembly has an official Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

TAKKANOT

Traditional Jewish law granted the Sages wide legislative powers. Technically, one may discern two powerful legal tools within the halakhic system:

- *Gezeirah*: “preventative legislation” of the Rabbis, intended to prevent violations of the commandments
- *Takkanah*: “positive legislation”, practices instituted by the Rabbis not based (directly) on the commandments

However, in common parlance sometimes people use the general term *takkanah* to refer either *gezeirot* or *takkanot*.

Takkanot, in general, do not affect or restrict observance of Torah *mitzvot*. However, the Talmud states that in exceptional cases, the Sages had the authority to “uproot matters from the Torah” in certain cases. In Talmudic and classical halakhic literature, this authority refers to the authority to prohibit some things that would otherwise be biblically sanctioned (*shev v'al ta'aseh*). Rabbis may rule that a Torah mitzvah should not be performed, e.g. blowing the shofar on Shabbat, or blessing the lulav and etrog on Shabbat. These *takkanot* are executed out of fear that some might otherwise carry the mentioned items between home and the synagogue, thus inadvertently violating a Sabbath *melakha*.

Another rare and limited form of *takkanah* involved overriding Torah prohibitions. In some cases, the Sages allowed the temporary violation a prohibition in order to maintain the Jewish system as a whole. This was part of the basis for Esther's relationship with Ahasuerus. (Sanhedrin)

For general usage of *takkanaot* in Jewish history see the article *Takkanah*. For examples of this being used in Conservative Judaism see *Conservative Halakha*.

Eras of History Important in Jewish Law

- The *Tannaim* (literally the “repeaters”) are the sages of the *Mishnah* (70–200)
- The *Amoraim* (literally the “sayers”) are the sages of the *Gemara* (200–500)

- The *Savoraim* (literally the “reasoners”) are the classical Persian Rabbis (500–600)
- The *Geonim* (literally the “prides” or “geniuses”) are the rabbis of Sura and Pumbeditha, in Babylonia (650–1250)
- The *Rishonim* (literally the “firsts”) are the rabbis of the early medieval period (1250–1550) preceding the Shulchan Aruch
- The *Acharonim* (literally the “lasts”) are the rabbis of 1550 to the present.

RULES BY WHICH EARLY JEWISH LAW WAS DERIVED

Hermeneutics is the study of rules for the exact determination of the meaning of a text; it played a notable role in early rabbinic Jewish discussion. The sages investigated the rules by which the requirements of the oral law were derived from and established by the written law, *i.e.* the Torah. These rules relate to:

1. grammar and exegesis
2. the interpretation of certain words and letters and superfluous words, prefixes, and suffixes in general
3. the interpretation of those letters, which, in certain words, are provided with points
4. the interpretation of the letters in a word according to their numerical value
5. the interpretation of a word by dividing it into two or more words
6. the interpretation of a word according to its consonantal form or according to its vocalisation
7. the interpretation of a word by transposing its letters or by changing its vowels
8. the logical deduction of a Halakah from a Scriptural text or from another law

Compilations of such hermeneutic rules were made in the earliest times. The tannaitic tradition recognises three such collections, namely:

1. the seven Rules of Hillel (baraita at the beginning of Sifra; Ab. R. N. xxxvii.)
2. the thirteen Rules of R. Ishmael (baraita at the beginning of Sifra; this collection is merely an amplification of that of Hillel)
3. the thirty-two Rules of R. Eliezer b. Jose ha-Gelili.

The last-mentioned rules are contained in an independent baraita, which has been incorporated and preserved only in later works. They are intended for haggadic interpretation; but many of them are valid for the Halakah as well, coinciding with the rules of Hillel and Ishmael.

Neither Hillel, Ishmael, nor Eliezer ben Jose ha-Gelili sought to give a complete enumeration of the rules of interpretation current in his day, but they omitted from their collections many rules that were then followed. They restricted themselves to a compilation of the principal methods of logical deduction, which they called “middot” (measures), although the other rules also were known by that term (comp. Midrash Sifre, Numbers 2 [ed. Friedmann, p. 2a]).

One of these set of rules is found in the siddur, from the “Introduction to *Sifra*” by Ishmael ben Elisha, c. 200 CE. These are known as the thirteen rules of exegesis.

1. *Kal va-Chomer* (a fortiori): We find a similar stringency in a more lenient case; how more so should that stringency apply to our stricter case!
2. *Gezera shava*, similarity in phrase: We find a similar law in a verse containing a similar phrase to one in our verse. This method can only be used in a case where there is a tradition to use it.
3. *Binyan av*, either by one or two Scriptures: We find a similar law in another case, why shouldn't we assume that the same law applies here? Now the argument may go against this inference, finding some law that applies to that case but not to ours. This type of refutation is valid only if the inference was from one Scripture, not if it was from two Scriptures.
4. *Klal ufrat*, a generality and a particularity: If we find a phrase signifying a particularity following that of a generality, the particularity particularises the generality and we only take that particular case into account.
5. *Prat ukhlal*, a particularity and a generality: If the order is first the particularity and then the generality, we add from the generality upon the particularity, even to a broad extent.
6. *Klal ufrat ukhlal*, a generality, a particularity and a generality: If there is a particularity inserted between two generalities, we only add cases similar to the particularity.
7. *Klal shehu tzarich lifrat*, a generality that requires a particularity, and a particularity that requires a generality: If it is impossible to have the more general law without more specific examples

or more specific cases without the statement of the general law, the above three rules don't apply.

8. Everything that was within the general rule and was excluded from the rule to teach us a rule, we don't consider this rule as pertaining only to this excluded case, but to the entire general case.
9. Anything that was included in a general rule, and was excluded to be susceptible to one rule that is according to its subject, it is only excluded to be treated more leniently but not more strictly.
10. Anything that was included in a general rule and was excluded to be susceptible to one rule that is not according to its subject, it is excluded to be treated both more leniently and more strictly.
11. Anything that was included in a general rule and was excluded to be treated by a new rule, we cannot restore it to its general rule unless Scripture restores it explicitly.
12. A matter that is inferred from its context, and a matter that is inferred from its ending.
13. The resolution of two Scriptures that contradict each other [must wait] until a third Scripture arrives and resolves their apparent contradiction.

Historical Analysis of Rules

The antiquity of the rules can be determined only by the dates of the authorities who quote them; in general, they cannot safely be declared older than the tanna to whom they are first ascribed. It is certain, however, that the seven middot of Hillel and the thirteen of Ishmael are earlier than the time of Hillel himself, who was the first to transmit them.

The Talmud itself gives no information concerning the origin of the middot, although the Geonim regarded them as Sinaitic. Modern historians believe that it is decidedly erroneous to consider the middot as traditional from the time of Moses on Sinai.

The middot seem to have been first laid down as abstract rules by the teachers of Hillel, though they were not immediately recognised by all as valid and binding. Different schools interpreted and modified them, restricted or expanded them, in various ways. Akiba and Ishmael and their scholars especially contributed to the development or establishment of these rules. Akiba devoted his attention particularly to the grammatical and exegetical rules, while Ishmael developed the

logical. The rules laid down by one school were frequently rejected by another because the principles that guided them in their respective formulations were essentially different. According to Akiba, the divine language of the Torah is distinguished from the speech of men by the fact that in the former no word or sound is superfluous.

Some scholars have observed a similarity between these rabbinic rules of interpretation and the hermeneutics of ancient Hellenistic culture. For example, Saul Lieberman argues that the names (e.g. *kal vahomer*) of Rabbi Ishmael's *middot* are Hebrew translations of Greek terms, although the methods of those *middot* are not Greek in origin.

HOW HALAKHA IS VIEWED TODAY

Orthodox Judaism hold "*halakha*" is the divine law of the Torah (Bible), rabbinical laws, rabbinical decrees and customs combined. Rabbis made many additions and interpretations of Jewish Law, they did so only in accordance with regulations they believe were given to them by Moses on Mount Sinai see Deuteronomy 5:8-13. See Orthodox Judaism, Beliefs about Jewish law and tradition.

Conservative Judaism holds that *Halakha* is normative and binding, and is developed as a partnership between people and God based on Sinaitic Torah. While there are a wide variety of Conservative views, a common belief is that *Halakha* is, and has always been, an evolving process subject to interpretation by Rabbis in everytime period. See Conservative Judaism, Beliefs.

Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism both hold that modern views of how the Torah and rabbinic law developed imply that the body of rabbinic Jewish law is no longer normative (seen as binding) on Jews today. Those in the traditionalist wing of these movements believe that the *Halakha* represents a personal starting-point, holding that each Jew is obligated to interpret the Torah, Talmud and other Jewish works for themselves, and this interpretation will create separate commandments for each person. Those in the neo-traditional wing of Reform include Rabbis Eugene Borowitz and Gunther Plaut.

Those in the liberal and classical wings of Reform believe that in this day and era most Jewish religious rituals are no longer necessary, and many hold that following most Jewish laws is actually counter-productive. They propose that Judaism has entered a phase of ethical monotheism, and that the laws of Judaism are only remnants of an earlier stage of religious evolution, and need not be followed. This is

considered wrong (and heretical) by Orthodox and Conservative Judaism.

Flexibility Within the Halakha

Throughout history, *Halakha* has, within limits, been a flexible system, despite its internal rigidity, addressing issues on the basis of circumstance and precedent. The classical approach has permitted new rulings incorporating regarding modern technology. These rulings guide the observant about the proper use of electricity on the Sabbath and holidays within the parameters of Halakhah. (Many scholarly tomes have been published and are constantly being reviewed ensuring the maximum coordination between electrical appliances and technology with the needs of the religiously observant Jew, with a great range of opinions.) Often, as to the applicability of the law in any given situation, the proviso is: "consult your local rabbi or posek." Modern critics, however, have charged that with the rise of movements that challenge the "Divine" authority of *Halakha*, traditional Jews have greater reluctance to change, not only the laws themselves but also other customs and habits, than traditional Rabbinical Judaism did prior to the advent of Reform in the 19th century.

Differences Between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism

Orthodox Jews believe "*halakha*" is the divine law of the Torah (Bible), rabbinical laws, rabbinical decrees and customs combined. They also believe there are traditional formulas that date back to Moses on how the divine law may be interpreted see above "Rules by which early Jewish law was derived". While Conservative Jews believe it can continuously be reinterpreted, their view of the *Halakha* has given rise to substantial differences in approach as well as result.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Jews believe that, *halakha* is a religious system, whose core represents the revealed will of God. Although Orthodox Judaism acknowledges that rabbis made many additions and interpretations of Jewish Law, they did so only in accordance with regulations they believe were given to them by Moses on Mount Sinai see Deuteronomy 5:8-13. These regulations were transmitted orally till shortly after the destruction of the second temple. They were then recorded in the Mishna explained in the Talmud Bavli and commentaries throughout history till today. Orthodox Judaism believes that subsequent interpretations have been derived with the utmost accuracy and care.

The final widely excepted code of Jewish law is known as the Shulchan Aruch. As such, no Rabbi has the right to change Jewish law unless they clearly understand how it collaborates with the rules of the Shulchan Aruch. Later commentaries were excepted by many rabbi's as final rule however other rabbi's may disagree.

Orthodox Judaism has a range of opinion on the circumstances and extent to which change is permissible. Haredi Jews generally hold that even *minhagim* (customs) must be retained and existing precedents cannot be reconsidered. Modern Orthodox authorities are generally more inclined to permit limited changes in customs, and some reconsideration of precedent. All Orthodox authorities, however, agree that only later Rabbinical interpretations are subject to reconsideration, and hold that core sources of Divine written and oral law, such as the Torah and the Mishnah, cannot be overridden.

Conservative Judaism

The view held by Conservative Judaism is that while God is real, the Torah is not the word of God in a literal sense. However, in this view the Torah is still held as mankind's record of its understanding of God's revelation, and thus still has divine authority. In this view, traditional Jewish law is still seen as binding. Jews who hold by this view generally try to use modern methods of historical study to learn how Jewish law has changed over time, and are in some cases more willing to change Jewish law in the present.

A key practical difference between Conservative and Orthodox approaches is that Conservative Judaism holds that its Rabbinical body's powers are not limited to reconsidering later precedents based on earlier sources, but the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) is empowered to override Biblical and Taanitic prohibitions by *takkanah* (decree) when perceived to be inconsistent with modern requirements and/or views of ethics. The CJLS has used this power on a number of occasions, most famously in the context of the *driving tshuva*, which permits driving to synagogue, and most recently in its December 2006 opinion lifting most traditional prohibitions on homosexual conduct which is clearly forbidden by the bible see the Bible and homosexuality. Conservative Judaism also made a number of changes to the role of women in Judaism, including counting women in the minyan and ordaining women as Rabbis. The latter was accomplished by simple vote on the faculty of the JTS. Orthodox Judaism holds that *takkanot* (Rabbinical decrees) can only supplement and can never nullify Biblical

law, and significant decisions must be accompanied by scholarly responsa analysing sources.

An example of how different views of the origin of Jewish law inform Conservative approaches to interpreting that law involves the CJLS's acceptance of Rabbi Elie Kaplan Spitz's responsum decreeing the Biblical category of *mamzer* as "inoperative", in which The CJLS adopted the Responsum's view that of how, in the Conservative view of *Halakha*, the "morality which we learn through the unfolding narrative of our tradition" informs the application of Mosaic law:

We cannot conceive of God sanctioning undeserved suffering... When a law of Torah conflicts with morality, when the law is 'unpleasant,' we are committed to find a way to address the problem... We are willing to do explicitly what was largely implicit in the past, namely, to make changes when needed on moral grounds. It is our desire to strengthen Torah that forces us to recognize, explicitly the overriding importance of morality, a morality which we learn from the larger, unfolding narrative of our tradition.

The responsum cited several examples of how, in Spitz's view, the Rabbinic Sages declined to enforce punishments explicitly mandated by Torah law. The examples include the "trial of the accused adulteress (Sotah)", the "Law of the Breaking of the Neck of the Heifer" and the application of the death penalty for the "rebellious child". Spitz argues that the punishment of the Mamzer has been effectively inoperative for nearly two thousand years due to deliberate rabbinic inaction (with a few rule-proving counterexamples, including the 18th century Orthodox rabbi Ismael ha-Kohen of Modena, who decreed that a child should have the word "mamzer" tattooed to his forehead). Further he suggested that the Rabbis have long regarded the punishment declared by the Torah as immoral, and came to the conclusion that no court should agree to hear testimony on "mamzerut". His motion was passed by the CJLS.

The decision represented a watershed for Conservative Judaism because it represented an explicit abrogation of a Biblical injunction on the grounds of contemporary morality, as distinct from exigency. The dissenters, who included Rabbi Joel Roth as well as a partial concurrence by Rabbi Daniel Nevins, argued for reaffirming the classical halakhic framework in which human decrees inform and often limit but never wholly abrogate law believed to be of Divine origin, stating that "we should acknowledge that God's law is beyond our authority to eliminate", but should continue the traditional approach of applying

strict evidentiary rules and presumptions that tend to render enforcement unlikely. He also argued that the current framework is moral, both because proving mamzer status sufficiently beyond all doubt is already so difficult that it is rare, and because the mere existence and possibility of mamzerut status, even if rarely enforced, creates an important incentive for divorcing parties to obtain a get (Jewish religious divorce) to avoid the sin of adultery. He cited a responsum by prominent Haredi Orthodox Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef as an example of how the traditional approach works. Rabbi Yosef was faced with the child of a woman who had left a religious marriage without religious divorce and had a child in the second marriage, seemingly an open-and-shut case of Mamzer status. Rabbi Yosef proceeded to systematically discredit the evidence that the former marriage had ever taken place. The Ketubah was mysteriously not found and hence disqualified, and the officiating Rabbi's testimony was never sufficiently corroborated and hence not credible. Rabbi Yosef then found reason to doubt that the new husband was ever the father, finding that because the ex-husband occasionally delivered alimony personally, an ancient presumption (one of many) that any time a husband and wife are alone together the law presumes intercourse has taken place governed the case. He held that Jewish law could not disprove, and hence had to conclude, that the original husband really was the child's father and there was no case of Mamzer status.

CODES OF JEWISH LAW

The Torah and the Talmud are not formal codes of law: they are sources of law. There are many formal codes of Jewish law that have developed over the past few thousand years. These codes have influenced, and in turn, have been influenced by, the responsa; History of Responsa thus provides an informative complement to the survey below.

The major codes are:

- The Mishnah, composed by Rabbi Judah the Prince, in 200 CE, as a basic outline of the state of the Oral Law in his time. This was the framework upon which the Talmud was based; the Talmud's dialectic analysis of the content of the Mishna (*gemara*; completed c. 500) became the basis for all later halakhic decisions and subsequent codes.
- Codifications by the Geonim of the halakhic material in the Talmud. An early work, *She'iltot* ("Questions") by Achai of

Shabcha (c. 752), discusses over 190 Mitzvot — exploring and addressing various questions on these. The first legal codex proper, *Halakhot Pesukot* (“Decided Laws”), by Yehudai Gaon (c. 760), rearranges the Talmud passages in a structure manageable to the layman. (It was written in vernacular Aramaic, and subsequently translated into Hebrew as *Hilkhot Riu*). *Halakhot Gedolot* (“Great Law Book”), by R. Simeon Kayyara, published two generations later, contains extensive additional material, mainly from Responsa and Monographs of the Geonim, and is presented in a form that is closer to the original Talmud language and structure. (Probably since it was distributed, also, amongst the newly established Ashkenazi communities.) The *She’iltot* was influential on both subsequent works.

- The *Hilchot of the Rif*, Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (1013–1103), summations of the legal material in the Talmud. Alfasi transcribed the Talmud’s halakhic conclusions verbatim, without the surrounding deliberation; he also excludes all Aggadic (non-legal, homiletic) matter. The *Hilchot* soon superseded the geonic codes, as it contained all the decisions and laws then relevant, and additionally, served as an accessible Talmudic commentary; it has been printed with almost every subsequent edition of the Talmud.
- The Mishneh Torah (also known as the *Yad Ha-Hazaqah* for its 14 volumes), by Maimonides (Rambam; 1135–1204). This work encompasses the full range of Talmudic law; it is organised and reformulated in a logical system — in 14 books, 83 sections and 1000 chapters — with each *Halakha* stated clearly. The Mishneh Torah is very influential to this day, and several later works reproduce passages verbatim. It also includes a section on Metaphysics and fundamental beliefs. (Some claim this section draws heavily on Aristotelian science and metaphysics; others suggest that it is within the tradition of Saadia Gaon.) It is the main source of practical *Halakha* for many Yemenite Jews — mainly Baladi and Dor Daim — as well as for a growing community referred to as *talmidei haRambam*.
- The work of *the Rosh*, Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel (1250?/1259?–1328), an abstract of the Talmud, concisely stating the final halakhic decision and quoting later authorities, notably Alfasi, Maimonides, and the Tosafists. This work superseded Rabbi Alfasi’s and has been printed with almost every subsequent edition of the Talmud.
- The *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (The “SeMaG”) of Rabbi Moses ben

Jacob of Coucy (13th century, Coucy, France). “SeMaG” is organised around the 365 negative and the 248 positive commandments, separately discussing each of them according to the Talmud (in light of the commentaries of Rashi and the Tosafot) and the other codes existent at the time.

- “The Mordechai” — by Mordecai ben Hillel, d. Nuremberg 1298 — serves both as a source of analysis, as well of decided law. Mordechai considered about 350 halakhic authorities, and was widely influential, particularly amongst the Ashkenazi and Italki communities. Although organised around the *Hilchot* of *the Rif*, it is, in fact, an independent work. It has been printed with every edition of the Talmud since 1482.
- The Arba’ah Turim (The Tur, The Four Columns) by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (1270–1343, Toledo, Spain). This work traces the *Halakha* from the Torah text and the Talmud through the Rishonim, with the *Hilchot* of Alfasi as its starting point. Ben Asher followed Maimonides’s precedent in arranging his work in a topical order, however, the Tur covers only those areas of Jewish religious law that were in force in the author’s time. The code is divided into four main sections; almost all codes since this time have followed the Tur’s arrangement of material.
 - Orach Chayim—“The Way of Life” worship and ritual observance in the home and synagogue, through the course of the day, the weekly sabbath and the festival cycle.
 - Yoreh De’ah—“Teach Knowledge” assorted ritual prohibitions, dietary laws and regulations concerning menstrual impurity.
 - Even Ha’ezer—“The Rock of the Helpmate” marriage, divorce and other issues in family law.
 - Choshen Mishpat—“The Breastplate of Judgment” The administration and adjudication of civil law.
- The Beit Yosef, and the Shulchan Aruch of Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488–1575). The *Beit Yosef* is a huge commentary on the *Tur* in which Rabbi Karo traces the development of each law from the Talmud through later rabbinical literature (examining thirty-two authorities, beginning with the Talmud and ending with the works of Rabbi Israel Isserlein). The Shulchan Aruch is, in turn, a condensation of the *Beit Yosef*—stating each ruling simply (literally translated, *Shulchan Aruch* means “set table”); this work follows the chapter divisions of the Tur. The Shulchan Aruch, together with its related commentaries, is considered by many

to be the most authoritative compilation of *halakha* since the Talmud. In writing the Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Karo based his rulings on three authorities—Maimonides (Rambam), Asher ben Jehiel (Rosh), and Isaac Alfasi (Rif); he considered *the Mordechai* in inconclusive cases. Sephardic Jews, generally, refer to the Shulchan Aruch as the basis for their daily practice.

- The works of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (“Rema”; Kraków, Poland, 1525 to 1572). Rema noted that the *Shulkhan Arukh* was based on the Sephardic tradition, and he created a series of glosses to be appended to the text of the Shulkhan Arukh for cases where Sephardi and Ashkenazi customs differed (based on the works of Yaakov Moelin, Israel Isserlein and Israel Bruna). The glosses are called *Hamapah*, the “Tablecloth” for the “Set Table”. His comments are now incorporated into the body of all printed editions of the Shulkhan Arukh, typeset in a different script; today, “Shulchan Aruch” refers to the combined work of Karo and Isserles. Isserles’ *Darkhei Moshe* is similarly a commentary on the Tur and the Beit Yosef.
- The Shulchan Aruch HaRav of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (c. 1800) was an attempt to recodify the law as it stood at that time—incorporating commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch, and subsequent responsa—and thus stating the decided *halakha*, as well as the underlying reasoning. The work was written, partly, so that laymen would be able to study Jewish law. Unfortunately, most of the work was lost in a fire prior to publication. It is held in esteem by many Hasidim and non-Hasidim, and is quoted as authoritative by many subsequent works.
- “Layman oriented” digests of *Halakha*. The *Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh* of Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (Hungary 1804–1886), based on the very strict Hungarian customs of the 19th century, became immensely popular after its publication due to its simplicity. This work is not binding in the same way as the Mishneh Torah or the Shulchan Aruch. It is still popular in Orthodox Judaism as a framework for study, if not always for practice. *Chayei Adam* and *Chochmat Adam* by Avraham Danzig (Poland, 1748–1820) are similar Ashkenazi works, but are regarded as a more appropriate basis for practice. The *Ben Ish Chai* by Yosef Chaim (Baghdad, 1832–1909) is a corresponding Sephardi work.
- Works structured directly on the Shulchan Aruch, providing analysis in light of Acharonic material and codes. The *Mishnah*

Berurah of Rabbi Yisroel Meir ha-Kohen, (the “Chofetz Chaim”, Poland, 1838–1933) is a commentary on the “Orach Chayim” section of the Shulchan Aruch, discussing the application of each *Halakha* in light of all subsequent Acharonic decisions. It has become the authoritative halakhic guide for much of Orthodox Ashkenazic Jewry in the post-war period. *Arukh HaShulkhan* by Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829–1888) is a scholarly analysis of *Halakha* through the perspective of the major Rishonim. The work follows the structure of the Tur and the Shulkhan Arukh; rules dealing with vows, agriculture, and ritual purity, are discussed in a second work known as *Arukh HaShulkhan he’Atid*. *Kaf HaChaim* on Orach Chayim and parts of Yoreh De’ah, by the Sephardi sage Yaakov Chaim Sofer (Baghdad and Jerusalem, 1870–1939) is similar in scope, authority and approach to the Mishnah Berurah. *Yalkut Yosef*, by Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef, is a voluminous, widely cited and contemporary work of *Halakha*, based on the rulings of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

- “A Guide To Jewish Religious Practice”, by Rabbi Isaac Klein, with contributions from the Conservative Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly. This work is based on the previous traditional law codes, but written from a Conservative Jewish point of view. It is not accepted among Orthodox Jews.

YESHIVA

A Yeshiva or yeshivah is a Jewish institution for Torah study and the study of Talmud. *Yeshivot* are usually Orthodox Jewish institutions, and generally cater to boys or men. A roughly equivalent women’s institution is the *midrasha* although the term *yeshiva* can be used for a mixed or an all women’s institution too.

The term *yeshiva gedola* (“senior/higher yeshiva”) refers to post-high school institutions, and *yeshiva ketana* (“junior yeshiva”) refers to institutions catering to boys of high school age. The term “*Yeshiva*” is also used as a generic name for any school that teaches Torah, Mishnah and Talmud, to any age group.

A *yeshiva* with a framework for independent study and providing stipends for male married students is known as a kollel.

ETYMOLOGY

Jewish tradition holds that students should sit while learning from a master. The word *yeshiva*, meaning “sitting”, therefore came to be

applied to the activity of learning in class, and hence to a learning “session.”

The transference in meaning of the term from the learning session to the institution itself appears to have occurred by the time of the great Talmudic Academies in Babylonia, Sura and Pumbedita, which were commonly referred to as *shte ha-yeshivot*, “the two colleges”.

HISTORY

Pre-1800s

Traditionally, every town rabbi had the right to maintain a number of full-time or part-time pupils in the town’s study hall (*beit midrash*, usually adjacent to the synagogue). Their cost of living was covered by community taxation. After a number of years, these young people would either take up a vacant rabbinical position elsewhere (after obtaining *semicha*, rabbinical ordination) or join the workforce.

The Mishna (tractate Megilla) mentions the law that a town can only be called a “city” if it supports ten men (*batlanim*) to make up the required quorum for communal prayers. Likewise, every rabbinical court (*beit din*) was attended by a number of pupils up to three times the size of the court (Mishna, tractate Sanhedrin). These might be indications of the historicity of the classical Yeshiva.

As indicated by the Talmud, adults generally took off two months a year (Elul and Adar, the months preceding the harvest) to pursue work, the rest of the year they studied.

The Lithuanian Yeshivas

Organised Torah study was revolutionised by Rabbi Chaim Volozhin, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon (an influential 18th century leader of Judaism). In his view, the traditional arrangement did not cater for those who were looking for more intensive study.

With the support of his teacher, Rabbi Volozhin gathered a large number of interested students and started a *yeshiva* in the (now Belarusian) town of Volozhin. Although the Volozhin Yeshiva was closed some 60 years later by the Russian government, a number of *yeshivos* opened in other towns and cities, most notably Ponevezh, Mir, Brisk and Telz. Many prominent contemporary *yeshivos* in the USA and Israel are continuations of these institutions and often bear the same name.

TYPES OF YESHIVOT

There are a few types of *yeshivot*:

1. Yeshiva ketana (“junior *yeshiva*”)—Many *yeshivot ketanot* in Israel and some in the diaspora do not have a secular course of studies and all students learn Judaic Torah studies full time.
2. Yeshiva High School—Also called *Mesivta* or *Mechina*, combines the intensive Jewish religious education with a secular high school education. The dual curriculum was pioneered by the Manhattan Talmudical Academy of Yeshiva University (now known as Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy) in 1916.
3. Mechina—For Israeli high-school graduates who wish to study for one year before entering the army.
4. Beth Medrash—For high school graduates, and is attended from one year to many years, dependent on the career plans and affiliation of the student.
5. Yeshivat Hesder—Yeshiva that has an arrangement with the Israel Defence Forces by which the students enlist together and, as much as is possible serve together in the army. Over a period of about 5 years there will be a period of service starting in the second year of about 16 months. There are different variations. The rest of the time will be spent in compulsory study in the *yeshiva*.
6. Kollel—Yeshiva for married adults. The Kollel idea, though having its intellectual roots traced to the Torah, is a relatively modern innovation of 19th century Europe. Often, a Kollel will be in the same location as the *yeshiva*.
7. Baal teshuva yeshivas that cater to the needs of the newly Orthodox. The best known are Ohr Somayach and Aish HaTorah.

Traditionally, religious girls’ schools are not called “Yeshiva.” In 1918, under the guidance of Sarah Schenirer the Bais Yaakov system was started, which provided girls with a Torah education, with a curriculum that skewed more toward practical halacha and the study of Tanach, rather than Gemara. Bais Yaakovs are strictly Hareidi schools. Non-Hareidi girls’ schools’ curricula often includes the study of Mishna. They are also sometimes called “Yeshiva” (*e.g.*, Prospect Park Yeshiva). Post-high schools for girls are generally called “seminary.”

PROMINENT YESHIVOT

Academic Year

In most *yeshivos* the year is divided into three periods (terms) called *zmanim*. Elul zman starts from the beginning of the Hebrew month of Elul and extends until the end of Yom Kippur. This is the shortest (approx. six weeks), but most intense semester as it comes before the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Winter zman starts after Sukkot (“Tabernacles”) and lasts until just before Passover, a duration of five months (six in a Jewish leap year).

Summer semester starts after Passover and lasts until either the middle of the month of Tammuz or Tisha B’Av, a duration of about three months.

TYPICAL SCHEDULE

The following is a typical daily schedule for Beis Medrash students:

- 7:00 a.m.—Optional *seder* (study session)
- 7:30 a.m.—Morning prayers
- 8:30 a.m.—Session on study of Jewish law
- 9:00 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9:30 a.m.—Morning Talmud study (first *seder*)
- 12:30 p.m.—*Shiur* (“lecture”)—advanced students sometimes dispense with this lecture
- 1:30 p.m.—Lunch
- 2:45 p.m.—Mincha—afternoon prayers
- 3:00 p.m.—Mussar seder—Jewish ethics
- 3:30 p.m.—Talmud study (second *seder*)
- 7:00 p.m.—Dinner
- 8:00 p.m.—Night *seder*—Review of lecture, or study of choice.
- 9:25 p.m.—Mussar seder—Jewish Ethics
- 9:45 p.m.—Maariv—Evening prayers
- 10:00 p.m.—Optional evening *seder*

This schedule is generally maintained Sunday through Thursday. On Thursday nights there may be an extra long night seder, sometimes lasting beyond 1:00 am. On Fridays there is usually at least one seder

in the morning and the afternoons are free. Saturdays have a special Sabbath schedule which includes some sedarim but usually no shiur.

METHOD OF STUDY

Studying is usually done together with a study-partner called a *havrutha* (Aramaic: “friend”), or in a *shiur* (“lecture”). The *havrutha* is one of the unique features of the Yeshiva. The young men studying in the Yeshiva will spend most of their time with a study partner. The duo should read over the text, discuss it, test each other, ask questions, encourage each other etc. Upon entering the main study of the Yeshiva a first time visitor will be amazed at the noise level, the partners of each *havrutha* will be almost shouting at each other, dozens of these together means there is a lot of noise.

Talmud Study

In the typical *yeshiva*, the main emphasis is on Talmud study and analysis. Generally, two parallel Talmud streams are covered during a *zman* (trimester). The first is study in-depth (*be-iyun*) with an emphasis on analytical skills and close reference to the classical commentators; the latter seeks to cover ground more speedily, to build general knowledge (*bekiyut*) of the Talmud; see The Talmud in modern-day Judaism.

Works generally studied to clarify the Talmudic text are the commentary by Rashi and the analyses of the Tosafists. Various other *meforshim* (commentators) are used as well.

Jewish Law

Generally, a period is devoted to the study of practical *halakha* (Jewish law). The text most commonly studied is the *Mishnah Berurah* written by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan. The *Mishnah Berurah* is a compilation of *halakhic* opinions rendered after the time of the writing of the *Shulkhan Arukh*.

Ethics

The pre-eminent ethical text studied in *yeshivot* is the *Mesillat Yesharim* (“Path [of the] Just”) by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. Other works studied include:

- *Orchot Tzaddikim* (“Paths [of the] Righteous”) Its authorship and time of writing is uncertain, but as it quotes Maimonides, it was written some time after his works were disseminated.

- *Chovot ha-Levavot*, by Bahya ibn Paquda.
- *Ma'alot ha-Middot* ("Benefit [of good character] traits")
- *Mishnat R' Aharon* Mussar Lectures on many topics by Rabbi Aharon Kotler.
- *Mikhtav me-Eliyahu*, the works of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.

Chasidic yeshivos study Hasidic philosophy (*Chassidus*). Chabad yeshivos, for example, study the Tanya, the Likutei Torah, and the voluminous works of the Rebbes of Chabad for an hour and a half in the morning, before prayers, and an hour and a half in the evening. See Tomchei Temimim.

Bible Study

One thing absent on the curriculum of almost all yeshivot is the Bible. It is assumed that all students will be fluent with the Torah and the main classical, rabbinical commentaries on it before they arrive at the yeshiva. Students may read the weekly Torah portion by themselves eg over the weekend. The study of Nevi'im and Ketuvim is not encouraged other than the five Megilloth and Tehillim, of the former it is assumed they are known and the latter are considered to be for women and children to recite or reserved for prayer in times of need. Some more modern yeshivot, particularly in Israel, occasionally offer a course in one of the books of Nevi'im and Ketuvim.

HAREDI YESHIVISH (SLANG)

"Yeshivish" is a word derived from "yeshiva" usually refers to Haredi non-Hasidic Jews that may also mean "misnagdim." Such Jews may be identified by their dress, outlook, and other aspects.

Used in another context *yeshivish* can sometimes refer to the culture which has grown out of the American Orthodox Jewish yeshiva system. Used as an adjective there are several connotations: (*i.e.*) certain cultural and other quasi-halachic norms of the "olam hayeshivos" (*e.g.*, wearing a black hat, jacket, and white shirt for davening, or an aversion to ostentatiousness.)

DAUGHTERS OF ABRAHAM

The Daughters of Abraham is an interfaith book group consisting of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women. Its mission is to overcome stereotypes and to foster mutual respect and understanding among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women.

The first group was founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 2002. Subsequent groups formed in Cambridge, Newton, Massachusetts, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts (at Boston College), and Washington, DC. Media coverage in 2006 has aroused interest in forming additional new groups around the country.

MISSION

The purpose is to increase respect for all of the Abrahamic religions by reading books that teach about each other's faith traditions and learn from each other about the practice of our respective faiths. The group members are committed to building relationships with each other. Daughters of Abraham is not a dialogue group, but a book group focused on discussions of books that explore our the three faith traditions.

MEMBERSHIP

Any Jewish, Christian or Muslim woman who shares the Daughters' purpose and mission is welcome to join. To locate an existing group or to obtain information about starting a new group visit the group's website at <http://www.daughtersofabraham.info/>.

FOUNDING

The Daughters of Abraham was the inspiration of Edie Howe. She attended an interfaith service on the evening of September 11, 2001 and sat with Jewish, Christian and Muslim women. Looking around, she wondered what she could do to respond to the tragic events of that day. She decided to form a book group of women from the three Abrahamic faiths. This first group has been meeting continuously since September 2002.

THE NAME "DAUGHTERS OF ABRAHAM"

This name emphasises the common elements that unite us. In all three of the religious traditions, Abraham is revered as the first monotheist. In this sense, he is the "father" and the members can be thought of as his "daughters." Even though they are "daughters" of different "mothers," Sarah and Hagar, Abraham is the father of all three religions. By naming themselves Abraham's daughters, the group members are saying that there is more holding them together than separating them.

MEETINGS

Some groups choose to meet in the same space every month at the same time. Groups try to select a space that is non-sectarian, comfortable

and easily accessible by public transportation. Group members agree to listen and speak respectfully to one another, not to monopolize the conversation, and to speak from personal experience, rather than making sweeping statements. Members suggest books at the meetings. Periodically, they review all the suggestions, then by consensus, choose the books that will be read. If anyone strongly objects to reading a particular book, it is not read.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ABRAHAM

- Christian Science Monitor (November 2005)
- ABC News Now “Top Priority” (December 2005)
- PBS Religion and Ethics Newsweekly (October 2006)
- Boston Globe (October 2006)
- Boston College Magazine (Spring 2007)

JEWISH DENOMINATIONS

Several groups, sometimes called denominations, “branches,” or “movements,” have developed among Jews of the modern era, especially Ashkenazi Jews living in anglophone countries. Despite the efforts of several of these movements to expand their membership in Israel and achieve official recognition by the Israeli government, non-Orthodox movements have remained largely a feature of Judaism in the diaspora.

Historically, the division of Jews in many Western countries into denominations, which in the United States in particular took the form of three large groups known as Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, can be traced to Jewish reaction to the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) and its aftermath, and to a certain extent the philosophies of these movements were shaped in reaction to one another. Several smaller movements have emerged in the years since. In more recent years, all of these movements have been shaped by the challenge of assimilation.

- Common values. The movements share common values such as *tikkun olam* (a sense of Jewish responsibility to heal or repair the world) and *klal Yisrael* (a sense of being part of, and responsible for, the universal Jewish community). These Jewish values are the basis for cooperation and interplay among the various movements.
- Sacred texts. The movements share a recognition that the Torah and other Jewish spiritual writings such as Tanakh and Talmud are central to Jewish experience. However they differ in their approach to such texts.

The movements differ in their views on various religious issues. These issues include the level of observance, the methodology for interpreting and understanding Jewish Law, biblical authorship, textual criticism, and the nature or role of the the Messiah (or Messianic age). Across these movements, there are marked differences in liturgy, especially in the language in which services are conducted, with the more traditional movements emphasising Hebrew. The sharpest theological division occurs between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews who adhere to other denominations, such that the non-Orthodox movements are sometimes referred to collectively as the “liberal denominations” or “progressive streams.”

TERMINOLOGY

Some people reject the term *denomination* as a label for different groups and ideologies within Judaism, arguing that the notion of *denomination* has a specifically Christian resonance that does not translate easily into the Jewish context. Other commonly used terms are *movements*, *branches*, *trends*, *streams*, or even *flavors* of Judaism. This article uses the terms interchangeably, without purporting to affirm the validity of one term over another.

The Jewish denominations themselves reject characterisation as sects. Sects are traditionally defined as religious subgroups that have broken off from the main body, and this separation usually becomes irreparable over time. Within Judaism, individuals and families often switch affiliation, and individuals are free to marry one another, although the major denominations disagree on who is a Jew. It is not unusual for clergy and Jewish educators trained in one of the liberal denominations to serve in another, and left with no choice, many small Jewish communities combine elements of several movements to achieve a viable level of membership.

Relationships between Jewish religious movements are varied; they are sometimes marked by inter-denominational cooperation outside of the realm of *halakha* (Jewish Law), and sometimes not. Some of the movements sometimes cooperate by uniting with one another in community federations and in campus organisations such as the Hillel Foundation. Jewish religious denominations are distinct from but often linked to Jewish ethnic divisions and Jewish political movements.

JUDAISM AND SAMARITANS

The Samaritans regard themselves as direct descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh in the northern Kingdom of Israel,

which was conquered by Assyria in 722 BCE. The first historical references to the Samaritans date from the Babylonian Exile. The attitude of the Talmud to the Samaritans is that they are to be treated as Jews in matters where their practice agrees with the mainstream but are otherwise to be treated as non-Jews. Modern DNA evidence supports the Samaritan's claim that they are descended patrilineally from ancient Israelites. Samaritan scripture preserves a version of the Pentateuch and some writings from Tanakh in slightly variant forms. The Samaritans have dwindled to two communities numbering about 700 individuals. One is located in the Israeli city of Holon, while the other is located near Nablus on Mount Gerizim, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

JEWISH SECT IN THE SECOND TEMPLE DAYS

In the decades before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the Jewish people in Palestine were divided into several movements, sometimes warring among themselves: Saducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. Many historic sources, from Flavius Josephus to the Christian New Testament to the recovered fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, attest to the divisions among Jews at this time. Rabbinical writings from later periods, including the Talmud, attest further to these ancient schisms.

KARAITE JUDAISM AND RABBINIC JUDAISM

Most of the Modern Judaism streams developed from the Pharisee movement, which became known as Rabbinic Judaism with the compilation of oral law into Mishna. After the destruction of the Second Temple and the Bar Kokhba revolt, the other movements disappear from historical records.

Those who did not agree with the Rabbinic oral law were later called by the name "Karaites" (in Hebrew "Karaim")—followers of the scriptures. Historically, Karaite Judaism appeared as an organised movement that rejected the innovations of rabbinical Judaism and the authority of the Exilarch after the Islamic conquest of the Middle East. In some of their older writings, the Karaites claim descent from the Sadducees. Karaism accepts only the Tanakh, rejecting the Talmud and other rabbinical writings. In the 10th century, the Karaites are believed to have comprised about 50 per cent of the world's Jewish population. At the time of the traveler Benjamin of Tudela in the 12th century, Karaites were widely dispersed around the eastern Mediterranean, both in Islamic areas and the Byzantine Empire. Benjamin describes Karaite communities in many of the places he visited.

In the early 20th century, small Karaite communities remained in Egypt, Turkey, the Crimea, and Lithuania. Today, there are about 14,000 Karaite Jews in the world, most of whom live in Israel. Traditionally, Rabbinic Judaism has regarded the Karaites as Jewish, but heretical.

BACKGROUND: JEWISH ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVISIONS

Traditionally, Judaism is not divided into religious traditions based on theological difference. However, a wide array of Jewish communities have developed independently, distinguishable by their varying practices in matters that are *not* considered central ideas within Judaism, such as Maimonides' list of the Jewish principles of faith.

Although there are numerous Jewish ethnic communities, there are several that are large enough to be considered "predominant." Ashkenazi communities compose about 42 per cent of the world's Jewish population, and Sephardic communities compose about 37 per cent. Of the remainder, the Mizrahi Jewish communities—the "Arab" and "Persian" Jews—compose the greatest part, with about 16 per cent of the world's Jewish population. Together these ethnic groups compose 95 per cent of the world's Jewish population.

The remaining 5 per cent of Jews are divided among a wide array of small groups (perhaps the Beta Israel group of Ethiopian Jews is the most important), some of which are nearing extinction as a result of assimilation and intermarriage into surrounding non-Jewish cultures or surrounding Jewish cultures.

Religiously speaking, most Jewish communities have historically held that there is no relevant role for "dogma"; rather, there is *halakha* (Jewish law) only. The extent to which every Jew as an individual adheres to Jewish law has long been regarded as a matter of personal preference, although the idea has always been prominent that every Jew should be as observant of the laws as they are able. The Enlightenment had a tremendous effect on Jewish identity and on ideas about the importance and role of Jewish observance. Due to the geographical distribution and the geopolitical entities affected by the Enlightenment, this philosophical revolution essentially affected only the Ashkenazi community; however, because of the predominance of the Ashkenazi community in Israeli politics and in Jewish leadership worldwide, the effects have been significant for all Jews.

Hasidic Judaism

Hasidic Judaism was founded by Israel ben Eliezer (1700-1760), also known as the Baal Shem Tov or the Besht (the Hebrew and Yiddish acronym of Baal Shem Tov). His disciples attracted many followers among Ashkenazi Jews, and established numerous Hasidic groups across Europe. Hasidic Judaism eventually became the way of life for many Jews in Europe. It first came to the United States during the large waves of Jewish emigration beginning in the 1880s.

In the late 18th century, there was a serious schism between Hasidic and non-Hasidic Jews. European Jews who rejected the Hasidic movement were dubbed Mitnagdim (“opponents”) by the followers of the Baal Shem Tov, who had previously called themselves Freylechn (“happy ones”) and now began to call themselves Hasidim (“pious ones”). Some of the reasons for the rejection of Hasidic Judaism were the overwhelming exuberance of Hasidic worship, their untraditional ascriptions of infallibility and alleged miracle-working to their leaders, and the concern that it might become a messianic sect. Since then all the sects of Hasidic Judaism have been subsumed theologically into mainstream Orthodox Judaism, particularly Haredi Judaism, although cultural differences persist. See the articles on Hasidic Judaism and Mitnagdim for more detailed information.

MODERN DIVISIONS OR “DENOMINATIONS”

Perhaps the greatest divisions since the time of the division between the Sadducees and Pharisees two millennia ago are the divisions within the Ashkenazic community that have arisen in the past two centuries, ever since the Enlightenment and the Renaissance influenced Jews from northern and eastern Europe.

The first evidence of this great dogmatic schism was the development of the Reform Judaism movement, rejected “ethnic Judaism” and preferred to regard Judaism as a religion rather than an ethnicity or a culture. Over time several movements emerged:

- Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Jews generally see themselves as practicing normative Judaism, rather than belonging to a particular movement. Within Orthodox Judaism there is a spectrum of communities and practices, including Modern Orthodox Judaism, Haredi Judaism, and a variety of movements that have their origins in Hasidic Judaism.

- Conservative Judaism or Masorti Judaism. Founded in the United States after the division between Reform and Orthodox Judaism, to provide Jews seeking liberalisation of Orthodox theology and practice with a more traditional and halakhically-based alternative to Reform Judaism. It has spread to Ashkenazi communities in Anglophone countries and Israel.
- Reform Judaism or Progressive Judaism. Originally formed in Germany as a reaction to traditional Judaism, stresses integration with society and a personal interpretation of the Torah.
- Reconstructionist Judaism. A small, liberal Jewish movement, found primarily in the United States. It began as a liberal movement within Conservative Judaism and formally separated in the 1980s.
- Jewish Renewal. Founded in the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, it tends to embrace the ecstatic worship style and mysticism of hasidism, while rejecting the halakhic rigor of Orthodox Judaism. Jewish renewal congregations tend to be inclusive on the subject of who is a Jew. The Jewish Renewal movement lacks the formal institutional structure of the other liberal movements.
- Humanistic Judaism. A nontheistic movement that emphasises Jewish culture and history as the sources of Jewish identity. Founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, it is centered in North America but has spread to Europe, Latin America and Israel.

Table Illustrating the Range of Jewish Denominations

This table illustrates the range of Jewish denominations. Those denominations that are more conservative in their theology and understanding of Jewish law are shown on the *right*, while those on the *left* are progressively more liberal in their theology and understanding of Jewish law. However, caution must be used in reading this table. There are many Jews who have a liberal view of theology and Jewish principles of faith while having a strict understanding of *halakha*, and vice-versa.

DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN “DENOMINATIONS”

Development of denominations or movements has been primarily a phenomenon among Ashkenazi Jews who have immigrated to Anglophone countries. Much of the literature of these denominations is in English, not Hebrew. Their development can be seen as both a

APPROXIMATE JEWISH DENOMINATIONAL MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Country	← Progressive/Liberal to Conservative/Traditional →					
USA	Reconstructionist Judaism	Union for Reform Judaism		United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism	Orthodox Union (Modern Orthodox) and others	Haredi Orthodox
Israel		Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism		Masorti Movement in Israel	Orthodox, traditional Mizrahi Jews, and others	Haredi Orthodox
United Kingdom		Liberal Judaism	Movement for Reform Judaism	Assembly of Masorti Synagogues	The United Synagogue (Orthodox)	Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations and others

response to the western Enlightenment and to emancipation and immigration.

Response to Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment

In the late 18th century Europe, and then the rest of the world, was swept by a group of intellectual, social and political movements that taken together were referred to as the Enlightenment. These movements promoted scientific thinking, free thought, and allowed people to question previously unshaken religious dogmas. The emancipation of the Jews in many European communities, and the Haskalah movement started by Moses Mendelssohn, brought the Enlightenment to the Jewish community.

In response to the challenges of integrating Jewish life with Enlightenment values, German Jews in the early 1800s began to develop the concept of Reform Judaism, adapting Jewish practice to the new conditions of an increasingly urbanised and secular community.

Response to Immigration

The particular forms which the denominations have taken on have been shaped by immigration of the Ashkenazi Jewish communities, once concentrated in eastern and central Europe, to western and mostly Anglophone countries (in particular, in North America). In the middle of the 20th Century, the institutional division of North American Jewry between Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox movements still reflected immigrant origins. Reform Jews at that time were predominantly of German or western European origin, while both Conservative and Orthodox Judaism came primarily from eastern European countries.

Response to Israel and Zionism

The issue of Zionism was once very divisive in the Jewish community. Non-Zionists believed that Jews should integrate into the countries in which they lived, rather than moving to the Land of Israel. The original founders of Reform Judaism in Germany rejected traditional prayers for the restoration of Jerusalem. Also, the view among Reform Jews that Judaism was strictly a religion and that Jews should be loyal citizens of their host nations led to a non-Zionist, and sometimes anti-Zionist, stance. Orthodox non-Zionists believed that the return to Israel could only happen with the coming of the Messiah, and that a political attempt to re-establish a Jewish state was contrary to God's plan.

After events of the twentieth century, most importantly the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern State of Israel, opposition to Zionism largely disappeared within Reform Judaism. Secular opposition to Zionism has continued among some Jewish political groups, and among some Jews active in leftist political movements. Among most religious non-Zionists, there is a *defacto* recognition of Israel, but as a secular state. The Edah Chareidis in Jerusalem does not recognize the legitimacy of the state, and one small group, Neturei Karta, actively opposes the existence of Israel.

Response to Pressures of Assimilation

Among of the most striking differences between the Jewish movements in the 21st century is their response to pressures of assimilation, such as intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis have been most accepting of intermarried couples, with some rabbis willing to officiate in mixed religious ceremonies, although most insist that children in such families be raised strictly Jewish. Conservative rabbis are not permitted to officiate in such marriages, but are supportive of couples when the non-Jewish partner wishes to convert to Judaism and raise children as Jewish.

EMERGENCE OF TRANS- AND POST-DENOMINATIONAL JUDAISM

While this article seeks to describe the various contemporary Jewish “denominations,” the very idea of Jewish denominationalism is contested by some Jews and Jewish organisations. Some consider themselves to be “trans-denominational” or “post-denominational.” A variety of new Jewish organisations are emerging that lack such affiliations:

- Hebrew College in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, a seminary.
- Jewish day schools are opening in the United States, both primary and secondary, that lack affiliation with one of the movements.

They believe that the formal divisions that have arisen among the “denominations” in contemporary Jewish history are unnecessarily divisive, as well as religiously and intellectually simplistic. According to Rachel Rosenthal, “The post-denominational Jew refuses to be labeled or categorised in a religion that thrives on stereotypes. He has seen what the institutional branches of Judaism have to offer and believes that a better Judaism can be created.” Such Jews might, out of necessity, affiliate with a synagogue associated with a particular movement, but their own personal Jewish ideology is often shaped by a variety of influences from more than one denomination.

THE SOMETIMES COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFFILIATION AND PERSONAL PRACTICE OR BELIEF

Finally, even among Jews who do not self-consciously think of themselves as “trans-” or “post-denominational,” the link between personal belief and practice, on the one hand, and formal affiliation, on the other, is sometimes tenuous. For example, some Jews will affiliate with a synagogue belonging to a particular denomination or grouping for practical, emotional, aesthetic, or sentimental reasons, even though their personal practice or belief diverge sharply from the stated norms of that denomination. In some situations, in fact, a synagogue movement will attract a mass of members whose belief and practices are very much at variance with the beliefs and practices of the movement’s core. This is particularly true, for example, for both Orthodox Judaism in the United Kingdom and Conservative Judaism in the United States. In both these cases, for different but overlapping reasons, the mass of members are less religiously observant than the official position, and the position of the movements’ cores, might suggest.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Orthodox Judaism is the formulation of Judaism that adheres to a relatively strict interpretation and application of the laws and ethics first canonised in the Talmudic texts (“Oral Torah”) and as subsequently developed and applied by the later authorities known as the Gaonim, Rishonim, and Acharonim.

Orthodox Judaism is characterised by:

- Belief that the Torah (*i.e.* the Pentateuch) and its pertaining laws are Divine, were transmitted by God to Moses, are eternal, and are unalterable;
- Belief that there is also an oral law in Judaism, which contains the authoritative interpretation of the written Torah’s legal sections, is also Divine—having been transmitted in some form by God to Moses along with the Pentateuch—and has been passed down to and expounded by various authorities from Moses to the Talmudic period. This oral law is embodied in the Talmud, Midrash, and innumerable related texts, all intrinsically and inherently entwined with the written law of the Torah;
- Belief that God has made an exclusive, unbreakable covenant with the Children of Israel (the descendants of the Jewish patriarch, Jacob, whose other name was Israel) to be governed by the Torah;

- Belief in a Jewish eschatology, including a Jewish Messiah, a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, and a resurrection of the dead.
- Adherence to *Halakha*
- Acceptance of codes, mainly the Shulchan Aruch, as authoritative practical guidance in application of both the written and oral laws. New Halakhic rulings can be made by Orthodox authorities, but such rulings cannot contradict or remove previous accepted Halakhic rulings, which are considered more authoritative.
- Near universal belief in the thirteen Jewish principles of faith as stated by the Rambam (Maimonides); and
- Acceptance of *halakha*, following Rabbis as authoritative interpreters and judges of Jewish law.

DIVERSITY WITHIN ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Orthodox Judaism's central belief is that the Torah, including both the Written Law and the Oral Torah, was given directly from God to Moses and can never be altered or rejected in any way. As a result, all Jews are required to live in accordance with the Commandments and Jewish law.

However, since there is no one unifying Orthodox body, there is no one official statement of principles of faith. Rather, each Orthodox group claims to be a non-exclusive heir to the received tradition of Jewish theology, while still affirming a literal acceptance of Maimonides' thirteen principles.

Given this (relative) philosophic flexibility, variant viewpoints are possible, particularly in areas not explicitly demarcated by the *Halakha*. The result is a relatively broad range of *hashkafot* (Hebrew: world view; sing. *hashkafa*) within Orthodoxy.

Social and Philosophic Differences

The greatest differences as regards the *devarim she'ein lahem shiur* are over:

1. the degree to which an Orthodox Jew should integrate and/or disengage from secular society;
2. the extent of acceptance of Torah/Talmud/Aggadah/*Halakha* through the viewpoint of rabbis and their rabbinical literature as a principal outlook on all matters of the external world including secular, scientific, and political matters, *vis-a-vis* accepting secular views on some matters;

3. the weight assigned to Torah study versus secular studies or other pursuits;
4. the centrality of yeshivas as the place for personal Torah study;
5. the importance of a central spiritual guide in areas outside of Halakhic decision;
6. the importance of maintaining non-Halakhic customs, such as dress, language and music;
7. the relationship of the modern state of Israel to Judaism;
8. the role of women in (religious) society.
9. the nature of the relationship with non-Jews;

Subgroups

The above differences are realised in the various subgroups of Orthodoxy, which maintain significant social differences, and differences in understanding *Halakha*. These groups, broadly, comprise Modern Orthodox Judaism and Haredi Judaism, the latter comprising Hasidic Judaism and non-Hasidic Haredi Judaism.

- Modern Orthodoxy is open to increased integration with non-Jewish society, regards secular knowledge as valuable, and is somewhat more willing to use Talmudic arguments to revisit questions of Jewish law
- Religious Zionism, characterised by belief in the importance of the modern state of Israel to Judaism, often intersects with Modern Orthodoxy.
- Haredi Judaism advocates segregation from non-Jewish culture, although not from non-Jewish society entirely. It is characterised by its focus on community-wide Torah study (in contrast with Modern Orthodoxy, which in practice decentralises the role of Torah study for lay people through the emphasis of other concurrent religious values). Engaging in the commercial world is often seen as a legitimate means to achieving a livelihood, but participation in modern society is not perceived as an inherently worthy ambition. The same outlook is applied with regard to obtaining degrees necessary to enter one's intended profession: where tolerated in the Haredi society, attending secular institutions of higher education is viewed as a necessary but inferior activity. Pure academic interest is instead directed toward the religious edification found in the yeshiva.

- Hasidic Judaism, a subgroup of Haredi Judaism, places great emphasis on all Jewish traditions, including the mystical, and generally prefers separation from all non-Jewish society.

In Practice

For guidance in practical application of Jewish law (*Halakha*) the majority of Orthodox Jews appeal, ultimately, to the Shulchan Aruch ("Code of Jewish Law" composed in the 16th century by Rabbi Joseph Caro) together with its surrounding commentaries. Thus, at a general level, there is a large degree of uniformity amongst all Orthodox Jews. Concerning the details, however, there is often variance: decisions may be based on various of the standardised codes of Jewish Law that have been made over the centuries, as well as on the various responsa. These codes and responsa may differ from each other as regards detail (and reflecting the above differences, on the weight assigned to various issues).

By and large, however, the differences result from the historic dispersal of the Jews and the consequent regional differences in practice (see *minhag*).

- Mizrahi and Sephardic Orthodox Jews base their practice on the Shulchan Aruch. Two recent works of *Halakha*, *Kaf HaChaim* and *Ben Ish Chai*, have become authoritative in Sephardic communities. Thus, Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews may choose to follow the opinion of the *Ben Ish Chai* when it conflicts with the Shulchan Aruch.
- Ashkenazic Orthodox Jews have traditionally based most of their practices on the *Rema*, the gloss on the Shulchan Aruch by Rabbi Moses Isserles reflecting differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi custom. In the post-war period, the *Mishnah Berurah* has become authoritative, and Ashkenazi Jews may choose to follow the opinion of the *Mishnah Brurah* instead of a particular detail of Jewish law as presented in the Shulchan Aruch.
- Chabad Lubavitch Hasidim generally follow the rulings of Shneur Zalman of Liadi in the Shulchan Aruch HaRav.
- Traditional Baladi and Dor Daim (Yemenite Jews) base most of their practices on the *Mishneh Torah* Maimonides' earlier compendium of Halacha (written several centuries before the Shulchan Aruch). The *Talmidei haRambam*, also keep Jewish law as codified in the *Mishneh Torah*.

- An even smaller number—such as the Romaniote Jews, traditionally rule according to the Jerusalem Talmud over the Babylonian Talmud.

(Note that on an *individual* level there is a considerable range in the level of observance amongst “Orthodox Jews”. Thus, there are those who would consider themselves “Orthodox” and yet may not be observant of, for example, the laws of family purity.)

There are several Jewish laws that Orthodox Judaism has traditionally placed an emphasis on. Amongst them are the rules of Kashrut, Shabbat, Family Purity, and Tefilah (Prayer).

Externally, Orthodox Jews can often be identified by their manner of dress and family lifestyle. Orthodox women will traditionally dress very modestly; keeping most of their skin covered. Additionally, most married women will cover their hair outside of their home usually in the form of hat, bandanna, or wig. Orthodox men traditionally wear a skullcap known as a Kipa. In the last century Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) men have often distinguished themselves by growing beards, wearing black hats and dressing in formal attire.

ORIGIN AND DEFINITION OF THE NAME “ORTHODOX”

While many Orthodox Jews accept the label “Orthodox”, others reject and criticise it because it was never traditionally applied to Jews who strictly interpreted and followed *halakha* in ancient times or the Middle Ages. Many Orthodox Jews prefer to call their faith Torah Judaism. The word “orthodox” itself is derived from the Greek *orthos* meaning “straight/correct” and *doxa* meaning “opinion”.

Use of the “Orthodox” label seems to have begun towards the beginning of the 19th century. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch wrote in 1854 that:

...it was not “Orthodox” Jews who introduced the word “orthodox” into Jewish discussion. It was the modern “progressive” Jews who first applied the name to “old,” “backward” Jews as a derogatory term. This name was... resented by “old” Jews. And rightfully so...

Others, however, say that Rabbi Isaac Leeser was the first to use the term in the US in his journal “The Occident,” whose target audience was the more “traditional” or Orthodox Jew.

Yet others explain that the term arose out of the growth of the then new Reformer Movement, which was “unorthodox”, hence making the traditionalists the “orthodox.”

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORTHODOXY

Orthodoxy is not a single movement or school of thought. There is no single rabbinic body to which all its rabbis are expected to belong, or any one organisation representing its member congregations. In the United States at the present time, there are a number of Orthodox congregational organisations such as, for example, Agudath Israel, the Orthodox Union, and the National Council of Young Israel— none of which can claim to represent even a majority of all Orthodox congregations.

What the exact forms of Judaism were during the times of Moses or during the eras of the Mishnah and Talmud cannot be exactly known today in all their details, but Orthodox Jews maintain that contemporary Orthodox Judaism maintains the same basic philosophy and legal framework that existed throughout Jewish history— whereas the other denominations depart from it. It may be said that Orthodox Judaism, as it exists today, is an outgrowth that stretches from the time of Moses, to the time of the Mishnah and Talmud, through the oral law, and rabbinic literature ongoing until the present time.

In the early 1800s, elements within German Jewry sought to reform Jewish belief and practice in response to The Age of Enlightenment and the Jewish Emancipation. In light of contemporary scholarship, they denied divine authorship of the Torah, declared only those biblical laws concerning ethics to be binding, and stated that the rest of *Halakha* (Jewish law) need no longer be viewed as normative (see Reform Judaism).

At the same time, there were those German Jews who actively maintained their traditions and adherence to Jewish law while simultaneously engaging with a post-Enlightenment society. This camp was best represented by the work and thought of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. Hirsch held that Judaism demands an application of Torah thought to the entire realm of human experience—including the secular disciplines. This philosophy is termed "*Torah im Derech Eretz*". While insisting on strict adherence to Jewish beliefs and practices, he held that Jews should attempt to engage and influence the modern world, and encouraged those secular studies compatible with Torah thought. This form of Judaism is sometimes termed "neo-Orthodoxy". The religious and social realities of Western European Jewry are considered by some to be the precursors to Modern Orthodoxy. While Modern Orthodoxy is considered traditional by most Jews today, some within the Orthodox community groups to its right consider it of questionable

validity, and the neo-Orthodox movement of today holds that Hirsch's views are unlike in essence to those of Modern Orthodoxy. [See *Torah im Derech Eretz* and *Torah Umadda* "Relationship with Torah im Derech Eretz" for a more extensive listing.]

In the 20th century, a large segment of the Orthodox population (notably as represented by the World Agudath Israel movement formally established in 1912) disagreed, and took a stricter approach. For a few of them, the motto "recent is forbidden by Torah" was appealing, but they too followed various routes of observance and practice. The leading rabbis of Orthodoxy viewed innovations and modifications within Jewish law and customs with extreme care and caution. Some today refer to this form of Judaism as "Haredi Judaism", or "Ultra-Orthodox Judaism". Both terms are controversial: in some circles, the label "Haredi" is considered pejorative, as is the case of the label "ultra-Orthodox".

The various approaches have proved resilient. It is estimated that presently there are more Jews studying in yeshivot (Talmudical schools) and Kollelim (post-graduate Talmudical colleges for married students) than at any other time in history. In 1915 Yeshiva College (later Yeshiva University) and its Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was established in New York City for training in a Modern Orthodox milieu. Eventually a school branch was established in Los Angeles, California. A number of other smaller but influential Orthodox seminaries, mostly Haredi, were also established throughout the country, most notably in New York City, Baltimore, and Chicago. The Haredi yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey is the largest institution of its kind.

BELIEFS

Orthodox Judaism is composed of different groups with intertwining beliefs, practices and theologies, although in their core beliefs, all Orthodox movements share the same principles.

Orthodoxy collectively considers itself the only true heir to the Jewish tradition. The Orthodox Jewish movements generally consider all non-Orthodox Jewish movements to be unacceptable deviations from authentic Judaism; both because of other denominations' doubt concerning the verbal revelation of Written and Oral Torah, and because of their rejection of Halakhic (Jewish legal) precedent as binding. As such, most Orthodox groups characterise non-Orthodox forms of Judaism as heretical; see the article on Relationships between Jewish religious movements.

Orthodox Judaism affirms monotheism—the belief in one God. Among the in-depth explanations of that belief are Maimonidean rationalism, Kabbalistic mysticism, and Hasidic panentheism. A few affirm self-limited omniscience (the theology elucidated by Gersonides in “The Wars of the Lord”.)

Orthodox Judaism maintains the historical understanding of Jewish identity. A Jew is someone who was born to a Jewish mother, or who converts to Judaism in accordance with Jewish law and tradition. Orthodoxy thus rejects patrilineal descent as a means of establishing Jewish national identity. Similarly, Orthodoxy strongly condemns intermarriage. Intermarriage is seen as a deliberate rejection of Judaism, and an intermarried person is effectively cut off from most of the Orthodox community. However, some Orthodox Jewish organisations do reach out to intermarried Jews.

Beliefs about Jewish Law and Tradition

Orthodox Judaism holds that the words of the Torah, including both the Written Law (Pentateuch) and those parts of the Oral Law which are *Halacha l’Moshe m’Sinai*, were dictated by God to Moses essentially as they exist today. The laws contained in the Written Torah were given along with detailed explanations as how to apply and interpret them, the Oral Law. Although Orthodox Jews believe that many elements of current religious law were decreed or added as “fences” around the law by the rabbis, all Orthodox Jews believe that there is an underlying core of Sinaitic law and that this core of the religious laws Orthodox Jews know today is thus directly derived from Sinai and directly reflects the Divine will. As such, Orthodox Jews believe that one must be extremely careful in changing or adapting Jewish law. Orthodox Judaism holds that, given Jewish law’s Divine origin, no underlying principle may be compromised in accounting for changing political, social or economic conditions; in this sense, “creativity” and development in Jewish law is limited.

There is, however, significant disagreement within Orthodox Judaism, particularly between Haredi Judaism and Modern Orthodox Judaism, about the extent and circumstances under which the proper application of *Halakha* should be re-examined as a result of changing realities. As a general rule, Haredi Jews believe that when at all possible the law should be maintained as it has been practiced through the generations; Modern Orthodox authorities are more willing to assume that under scrupulous examination, identical principles may lead to

different applications in the context of modern life. To the Orthodox Jew, *Halakha* is a guide, God's Law, governing the structure of daily life from the moment he or she wakes up to the moment he goes to sleep.

It includes codes of behaviour applicable to a broad range of circumstances (and many hypothetical ones). There are though a number of meta-principles that guide the halachik process and in an instance of opposition between a specific halacha and a meta-principle, the meta-principle often wins out. Examples of Halachik Meta-Principles are: *Deracheha Darchei Noam*-the ways of Torah are pleasant, *Kavod Habriyot*-basic respect for human beings, *Pikuach Nefesh*-the sanctity of human life.

Orthodox Judaism holds that on Mount Sinai the Written Law was transmitted along with an Oral Law. The words of the Torah (Pentateuch) were spoken to Moses by God; the laws contained in this Written Torah, the *Mitzvot*, were given along with detailed explanations (the oral tradition) as to how to apply and interpret them. Furthermore, the Oral law includes principles designed to create new rules. The Oral law is held to be transmitted with an extremely high degree of accuracy. Jewish theologians, who choose to emphasize the more evolutionary nature of the Halacha point to a famous story in the Talmud, where Moses is magically transported to the House of Study of Rabbi Akiva and is clearly unable to follow the ensuing discussion.

According to Orthodox Judaism, Jewish law today is based on the commandments in the Torah, as viewed through the discussions and debates contained in classical rabbinic literature, especially the Mishnah and the Talmud. Orthodox Judaism thus holds that the *Halakha* ("Jewish law") represents the "will of God", either directly, or as closely to directly as possible. The laws are from the word of God in the Torah, using a set of rules also revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, and have been derived with the utmost accuracy and care, and thus the Oral Law is considered to be no less the word of God. If some of the details of Jewish law may have been lost over the millennia, they were reconstructed in accordance with internally consistent rules; see The 13 rules by which Jewish law was derived.

In this world view, the Mishnaic and Talmudic rabbis are closer to the Divine revelation; by corollary, one must be extremely conservative in changing or adapting Jewish law. Furthermore, Orthodox Judaism holds that, given Jewish law's Divine origin, no underlying principle may be compromised in accounting for changing political, social or

economic conditions; in this sense, “creativity” and development in Jewish law is held to have been limited. Orthodox Jews will also study the Talmud for its own sake; this is considered to be the greatest mitzvah of all.

Haredi and Modern Orthodox Judaism vary somewhat in their view of the validity of Halakhic reconsideration. It is held virtually as a principle of belief among many Haredi Jews that *halakha* (“Jewish law”) never changes. Haredi Judaism thus views higher criticism of the Talmud as inappropriate, and almost certainly heretical. At the same time, many within Modern Orthodox Judaism do not have a problem with historical scholarship in this area. See the entry on Higher criticism of the Talmud. Modern Orthodox Judaism is also somewhat more willing to consider revisiting questions of Jewish law through Talmudic arguments. Although in practice such instances are rare, they do exist. Notable examples include acceptance of rules permitting farming during the Shmita year and permitting the advanced religious education of women.

ORTHODOX MOVEMENTS, ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, more commonly known as the Orthodox Union, or more simply as the “OU”, and the Rabbinical Council of America, “RCA” are organisations that represent Modern Orthodox Judaism, a large segment of Orthodoxy in the United States and Canada. These groups should not be confused with the similarly named Union of Orthodox Rabbis (described below).

The National Council of Young Israel, and the Council of Young Israel Rabbis are smaller groups that were founded as Modern Orthodox organisations, are Zionist, and are in the right wing of Modern Orthodox Judaism. Young Israel strongly supports and allies itself with the settlement movement in Israel. Israeli government leaders typically refuse to deal with the NCYI, preferring to work with the more moderate and mainstream Orthodox Union. While the lay membership of synagogues affiliated with the NCYI are almost exclusively Modern Orthodox in orientation, the Rabbinical leadership of the synagogues ranges from Modern Orthodox to Haredi.

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel was founded with the intention of representing all of Judaism within the State of Israel, and has two chief rabbis: One is Ashkenazic (of the East European and Russian Jewish tradition) and one is Sephardic (of the Spanish, North African and middle-eastern Jewish tradition.) The rabbinate has never been

accepted by most Israeli Haredi groups. Since the 1960s the Chief rabbinate of Israel has moved somewhat closer to the positions of Haredi Judaism.

Mizrachi, Mafdal and National Union (Israel) all represent certain sectors within the Religious Zionist movement, both in diaspora and Israel. Gush Emunim, Meimad, Tzohar, Hazit and other movements represent over competing divisions within the sector. They firmly believe in the 'Land of Israel for the People of Israel according to the principles Torah of Israel.', although Meimad are pragmatic about such programme. Gush Emunim are the settlement wing of National Union (Israel) and support widespread kiruv as well, through such institutions as Machon Meir, Merkaz HaRav and Rabbi Shlomo Aviner. Another sector includes the Hardal faction, which tends to be unallied to the Government and quite centristic.

Chabad Lubavitch is a well-known branch of Hasidic Judaism which is well-known because of its emphasis on outreach and education. The organisation has been in existence for 200 years, and especially after the Second World War, it began sending out emissaries (Shluchim) who have as a mission the bringing back of disaffected Jews to a level of observance consistent with authentic and proper norms (*i.e.*, Orthodox Judaism). They are major players in what is known as the *Baal Teshuva* movement. Their mandate is to make non-observant Jews more Jewishly aware.

Agudath Israel of America (also: Agudat Yisrael or Agudas Yisroel) is a large and influential Haredi group in America. Its roots go back to the establishment of the original founding of the Agudath Israel movement in 1912 in Kattowitz (Katowice), Germany (now Poland). The American Agudath Israel was founded in 1939. There is an Agudat Israel (Hasidic) in Israel, and also Degel HaTorah (non-Hasidic "Lithuanian"), as well as an Agudath Israel of Europe in Europe. These groups are loosely affiliated through the World Agudath Israel, which from time to time holds a major gathering in Israel called a *knessia*. Agudah unites many rabbinic leaders from the Hasidic Judaism wing with those of the non-Hasidic "Yeshiva" world. It is generally non-nationalistic.

In Israel it shares a similar agenda with the Sephardic Shas political party, although Shas are more bipartisan towards their own issues, non-nationalistic based with a huge emphasis on Sephardi Judaism and Mizrahi Judaism. They have their own positions and play a more prominent role in the Government of the State, usually having something

to say about almost every Jewish issue. They are usually in fierce contention to Agudat Yisrael.

The Agudath HaRabonim (Agudas HaRabbonim), also known as the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, is a small Haredi-leaning organisation that was founded in 1902. It should not be confused with “The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America” (see above) which is a separate organisation. While at one time influential within Orthodox Judaism, the Agudath HaRabonim in the last several decades it has progressively moved further to the right; its membership has been dropping and it has been relatively inactive. Some of its members are rabbis from Chabad (Lubavitch) Judaism; some are also members of the RCA (see above). It is currently most famous for its 1997 declaration (citing Israeli Chief Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog, Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, and Modern Orthodox Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik) that the Conservative and Reform movements are “not Judaism at all.”

The Igud HaRabonim (also: Igud HaRabanim), the Rabbinical Alliance of America, is a small Haredi organisation. Founded in 1944, it claims over 650 rabbis; recent estimates indicate that less than 100 of its members worldwide actually work as rabbis.

The *Hisachdus HaRabanim D'ARHA" B V'Canada* or the Central Rabbinical Congress of the United States and Canada (CRC) was established in 1952. It is an anti-Zionist Haredi organisation, consisting mainly of the Satmar Hasidic group, which has about 1,00,000 adherents (an unknown number of which are rabbis), and other like-minded Haredi groups.

During the past years, the left-wing Modern Orthodox advocacy group Edah, consisting of American Modern Orthodox rabbis. Most of its membership came from synagogues affiliated with the Union of Orthodox Congregations and RCA (above). Their motto was “The courage to be Modern and Orthodox”. Edah ceased functioning in 2007 and merged some of its programmes into the left-wing Yeshivat Chovevei Torah.

The Bais Yaakov movement, begun in 1917, introduced the concept of formal Judaic schooling for Orthodox women.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Conservative Judaism (also known as Masorti Judaism in Israel and Europe) is a modern stream of Judaism that arose out of intellectual

currents in Germany in the mid-19th century and took institutional form in the United States in the early 1900s.

The principles of Conservative Judaism include:

- A dedication to *Halakha*... [as a] guide for our lives”;
- A deliberately non-fundamentalist teaching of Jewish principles of faith;
- A positive attitude toward modern culture; and,
- An acceptance of both traditional rabbinic modes of study and modern scholarship and critical text study when considering Jewish religious texts.

Conservative Judaism has its roots in the school of thought known as Positive-Historical Judaism, developed in 1850s Germany as a reaction to the more liberal religious positions taken by Reform Judaism. The term *conservative* was meant to signify that Jews should attempt to *conserve* Jewish tradition, rather than reform or abandon it, and does not imply the movement’s adherents are politically conservative. Because of this potential for confusion, a number of Conservative rabbis have proposed renaming the movement, and outside of the United States and Canada, in many countries including Israel and the UK, it is today known as *Masorti* Judaism (Hebrew for “Traditional”).

HISTORY

Like Reform Judaism, the Conservative movement developed in Europe and the United States in the 1800s, as Jews reacted to the changes brought about by the Enlightenment and Jewish emancipation. In Europe the movement was known as Positive-Historical Judaism, and it is still known as “the historical school.”

Positive-Historical Judaism

Positive-Historical Judaism, the intellectual forerunner to Conservative Judaism, was developed as a school of thought in the 1840s and 1850s in Germany. Its principal founder was Rabbi Zecharias Frankel, who had broken with the German Reform Judaism in 1845 over its rejection of the primacy of the Hebrew language in Jewish prayer. In 1854, Frankel became the head of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, Germany. At the seminary, Frankel taught that Jewish law was not static, but rather has always developed in response to changing conditions.

He called his approach towards Judaism “Positive-Historical,” which meant that one should have a positive attitude towards accepting

Jewish law and tradition as normative, yet one should be open to developing the law in the same fashion that it has always historically developed. Frankel rejected the innovations of Reform Judaism as insufficiently based in Jewish history and communal practice. However, Frankel's use of modern methods of historical scholarship in analysing Jewish texts and developing Jewish law set him apart from neo-Orthodox Judaism, which was concurrently developing under the leadership of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Conservative Judaism in America

In the latter half of the 19th century, the debates occurring in German Judaism were replicated in America. Conservative Judaism in America similarly began as a reaction to Reform Judaism's rejection of traditional Jewish law and practice. The differences between the more modern and traditional branches of American Judaism came to a head in 1883, at the "Trefa Banquet", where shellfish and other non-kosher dishes were served at the celebration of the first graduating class of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. The adoption of the radical Pittsburgh Platform in 1885, which dismissed observance of the ritual commandments and Jewish peoplehood as "anachronistic", created a permanent wedge between the Reform movement and more traditional American Jews.

Jewish Theological Seminary

In 1886, Rabbis Sabato Morais and H. Pereira Mendes founded the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York City as a more traditional alternative to HUC. The Seminary's brief affiliation with the traditional congregations that established the Orthodox Congregation Union of America in 1898 was severed due to the Orthodox rejection of the Seminary's academic approach to Jewish learning. At the turn of the century, the Seminary lacked a source of permanent funding and was ordaining on average no more than one rabbi per year.

The fortunes of Conservative Judaism underwent a dramatic turnaround when in 1902, the famed scholar Solomon Schechter accepted the invitation to become president of JTS. Under Schechter's leadership, JTS attracted a distinguished faculty and became a highly regarded center of Jewish learning. In 1913, the Conservative Movement founded its congregational arm, the United Synagogue of America.

Conservative Judaism enjoyed rapid growth in the first half of the 20th Century, becoming the largest American Jewish denomination. Its combination of modern innovation (such as mixed gender seating)

and traditional practice particularly appealed to first and second-generation Eastern European Jewish immigrants, who found Orthodoxy too restrictive, but Reform Judaism foreign. After World War II, Conservative Judaism continued to thrive. The 1950s and early 1960s featured a boom in synagogue construction as upwardly-mobile American Jews moved to the suburbs. Conservative Judaism occupied an enviable middle position during a period where American society prized consensus.

Rise of Reconstructionism

The Conservative coalition splintered in 1963, when advocates of the Reconstructionist philosophy of Mordecai Kaplan seceded from the movement to form a distinct Reconstructionist Judaism. Kaplan had been a leading figure at JTS for 54 years, and had pressed for liturgical reform and innovations in ritual practice from inside of the framework of Conservative Judaism. Frustrated by the perceived dominance of the more traditionalist voices at JTS, Kaplan's followers decided that the ideas of Reconstructionism would be better served through the creation of separate denomination. In 1968, the split became formalised with the establishment of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Modern Conservative Judaism

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Conservative Judaism was divided over issues of gender equality. In 1973, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards voted, without adopting an explanatory responsum, to permit synagogues to count women toward a minyan, but left the choice to individual congregations. After a further decade of debate, in 1983, JTS voted to admit women for ordination as Conservative rabbis, also without adopting an explanatory responsum. Some opponents of these decisions left the Conservative movement to form the Union for Traditional Judaism.

In 2002, the Committee adopted a responsum that provides an official religious-law foundation for its past actions and articulates the current Conservative approach to the role of women in Judaism.

In December 2006, a responsum was adopted by the Committee that approved the ordination of lesbian and gay rabbis and permitted commitment ceremonies for lesbian and gay Jews (but not same-sex marriage), while maintaining the traditional prohibition against anal sex between men. An opposing responsum, that maintained the

traditional prohibitions against ordinations and commitment ceremonies, was also approved. Both responsa were enacted as majority opinions, with some members of the Committee voting for both. This result gives individual synagogues, rabbis, and rabbinical schools discretion to adopt either approach.

Ziegler School

In the 1990s, the American Jewish University (Formerly the University of Judaism) in Los Angeles established the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies as an independent rabbinical school.

Concern About Movement Direction

At the time of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, Conservative Judaism remained the largest denomination in America, with 43 per cent of Jewish households affiliated with a synagogue belonging to Conservative synagogues (compared to 35 per cent for Reform and 16 per cent for Orthodox). 10 years later, the NJPS showed that the Conservative movement had suffered serious attrition, with only 33 per cent of synagogue-affiliated American Jews belonging to Conservative synagogue. For the first time in nearly a century, Conservative Judaism is no longer the largest denomination in America. At the same time, however, certain Conservative institutions, particular day schools, have shown significant growth. Conservative leaders agree that these contrasting trends indicate that the movement has reached a crossroads as it heads into the 21st century.

BELIEFS

For much of the large movement's history, Conservative Judaism avoided publishing systematic explications of the Jewish principles of faith. This was a conscious attempt to hold together a wide coalition.

In 1988, the leadership council of Conservative Judaism finally issued an official statement of belief, *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism*. In accord with classical rabbinic Judaism, it agrees that Jews must hold certain beliefs. However, it holds that the Jewish community never developed any one binding catechism. Thus, it is difficult if not impossible to pick out only one person's formal creed and hold it as binding. Instead, *Emet Ve-Emunah* allows for a range of Jewish beliefs that Conservative rabbis believe are authentically Jewish and justifiable.

Thus, *Emet Ve-Emunah* affirms belief in God and in the divine inspiration of the Torah; however it also affirms the legitimacy of

multiple interpretations of these issues. Atheism, Trinitarian views of God, and polytheism are all ruled out. Conservative Judaism explicitly rejects relativism, yet also rejects literalism and fundamentalism.

God

Conservative Judaism affirms monotheism. Its members have varied beliefs about the nature of God, and no one understanding of God is mandated. Among the beliefs affirmed are: Maimonidean rationalism; Kabbalistic mysticism; Hasidic panentheism (neo-Hasidism, Jewish Renewal); limited theism (as in Harold Kushner's "When Bad Things Happen to Good People"); organic thinking in the fashion of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, also known as process theology (such as Rabbis Max Kaddushin and William E. Kaufman).

Mordecai Kaplan's religious naturalism (Reconstructionist Judaism) used to have an influential place in the movement, but since Reconstructionism developed as an independent movement, this influence has waned. Papers from a recent Rabbinical Assembly conference on theology were recently printed in a special issue of the journal *Conservative Judaism* (Winter 1999); the editors note that Kaplan's naturalism seems to have dropped from the movement's radar screen.

Revelation

Conservative Judaism allows its adherents to hold to a wide array of views on the subject of revelation. Many Conservative Jews reject the traditional Jewish idea that God literally dictated the words of the Torah to Moses at Mount Sinai in a verbal revelation, but they hold the traditional Jewish belief that God inspired the later prophets to write the rest of the Tanakh. Many Conservative Jews believe that Moses was inspired by God in the same manner as the later prophets. Many believe that the Torah was divinely revealed on Mount Sinai to some extent, but was later corrupted by human hands.

Conservative Jews who reject the concept of verbal revelation believe that God revealed his will to Moses and other prophets in a non-verbal form — that is, God's revelation did not include the particular words of the divine texts.

Conservative Judaism is comfortable with the higher criticism, including the documentary hypothesis, the theory that the Torah was redacted from several earlier sources. The movement's rabbinic authorities and its official Torah commentary (*Etz Hayim: A Torah Commentary*) affirm that Jews should make use of modern critical literary and historical analysis to understand how the Bible developed.

Jewish Law

Conservative Judaism views *Halakha* (Jewish religious law) as normative and binding. Examining Jewish history and rabbinic literature through the lens of academic criticism, Conservative Judaism believes that *halakha* has always evolved to meet the changing realities of Jewish life, and that it must continue to do so in the modern age.

This view, together with Conservative Judaism's diversity of opinion concerning divine revelation, accounts for some of the diversity and disagreement in the Conservative movement's *halakha*. When considering changes to *halakha*, Conservative Judaism's rabbinical authorities may rely on historical analysis as well as religious considerations. As Solomon Schechter noted, "however great the literary value of a code may be, it does not invest it with infallibility, nor does it exempt it from the student or the Rabbi who makes use of it from the duty of examining each paragraph on its own merits, and subjecting it to the same rules of interpretation that were always applied to Tradition".

Views of other Jewish Denominations

Conservative Judaism contrasts itself with other denominations through two major areas of distinction:

Revelation of Torah

Concerning the degree of revelation of Torah Conservative Judaism assumes that Orthodox Jews accept direct verbal revelation of the Torah. (Many Orthodox philosophers do not agree with this characterisation, see Breuer, Berkovits, Soloveitchik, Kook, or Fox) However, Conservative Judaism rejects the Reform view, that the Torah was not revealed but divinely inspired. In contrast to both, most Conservative positions affirm the divine but non-verbal revelation of written Torah as the authentic, historically correct Jewish view. In this view, Oral Torah is considered inspired by Torah, but not necessarily of a straightforward divine origin.

Interpretation of Halakha

- Concerning interpretation of *Halakha* (or Jewish law): because of Judaism's legal tradition, the fundamental differences between modern Jewish denominations also involve the relevance, interpretation, and application of Jewish law Jewish law and tradition. Conservative Judaism believes that its approach is the most authentic expression of Judaism as it was traditionally practiced. Conservative Jews believe that movements to its left,

such as Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism, have erred by rejecting the traditional authority of Jewish law and tradition. They believe that the Orthodox Jewish movements, on the theological right, have erred by slowing down, or stopping, the historical development of Jewish law: "Conservative Judaism believes that scholarly study of Jewish texts indicates that Judaism has constantly been evolving to meet the needs of the Jewish people in varying circumstances, and that a central halakhic authority can continue the halakhic evolution today." (Soc. Culture. Jewish Usenet Newsgroup FAQ) The Conservative movement makes a conscious effort to use historical sources to determine what kind of changes to Jewish tradition have occurred, how and why they occurred, and in what historical context. With this information they believe that can better understand the proper way for rabbis to interpret and apply Jewish law to our conditions today. See also under Modern Orthodox Judaism.

Mordecai Waxman, a leading figure in the Rabbinical Assembly, writes that "Reform has asserted the right of interpretation but it rejected the authority of legal tradition. Orthodoxy has clung fast to the principle of authority, but has in our own and recent generations rejected the right to any but minor interpretations. The Conservative view is that both are necessary for a living Judaism. Accordingly, Conservative Judaism holds itself bound by the Jewish legal tradition, but asserts the right of its rabbinical body, acting as a whole, to interpret and to apply Jewish law." (Mordecai Waxman *Tradition and Change: The Development of Conservative Judaism*).

One of the leaders of the Conservative Movement has described the legal approaches of the movements by comparing *halakha* to a game of chess. In the 16th and 17th century (correlating to the publication of the Shulkhan Arukh and its commentaries), the Orthodox put a glass dome over the board. Conservative Jews merely took the dome off the board to begin moving the pieces once again according to the rules. Reform Judaism rejects the rules of the game (and is perhaps playing checkers).

Conservative Judaism views the process by which Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism make changes to Jewish tradition as potentially invalid. Thus, Conservative Judaism rejects patrilineal descent and would hold that a child of a non-Jewish mother who was raised as a Reform or Reconstructionist Jew is not legally Jewish and would have to undergo conversion to become a Jew. The Conservative movement is committed to Jewish pluralism and respects the religious

practices of Reform and Reconstructionist Jews. For example, the Conservative movement recognises their clergy as rabbis, even if it does not necessarily accept their specific decisions.

Conservative Judaism accepts that the Orthodox approach to *halakha* is generally valid. Accordingly, a Conservative Jew could satisfy their halakhic obligations by participation in Orthodox rituals.

MOVEMENT ORGANISATION

In the more limited sense of the term, Conservative Judaism is a unified movement; the international body of Conservative rabbis is the Rabbinical Assembly (RA), the organisation of synagogues is the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), and the primary seminaries are the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in New York City and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University (formerly the University of Judaism) in Los Angeles. Conservative Judaism outside the USA is often called Masorti Judaism; Masorti rabbis belong to the Rabbinical Assembly.

Affiliated seminaries outside the USA include the Marshall Meyer Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano in Argentina, and Machon Schechter (in Jerusalem.)

Many Jews both inside and outside of this formal Conservative movement identify Conservative Judaism as a worldview which is significantly larger than the USCJ and RA. Sociologically and religiously, there is social and religious overlap between the USCJ, the Union for Traditional Judaism, and much of the Chavurah movement. A growing number of congregations which are not affiliated, but which identify themselves as “post-denominational,” practice traditional Judaism while emphasising equal roles for women, for example as prayer leaders. Rabbis trained at JTS and the Ziegler School often serve these synagogues and chavurot, and members of these synagogues and chavurot often pray at, or are members of, USCJ synagogues.

CONSERVATIVE JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

Conservative Judaism has had a large impact on education in America. Many conservative schools dot the United States. The Solomon Schechter day schools, including The Epstein School in Atlanta, Georgia, are an example.

IMPORTANT FIGURES

- Bradley Shavit Artson—Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University (formerly the University of Judaism), author, theologian, and public speaker.

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- Ben Zion Bokser—Rabbi, halakhic expert, scholar, and community leader.
 - Elliot N. Dorff—Professor of philosophy at the American Jewish University (formerly the University of Judaism) professor, theologian, member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
 - Arnold Eisen—Chancellor-elect of the Jewish Theological Seminary
 - Shya Finestone—Shaare Zion Congregation Religious Affairs Committee (Canada)
 - Louis Finkelstein—Talmud scholar
 - Zecharias Frankel—founder of positive-historical Judaism.
 - Neil Gillman—Theologian, Philosophy Professor at Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS)
 - Louis Ginzberg—Talmud scholar and halakhic expert, early member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
 - Robert Gordis—Rabbi, Theologian, Educator
 - Simon Greenberg Rabbi and Institution Builder
 - Judith Hauptman—JTS Talmud scholar
 - Jules Harlow—Primary liturgist of the Conservative movement
 - Abraham Joshua Heschel—Theologian and social activist
 - Louis Jacobs—Rabbi, founder of Masorti Judaism in the United Kingdom
 - Isaac Klein—Rabbi, expert in Jewish law, early member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
 - Sheldon Levin—Former President of the CA, also former member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
 - David Lieber- President Emeritus of the American Jewish University (formerly the University of Judaism), past President of the Rabbinical Assembly, Editor of the Etz Hayim Humash
 - Saul Lieberman—Talmud scholar at JTS
 - Aaron L. Mackler—Rabbi, Professor of Theology at Duquesne University, member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
 - Daniel S. Nevins—Dean of the JTS Rabbinical School, Halakhic Scholar.
 - Mayer E. Rabinowitz—JTS Talmud scholar, former member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards

- Joel Roth—JTS Talmud scholar, former member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
- Solomon Schechter—Researcher, early leader of JTS, creator of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
- Mathilde Roth Schechter—Founder of the Women’s League of Conservative Judaism and of Hadassah
- Ismar Schorsch—Former chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
- Harold Schulweis—Rabbi in Los Angeles, theologian, founder of the Havurah movement and the Jewish World Watch
- Gordon Tucker—Former Dean of Jewish Theological Seminary rabbinical school, part-time faculty member at JTS and member of Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel Center in White Plains, NY
- David Wolpe—Rabbi, author, public speaker in Los Angeles, California.
- Samuel Schafler—Rabbi, historian, President of Hebrew College, Boston; Superintendent of the Board of Jewish Education, Chicago; Camp Ramah educational director

JEWISH IDENTITY

Conservative Judaism maintains the Rabbinic understanding of Jewish identity: A Jew is someone who was born to a Jewish mother, or who converts to Judaism in accordance with Jewish law and tradition. Conservatism thus rejects patrilineal descent, which is accepted by the Reform movement. Conservative Rabbis are not allowed to perform intermarriages (marriages between Jews and non-Jews). However, the Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism has a different sociological approach to this issue than does Orthodoxy, although agreeing religiously. In a press release it has stated:

“In the past, intermarriage...was viewed as an act of rebellion, a rejection of Judaism. Jews who intermarried were essentially excommunicated. But now, intermarriage is often the result of living in an open society....If our children end up marrying non-Jews, we should not reject them. We should continue to give our love and by that retain a measure of influence in their lives, Jewishly and otherwise. Life consists of constant growth and our adult children may yet reach a stage when Judaism has new meaning for them. However, the marriage between a Jew and non-Jew is not a celebration for the Jewish community. We therefore reach out to the couple with the hope that the non-Jewish partner will move

closer to Judaism and ultimately choose to convert. Since we know that over 70 per cent of children of intermarried couples are not being raised as Jews...we want to encourage the Jewish partner to maintain his/her Jewish identity, and raise their children as Jews."

CRITICISM

Conservative Judaism has come under criticism from a variety of sources such as:

- Orthodox Jews who question the movement's commitment to *Halakha*.
- Conservative Traditionalists who criticize the Halakhic process when dealing with issues such as women in Judaism as well as homosexuality.

Orthodox Jewish leaders vary considerably in their dealings with the Conservative movement and with individual Conservative Jews. Some Modern Orthodox leaders cooperate and work with the Conservative movement, while haredi ("ultra-Orthodox") Jews often eschew formal contact with Conservative Judaism, or at least its rabbinate. From the Orthodox perspective, Conservative Jews are considered just as Jewish as Orthodox Jews, but they are viewed as misguided, consistent violators of *halakha*.

Over the years, Conservative Judaism has experienced internal criticism. Due to halakhic disputes, such as the controversial ordination of women, some Conservative Talmudic scholars and experts in *halakha* have left JTS and the seminary's last Chancellor, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, complained of the movement's "erosion of [its] fidelity to Halacha... [which] brings [it] close to Reform Judaism."

In matters of marriage and divorce, the State of Israel relies on its Chief Rabbinate to determine who is Jewish; the Chief Rabbinate, following Orthodox customs, does not recognize the validity of conversions performed by Conservative rabbis and will require a Jew who was converted by a Conservative rabbi to undergo a second, Orthodox conversion to be regarded as a Jew for marriage and other purposes.

HAREDI JUDAISM

Haredi or Chareidi Judaism is the most theologically conservative form of Orthodox Judaism. A follower of Haredi Judaism is called a *Haredi* (*Haredim* in the plural).

Haredi is derived from *charada* (fear, anxiety), which could be interpreted as “one who trembles in awe of God” (cf. Isaiah 66:2,5).

Haredi Jews, like other Orthodox Jews, consider their belief system and religious practices to extend in an unbroken chain back to Moses and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. As a result, they consider non-Orthodox denominations to be unjustifiable deviations from authentic Judaism, both because of other denominations’ doubts concerning the divine revelation of the Written and Oral Torah, and because of their rejection of halakhic (or Jewish legal) precedent as binding.

Many Haredi Jews dislike the term *ultra-Orthodox*, which is commonly used to distinguish them from modern Orthodox Jews. The term ‘chareidi’ is used in Haredi newspapers, not ‘ultra-orthodox’.

PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

Views of *Halacha*

One basic belief of the Orthodox community in general is that it is the latest link in a chain of Jewish continuity extending back to the giving of the Torah to Moses at Mount Sinai. It believes that two guides to Jewish law were given to the Israelites at that time: the first, known as the *Torah she-bi-khsav*, or the “Written Law” is the Tanach (Jewish Holy Book) as we know it today; the second, known as the *Torah she-ba’al peh* (“Oral Law”), is the exposition as relayed by the scholarly and other religious leaders of each generation. The traditional interpretation of the Oral Torah is considered as the authoritative reading of the Written Law.

Jewish law, known as *halacha* is considered a set of God-given instructions to effect spiritual, moral, religious and personal perfection. As such, it includes codes of behaviour applicable to virtually every imaginable circumstance (and many hypothetical ones), which have been pored over and developed throughout the generations in a constantly expanding collection of religious literature. The earliest written compilation of *halacha*, the Talmud, is considered authoritative.

Halacha is a guide for everything the traditional Jew does from the moment he wakes up to the moment he goes to sleep. It is a body of intricate laws, combined with the reasoning on how such conclusions are reached. *Halacha* incorporates as rules many practices that began as customs, some passed down over the centuries, and an assortment of ingrained behaviours. It is the subject of intense study in religious schools known as *yeshivas*.

Throughout history, *halacha* has addressed issues on the basis of circumstance and precedent. There have been some significant adaptations, including more formal education for women in the early twentieth century, and the application of halacha to modern technology. While *Haredim* have typically been more conservative than their Modern Orthodox counterparts regarding new practices and rulings on new applications of *halachic* concepts, Orthodox Judaism views these types of innovations as consistent with traditionally expounded *halachic* concepts. Haredi Orthodoxy's differences with Modern Orthodoxy usually lie in interpretation of the nature of traditional halachic concepts and in understanding of what constitutes acceptable application of these concepts.

Modern inventions have been studied and incorporated into the ever-expanding halacha, accepted by both *Haredi* and other Orthodox communities. For instance, rulings guide the observant about the proper use of electricity and other technology on the Jewish Sabbath and holidays.

Most major points are the subject of consensus, although fine points are the subject of a greater range of opinions. While discussions of *halacha* are common and encouraged, laypersons are not authorised to make final determinations as to the applicability of the law in any given situation; the proviso is: "Consult your local Orthodox rabbi or *posek* (rabbinical authority)."

Lifestyle and Family

Haredi life is very family-centered. Depending on various factors, both boys and girls attend school and proceed to higher Torah study, in a *yeshiva* or *seminary* ("sem") respectively, starting anywhere between the ages of 13 and 18. A significant proportion of students, especially boys, remain in *yeshiva* until marriage (which is often arranged through facilitated dating. See *shiduch*), and many study in a *kollel* (Torah study institute for married men)—for many years after marriage. In many Haredi communities, studying in secular institutions is discouraged, although some have educational facilities for vocational training or run professional programmes for men and women. Most men, even those not in *kollel*, will make certain to study Torah daily. Families tend to be large, reflecting adherence to the Torah commandment "be fruitful and multiply" (Book of Genesis 1:28, 9:1,7).

Many Haredi *poskim* (authorities in Jewish law) forbid television and films, reading secular newspapers and using the Internet for non-

business purposes. They feel that mobile phones should be programmed to disable internet and other functions that could influence their users negatively, and most companies in Israel now offer basic cellphones with limited capabilities to accommodate *Haredim*.

However, it appears that many *Haredi* lay people use the Internet despite this, evidenced by the large number of participants in “Haredi chat rooms.”

Dress

Many *Haredim* view manner of dress as an important way to ensure Jewish identity and distinctiveness. In addition, a simple, understated, mode of dress is seen as conducive to inner reflection and spiritual growth. As such, many members of the Haredi community are wary of modern fashions that compromise their standards of modesty.

Many men have beards, most dress in dark suits, all wear a kippah at all times and generally a wide-brimmed hat (typically black) during prayer and outside. Women adhere to meticulous *tznius* (modesty) standards, and hence wear long skirts and long sleeves, high necklines and some form of head covering when married (scarves, snoods, *shpitzelach*, hats, or wigs).

Hasidic men often follow the specific dress style of their group, which may include elegant frock coats (*bekishes*), wide or high fur hats (*shtreimels* or *spodiks*) on the Sabbath and festivals. During prayer a *gartel* (a long belt wrapped around the frock) is worn. Some non-Hasidic *Haredim* also wear this garb.

HISTORY

Modern Origins

For several centuries before the Emancipation of European Jewry, most of Europe’s Jews were forced to live in closed communities, where their culture and religious observances persevered, no less because of internal pressure within their own community as because of the refusal of the outside world to accept them. In a predominantly Christian society, the only way for Jews to gain social acceptance was to convert, thereby abandoning all ties with one’s own family and community. There was very little middle ground, especially in the ghetto, for people to negotiate between the dominant culture and the community.

This began to change with the Haskalah (“Enlightenment”) and calls by some European liberals to include the Jewish population in

the emerging empires and nation states. For some Jews, the meticulous and rigorous Judaism practiced in the ghetto interfered with the new opportunities. They held that acceptance by the non-Jewish world necessitated the reformation of Judaism and the modification of those principles deemed inconsistent with this goal. In the words of a popular aphorism coined by Yehuda Leib Gordon, a person should be “a Jew in the home, and a *mensch* (good person) in the street.”

Other Jews argued that the division between Jew and gentile had actually protected the Jews’ religious and social culture; abandoning such divisions, they argued, would lead to the eventual abandonment of Jewish religion through assimilation. This latter group insisted that the appropriate response to the Enlightenment was to maintain strict adherence to traditional Jewish law and custom to prevent the dissolution of authentic Judaism and ensure the survival of the Jewish people.

The former group argued that Judaism had to “reform” itself in keeping with the social changes taking place around them. They were the forerunners of the Reform movement in Judaism. This group overwhelmingly assimilated into the surrounding culture.

Even as the debate raged, the rate of integration and assimilation grew proportionately to the degree of acceptance of the Jewish population by the host societies. In other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, acceptance (and integration) was much slower in coming. This was especially true in the Pale of Settlement, a region along Russia’s western border including most of modern Poland, to which Jewish settlement in Russia was confined.

Although Jews here did not win the same official acceptance as they did in Western and Central Europe, that same spirit of change pervaded the air, albeit in a local variant. Since it was impossible to gain acceptance by the dominant culture, many Jews turned to a number of different movements that they expected would offer hope for a better future.

The predominant movement was socialism; other important alternatives were the cultural autonomists, including the Bund and the Zionists. These movements were not neutral on the topic of the Jewish religion: by and large, they entailed a complete, not infrequently contemptuous, rejection of traditional religious and cultural norms.

One of the most influential, if not the most influential members of early Haredi Judaism was the Chasam Sofer, from Hungary. In response

to those who stated that Judaism could change or evolve, Rabbi Sofer applied the rule *chadash asur min ha-Torah* (חֲדָשׁ אֲסוּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה), “The ‘new’ is forbidden by the Torah,” originally referring to new (winter) wheat that had not been sanctified through the wave offering culminating in the Counting of the Omer in the Temple in Jerusalem, now liberally understood to mean “major modifications” in general.

Rabbi Sofer held that any movement expressing the need to “modernize” Judaism, or expressing the dubiety of the verbal revelation of the Written and Oral Torah, were outside the pale of authentic Judaism. In his view the fundamental beliefs and tenets of Judaism should not, and could not, be altered. This became the defining idea behind the opponents of Reform and in some form, it has influenced the Orthodox response to other innovations. The traditionalists of Eastern Europe, who fought against the new movements emerging in the Jewish community, were the forebears of the contemporary Haredim.

Effects of the Holocaust

During this time, the Haredi community was engaged in bitter debates with the emerging new philosophies, most notably those that denied the pre-eminence, or even relevance, of religion in Jewish life. Anecdotes abound: in one case, a reformer sent a leading rabbi a kosher cookie shaped like a pig, knowing that pork was a forbidden food in the Jewish religion. The rabbi responded by sending back a photograph with this note: “Thank you for your gift. You sent me a picture of yourself, so I am returning the favour in kind with a picture of myself.”

The Holocaust brought a pause to the infighting. Until the rise of Nazism, Germany had been the major arena for the Enlightenment policies of acceptance and tolerance. Haredi leaders warned that “if the Jews do not make ‘kiddush’, the gentiles will make ‘havdalah’.” ‘Kiddush’ refers to the beginning ceremonies of the Shabbat, which sanctifies the day through joy and sets it apart from the mundane. ‘Havdalah’ refers to the ending ceremony, which mourns the departing of the holy as the darkness of the new week commences. Both words connote separation, kiddush meaning literally sanctification, and havdalah meaning separation.

Although illegal, and sometimes socially suppressed, anti-Semitism began to spread in the 1930’s in many countries of Europe, partly in response to the Great Depression, aided by a readily identifiable ethnic minority to blame. Such anti-Semitism did not distinguish between

Jews, regardless of their religious affiliation or lack thereof. At this time, faced with destruction, Jews were able to overlook the differences between them as they confronted a common enemy.

In the following years, however, the survivors were forced to come to grips with the theological implications of the catastrophe that had all but eradicated their communities. While they struggled to rebuild themselves, particularly in the United States and in Palestine (later Israel), they also attempted to understand why God had allowed such a disaster to befall them.

This was coupled with the emergence of socialist Jewish nationalism, or Zionism, as a widely accepted, secular Jewish philosophy. Until that time, the Zionists were a small but vocal minority among the Jewish population of Eastern Europe. Suddenly, they experienced a tremendous growth, since settlement of the Land of Israel seemed to offer a viable response to the anti-Semitism that was still prevalent in Europe. The Haredi traditionalists had long rejected Zionism, partly because it was a predominantly anti-religious movement. Now, suddenly, the secular Zionists were in the process of achieving their goal of a Jewish homeland.

Meanwhile, unable to return to their old homes in Europe and with quotas on Jewish immigration in the United States, a Jewish homeland had necessarily become in some cases the only option for Haredi Jews. In effect, they were suddenly at the mercy of their most bitter opponents. However, they were not without their own leverage, including the sensitive fact that the longest-standing Jewish settlements in Palestine were, in fact, Haredi.

It would have been easy for the Haredi community to explain the events of the 1930s-1950s as the direct result of most Jews abandoning their religious beliefs. In fact, some did; but the vast majority chose a less divisive approach, believing that allowing the Holocaust to occur was a Divine act beyond human understanding. This allowed them to focus on rebuilding their communities, rather than to obsess on the past.

Within a generation, two vibrant new centers of Haredi life emerged: one in the United States, and the other in Israel, with smaller, somewhat less influential communities in England, Canada, France, Belgium, and Australia. As these communities became viable, independent entities, some of the old animosities between them and members of other Jewish groups began to resurface. This time, however, they were

sharpened by the charge that, as predicted, those groups' actions and prescriptions have often led to assimilation, thereby threatening the very idea of Jewish continuity. In the post-Holocaust era, that threat is perceived as being more real than ever.

PRESENT DAY

Israel

Israel is home to the largest Haredi population, at least 6,00,000-800,000 (out of 5.4 million Israeli Jews). The Haredi community there has adopted a policy of cultural dissociation, but at the same time, it has struggled to remain politically active, perceiving itself as the true protector of the country's Jewish nature.

The issues date to the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, with the rise of Zionism. Until the Holocaust, the vast majority of Haredi Jews rejected Zionism for a number of reasons. Chief among these was the claim that Jewish political independence could only be obtained through Divine intervention, with the coming of the Jewish Messiah. Any attempt to force history was seen as an open rebellion against Judaism (see Neturei Karta for a more complete exposition of this ideology). In this the Haredi Jews mirrored the Reform community, which, with few exceptions, rejected Zionism, since it called into question the loyalty that Jews should feel toward their native countries.

More important, however, was the dislike that the political and cultural Zionism of the time felt toward any manifestation of religion. Spurred on by socialism, they taunted religion as an outdated relic, which should disappear (or, according to some extreme views, even be eradicated) in the face of Jewish nationalism. The Haredi Jews point out that even such liberals as Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, at one time contemplated the mass conversion of the Jews to Christianity as a means of eliminating anti-Semitism.

As with the nineteenth century Reform Judaism movement in Germany, the result was mutual recriminations, rejection, and harsh verbal attacks. To Zionists, Haredi Jews were either "primitives" or "parasites"; to Haredi Jews, Zionists were tyrannising heretics. This *kulturkampf* still plagues Israeli society today, where animosity between the two groups has even pervaded both their educational systems.

Nevertheless, despite the animosity, it was necessary for the two groups to work out some *modus vivendi* in the face of a more dangerous enemy, first the Nazis, and then the neighbouring Arab states. This

was achieved by a division of powers and authority, based on the division that existed during the British Mandate in the country. Known as the “*status quo*,” it granted political authority (such as control over public institutions, the army, etc.) to the Zionists and religious authority (such as control over marriage, divorce, conversions, etc.) to the Orthodox. A compromise worked out by Labour Zionist leader Berl Katznelson even before statehood ensured that public institutions accommodate the Orthodox by observing the Sabbath and providing kosher food.

Notwithstanding these compromises, many Haredi groups maintained their previous apolitical stance. The community had split into two parts: Agudat Israel, which cooperated with the state, and the Edah HaChareidis, which fiercely opposed it. Both groups still exist today, with the same attitudes. The Edah HaChareidis includes numerous Hasidic groups, such as Satmar, Dushinsky and Toldos Aharon, as well as several non-Hasidic groups of Lithuanian and Hungarian background.

A small minority of Jews, who claim to have been descended from communities who had lived peacefully with their Arab neighbours during the 18th and early 19th centuries, took a different stance. In 1935 they formed a new grouping called the Neturei Karta out of a coalition of several previous anti-Zionist Jewish groups in the Holy Land, and aligned themselves politically with the Arabs out of a dislike for Zionist policies.

As part of the Status Quo Agreement worked out between prime minister David Ben Gurion and the religious parties, Haredi leader Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz (known as the *Chazon Ish*) was promised that the government would exempt a group of religious scholars (at that time, 400) from compulsory military service so that they could pursue their studies.

Finally, the Agudat Israel party representing the Haredi population was invited to participate in the governing coalition. It agreed, but did not appoint any ministers since that would have implied full acceptance of the legitimacy of non-religious actions taken by the government.

Haredim proved to be able politicians, gradually increasing their leverage and influence. In addition, the Haredi population grew exponentially, giving them a larger power base. From a small group of just four members in the 1977 Knesset, they gradually increased the

number of seats they hold to 22 (out of 120) in 1999. In effect, they controlled the balance of power between the country's two major parties.

This situation was exacerbated still further by the rise of a strong Mizrahi (Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent) population with political aspirations of its own. Traditionally, the political elite in Israel consisted of European Jews, who founded the state. They were joined in the 1950s by entire communities of North African and Middle Eastern Jews (especially from Morocco, Iraq, Tunisia, Yemen, etc.), who were kept marginalised and encouraged (in some cases, even forced) to forego their traditional cultures for the dominant European secular one. There were protests, including a small but vocal "Black Panther" movement among unemployed Sephardic youth in the early 1970s, but the most effective voice for empowerment came from a small Haredi party named Shas, which split off from Agudat Yisrael in the early 1980s.

With Sephardic enfranchisement as its platform, it gained 17 of the 22 Haredi seats in the Knesset. Taking the attitude that restoring Sephardic pride and restoring Sephardic religious observance are one and the same, Shas has created devoted cadres of newly religious and semi-religious men and women with the zeal of neophytes and an animosity toward the country's secular European political establishment. Furthermore, the movement has gained unwavering and determined obedience in its supporters to the teachings of its spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef.

A chief Haredim antagonist from the Haredim point of view is the Israeli Supreme Court, which does not base its rulings on Haredi beliefs or policy. The Supreme Court has limited the power of Haredi community by granting equal powers to competing bodies. A notable case of this trend is the "Who Is a Jew?" case, in which the Supreme Court ruled that the Ministry of the Interior (then controlled by Shas) must recognize Reform and Conservative converts to Judaism. More recently, even the Orthodox Zionist establishment has come under attack by the Court, since it often allies itself with the Haredi in matters of control of municipal and national religious councils.

In many instances, the Haredim have responded to these and other threats angrily, verbally defending against those who would challenge their hegemony. At the same time, they recognize the animosity many secular Israelis feel toward them and have embarked on various public relations campaigns and other media projects to improve their image

among the general public. In practice, the Israeli Haredim remain firmly entrenched in seats of political power, with both blocs doing everything they can to gain their support.

Following the 2003 elections, the Haredi parties lost their place in the government to the ultra-secular anti-religious Shinui party. In 2005 Shinnui left the government and Ariel Sharon brought the Haredi United Torah Judaism back into his ruling coalition. Shinui runs under the flag of stopping extra funding to mostly Haredi schools and resistance to Tal Law which gives legal status to their exemption from military service. Nevertheless, in recent years as many as 1000 Haredi Jews have chosen to volunteer to serve in the IDF, in a specifically Haredi Jewish battalion, the Netzah Yehuda Battalion, also known as Nachal Haredi.

The Haredi are relatively poor, compared to other Israelis. 60 per cent of the men do not have regular jobs; instead they prefer religious study. "More than 50 per cent live below the poverty line and get state allowances, compared with 15 per cent of the rest of the population..." Their families are also larger, usually having six or seven children.

In recent years, there has been a process of reconciliation and a merging of Haredi Jews with Israeli society. While not compromising on religious issues and their strict code of life, Haredi Jews have become more open to the secular Israeli culture. Haredi Jews, such as satirist Kobi Arieli, publicist Sehara Blau and politician Israel Eichler write regularly to leading Israeli newspapers. Another important factor in the reconciliation process has been the activity of ZAKA—a voluntary rescue organisation which provides emergency first response medical attention at suicide bombing scenes and rescues human remains found there to provide proper burial.

Another important Haredi institution of charity is Yad Sara, established by Uri Lupolianski (mayor of Jerusalem since 2003) in 1977. Yad Sara, the only Israeli institution of its kind, provides patients and the handicapped with medical equipment (such as wheelchairs) on loan at no charge, and it is open to all Israelis. Religious Zionists, mainly from the National Religious Party and publicly-involved Haredi Jews are trying to bridge the gaps between secular Jews and Haredi Jews.

Between Haredi Judaism and National Religious or Religious Zionist Judaism, there is also a category of Orthodox Jews known as 'Hardalim', who combine Religious Zionism with a stricter adherence to Halacha.

The number of Haredi Jews in Israel is steeply rising. In 1992, out of a total of 1,500,000 Orthodox Jews worldwide, about 550,000 were Haredi (Half of them in Israel). The vast majority of Haredi Jews are Ashkenazi.

United States

United States is home to the second largest Haredi population, estimated at 1,90,000-2,40,000. While there has been a Haredi presence in the U.S. since the start of the 20th century, the various groups began to emerge as distinctive communities only in the 1950s, with the influx of refugees from the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, who quickly filled leadership positions. Before then, the distinctions that are now commonly made between Haredi and Modern Orthodox Jews were moot at best; dividing lines between the two camps can now be drawn, though it is important to recognize that there is a substantial overlap between the two communities.

As the tides of Jewish immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries became more settled and affluent, they looked to Europe to provide rabbis and other spiritual leaders and teachers for their emerging communities. While some rabbis accepted the challenge, a number of them returned to Europe soon after, frustrated by what they found in the United States.

Unlike Eastern Europe, where Jews constituted a distinct minority group, the United States offered Jews an opportunity to blend into the dominant culture. Many of the new immigrants dropped their traditional customs and laws, both out of choice (the U.S. offered them a chance to escape what they viewed as the constraints of religious identity) or not (Jews refusing to work on the Sabbath were almost always fired at the end of the week; the large majority of those who desisted from working on Saturday had to face the formidable challenge of finding new work each week).

The groups that arrived en masse after the Holocaust found a religious and social infrastructure already in place. While they also feared that their communities might assimilate into the mainstream of American society, they were also able to create more insular communities, devoid of all but the most necessary contacts with the surrounding society. As the communities became more affluent, they were able to assume more and more roles of the city and state for themselves.

Today, there exist many autonomous communities in places such as Borough Park, Williamsburg Crown Heights in Brooklyn, as well as more recently the yeshiva centered community of Lakewood, New Jersey, with their own economies, educational systems (*yeshivos*) welfare institutions and *gemachs* (free loan societies for everything from money to household items to tools to furniture), medical services (such as the *Hatzolah* ambulance corps), and security (the *Shomrim* neighbourhood patrol). Some smaller, more isolationist Hasidic groups actually founded their own small towns, such as New Square, New York and Kiryas Joel, New York patterned after the communities they left in Europe.

There are still other, smaller, communities throughout the United States which at first did not have all the established institutions of the dominant community in New York. Eventually, even they managed to put many of these institutions in place, thereby preserving their cultural separation.

With these in place, the communities were able to grow and flourish, both because of an extremely high birthrate (eight or more children is normal), and due to outreach programmes geared toward other Jews. Most notably the Chabad Lubavitch Hasidic movement embraced outreach with a passion, conducting nationwide campaigns to introduce Chabad Judaism to unaffiliated Jews, as well as to Jews of other affiliations. This helped ignite the Teshuvah Movement that now attracts thousands of new adherents to Haredi Judaism yearly.

On the other hand, despite all their efforts at cultural separation, the Haredi leadership could not ignore the appeal of American life to their own youth. While certain few concessions to American society were made (for example, some groups allowed some of their children to pursue some higher education under certain circumstances), for the most part the response was to adopt an even more extreme approach to insularity. In effect, anything that might be perceived as a threat to the cultural homogeneity of the community was disparaged, including secular newspapers, radio, and television. Instead, a programme of total immersion in study was encouraged for the younger generation.

Some Haredi leaders realised that the communities could not be kept completely insular and established ways to connect to society without compromising on their intrinsic beliefs. In several instances, yeshivos such as Torah Vodaas, Chaim Berlin and Ner Israel started allowing the boys (or bochorim) to pursue a secular education while remaining in the yeshiva. This was helped largely by the establishment of Touro College by Dr. Bernard Lander, a college based in New York

City geared towards Haredi students seeking college degrees. One of the most noticeable things in Touro is the fact that the classes are separate for men and women to keep in line with strict Haredi lifestyles.

Another, perhaps greater threat, was seen in those Jewish groups that attempted to bridge the gap between the religious and secular worlds, since this was perceived as possibly more alluring to the youths of the community, including those who could not conceive of a total break from their Jewish upbringing. Reform, Conservative, and even Modern Orthodox Judaism were seen as threatening to the very continuity of the community.

In the case of Reform, this animosity could be traced to the early nineteenth century in Germany, where Reform waged a battle to wrest control of the communities from Traditional Jews. At that time, both groups attacked each other incessantly in the struggle for hegemony over the Jewish community. Until most recently, the Reform movement felt secure and was not leveling the same attacks on the Orthodox. In many instances, they sought ways to cooperate on common issues, hoping to consume the smaller community. To the Haredim, however, they were seen as a steppingstone to assimilation, to be disparaged and discouraged within their own communities. The criticisms of two centuries earlier were also applied to the Conservative community. Their beliefs and practices were held to be incompatible with authentic Judaism and, as such, rejected.

The Haredim maintain a delicate balancing act: on an individual level, Conservative and Reform Jews are seen as “innocents led astray” (R’ Moshe Feinstein). As such Haredim have created extensive outreach programmes, conducted out of a deep love and concern for the spiritual well-being of other Jews; on a philosophical level, the generation and beliefs of these movements are condemned as stemming from the widespread denigration of religion of the 19th century. It is this viewpoint that defines the Haredi community’s relationship to the larger Jewish community to this day.

However, the issue is more complicated when considering their position vis à vis the Modern Orthodox community. There is a mutual dependency between the two communities: the Modern Orthodox generally respect and adhere to the religious rulings of the Haredi leadership, while the Haredi often depend on university trained Modern Orthodox professionals to provide for needs that members of their own community cannot. For example, since there are so few Haredi doctors, the community will prefer to go to a Modern Orthodox doctor,

since he or she will have a better understanding of the implications of the treatment in Jewish law (*halakha*). Furthermore, Haredi rabbis will consult with Modern Orthodox doctors before issuing rulings on medical procedures (an example of this is on issues relating to the precise moment of death).

Nevertheless, the leadership is unwilling to accept the *liberalism* of their Modern Orthodox colleagues. In some cases, Modern Orthodoxy is perceived as balancing precariously on a very narrow wire between the Jewish and secular worlds: a tenable but, to the Haredi, unnecessary position. In other cases, Modern Orthodox leaders are considered to have passed the bounds of religious propriety and condemned for this in severe terms, since those leaders, unlike Reform and Conservative rabbis, are believed to have the requisite learning and should have known better.

This fight, however, no matter how sharp the discourse, does not have the same intensity as earlier arguments that led to or threatened real schisms among the Jewish people. For instance, with the rise of Hasidism, Rabbi Elijah of Vilna declared that his followers must not marry Jews adhering to the hasidic movement (the ruling was never put into practice). While, as tensions mount between Haredi and other Jews, the possibility of such a schism exists, the leadership of all the factions involved have taken care to prevent a complete break, while respecting the desire of the Haredi for autonomy and separatism. And there is common ground too, especially in the field of learning. It is not uncommon for Haredi scholars to take advantage of the vast library holdings, including rare manuscripts, in the libraries of Yeshiva University (Modern Orthodox), the Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative), and Hebrew Union College (Reform).

In 1988, it was estimated that there are between 40,000 and 57,000 Haredim in Williamsburg. The Jewish population in Boro Park (70,000 in 1983) was also mostly Haredi.

United Kingdom

In the UK, the largest Haredi communities are located in London (Stamford Hill, Golders Green, Hendon, Edgware), Salford/Bury (Broughton Park and Prestwich) and Gateshead. The majority of UK Haredim descend from Eastern-European immigrants. The largest UK Haredi community is in London, where it is organised into a group known as the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (UOHC).

The UK Haredi community is vibrant and growing, maintaining hundreds of synagogues, although many are smaller scale shtiebels. It also maintains numerous schools, yeshivas, kollels and mikvas. The community also supports dozens of kosher food shops, bakeries and to a lesser extent, restaurants.

The Haredi population in UK is estimated at 27,000 in 1998.

France

About 25,000 Haredim lives in France (Mostly Mizrachi).

ORGANISATIONS

Haredi Jewish Groups

- Agudath Israel, worldwide and local (such as Agudath Israel of America)
- Hasidic Jewish groups such as: Belz, Bobov, Boston, Boyan, Breslov, Chabad Lubavitch, Ger, Karlin, Munkacz, Puppa, Satmar, and Vizhnitz.
- Shas—Mizrahi Sefardi Haredi party in Israel
- United Torah Judaism—Ashkenazi Haredi political grouping in Israel
- Edah HaChareidis—rabbinical council of anti-Zionist Haredi groups in and around Jerusalem, including Satmar, Dushinsky, Toldos Aharon, Toldos Avrohom Yitzchok, Mishkenos Horoim, Spinka, Brisk and a section of other Litvish Haredim.

RABBINICAL LEADERS

Individual Leaders, Sorted by Years of Activity

- The Baal Shem Tov (18th century founder of Hasidism)
- The Vilna Gaon (of Lithuania)
- Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (19th century founder of the Lithuanian yeshivoth)
- Rabbi Moses Sofer (18th-19th century leader of Eastern European ultra-Orthodox)
- Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaCohen Kagan, the Chafetz Chaim
- Rabbi Avrohom Mordechai Alter, driving force behind Agudas Yisroel in Poland
- Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the highest halachic authorities for much of the twentieth century

- Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (leader of Haredim in Israel)
- Rabbi Aharon Kotler (founder of the Lakewood yeshivas in America)
- Rabbi Ovadya Yosef (leader of Israeli Sephardi Haredim)
- Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (present-day leader of Israel's non-Hasidic Ashkenazi Haredim)

Groups of Rabbinical Leaders (Including Rebbes of Hasidic Dynasties)

- Rabbis of the Edah HaChareidis rabbinical council of Jerusalem
- Rebbes of the Satmar Hasidim (originally Hungary, now New York)
- Rebbes of the Gerrer Hasidim (originally Poland, now Israel)
- Rebbes of Lubavitch

RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM

Reconstructionist Judaism is a modern American-based Jewish movement, based on the ideas of the late Mordecai Kaplan, that views Judaism as a progressively evolving civilisation. It originated as the radical left branch of Conservative Judaism before it splintered. There is substantial theological diversity within the movement. *Halakha* is not considered binding, but is treated as a valuable cultural remnant that should be upheld unless there is reason for the contrary. The movement emphasises positive views towards modernism, and considers religious custom to be subservient to personal autonomy.

ORIGIN

Reconstructionism was developed by Rabbis Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983) and Ira Eisenstein (1906–2001) over a period of time spanning from the late 1920s to the 1940s. It made its greatest stride in becoming the fourth movement in North American Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative and Reform being the other three) with the founding of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1968.

Reconstructionist Judaism is the first major movement of Judaism to originate in North America; the second is the Humanistic Judaism movement founded in 1963 by Rabbi Sherwin Wine.

THEOLOGY

Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan believed that in light of advances in philosophy, science and history as they existed in the 1930s and 1940s,

it would be impossible for modern Jews to continue to adhere to many of Judaism's traditional theological claims. Kaplan's naturalism theology has been seen as a variant of John Dewey's philosophy. Dewey's naturalism combined atheist beliefs with religious terminology in order to construct a religiously satisfying philosophy for those who had lost faith in traditional religion.

In agreement with most classical medieval Jewish thinkers, Kaplan affirmed that God is not personal, and that all anthropomorphic descriptions of God are, at best, imperfect metaphors. Kaplan's theology went beyond this to claim that God is the sum of all natural processes that allow man to become self-fulfilled. Kaplan wrote that "to believe in God means to take for granted that it is man's destiny to rise above the brute and to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation from human society."

Not all of Kaplan's writings on the subject were consistent; his position evolved somewhat over the years, and two distinct theologies can be discerned with a careful reading. The view more popularly associated with Kaplan is strict naturalism, *à la* Dewey, which has been criticised as using religious terminology to mask a non-theistic, if not outright atheistic, position. However, a second strand of Kaplanian theology exists, which makes clear that at times Kaplan believed that God has ontological reality, a real and absolute existence independent of human beliefs. In this latter theology, Kaplan still rejects classical forms of theism and any belief in miracles, but holds to a position that in some ways is neo-Platonic.

Most "Classical" Reconstructionist Jews [those following Kaplan] reject traditional forms of theism, though this is by no means universal. Many are deists; a small number accept Kabbalistic views of God, or the concept of a personal God.

Though many of Kaplan's followers found his ideas about God compelling, Kaplan's theology, as he explicitly stated, does not represent the only Reconstructionist understanding of theology. Theology is not the cornerstone of the Reconstructionist movement. Much more central is the idea that Judaism is a civilisation, and that the Jewish people must take an active role in ensuring its future by participating in its ongoing evolution.

Consequently, a strain of Reconstructionism exists which is distinctly non-Kaplanian. In this view, Kaplan's assertions concerning belief and practice are largely rejected, while the tenets of an "evolving religious

civilisation” are supported. The basis for this approach is that Kaplan spoke for his generation: he also wrote that every generation would need to define itself and its civilisation for itself. In the thinking of these Reconstructionists, what Kaplan said concerning belief and practice is not applicable today. This approach may include a belief in a personal God, acceptance of the concept of “chosenness”, a belief in some form of “resurrection” or continued existence of the dead, and the existence of an obligatory form of *Halakha*. In the latter, in particular, there has developed a broader concept of “Halakhah” wherein concepts such as “eco-Kashrut” are incorporated.

JEWISH LAW AND TRADITION

As in Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism holds that contemporary Western secular morality has precedence over Jewish law and theology. It does not ask that its adherents hold to any particular beliefs, nor does it ask that Jewish law be accepted as normative. Unlike classical Reform Judaism, Reconstructionism holds that a person’s default position should be to incorporate Jewish laws and tradition into their lives, unless they have a specific reason to do otherwise. The most important distinction between Reconstructionist Judaism and traditional Judaism is that Reconstructionism feels that all of *halakha* should be categorised as “folkways”, and not as law.

Reconstructionism promotes many traditional Jewish practices, while holding that contemporary Western secular morality has precedence over Jewish law. Thus, mitzvot (commandments) have been replaced with “folkways”, non-binding customs that can be democratically accepted or rejected by the congregations. Folkways that are promoted include keeping Hebrew in the prayer service, studying Torah, daily prayer, wearing kipot (*yarmulkas*), tallisim and tefillin during prayer, and observance of the Jewish holidays.

PRINCIPLES OF BELIEF

In practice, Rabbi Kaplan’s books, especially *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* and *Judaism as a Civilisation* are *de facto* statements of principles. In 1986, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) and the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot (FRCH) passed the official *Platform on Reconstructionism* (2 pages). It is not a mandatory statement of principles, but rather a consensus of current beliefs. Major points of the platform state that:

“Judaism is the result of natural human development. There is no such thing as divine intervention; Judaism is an evolving religious civilisation;

Zionism and aliyah (immigration to Israel) are encouraged; Reconstructionist Judaism is based on a democratic community where the laity can make decisions, not just rabbis; The Torah was not inspired by God; it only comes from the social and historical development of Jewish people; The classical view of God is rejected. God is redefined as the sum of natural powers or processes that allows mankind to gain self-fulfillment and moral improvement; The idea that God chose the Jewish people for any purpose, in any way, is "morally untenable", because anyone who has such beliefs "implies the superiority of the elect community and the rejection of others".

Most Reconstructionists do not believe in revelation (the idea that God can reveal His will to human beings). This is dismissed as supernaturalism. Kaplan posits that revelation "consists in disengaging from the traditional context those elements in it which answer permanent postulates of human nature, and in integrating them into our own ideology... the rest may be relegated to archaeology." (*The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*).

Many writers have criticised the movement's most widely held theology, religious naturalism. David Ray Griffin and Louis Jacobs have objected to the redefinitions of the terms "revelation" and "God" as being intellectually dishonest, and as being a form of "conversion by definition"; in their critique, these redefinitions take non-theistic beliefs and attach theistic terms to them.

Similar critiques have been put forth by Rabbis Neil Gillman (*Sacred Fragments*, p.200); Milton Steinberg (*Milton Steinberg: Portrait of a Rabbi* by Simon Noveck, Ktav, 1978, p.259-260; and Michael Samuels (*The Lord is My Shepherd: The Theology of a Caring God* 1996).

Reconstructionist Judaism is egalitarian with respect to gender roles. All positions are open to both genders; they are open to lesbians and gay men as well.

JEWISH IDENTITY

Reconstructionist Judaism allows its rabbis to determine their own policy regarding officiation at intermarriages; about two-thirds will do so. Some congregations accept patrilineal descent as well as matrilineal, *i.e.*, children of one Jewish parent, of either sex, are considered Jewish if raised as Jews. This is less restrictive than the traditional standard that only considers children with Jewish mothers to be Jewish, regardless of how they were raised.

The role of non-Jews in Reconstructionist congregations is a matter of ongoing debate. Practices vary widely between synagogues. Most

congregations strive to strike a balance between inclusivity and integrity of boundaries. The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF) has issued a non-binding statement attempting to delineate the process by which congregations set policy on these issues, and sets forth sample recommendations. These issues are ultimately decided by local lay leadership.

RELATION TO OTHER JEWISH MOVEMENTS

Originally an offshoot of Conservative Judaism/Masorti Judaism, Reconstructionism retains warm relations with both the Conservative/Masorti movement and Reform Judaism. Orthodox Judaism, however, considers Reconstructionism to be incompatible with its beliefs.

HASIDIC JUDAISM

Hasidic Judaism is a Haredi Jewish religious movement. Some refer to Hasidic Judaism as Hasidism, and the adjective *chasidic* / *hasidic* (or in Yiddish חסידיש *khsidish*) applies. The movement originated in Eastern Europe (what is now Belarus and Ukraine) in the 18th century.

Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1698–1760), also known as the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, founded Hasidic Judaism. It originated in a time of persecution of the Jewish people, when European Jews had turned inward to Talmud study; many felt that most expressions of Jewish life had become too “academic”, and that they no longer had any emphasis on spirituality or joy. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* set out to improve the situation. In its initial stages, Hasidism met with opposition from several contemporary leaders, most notably the Vilna Gaon, leader of the Lithuanian Jews, united as the *misnagdim* — literally meaning “those who oppose”.

HISTORY

Prelude

In Poland, where the bulk of Jewry had established itself since the 13th century, two branches of Rabbinic Judaism emerged: those who opposed the study of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) and those who supported it. This schism became particularly acute after the Messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi in the 17th century. Leanings to mystical doctrines and sectarianism showed themselves prominently among the Jews of the south-eastern provinces of Poland, while in the Lithuanian provinces, anti-kabbalist orthodox leaders held sway. In

part, this division in modes of thought reflected social differences between the northern (Lithuanian) Jews and the southern Jews of Ukraine. In Lithuania the Jewish masses mainly lived in densely-populated towns where anti-kabbalistic rabbinical academic culture (in the yeshivos) flourished; while in Ukraine the Jews tended to live scattered in villages far removed from intellectual centers where the influence of the anti-kabbalists prevailed.

Pessimism in the south became more intense after the Cossacks' Uprising (1648-1654) under Chmielnicki and the turbulent times in Poland (1648-1660), which completely ruined the Jewry of Ukraine, but left comparatively untouched that of Lithuania. The general population of Ukraine itself declined and economic chaos reigned, especially due to these events and the subsequent Turkish Invasion which left this region depopulated and barren. After the Polish Magnates regained control of southern Ukraine in the last decade of the 17th century, an economic renaissance ensued. The magnates began a massive rebuilding and repopulation effort while being generally welcoming and benevolent towards the Jews. A type of frontier environment pursued where new people and new ideas were encouraged. The state of the Jews of what would later become southern Russia created a favorable field for mystical movements and religious sectarianism, which spread in the area from the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century.

Besides these influences, deeply-seated causes produced among many Jews a discontent with Rabbinism and a gravitation toward mysticism. Rabbinism, which in Poland had become transformed into a system of religious formalism, no longer provided a satisfactory religious experience to many Jews. Although traditional Judaism had adopted some features of Kabbalah, it adapted them to fit its own system: it added to its own ritualism the asceticism of the "practical cabalists" just across the border in the Ottoman Empire, who saw the essence of earthly existence only in fasting, in penance, and in spiritual sadness. Such a combination of religious practices, suitable for individuals and hermits, did not suit the bulk of the Jews.

Hasidism gave a ready response to the burning desire of the common people in its simple, stimulating, and comforting faith. In contradistinction to other sectarian teaching, early Hasidism aimed not at dogmatic or ritual reform, but at a deeper psychological one. It aimed to change not the belief, but the believer. By means of psychological suggestion it created a new type of religious man, a

type that placed emotion above reason and rites, and religious exaltation above knowledge.

Israel Ben Eliezer

The founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer, also became known under the title of the “Master of the Good Name” (the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, abbreviated as the *Besht*). His fame as a healer spread not only among the Jews, but also among the non-Jewish peasants and the Polish nobles. He allegedly could successfully predict the future.

To the common people, the *Besht* appeared wholly admirable. Characterised by an extraordinary sincerity and simplicity, he knew how to gain an insight into the spiritual needs of the masses. He taught them that true religion consisted not only of religious scholarship, but also of a sincere love of God combined with warm faith and belief in the efficacy of prayer; that the ordinary person filled with a sincere belief in God, and whose prayers come from the heart, is more acceptable to God than someone versed in and fully observant of Jewish law who lacks inspiration in his divine service. This democratisation of Judaism attracted to the teachings of the *Besht* not only the common people, but also the scholars whom the rabbinical scholasticism and ascetic Kabbalah failed to satisfy.

About 1740 the *Besht* established himself in the Ukrainian town of Mezhibizh. He gathered about him numerous disciples and followers, whom he initiated into the secrets of his teachings not by systematic exposition, but by means of sayings and parables that contained both easily graspable insights, for the laymen, and profound Kabbalistic depth, for the great scholars. These sayings spread by oral transmission; later the founder's disciples set them in writing, developing the thoughts of their master into a system. The *Besht* himself did not write anything.

The Spread of Hasidism

Israel ben Eliezer's disciples attracted many followers; they themselves established numerous Hasidic courts across Europe. After the *Besht's* death, followers continued his cause, under the leadership of the Magid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch. From his court students went forth; they in turn attracted many Jews to Hasidism, and many of them came to study in Mezritch with Dov Ber personally. Hasidic Judaism eventually became the way of life of the majority of Jews in Ukraine, Galicia, Belarus and central Poland; the movement also had sizable groups of followers in Hungary. Hasidic Judaism began coming

to Western Europe and then to the United States during the large waves of Jewish emigration in the 1880s.

After the passing of Rabbi Dov Ber, his inner circle of followers, known as the “Chevraya Kadisha,” the Holy Fellowship, agreed to divide up the whole of Europe into different territories, and have each one charged with disseminating hasidic teachings in his designated area.

Hasidism gradually branched out into two main divisions: (1) in Ukraine and in Galicia and (2) in Litta (Greater Lithuania). Three disciples, Dov Ber of Mezritch (Elimelech of Lizhensk, Levi Yitzchak of Berdychev, and Menachem Nahum of Chernobyl), besides the grandson of the *Besht*, Boruch of Tulchin, later R' Boruch of Mezhibizh, directed the first of these divisions. Elimelech of Lizhensk affirmed belief in Tzaddikism as a fundamental doctrine of Hasidism. In his book *No'am Elimelekh* he conveys the idea of the Tzadik (“righteous one”) as the mediator between God and the common people, and suggests that through him God sends to the faithful three earthly blessings: life, a livelihood, and children, on the condition, however, that the Hasidim support the Tzaddik by pecuniary contributions (“pidyonos”), in order to enable the holy man to become completely absorbed in the contemplation of God. Lithuanian Hasidim followed Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, who founded Chabad Hasidism, and Rabbi Aharon of Karlin.

Opposition

Early on, a serious schism evolved between the hasidic and non-hasidic Jews. Those European Jews who rejected the Hasidic movement dubbed themselves *misnagdim* (literally, “opponents”). Critics of Hasidic Judaism:

- decried the apparently novel hasidic emphasis on different aspects of Jewish law;
- found problematic the overwhelming exuberance of hasidic worship;
- distrusted as non-traditional hasidic ascriptions of infallibility and miracle-working to their leaders;
- expressed concern that hasidism might become a deviant messianic sect (which in fact had occurred among the followers of both Shabbatai Zvi and Jacob Frank, and which according to some is currently taking place within Chabad-Lubavitch).

Some other important differences between hasidim and *misnagdim* included:

- Hasidism believed in miracle workers; they believed that the *Ba'al Shem Tov* and some of his disciples literally performed miracles. Stories of their miracles became a part of Hasidic literature. The Misnagdim held such views as heretical, based on classical rabbinic works such as Saadia Gaon's *Emunoth ve-Deoth*. (Ultimately, their descendants were to regularly tell identical stories about respected Misnagdic leaders.)
- The hasidic way of dress was seen as a way to outwardly appear pious; this was opposed as improper.
- Hasidic philosophy (*chasidus*) holds as a core belief that God permeates all physical objects in nature, including all living beings. According to the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, Baal Shem Tov used to say, that *God is all and all is God*. In opposition many Jewish religious rationalists misunderstood this seemingly pantheistic doctrine as a violation against the Maimonidean principle of faith that God is not physical, and thus considered it heretical. In fact, Hasidic philosophy, especially the Chabad school, views all physical and psychological phenomena as relative and illusionary; God, the absolute reality in itself, is beyond all physical or even spiritual concepts and boundaries. Contemporary Hasidic researcher rabbi Jacob Immanuel Schochet defines this quasi-pantheistic view as *acosmic monism*.
- Hasidism teaches that there are sparks of goodness in all things, which can be redeemed to perfect the world. Many held such a view to be false and dangerous.

On a more prosaic level, other *misnagdim* regarded hasidim as pursuing a less scholarly approach to Judaism, and opposed the movement for this reason. At one point hasidic Jews were put in *cherem* (a Jewish form of communal excommunication); after years of bitter acrimony, a rapprochement occurred between hasidic Jews and their opponents within Orthodox Judaism. The reconciliation took place in response to the perceived even greater threat of the *Haskala*, or Jewish Enlightenment. Despite this, the distinctions between the various sects of Hasidim and other Orthodox Jews remain.

In the Soviet Union

The Bolshevik revolution and the rise of Communism saw the disintegration of the chasidic centers such as Chabad, Breslov, Chernobyl and Ruzhin.

Many chasidim, primarily those following the Chabad school, but also the Tshernobler Rebbe and the Ribnitzer Rebbe, remained in the Soviet Union (primarily in Russia), intent on preserving Judaism as a religion in the face of increasing Soviet opposition. With yeshivos and instruction in Hebrew outlawed, synagogues seized by the government and transformed into secular community centers, and Jewish circumcision forbidden to all members of the Communist Party, most chasidim took part in the general Jewish religious underground movement. Many became so-called "wandering clerics," travelling from village to village and functioning as chazzanim, shochemim, mohels, and rabbis wherever such services were needed. These figures were often imprisoned and sometimes executed.

Current Position

The Holocaust brought final destruction to all chasidic centers of Eastern Europe. Most survivors moved eventually to Israel or to America, and established new centers of Hasidic Judaism modeled after their original communities.

Some of the larger and more well-known chasidic sects that still exist include Belz, Bobov, Breslov, Ger, Lubavitch (Chabad), Munkacs, Pappa, Sanz (Klausenburg), Satmar, Skver, Spinka and Vizhnitz.

The largest groups in Israel today are Ger, Chabad, Belz, Satmar, Breslov, Vizhnitz, Seret-Vizhnitz, Nadvorna, and Toldos Aharon. In the United States the largest are Lubavitch, Satmar and Bobov, all centered in Brooklyn, New York, and Skver in Rockland County, New York. Large chasidic communities also exist in the Montreal borough of Outremont; Toronto; London; Antwerp; Melbourne; the Fairfax neighbourhood of Los Angeles; and St. Louis Park, a Minneapolis suburb.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND CULTURE

Fundamental Conceptions

The teachings of Hasidism are founded on two theoretical conceptions: (1) religious panentheism, or the omnipresence of God, and (2) the idea of *Devekus*, communion between God and man. "Man," says the *Besht*, "must always bear in mind that God is omnipresent and is always with him; that God is the most subtle matter everywhere diffused... Let man realize that when he is looking at material things he is in reality gazing at the image of the Deity which is present in all things. With this in mind man will always serve God even in small matters."

Deveikus (communion) refers to the belief that an unbroken intercourse takes place between the world of God and the world of humanity. It is true not only that the Deity influences the acts of man, but also that man exerts an influence on the will of the Deity. Every act and word of man produces a corresponding vibration in the upper spheres. From this conception is derived the chief practical principle of Hasidism—communion with God for the purpose of uniting with the source of life and of influencing it. This communion is achieved through the concentration of all thoughts on God, and consulting Him in all the affairs of life.

The righteous man is in constant communion with God, even in his worldly affairs, since here also he feels His presence. A special form of communion with God is prayer. In order to render this communion complete the prayer must be full of fervor, ecstatic; and the soul of him who prays must during his devotions detach itself from its material dwelling. For the attainment of ecstasy recourse may be had to mechanical means, to violent bodily motions, to shouting and singing.

According to Besht, the essence of religion is in practice and not in reason. Theological learning and halakhic lore are of secondary importance, and are useful only when they serve as a means of producing an exalted religious mood. It is better to read books of moral instruction than to engage in the study of the casuistic Talmud and the rabbinical literature. In the performance of rites the mood of the believer is of more importance than the externals; for this reason formalism and superfluous ceremonial details are injurious.

Hasidic Philosophy

Hasidic Philosophy teaches a method of contemplating on God, as well as the inner significance of the Mitzvos (commandments and rituals of Torah law). Hasidic Philosophy has four main goals:

1. Revival: At the time when Rabbi Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov founded Hasidism, the Jews were physically crushed by massacres (in particular, those of the Cossack leader Chmelnitzki in 1648-1649) and poverty, and spiritually crushed by the disappointment engendered by the false messiahs. This unfortunate combination caused religious observance to seriously wane. This was especially true in Eastern Europe, where Hasidism began. Hasidism came to revive the Jews physically and spiritually. It focused on helping Jews establish themselves financially, and then lifting their moral and religious observance through its teachings.

2. Piety: A Hasid, in classic Torah literature, refers to one of piety beyond the letter of the law. Hasidism demands and aims at cultivating this extra degree of piety.
3. Refinement: Hasidism teaches that one should not merely strive to improve one's character by learning new habits and manners. Rather a person should completely change the quality, depth and maturity of one's nature. This change is accomplished by internalising and integrating the perspective of Hasidic Philosophy.
4. Demystification: In Hasidism, it is believed that the esoteric teachings of Kabbalah can be made understandable to everyone. This understanding is meant to help refine a person, as well as adding depth and vigor to one's ritual observance.

Liturgy and Prayer

Most Hasidim pray according to one of the variations of the nusach (prayer book tradition) known as *Nusach Sefard*, a blend of Ashkenazi and Sephardi liturgies, based on the innovations of Rabbi Isaac Luria (also known as the *Arizal*). However, many Hasidic dynasties have their own specific adaptation of Nusach Sefard; some, such as the versions of the Belzer, Bobover and Dushinsky Hasidim, are closer to nusach Ashkenaz, while others, such as the Munkacz version, are closer to nusach Sefarad of the Arizal. Chabad-Lubavitch has a distinctive variant known as Nusach Ari.

The Baal Shem introduced two innovations to the Friday services: the recitation of Psalm 107 before Mincha (the afternoon service), as a prelude to the Sabbath, one gives praise for the release of the soul from its weekday activities, and Psalm 23 just before the end of Maariv (evening service).

In regard to dialect, many Hasidim, in common with most Ashkenazi Haredim, pray in Ashkenazi Hebrew. This dialect has nothing to do with Hasidism in its origins, nor was it chosen deliberately. It just happens to be the Yiddish dialect of the places from which most chasidim originally came. Thus, there are significant differences between the dialects used by chasidim originating in different places, such as Poland, Belarus, Hungary, and Ukraine.

Hasidic prayer has a distinctive accompaniment of wordless melodies called *nigunim* (or in America "nigguns") that represent the overall mood of the prayer; in recent years this innovation has become increasingly popular in non-Hasidic communities as well. Hasidic prayer

also has a reputation for taking a very long time (although some groups do pray quickly). Some hasidim will spend seven seconds of concentration on every single word of the prayer of *Amidah*.

Hasidim have a reputation for having a lot of *kavana*, mental concentration, during prayer. Overall, chasidim regard prayer as one of the most paramount activities during the day. In fact, one of the most controversial innovations of hasidic practice as practised in several courts involves the near-abolition of the traditional specified times of day by which prayers must be conducted (*zemanim*), particularly *shacharis* (the morning prayer service); the preparations for prayer take precedence and may extend into the allotted time. The Kotsker Rebbe allegedly originated this practice, which is prevalent to this day in Chabad-Lubavitch. It is controversial in many other chasidic courts, who place more emphasis on praying earlier and not eating before praying, according to the interpretation of *Halacha* (Jewish law) which is followed by the vast majority of other Hasidic and non-Hasidic Orthodox Jews.

Daily Immersion

Many male Orthodox Jews customarily immerse in a *mikva* (ritual pool of water) before major Jewish holidays (and particularly before Yom Kippur), in order to achieve spiritual cleanliness. Chasidim have extended this to a daily practice preceding morning prayers. Although daily immersion in a *mikva* is not mandated by halacha, Hasidism places great emphasis on this practice, because the Arizal taught that each time one immerses in a *mikva* he adds holiness to his soul. Immersion in a *mikva* is practised by many non-*Hasidim* as well. The reason for this is the "Enactment of Ezra" (that one must immerse in a *mikva* following a seminal emission before studying Torah or praying; although this enactment was later nullified by the Sages, many pious Jews still today try to keep this enactment).

Dress

Hasidim have a reputation for their distinctive attire. Even within the Hasidic world, one can distinguish different groups by subtle differences in appearance. Many details of their dress are shared by other Haredim. Much of Hasidic dress was historically the clothing of all Eastern-European Jews, but Hasidim have preserved more of these styles to the present day. Furthermore, hasidim have attributed mystical intents to these clothing styles. Chasidim button their clothes right over left. Most hasidim do not wear neck-ties (with the exception of some Russian Hasidim, such as those stemming from Ruzhin, Karlin, and Lubavitch).

Hasidic men most commonly wear suits in dark (usually black or navy blue) colours with distinctively long jackets, called *rekelekh*. On the Jewish Sabbath they wear a long black satin (or similar of a cheaper material, such as polyester) robe called a *zaydene kapote* (Yiddish, lit. satin caftan) or *bekishe*. On Jewish Holydays a silk garment may be worn. On the Sabbath the rebbes of chasidim traditionally wore a white *kapote* rather than a black one; this practice has fallen into disuse except for a minority of rebbes, such as Toldos Aharon and Lelov, and by Hungarian rebbes such as Tosh and Satmar. Many rebbes wear a black silk *bekishe* that is trimmed with velvet (known as *strokes* or *samet*).

Some Hasidim wear a satin overcoat, known amongst Hungarian and Galitsyaner chasidim as a *rezhvolke*, over the regular *bekishe*. Some Hasidic literature refers to this garment as an *Or Makif*, referring to the Kabbalistic concept of “Surrounding Light”. A rebbe’s *rezhvolke* might be trimmed with velvet. Some rebbes wear a fur-lined *rezhvolke* known as a *tilep*. The fur is referred to as *pelts*.

In many hasidic sects the rebbe wears a white or black, and in those of Hungarian lineage a gold designed or other coloured, *tish bekishe* or *khalat* during the *tish* or during the prayers that come right before or after the “tish”.

Contrary to popular belief, Hasidic dress has little or nothing to do with the way Polish nobles once dressed. The Emancipation Movement originated this myth in the late 19th century in an attempt to induce younger Jews to abandon the outfit. Interestingly, secular Yiddish writers of old, living in Eastern Europe (Sholom Aleichem, for example) appear to have no knowledge of the “Polish origin” of the dress. Likewise, numerous Slavic sources from the 15th century onwards refer to the “Jewish kaftan”. The Tsarist edict of the mid-19th century banning Jewish outfits mentions the “Jewish kaftan” and “Jewish hat”—as a result of this edict chasidim modified their dress in the Russian Empire and generally hid their sidelocks. Modern Chabad Lubavitch dress—where the Prince Albert frock coat substitutes for the *bekishe*—reflects this change, as does the Gerrer substitution of the *spodik* for the *shtreimel*.

Generally Hasidic dress has altered over the last hundred years and become more European in response to the Emancipation Movement. Modern Hasidim tend to wear Hasidic dress as used just prior to World War II—numerous pictures of Hasidim in the mid-19th century show a far more Levantine outfit (*i.e.* a kaftan lacking lapels or buttons)

that differs little from the classical oriental outfit consisting of the kaftan, white undershirt, sash, knee-breeches (*halbe-hoyzn*), white socks and slippers—this outfit allegedly had a Babylonian origin before its later adoption by the Israelites, Persians and lastly the Turks, who brought it to Europe where it became the basis of the modern western suit (note the 16th-century European outfit of frock coat, knee-breeches, silk stockings and slippers). The Polish nobility adopted its 16th-century outfit from the Turks—hence (allegedly) the vague similarity between the Hasidic outfit and Polish nobles' clothing. (Similarly, Hasidic dress has a vague connection with Shia Muslim clerical dress—the Shia clergy adopted this dress from the Persians.) One Hasidic belief (taught by the Klausenberger rebbe) holds that Jews originally invented this dress-code and that the Babylonians adopted it from Israelites during the Jewish exile in Babylon of the 6th century BCE. This belief is not widely held or well-known among hasidim.

Some claim that the Sabbath dress of Hasidim resembles the description of the High Priest's dress in the Bible but there does not seem to be a serious similarity. Many Hasidim also believe that Hasidic dress supports fundamental Judaic concepts—for instance white socks tucked in short pants so one's trouser-bottoms never touch the floor or ground (which in former times was likely to be a source of waste, which is problematic during prayer); and slippers (*shtibblat*) without buckles or laces so one never need touch one's shoes—which would ritually defile one's hands, requiring ritual purification through washing with a special vessel.

- Kaftans (*bekishes*, *kapotes*, *chalat*) serve as a sign of modesty, covering the entire body.
- A sash or *gartel* divides one's lower parts from one's upper parts, and are mentioned in the Talmud and *Shulchan Aruch* as a way to “prepare to meet your God”.
- Knee-breeches mean that a man's private parts remain covered when walking up stairs (cf Exodus 28:42, 20:23).

Headgear

Hasidim customarily wear black hats during the weekdays as do nearly all Haredim today. A variety of hats are worn depending on the sect. Hasidim wear a variety of fur headdresses on the Sabbath:

- *Shtreimel* is worn by most Hasidim today, including from Galicia and Hungary such as Satmar, Munkacs, Bobov, Breslov and

Belz, and some non-Galician Polish Hasidim, such as Biala, as well as some non-Hasidic Haredim in Jerusalem.

- *Spodik* – name given by others to the *shtraml* worn by Polish Hasidim such as Ger, Amshinov, Ozharov, Aleksander.
- *Choibl* or “*Soyvl*” was worn in Poland prior to the Holocaust, and has fallen into disuse.
- *Kolpik* (Polish: *calpac*) is a traditional Slavic headdress, worn by unmarried sons and grandsons of many Rebbes on the Sabbath. The *kolpik* is worn by some Rebbes on special occasions other than the Sabbath and major Biblical Holidays, such as Hanukah, Tu B’Shvat, and Rosh Chodesh.
- *The dashikl* was a peaked cap worn during the week, prior to the Holocaust. It was worn in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, and was worn by poorer Hasidim on Shabbath. Its use began as a result of the Tsarist decrees banning other traditional Jewish headdress. In these geographic areas, generally only rabbis wore black hats. Today, some Hasidic children, under the age of 13, wear a *kashket* cap on the Sabbath. In the sect of Belz, the *kashket* has been reintroduced for boys under the age of 15 to wear on weekdays.
- Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidim wear black felt fedoras, dating back to the style of the 1940s and 50s. They are the same as the hats worn by many non-Hasidic Haredim, as well as by some more “modern” Hasidim who are followers of a particular Rebbe without being part of a Hasidic community. Chabad Hasidim often pinch their hats to form a triangle on the top. They wear their fedoras even on the Sabbath and Holidays. However, some Chabad Hasidim in Jerusalem wear a *shtreimel* on the Sabbath, if that was their family’s custom for generations in Jerusalem.
- Various forms of felt open-crown (a type of hat with a rounded top, such as a bowler) hats are worn by many Hasidim. Affiliation can sometimes be identified by whether there is a pinch in the middle of the top or not, as well as the type of brim. This is called a *shtofener* hat in Yiddish. Ger and Slonimer Hasidim wear a round topped hat, while Stolin and Emunas Yisrael wear a pinched hat. Many Satmar laymen wear a type of open crown hat that resembles a bowler hat with rounded edges on the brim.
- *Samet* (velvet) or *biber* (beaver) hats are worn by Galician and Hungarian Hasidim during the week and by unmarried men on

Shabbath as well. Some unmarried men only wear a *samet* hat on the Sabbath and a felt hat during the week. There are many types of *Samet* hats, most notably the “high” (“*hoicher*”) and “flat” (“*platsher*”) varieties. The “flat” type is worn by Satmar Hasidim, and some others as well. Some Rabbis wear a “round” *samet* hat in a similar style to the *shtofener* hats, however made from the *Samet* material. They are called beaver hats even though today they are made from rabbit.

- A small fur hat called a *kutchma* (Ukrainian: *kuèma* or *êó-ìa*) is worn by many Hasidic laymen during weekdays in the winter. Today this hat is sometimes made from cheaper materials, such as polyester. This hat is referred to as a *shlyapka* (*øëÿièà*), by Russian Jews.

Other Distinct Clothing

Many Hasidim wear a watch and chain (“*zeigerel*”) and a vest (also right-over-left).

Gerrer hasidim wear “*hoyznzokn*” — long black socks that they tuck their pants into. Some hasidim from Eastern Galicia wear black socks with their breeches on the Sabbath, as opposed to white ones, particularly Belzer Hasidim.

Many Hungarian Hasidic and non-Hasidic laymen wear a suit jacket that lies somewhere between a *rekel* and a regular three-quarter double breasted suit called a “*drei-fertl*” (Yiddish for “three-quarter”). It is distinct from a regular three-quarter suit inasmuch as the right side covers the left, like a *rekel*.

Many Skverer hasidim wear knee-high leather boots (*shtifl*) with their breeches on the Sabbath. This manner of concealing the stockings was introduced as a compromise prior to a family wedding when one side had the tradition of wearing white stockings and the other did not. The Skverer Rebbe and his family wear such boots every day, and so do some rabbinical families affiliated with other Hasidic groups.

Hair

Following a Biblical commandment not to shave the sides of one’s face, male members of most Hasidic groups wear long, uncut sideburns called payoth (Ashkenazi Hebrew *peyos*, Yiddish *peyes*). Many Hasidim shave off the rest of their hair. Not every Hasidic group requires long peyos, and not all Jewish men with peyos are Hasidic, but all groups discourage the shaving of one’s beard. Hasidic boys receive their first

haircuts ceremonially at the age of three years (though Skverrer Hasidim do this at their second birthday). Until then, Hasidic boys have long hair. Many non-Hasidic (and even some non-Orthodox) Jews have adopted this custom.

Tzitzit

The white threads dangling at the waists of Hasidim and other Orthodox Jewish males are *tzitzit*. The requirement to wear fringes comes from the Book of Numbers: "Speak to the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes on the borders of their garments throughout their generations" (Numbers 15:38). In order to fulfill this commandment, Orthodox males wear a *tallit katan*, a square white garment with the fringes at the corners. By tradition, a Hasidic boy will receive his first fringed garment on his third birthday, the same day as his first haircut. Most Orthodox Jews wear the *tallit katan* under their shirts, where it is unnoticeable except for the strings that many leave hanging out; many Hasidim, as well as some other Haredim, wear the *tallit katan* over their shirt.

Women

Hasidic women wear clothing of less distinctive appearance than that of their male counterparts, but which answers to the principles of *tzeniut* (modest dress in the sense of Jewish law). As with all Haredi women, the standard is long, conservative skirts, and sleeves past the elbow. Otherwise, female Hasidic fashion remains on the conservative side of secular women's fashion. Most Hasidic women do not wear red clothing.

In common with all Haredim, Hasidic men will not touch or even shake hands with anyone of the opposite sex other than their wife, (mother, offspring); the converse applies for women.

In keeping with Jewish law married Hasidic women cover their hair. In many Hasidic groups the women wear wigs for this purpose. In some of these groups the women might also wear a *tichel* (scarf) or hat on top of the wig either on a regular basis or when attending services or other religious events. Other groups consider wigs too natural looking, so they simply put their hair into kerchiefs (called *tichels*—a *tichel* often covers a *shpitzel*). In some groups, such as Satmar, married women are expected to shave their heads and wear head kerchiefs. All allow uncovered hair before marriage.

Families

Hasidic men and women, as customary in Haredi Judaism, usually meet through matchmakers in a process called a *shidduch*, but marriages involve the mutual consent of the couple and of the parents. Expectations exist that a bride and groom should be about the same age. Marriage age ranges from 17-25, with 18-21 considered the norm. No custom encourages an older man marrying a young woman.

An old myth asserts that Hasidic couples have intercourse through a sheet with holes in it. This is not true. Many scholars have posited that this myth originated in the speculation of outsiders upon seeing the poncho-like tallit katan drying on a clothes line. Since the tallit katan resembles a small square sheet with a hole in it (for the wearer's head to go through) and Hasidim were known for extreme modesty, a new myth was born. However, while this story is a myth, many pious Hasidic couples follow strict regulations regarding what types of sexual relations are allowed and how (what positions etc.) Hasidic thought stresses the holiness of sex. The Jewish religion stresses the importance of married couples enjoying the pleasure of sexual intercourse as a divine command.

Hasidic Jews, like many other Orthodox Jews, have a reputation for producing large families; the average chasidic family in the United States has 7.9 children. Many sects follow this custom out of what they consider a Biblical mandate to 'be fruitful and multiply.'

Languages

Most Hasidim speak the language of their countries of residence, but use Yiddish amongst themselves as a way of remaining distinct and preserving tradition. Thus, children are still learning Yiddish today, and the language, despite predictions to the contrary, is not dead. Yiddish newspapers are still published, and Yiddish fiction is being written, primarily aimed at women. Films in Yiddish are being produced within the Hasidic community, and released immediately as DVDs (as opposed to the Yiddish movies of the past, which were produced by non-religious Jews).

Some Hasidic groups actively oppose the everyday use of Hebrew, which is considered a holy tongue. To use it for anything other than prayer is profane. Hence Yiddish is the vernacular and common tongue for Hasidim around the world.



21

OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS AND DIMENSIONS OF JUDAISM

MODERN ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Modern Orthodox Judaism (or Modern Orthodox or Modern Orthodoxy) is a movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to synthesize traditional observance and values with the secular, modern world.

Modern Orthodoxy draws on several teachings and philosophies, and thus assumes various forms. In the United States, and generally in the Western world, “Centrist Orthodoxy”—underpinned by the philosophy of *Torah Umadda* (“Torah and Knowledge/Science”)—is prevalent. In Israel, Modern Orthodoxy is dominated by Religious Zionism; however, although not identical, these movements share many of the same values and many of the same adherents.

PHILOSOPHY

Modern Orthodoxy comprises a fairly broad spectrum of movements each drawing on several distinct, though related, philosophies, which in some combination provide the basis for all variations of the movement today; these are discussed below.

In general, Modern Orthodoxy holds that Jewish law is normative and binding, while simultaneously attaching a positive value to interaction with the modern world. In this view, Orthodox Judaism can “be enriched” by its intersection with modernity; further, “modern society creates opportunities to be productive citizens engaged in the Divine work of transforming the world to benefit humanity”. At the same time, in order to preserve the integrity of *halakha*, any area of “powerful inconsistency and conflict” between Torah and modern culture must be avoided.

Modern Orthodoxy, additionally, assigns a central role to the “People of Israel”. Modern Orthodoxy, in general, places a high national, as well as religious, significance on the State of Israel, and Modern Orthodox institutions and individuals are, typically, Zionist in orientation. An additional manifestation is that involvement with non-orthodox Jews will extend beyond “outreach” to continued institutional relations and cooperation; see further under *Torah Umadda*.

Roots

Modern Orthodoxy traces its roots to the works of Rabbis Azriel Hildesheimer (1820-1899) and Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888). Note that while Hildesheimer’s role is not disputed—comprising distinct philosophic and pragmatic contributions—Hirsch’s role is less clear, with some Hirsch scholars arguing that his “Torah im Derech Eretz” philosophy is in fact at odds with that of Modern Orthodoxy; see further below and in the Hildesheimer article.

Torah im Derech Eretz

Hirsch’s *Torah im Derech Eretz* (טורה דרך ארץ – “Torah with the way of the Land”) is a philosophy of Orthodox Judaism which formalises a relationship between halakhically observant Judaism and the modern world. Hirsch held that Judaism requires the application of Torah philosophy to all human endeavor and knowledge compatible with it. Thus, secular education becomes a positive religious duty. “Judaism is not a mere adjunct to life: it comprises all of life... in the synagogue and the kitchen, in the field and the warehouse, in the office and the pulpit... with the pen and the chisel”. Hirsch’s vision, although not unqualified, extended to the sciences as well as to (German) literature, philosophy and culture. *Torah im Derech Eretz* remains influential to this day in all branches of Orthodox Judaism.

Hildesheimer’s Pragmatism

Azriel Hildesheimer, along with Rabbi Hirsch, was insistent that for Orthodox Jews living in the west, there was no possibility to segregate oneself behind ghetto walls. On the contrary, modern Jewish education, must teach Jews how best to confront and deal with modernity in all of its aspects.

His approach, “Cultured Orthodoxy”, was defined as representing “unconditional agreement with the culture of the present day; harmony between Judaism and science; but also unconditional steadfastness in the faith and traditions of Judaism”.

He was, however, “the pragmatist rather than the philosopher”, and it is his actions, rather than his philosophy, which have become institutionalised in Modern Orthodoxy, and through which his influence is still felt.

- He established Jewish education for males and females, which included both religious and secular studies.
- He established Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary, one of the first Orthodox yeshivot incorporating modern Jewish studies, secular studies and academic scholarship in its curriculum.
- He was non-sectarian, and worked with communal leaders, even non-Orthodox ones, on issues that affected the community.
- He maintained traditional attachments to the Land of Israel and worked with the non-Orthodox on its behalf.

Torah Umadda

Torah Umadda is a philosophy concerning the secular world and Judaism, and in particular secular knowledge and Jewish knowledge. It envisions a personal (as opposed to theoretical) “synthesis” between Torah scholarship and Western, secular scholarship, entailing, also, positive involvement with the broader community. Here, the “individual has absorbed the attitudes characteristic of science, democracy and Jewish life and responds appropriately in diverse relations and contexts”. The resultant mode of Orthodox Judaism is referred to as “Centrist Orthodoxy”.

This philosophy, as formulated today, is to a large extent a product of the teachings and philosophy of HaRav Joseph Soloveitchik (1903-1993), Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University. In “Rav Soloveitchik’s” thought, Judaism, which believes that the world is “very good”, enjoins man to engage in *tikkun olam*. “Halakhic Man” must therefore attempt to bring the sanctity and purity of the transcendent realm into the material world. Centrist Orthodoxy is the dominant mode of Modern Orthodoxy in the United States, while Torah Umadda remains closely associated with Yeshiva University. Torah Umadda is related to Hirsch’s *Torah im Derech Eretz*, but see below for a comparison between the two.

Religious Zionism

Modern Orthodoxy draws on the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1864-1935)—both as regards its views on Jewish Peoplehood and as regards the interaction with the secular world.

“Rav Kook” saw Zionism as a part of a divine scheme finally to result in the resettlement of the Jewish people in its homeland, bringing salvation (“Geula”) to the Jewish people, and the entire world. In Rav Kook’s thought *Kodesh* and *Chol* (sacred and profane) play an extremely important role. Here, *Kodesh* is the inner *taam* (reason) of reality and the meaning of existence while *Chol* is that which is detached from *Kodesh* and is without any meaning; Judaism, then, is the vehicle “whereby we sanctify our lives, and attach all the practical, secular elements of life to spiritual goals which reflect the absolute meaning of existence—G-d Himself”.

In Israel, the Religious Zionism of the “*Dati Leumi*” (דתי לאומי, “National Religious”) dominates Modern Orthodoxy. Here too, the ideological basis is largely drawn from the teachings of Rav Kook, and there is therefore much overlap; philosophical differences, as well as other “non-modern” forms of Religious Zionism, are discussed below.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER MOVEMENTS

Various, highly differing views are offered under the banner of Modern Orthodoxy, ranging from traditionalist to revisionist. In addition, some elements of Haredi Judaism (“Ultra-Orthodox Judaism”) appear to be more receptive to messages that have traditionally been part of the Modern-Orthodox agenda. At the same time, Modern Orthodoxy’s left wing may appear to align with more traditional elements of Conservative Judaism. Thus, in clarifying its position, it is useful to discuss Modern Orthodoxy with reference to other movements in Judaism.

Haredi Judaism

Although there is some question as how precisely to define the distinction between Modern Orthodoxy and Haredi Judaism, there is basic agreement that they may be distinguished on the basis of three major characteristics:

1. Modern Orthodoxy adopts a relatively inclusive attitude stance toward society in general, and the larger Jewish community in particular.
2. Modern Orthodoxy is, in comparison, accommodating, “if not welcoming” to modernity, general scholarship and science.
3. Modern Orthodoxy is almost uniformly receptive toward Israel and Zionism, viewing the State of Israel (in addition to the Land of Israel) as having inherent religious significance.

A fourth difference suggested, relates to the acceptability of moderation within Jewish law. Both Modern Orthodoxy and Ultra Orthodoxy regard *Halakha* as Divine in origin, and as such, no position is assumed without justification in the Shulkhan Arukh and in the Acharonim. The movements differ, however, in their approach to strictures (*chumras*) and leniencies (*kulas*).

- Modern Orthodoxy holds that strictures are not normative, rather, these are a matter of personal choice; “severity and leniency are relevant only in circumstances of factual doubt, not in situations of debate or varied practice. In the latter situations, the conclusion should be based solely on the legal analysis”. Note though, that in recent years, many Modern Orthodox Jews are described as “increasingly stringent in their adherence to Jewish law”.
- In the Haredi view, on the other hand, “the most severe position... is the most likely basis for unity and commonality of practice within the Orthodox community and is therefore to be preferred”. Further, “such severity... results in the greatest certainty that God’s will is being performed.” *Haredi* Judaism thus tends to adopt *chumras* as a norm.

(As to the contention that Modern Orthodoxy’s standards of observance of *halakha* are, in fact, “relaxed,” as opposed to moderate, see below under *Criticism*.)

Neo-Orthodoxy/Torah Im Derech Eretz

Neo Orthodoxy, the movement directly descended from Hirsch’s Frankfurt community, is often regarded as positioned, ideologically, outside of contemporary Modern Orthodoxy. In general, both communities have combined Torah and secular knowledge in contemporary western life. Neo-Orthodoxy, however, has done so in a more qualified fashion, emphasising that followers must exercise caution in engagements with the secular world.

Philosophical distinctions, though subtle, manifest in markedly divergent religious attitudes and perspectives; in fact, Shimon Schwab, second Rabbi of this community in the United States, is described as being “spiritually very distant” from Yeshiva University and Modern Orthodoxy. From the viewpoint of Neo-Orthodoxy, that movement differs from Modern Orthodoxy (and particularly Centrist Orthodoxy) on three main counts.

- The role of secular life and culture: In the Hirschian view, interaction with the secular—and the requisite acquisition of

culture and knowledge—is encouraged, insofar as it facilitates the application of Torah to worldly matters. For Modern Orthodoxy, on the other hand, secular culture and knowledge are seen as a complement to Torah, and, to some extent, encouraged for their own sake. Some would suggest that in Modern Orthodoxy, Judaism is enriched by interaction with modernity, whereas in Neo-Orthodoxy human experience (and modernity) are enriched by the application of Torah outlook and practice.

- Priority of Torah versus Secular knowledge: In the Hirschian view, Torah is the “sole barometer of truth” by which to judge secular disciplines, as “there is only one truth, and only one body of knowledge that can serve as the standard... Compared to it, all the other sciences are valid only provisionally.” (Hirsch, commentary to Leviticus 18:4-5). By contrast, in the view some (although certainly not all) proponents of Modern Orthodoxy, although Torah is the “pre-eminent center”, secular knowledge is considered to offer “a different perspective that may not agree at all with [Torah]... [but] both together present the possibility of a larger truth.” (*Torah Umadda*, p. 236).
- Broader communal involvement: Neo-Orthodoxy, influenced by Hirsch’s philosophy on *Austritt* (secession), “could not countenance recognition of a non-believing body as a legitimate representative of the Jewish people”, and is therefore opposed to the *Mizrachi* movement, which is affiliated with the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency. Modern Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is characterised by its involvement with the broader Jewish Community and by its Religious Zionism.

Others claim that these distinctions—save the last one—are unclear and/or unsubstantiated given the selective nature of the evidence.

Religious Zionism

Broadly defined, Religious Zionism is a movement which embraces the idea of Jewish national sovereignty, often in connection with the belief in the ability of the Jewish people to bring about a redemptive state through natural means, and often attributing religious significance to the modern State of Israel. (This attitude is rejected by most Haredim—but not all, particularly the Hardal movement.) Thus, in this sense, Religious Zionism in fact encompasses a wide spectrum of religious views including Modern Orthodoxy.

Note however, that Modern Orthodoxy, in fact, overlaps to a large extent with “Religious Zionism” in its narrower form (“Throughout the world a “religious Zionist day school” is a synonym for a “modern Orthodox day school”). At the least, the two are not in any direct conflict, and generally coexist, sharing both values and adherents. Further, in practice, except at their extremes, the differences between Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy in Israel are not pronounced, and they are often identical, especially in recent years and for the younger generation.

Nevertheless, the two movements are philosophically distinct on two broad counts.

- Firstly, (conservative) Religious Zionists differ with Modern Orthodoxy in its approach to secular knowledge. Here, engagement with the secular is permissible, and encouraged, but only insofar as this benefits the State of Israel; secular knowledge is viewed as valuable for practical ends, though not in and of itself.
- Secondly, under Religious Zionism, a “nationalistic coloration” is given to traditional religious concepts, whereas, by contrast, Modern Orthodoxy includes “a greater balance which includes openness to the non-Jewish world”; thus under Religious Zionism the Jewish nation is conceived of as an “organic unity”, whereas Modern Orthodoxy emphasises the individual.

Applying the above distinction, in Israel today, Modern Orthodoxy—as distinct from Religious Zionism—is represented by only a handful of institutions: the Religious Kibbutz Federation, *Neemanei Torah V'Avoda*, the Meimad political party, and the Shalom Hartman Institute (some would include Yeshivat Har Etzion and Yeshivat Hamivtar / Ohr Torah Stone Institutions).

Conservative Judaism

In some areas, Modern Orthodoxy’s left wing appears to align with more traditional elements of Conservative Judaism, and in fact some on the left of Modern Orthodoxy have allied with the formerly Conservative Union for Traditional Judaism. Nonetheless, the two movements are completely distinct. Rabbi Avi Weiss—from the left of Modern Orthodoxy—stresses that Orthodox and Conservative Judaism are “so very different in... three fundamental areas: *Torah mi-Sinai*, rabbinic interpretation, and rabbinic legislation”.

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- *Torah mi-Sinai* (“Torah From Sinai”): According to Weiss, Modern Orthodoxy, in line with the rest of Orthodoxy, holds that Jewish law is Divine in origin, and as such, no underlying *principle* may be compromised in accounting for changing political, social or economic conditions, whereas Conservative Judaism holds that Poskim should make use of literary and historical analysis in deciding Jewish law, and may reverse decisions of the Acharonim that are held to be inapplicable today. “The Conservative Movement maintains that the purpose of the law in the first place is largely to concretize moral values, and so the specific form of the law can and should be changed if it is not effectively doing that”. (Within the context that “[t]he halakhic system, historically considered, evinces a constant pattern of responsiveness, change and variety. Conservative Judaism did not read that record as *carte blanche* for a radical revision or even rejection of the system, but rather as warrant for valid adjustment where absolutely necessary”.)
 - Rabbinic interpretation: Weiss argued that (Modern) Orthodoxy contends that legal authority is cumulative, and that a contemporary *posek* (decisor) can only issue judgments based on a full history of Jewish legal precedent, whereas the implicit argument of the Conservative movement is that precedent provides illustrations of possible positions rather than binding law. Conservatism, therefore, remains free to select whichever position within the prior history appeals to it.. “Conservative rabbis have great respect for the Shulkhan Arukh, but do not view it as the ultimate authority because it was written over 400 years ago and much has changed since then in the *halakha*, in society and in our outlook on life”.
 - Rabbinic legislation: Weiss argued that since the Orthodox community is ritually observant, Rabbinic law legislated by (today’s) Orthodox rabbis can meaningfully become binding if accepted by the community (see *minhag*), while Conservative Judaism has a largely non-observant laity. Conservatism similarly holds that “no law has authority unless it becomes part of the concern and practice of the community” (and, in fact, the decision of when change is necessary is becoming “a communal matter at the congregational level”). However, its constituency is generally not composed of ritually observant members, and thus communal acceptance of a “permissive custom” is not

“meaningful”, and, as a result, related Rabbinic legislation cannot assume the status of law.

In general, Modern Orthodoxy does not, therefore, view the process by which the Conservative movement decides *halakha* as legitimate—or with the non-normative weighting assigned to *halakha* by the Conservative movement. In particular, Modern Orthodoxy disagrees with many of Conservative Judaism’s *halakhic* rulings, particularly as regards issues of egalitarianism. See further on the Orthodox view and the Conservative view. Modern Orthodoxy clearly differs from the approach of Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism, which do not consider *halakha* to be obligatory.

RIGHT AND LEFT

The philosophical spectrum within Modern Orthodoxy has been redefined by various challenges from both the right and the left over the last 30-40 years. Among the issues have been the extent to which Modern Orthodoxy should cooperate with the more liberal denominations, support secular academic pursuits combined with religious learning, and embrace efforts to give women a larger role in Jewish learning and worship, the acceptability of modern textual criticism as a tool for Torah study is also debated.

To the ideological right, the line between Haredi and Modern Orthodox has blurred in recent years (some have referred to this trend as “haredization”). In addition to increasing stringency in adherence to *Halakha*, many Modern Orthodox Jews express a growing sense of alienation from the larger, secular culture. Here “the balance has tipped heavily in favour of Torah over madda ... [and many] have redefined “madda” as support for making one’s livelihood in the secular world, not culturally or intellectually engaging with it”.

At the same time, adherents on the ideological left have begun to develop new institutions that aim to be outward looking whilst maintaining a discourse between modernity and *halakha*. The resultant Open Orthodoxy seeks to re-engage with secular studies, Jews of all denominations and global issues. This movement has its own Yeshiva in New York, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Some within this movement have experimented with orthodox egalitarianism where gender equality solutions are found through *halakha*. This has led to women taking on more leadership roles. Others in this movement are increasingly re-engaging with social justice issues from a halakhic point of view.

CRITICISM

Generalisations concerning Modern Orthodoxy are difficult to draw, and, as such, any criticism may be aimed at a straw man. This section deals with criticism relating to standards of observance and to social issues; as regards its philosophy see “Criticism” under Torah Umadda.

Standards of Observance

There is an often repeated contention that Modern Orthodoxy has lower standards of observance of traditional Jewish laws and customs than other branches of Orthodox Judaism. This view is largely anecdotal, and is based on individual behaviour, as opposed to any formal, institutional position:

“There are at least two distinct types of Modern Orthodox.. One is philosophically or ideologically modern, while the other is more appropriately characterised as behaviourally modern... [The] philosophically Modern Orthodox would be those who are meticulously observant of *Halakha* but are, nevertheless, philosophically modern.... The behaviourally Modern Orthodox, on the other hand, are not deeply concerned with philosophical ideas...by and large, they define themselves as Modern Orthodox [either] in the sense that they are not meticulously observant [or] in reference to... right-wing Orthodoxy. “

Introduction of “Reforms”

Whereas the Modern Orthodox position is (generally) presented as “unquestioned allegiance to the primacy of Torah, and that the apprehension of all other intellectual disciplines must be rooted and viewed through the prism of Torah”, *Haredi* groups have sometimes compared Modern Orthodoxy with early Reform Judaism in Germany: Modern Orthodox Rabbis have been criticised for attempting to modify Jewish law, in adapting Judaism to the needs of the modern world.

Note that claims of this nature have been commonplace within Orthodox Judaism since the first “reforms” of Samson Raphael Hirsch and Azriel Hildesheimer. Thus, in Europe of the early 1800s, all of Judaism that differed from the strictest forms present at the time was called “Reform”. Then, as now, Modern Orthodoxy took pains to distance its “reforms” – those which could be justified as based on the Shulkhan Arukh and poskim – from those of the Reform movement, which could not.

“It is foolish to believe that it is the wording of a prayer, the notes of a synagogue tune, or the order of a special service, which form the abyss between [Reform and Orthodoxy]... It is not the so-called Divine Service

which separates us, [rather it] is the theory—the principle [of faithfulness to Jewish law]... if the Torah is to you the Law of God how dare you place another law above it and go along with God and His Law only as long as you thereby “progress” in other respects at the same time? (*Religion Allied to Progress*, Samson Raphael Hirsch).”

Inherent Difficulties

Some observe that the ability of Modern Orthodoxy to attract a large following and maintain its strength as a movement is, (ironically), inhibited by the fact that it embraces modernity—its *raison d’être*—and that it is highly rational and intellectual.

- The very term “Modern Orthodoxy” is, in some sense, an oxymoron. One of the characteristics of all religious orthodoxies, is the submission to the authority of its tradition—authority and tradition are a prerequisite for orthodoxy, and within an orthodoxy, the individual is expected to perceive himself as not having any choice but to conform to all of its dictates. Modernity, by contrast, emphasises a measure of personal autonomy as well as rationalist truth. Some implications are that Modern Orthodoxy is, almost by definition, inhibited from becoming a strong movement, because this would entail organisation and authority to a degree “which goes against the very grain of modernity”. A related difficulty is that Modern Orthodox rabbis who do adopt stringencies may, in the process, lose the support of precisely the “Modern” group which they sought to lead.
- Modern Orthodoxy’s “highly intellectual and rational stance” presents its own difficulties. Firstly, the ideology entails built-in tensions and frequently requires conscious living with inconsistency (for instance, modernity vs. orthodoxy). In fact, even amongst its leadership there is limited agreement “on the philosophical parameters of modern Orthodoxy”. Secondly, there are also those who question whether “the literature... with its intellectually elitist bias fails to directly address the majority of its practitioners”. The suggestion here is that Modern Orthodoxy may not provide a directly applicable theology for the contemporary Modern Orthodox family; see further discussion under *Torah Umadda*.

IMPORTANT FIGURES

Many Orthodox Jews find the intellectual engagement with the modern world as a virtue. Examples of Orthodox rabbis who promote or have promoted this worldview include:

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- Marc D. Angel—former president of the Rabbinical Council of America, and rabbi of Shearith Israel, a Spanish Portuguese synagogue in New York.
 - Yehuda Amital—A Hungarian survivor of the Holocaust, Rabbi Amital emigrated to Israel in 1944, and resumed his yeshiva studies in Jerusalem. During the War of Independence, he served in the Hagana armored corps, taking part in the famous battle of Latrun. Subsequently, he took an active role in the development of Yeshivat Hadarom, where he was involved in the formulation of the idea of Yeshivat Hesder. Following the Six Day War, Rabbi Amital founded and assumed leadership of Yeshivat Har Etzion. He is a dominant public figure in Israel who is widely respected on matters of religious and national concern.
 - Samuel Belkin, former President of Yeshiva University
 - Eliezer Berkovits—philosopher, author of many works including *Not In Heaven: The Nature and Function of Halakha* and *Faith after the Holocaust*.
 - Saul Berman—director of Edah, a Modern Orthodox advocacy organisation.
 - Benjamin Blech
 - J. David Bleich, professor at Yeshiva University and expert in Jewish law
 - Shalom Carmy—professor of Jewish Studies and Philosophy at Yeshiva University; a prominent Modern Orthodox theologian
 - J. Simcha Cohen, presently rabbi in West Palm Beach, Fl., formerly rabbi of the Melbourne, Australia, Mizrachi community. Author of a series of Modern Orthodox response collections.
 - Shmuel Goldin, Congregation Ahavath Torah, Englewood, N.J.; Chair, Shvil Hazahav
 - Rabbi Professor David Hartman—founder of the Shalom Hartman Institute
 - Leo Jung, Rabbi at the Jewish Center
 - Norman Lamm—Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva University; Orthodox Forum; author of *Torah U-Maddah*. One of the leading voices for the validity and importance of Modern Orthodoxy.
 - B. Barry Levy—former professor at Yeshiva University, now professor at McGill University. His work attempts to reconcile modern day biblical scholarship with Orthodox theology.

- Mendell Lewittes—Author of *Jewish Law: An Introduction*.
- Aharon Lichtenstein—Lichtenstein grew up in the United States, earning Semicha at Yeshiva University, and a Ph.D. in English Literature at Harvard. He is committed to intensive and original Torah study, and articulates a bold Jewish worldview that embraces modernity, reflecting the tradition of his teacher and father-in-law, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. In 1971, Lichtenstein answered Rabbi Amital's request to join him at the helm of Yeshivat Har Etzion. He is a source of inspiration for a wide circle of Jewry, for both his educational attainments and his intellectual leadership. Author of *Leaves of Faith—The World of Jewish Learning*, and *By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of God*.
- Haskel Lookstein—Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, NY
- Joseph Lookstein- Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, NY
- Michael Melchior—Affiliated with Meimad
- Emanuel Rackman—Chancellor Bar Ilan Univ, Israel; member of Edah; former president of the Rabbinical Council of America, and author of *One Man's Judaism*. A leader in defending the rights of agunot, women who are prevented from receiving a divorce under Jewish law.
- Shlomo Riskin—Formerly rabbi of the Lincoln Square Synagogue in Manhattan, he emigrated to Israel to become the Chief Rabbi of Efrat.
- Sol Roth—author of "Judaism and Culture"
- Hershel Schachter—one of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's most prominent students, dean of the Katz Kollel at the Yeshiva University-affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanon Theological Seminary (RIETS). Has published several works attempting to establish a definitive view of Rabbi Soloveitchik's Weltanschauung.
- Marc Schneier—Rabbi of The Hampton Synagogue, NY
- Joseph B. Soloveitchik—Known as "The Rav", he was effectively the spiritual and intellectual guide of Modern Orthodoxy in America for the mid-20th century. He is the author of "The Lonely Man of Faith" and "Halakhic Man," an outspoken Zionist, an opponent of extending rabbinic authority into areas of secular expertise, and a proponent of some interdenominational cooperation, such as the Rabbinical Council of America participation in the now-defunct Synagogue Council of America.

He was known as a stern leader who described in his writings the spiritual loneliness and internal isolation of the modern religious “man of faith”.

- Rav Dr. Moshe David Tendler—Rav Tendler is the Rabbi Isaac and Bella Tendler Professor of Jewish Medical Ethics, and is a Professor of Biology, as well as being a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivat Rav Yitzchak Elchanan (MYP/RIETS). Holding a PhD in Microbiology, Rav Tendler is among the most prominent students of both Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l (his father-in-law) and Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. Rabbi Tendler is an expert on medical ethics as it pertains to Jewish law. He is the author of Practical Medical Halakhah, a textbook of Jewish responsa to medical issues, and “Pardes Rimonim”, a book about the halachot of Taharat Mishpacha. Rabbi Tendler is currently Rabbi of the Community Synagogue in Monsey, NY, and is the chairman of the Bioethical Commission, RCA, and of the Medical Ethics Task Force, UJA-Federation of Greater New York.
- Joseph Telushkin—Author, teacher, lecturer.
- Avi Weiss—Dean, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale Bronx, NY. Author, teacher, lecturer, and activist.
- Joel B. Wolowelsky—Yeshivah of Flatbush; Orthodox Forum; Tradition; MeOtzar HoRav.
- Walter Wurzbarger- former pulpit Rabbi, editor of Tradition magazine and head of the RCA.
- Alan Schwartz—Rabbi of Congregation Ohab Zedek (OZ) on the UWS (Upper West Side, Manhattan) and professor of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University’s undergraduate colleges
- Raymond Apple—former senior rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, Australia, and the pre-eminent Jewish spokesperson on Judaism in Australia.

MODERN ORTHODOX ADVOCACY GROUPS

There are a few organisations dedicated to furthering Modern Orthodoxy as a religious trend: The largest and oldest are the Orthodox Union (Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America), which sponsors youth groups, kashrut supervision, and many other activities and its rabbinic counterpart, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). Both have Israel and diaspora (outside the land of Israel) programmes.

- Meimad is a political/intellectual alternative to Israel's highly nationalistic religious parties or those hostile to modern secularist values
- The Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) a forum for enhancing the roles of Orthodox Jewish women within the Orthodox community, and reducing Orthodox religious disabilities against women. Considered a far-left organisation by centrist-Orthodox mainstream.

REFORM JUDAISM

Reform Judaism refers to the spectrum of beliefs, practices and organisational infrastructure associated with Reform Judaism in North America and in the United Kingdom. For more about the beliefs of Reform Judaism, see Beliefs and practices in Progressive Judaism.

The term also may refer to the Israeli Progressive Movement, the worldwide Progressive movement, the Reform movement in Judaism, and the magazine *Reform Judaism*.

REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

Reform Judaism is one of the two North American denominations affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism. It is the largest denomination of American Jews today.[2][3] With an estimated 1.1 million members, it also accounts for the largest number of Jews affiliated with Progressive Judaism worldwide.

REFORM JUDAISM IN BRITAIN

UK Reform is one of two Progressive movements in the UK. For details on the relationship between the two progressive movements, see Progressive Judaism (United Kingdom).

PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM IN ISRAEL

After a failed attempt in the 1930s to start an Israeli movement, the World Union for Progressive Judaism tried again in the 1970s and created the movement now known as the Israeli Progressive Movement. Because the first rabbis in the 1970s were trained in the United States, the Israeli press and public often refers to the Israeli Progressive Movement as "Reform".

REFORM MOVEMENT IN JUDAISM

Along with other forms of non-orthodox Judaism, the US Reform, UK Reform, and Israeli Progressive Movement can all trace their

intellectual roots to the Reform movement in Judaism. Elements of Orthodoxy developed their cohesive identity in reaction to the Reform movement in Judaism.

Although US Reform, UK Reform, and Israeli Progressive Judaism all share an intellectual heritage, they have taken places at different ends of the non-orthodox spectrum. The US Reform movement reflects the more radical end. The UK Reform and Progressive Israeli movements, along with the US Conservative movement and Masorti Judaism, occupy the more conservative end of the non-orthodox Judaisms.

JEWISH RENEWAL

Jewish Renewal is a new religious movement in Judaism which endeavors to reinvigorate modern Judaism with mystical, Hasidic, musical and meditative practices.

OVERVIEW

The term Jewish Renewal describes “a set of practices within Judaism that attempt to reinvigorate what it views as a moribund and uninspiring Judaism with mystical, Hasidic, musical and meditative practices drawn from a variety of traditional and untraditional, Jewish and other, sources. In this sense, Jewish renewal is an approach to Judaism that can be found within segments of any of the Jewish denominations.”

The term also refers to an emerging Jewish movement, the Jewish Renewal movement, which describes itself as “a worldwide, transdenominational movement grounded in Judaism’s prophetic and mystical traditions.” The Jewish Renewal movement incorporates social views such as feminism, environmentalism and pacifism.

The movement’s most prominent leader is Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. Other prominent leaders, teachers and authors associated with Jewish Renewal include Dr. Arthur Green, Rabbis Pam Baugh, David Cooper, Elliot Ginsberg, Shefa Gold, Lynn Gottlieb, Miles Krassen, Michael Lerner, Goldie Milgram, Marcia Prager, Daniel Siegel, Shohama Wiener, David Wolfe-Blank, Stan Levy, and Arthur Waskow.

Jewish Renewal brings kabbalistic and Hasidic theory and practice into a non-Orthodox, egalitarian framework, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as neo-Hasidism. Like Hasidic Jews, Renewal Jews often add to traditional worship ecstatic practices such as meditation, chant and dance. In augmenting Jewish ritual, some Renewal Jews borrow freely and openly from Buddhism, Sufism and other faiths.

HISTORY

Jewish Renewal, in its most general sense, has its origins in the North American Jewish counter-cultural trends of the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, groups of young rabbis, academics and political activists founded experimental *havurot* (singular: *havurah*) or “fellowships” for prayer and study, in reaction to what they perceived as an over-institutionalised and unspiritual North American Jewish establishment. Initially the main inspiration was the pietistic fellowships of the Pharisees and other ancient Jewish sects.

Also initially, some of these groups, like the Boston-area *Havurat Shalom* attempted to function as full-fledged communes after the model of their secular counterparts. Others formed as communities within the urban or suburban Jewish establishment. Founders of the havurot included the liberal political activist Arthur Waskow, Michael Strassfeld (who later became rabbi for a Conservative congregation and then moved on to serve a major Reconstructionist congregation), and Zalman Schachter. Although the leadership and ritual privileges were initially men-only, as in Orthodox Jewish practice, the “second wave” of American feminism soon led to the full integration of women in these communities.

Apart from some tentative articles in *Response* and other Jewish student magazines, the early havurot attracted little attention in the wider North American Jewish community. Then, in 1973, Michael and Sharon Strassfeld released *The Jewish Catalog: A Do-It-Yourself Kit*. Patterned after the recently-published counter-culture *Whole Earth Catalog*, the book served both as a basic reference on Judaism and American Jewish life, as well as a playful compendium of Jewish crafts, recipes, meditational practices, and political action ideas, all aimed at disaffected young Jewish adults. *The Jewish Catalog* became one of the best-selling books in American Jewish history to that date and spawned two sequels. A much more widespread havurah movement soon emerged, including self-governing havurot within Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist synagogues.

By 1980 an increasing number of *havurot* had moved away from strictly traditional Jewish worship practices, as members added English readings and chants, poetry from other spiritual traditions, percussion instruments, and overall a less formal approach to worship.

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a Hasidic-trained rabbi ordained in the Lubavitch movement, broke with Orthodox Judaism beginning in the 1960s, and founded his own organisation, The B’nai Or Religious

Fellowship, which he described in an article entitled "Toward an Order of B'nai Or." The name "B'nai Or" means "sons" or "children" of light, and was taken from the Dead Sea Scrolls material, where the "sons of light" battle the "sons of darkness." Schachter-Shalomi envisioned B'nai Or as a semi-monastic ashram-type community, based upon the various communal models prevalent in the 1960s and 70s. This community never materialised as he envisioned it, but B'nai Or did produce a number of important leaders in the Renewal movement. It also produced the *B'nai Or Newsletter*, a quarterly magazine that presented articles on Jewish mysticism, Hasidic stories and Schachter-Shalomi's philosophy. The masthead of this publication read: "B'nai Or is a Jewish Fellowship established for the service of G-d [sic] through prayer, Torah, celebration, meditation, tradition, and mysticism. We serve as a center to facilitate people in the pursuit of Judaism as a spiritual way of life."

Schachter-Shalomi was strongly influenced by Sufism (Sufi Islam) and Buddhism, even translating some of the prayers into Hebrew. He also focused more on urban sustainable living than rural culture, and suggested for instance interconnected basements of houses in urban neighbourhoods that would create collective space (especially for holidays), while providing the level of privacy secular life had encouraged. Some of these ideas have influenced urban economics.

In 1985, after the first national *Kallah* (conference) gathering in Radnor, Pennsylvania, the name was changed from *B'nai Or* to *P'nai Or* ("Faces of Light") to reflect the more egalitarian perspective of the rising feminist movement. Together with such colleagues as Arthur Waskow, Schachter-Shalomi broadened the focus of his organisation. In 1993 it merged with The Shalom Center, founded by Rabbi Waskow, to become ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, which served as a loose umbrella for like-minded havurot. However, some of the more Orthodox members of the old B'nai Or were not happy with these radical changes, and left the Renewal movement at this time. This resulted in major leadership changes, with Waskow taking an increasingly important role.

In 1979, Waskow had founded a magazine called *Menorah*, which explored and encouraged many creative ritual and social issues from a Jewish perspective. It was in this publication that Waskow coined the term "Jewish Renewal." In 1986, *Menorah* merged with *The B'nai Or Newsletter* to become *New Menorah*, now available online through ALEPH. The new version of the publication addressed Jewish feminism,

the nuclear arms race, new forms of prayer, social justice, etc. Several of the early *New Menorah* issues explored gay rights, and became an important catalyst for opening this discussion in more mainstream synagogues.

The greater cohesion and focus created by B'nai Or/ALEPH and its magazine led gradually to the spread of Jewish Renewal throughout much of the United States and, by the close of the century, to the establishment of communities in Canada, Latin America, Europe and Israel. By this time, the beginnings of institutionalisation were in place, in the form of the administrative ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, the rabbinical association OHaLaH, and an increasingly formalised rabbinic ordination programme that today is accepted by the National Council of Seminaries which includes the heads of all major non-Orthodox North American Rabbinical and Cantorial Training programmes.

RENEWAL AND THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH COMMUNITY

Statistics on the number of Jews who identify themselves as "Renewal" are not readily available. Nevertheless, the movement has had a significant impact on the other non-orthodox streams of Judaism within the United States. The often-controversial trend in non-Orthodox movements towards increased ritual and leadership privileges for women, lesbians and gays arguably has its origin in the liberal political activism of those *havurot* which formed the kernel of Renewal.

Signs of Renewal influence can be found elsewhere; it is not uncommon for congregations not associated with the Renewal movement to feature workshops on Jewish meditation and various Judaized forms of yoga. Many melodies and liturgical innovations are also shared among the Reform, Renewal, and Reconstructionist movements. Even rabbis trained by one of these movements have begun to serve congregations with other affiliations.

CRITICISM AND RESPONSE

Critics of Jewish Renewal claim that the movement emphasises individual spiritual experience and subjective opinion over communal norms and Jewish textual literacy; the above-mentioned formalisation of the ALEPH ordination programmes may be a response to such criticism. Some critics within the Jewish community have dismissed Jewish Renewal as "New Age Judaism." Others reply that the criticism is overblown and that the community values a range of practices and that textual literacy is a priority within the movement as a whole.

Some find fault with what they consider to be excessive borrowing from non-Jewish traditions. They hold that just as Jews cannot adopt Christian beliefs and practices and still consider themselves to be followers of Judaism, one cannot adopt Buddhist, Sufi, and polytheistic beliefs and practices and still consider themselves to be part of Judaism. Some Renewalists counter that Judaism has long since assimilated Canaanite, Babylonian, Hellenistic and Muslim elements without harm to its integrity, and that Renewal-style “deep ecumenism” poses no threat to Judaism.

Like all religious movements, the movement faces challenges today. Some within the Renewal community maintain that the movement has been more successful in providing occasional ecstatic “peak experiences” at worship services and spiritual retreats than in inculcating a daily discipline of religious practice. Others have observed a tension within the community between those who prefer to focus on liberal social activism on American, Middle East and global issues; and those who favour an emphasis on meditation, text study and worship. These, together with the challenge of training and recruiting future generations of leaders, are among the issues facing Jewish Renewal today.

RABBINIC JUDAISM

Rabbinic Judaism or Rabbinism was the continuation of the Pharisees after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. It developed through the second to sixth centuries CE. It is to be contrasted with Karaite Judaism, which broke with the Rabbinic Jews over the validity of the oral law, and over procedures used to interpret Jewish scripture, the Torah; and Early Christianity, which developed into a separate religion. Karaite Jews are nowadays a very small group.

Rabbinic Judaism is based on the tradition that the law (Torah) revealed at Sinai had both a written and oral form. The written part consists in the Torah, or the five books of Moses. The oral revelation was transmitted by word of mouth from the generation present at Sinai to their descendants up to the time of the second Temple in Jerusalem. The oral law was subsequently codified in the Mishna and Gemarah, and is interpreted by subsequent rabbinic decisions and writings. Rabbinic Jewish literature is predicated on the belief that the written law cannot be properly understood without recourse to the Oral Law (the Mishnah and the Talmud). Much Rabbinic Jewish literature concerns specifying what behaviour is sanctioned by the

law; this body of interpretations is called *halakha* (*the way*). Until the Jewish enlightenment *halakha* had the universal status of required religious practice, which remains the prevailing position among Orthodox and Conservative Jews. Reform Jews do not generally treat *halakha* as binding.

Although there are now profound differences between the streams of Rabbinic Judaism with respect to the binding force of *halakha* and the willingness to challenge preceding interpretations, all identify themselves as coming from the tradition of the oral law and the Rabbinic method of analysis. It is this which distinguishes them as Rabbinic Jews, in comparison to the Karaite movement.

KARAITE JUDAISM

Karaite Judaism or Karaism is a Jewish movement characterised by the sole reliance on the Tanakh as scripture, and the rejection of the Oral Law (the Mishnah and the Talmud) as *halakha* (*Legally Binding, i.e., required religious practice*). The word "Karaite" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "Readers [of Scripture]". This name was chosen by the adherents of Karaite Judaism to distinguish themselves from the adherents of Rabbinic Judaism. They originated in Baghdad, which is in present day Iraq.

When interpreting scripture, Karaites strive to adhere only to the *p'shat* (plain meaning) of the text. This is in contrast to Rabbinical Judaism, which employs the methods of *p'shat*, *remez* (implication or clue), *drash* ("deep interpretation," based on breaking down individual words, *e.g.*, breaking down "be'ra'shit" to "beit" "ra'shit" which means two *startings of*) and *sod* ("secret," the deeper meaning of the text, drawing on the Kabbalah). In modern times Karaite Judaism has formed its own independent Jewish organisation, and is not a member of any Rabbinic organisation.

Today there are approximately 30,000 Karaites worldwide, with 20,000-25,000 of them living in Israel, mostly in Ramla, Ashdod and Beersheba.

KARAITE BELIEFS

The Karaites believe in an eternal, one, and incorporeal God, Creator of Universe, who gave the Tanakh to humankind, through Moses and the Prophets. Karaites trust in the Divine providence and hope for the coming of the Moshiach.

Karaites and the Mishnah

Karaites do not accept the Mishnah because:

1. The Mishnah quotes many different opinions from one another.
2. The Mishnah doesn't go on to say in which opinion the truth lies. Rather the Mishnah sometimes agreeing with neither one nor the other, contradicting both.
3. They argue that the truth of the oral law given to Moses could only be in one opinion, not many opinions.
4. They question why the Mishnah does not solely speak in the name of Moses.

KARAITE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TORAH

Theoretically, most historical Karaites would not object to the idea of a body of interpretation of the Torah, along with extensions and development of *halakha*. In fact, several hundred such books have been written by various Karaite sages throughout the movement's history, though most are lost today. The disagreement arises over the perceived exaltation of the Talmud and the writings of the Rabbis above that of the Torah, so that, in the view of Karaites, many traditions and customs are kept which are in contradiction with those expressed in the Torah. This is seen especially by the fact that the Karaites also have their own traditions which have been passed down from their ancestors and religious authorities. This is known as "Sevel HaYerushah", which means "the yoke of inheritance." It is kept primarily by traditional Egyptian Karaites, and any tradition therein is rejected if it contradicts the simple meaning of the Torah.

For those Karaites who do not have such an "inheritance" or "tradition," they tend to rely heavily upon just the Torah and those practices found within it, as well as adapting Biblical practices into their own cultural context. This lack of tradition could be for many reasons; one is that many modern Karaites are the result of the Karaite revival in large part due to the World Karaite Movement, a revival group started by Nehemia Gordon and Meir Rekhavi in the early 90's. Another may be the fact that Karaite communities are so small and generally isolated that their members generally adopt the customs of their host country. A prime example of this would be the beginnings of cultural assimilation of traditional Israeli Karaites into mainstream society.

Rabbinic Opinions

Rabbinic Judaism's scholars, such as Maimonides, write that people who deny the Godly source of the Oral Torah are to be considered among the heretics. However, at the same time Maimonides holds (Hilchot Mamrim 3:3) that most of the Karaites and others who claim to deny the "teaching of the mouth" are not to be held accountable for their errors in the law because they are led into error by their parents and are thus referred to as a *tinok shenishba*, or a captive baby.

Rabbinic scholars have traditionally held that, because the Karaites do not observe the rabbinic law on divorce, there is a strong presumption that they are mamzerim (adulterine bastards), so that marriage with them is forbidden even if they return to Rabbinic Judaism. Some recent scholars have held that Karaites should be regarded as Gentiles in all respects, though this is not universally accepted. They hasten to add that this opinion is not intended to insult the Karaites, but only to give individual Karaites the option of integrating into mainstream Judaism by way of conversion.

The Calendar

Karaites rely on observations of the Moon to begin their months, and on observations of barley (called the *Aviv*) to begin their years, as deduced from statements in the Torah (*Aviv* is both a marker for the first season of the Biblical Hebrew calendar, and the next-to-last stage in the growth of barley, which occurred during the plague of hail shortly before the first Passover). Before quick worldwide communication was available, Karaites in the Diaspora used the calendar of Hillel II, as the Rabbis did.

The Shabbat

As with other Jews, during the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat), Karaites attend synagogues to worship and to offer prayers. However, most Karaites refrain from sexual relations on that day. Their prayer books are composed almost completely of biblical passages. Karaites often practice full prostration during prayers, while most other Jews only pray in this fashion on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Unlike Rabbinic Jews, Karaites do not practice the ritual of lighting candles before Shabbat because this prayer was instituted as anti-karaite legislation in the Middle Ages. [Ref: Jewish Book of Why V.1] The written Torah does not contain a commandment, as the rabbis have decreed, to light Shabbat candles. Additionally, Karaites interpret

the biblical prohibition against kindling a fire on the Shabbat as prohibiting a fire from continuing to burn that was lit prior to the Shabbat. Historically Karaites refrained from utilising or deriving benefit from light until the Sabbath ends, but modernly Karaites use fluorescent light power hooked up to a battery which is turned on prior to Shabbat. Many observant Karaites either unplug their refrigerators on Shabbat or turn off the circuit breakers. Purchasing electricity that is charged on an incremental basis during the Shabbat is viewed as a commercial transaction that the TaNaKh prohibits. Theoretically these practices are not universal, since different readings of the scriptural Sabbath prohibitions could yield a variety of points of view.

Tzitzit

Karaites wear tzitzit with blue threads in them. In contrast to Rabbinic Judaism, they believe that the techelet (the “blue”), does not refer to a specific dye. The traditions of Rabbinic Judaism used in the knotting of the tzitzit are not followed, so the appearance of Karaite tzitzit can be quite different from that of Rabbanite tzitzit. Contrary to some claims, Karaites do not hang tzitzit on their walls.

Tefillin

Contrary to the beliefs of some, Karaites do not wear tefillin in any form. According to the World Karaite Movement, the Biblical passages cited for this practice are metaphorical, and mean to “remember the Torah always and treasure it.” This is because the commandment in scripture is “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart” ... “And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.” (Deuteronomy 6:5, 9) Since words cannot be on one’s heart, or bound on one’s hand, the entire passage is understood metaphorically.

Mezuzot

Like Tefillin, Karaites interpret the scripture that mandates inscribing the Law on doorposts and city gates as a metaphorical admonition, specifically, to keep the Law at home and away. This is because the previous commandment in the same passage is the source for Tefillin for Rabbinic Judaism, and is understood metaphorically due to the language. As a result, the entire passage is understood as a metaphor. Therefore, they do not put up mezuzot, although many Karaites do have a small plaque with the Aseret haDibrot on their doorposts. In Israel, in an effort to make other Jews comfortable, many Karaites there do put up mezuzot.

HISTORY OF KARAISM

Karaism appears to be a combination from various Jewish groups in Mesopotamia, that rejected the Talmudic tradition as an innovation. Some suggest that the major impetus for the formation of Karaism was a reaction to the rise of Islam, which recognised Judaism as a fellow monotheistic faith, but claimed that it detracted from this Monotheism by deferring to rabbinical authority: Given the number of Jews that voluntarily accepted Islam during the early period, this theory is quite plausible in that those that did not become Muslim defended their beliefs by rejecting rabbinical authority.

In the IX century Anan ben David and his followers absorbed sects such the Isawites (followers of Abu Isa al-Isfahani), Yudghanites and the remnants of the pre-talmudic Sadducees and Boethusians. Anan led a polemic with the rabbinical establishment and later non-Ananist sects emerged, like the Ukbarites. The dispute of the rabbanite Gaon Saadiah and the Karaites helped to consolidate the split between them.

Karaites, Sadducees, and Philo

Abraham Geiger posited a connection between the Karaites and the Sadducees based on comparison between Karaite and Sadducee Halacha. However Dr. Bernard Revel in his dissertation on "Karaite Halacha" rejects many of Geiger's proofs. Dr. Revel also points to the many correlations between Karaite Halacha and theology and the interpretations of the Alexandrian philosopher Philo. He also points to the writings of a 10th century Karaite who brings down the writings of Philo showing that the Karaites made use of Philo's writings in the development of their movement.

The Golden Age of Karaism

The "Golden Age of Karaism" was a period of time between 10th-11th c. CE in which a large number of Karaitic works were produced in the central and eastern parts of the Muslim world. Karaite Jews were able to obtain autonomy from Rabbinical Judaism in the Muslim world and establish their own institutions, and even forced the yeshivas to move to Ramle. Karaites in the Muslim world also obtained high social positions such as tax collectors, doctors, and clerks, and even received special positions in the Egyptian courts. Karaite scholars were among the most conspicuous practitioners in the philosophical school known as Jewish Kalam.

According to historian Salo Wittmayer Baron, at one time the number of Jews affiliating with Karaism comprised as much as 10 per cent of world Jewry, and debates between Rabbinic and Karaite leaders were not uncommon.

Most notable among the opposition to Karaite thought and practice at this time are the writings of Rabbi Saadia Gaon (himself a practitioner of Jewish Kalam thought), which eventually led to a permanent split between some Karaite and Rabbinic communities.

Russian Karaites

During the 18th century, Russian Karaites spread many myths externally which freed them from various anti-Semitic laws that affected other Jews. Avraham Firkovich helped establish these ideas by referring to the tombstones in Crimea which bear inscriptions stating that those buried were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Other deflections included claiming to be among those Jews with a Khazar origin, or claiming that Karaites were otherwise not strictly Jewish descended. These actions were intended to convince the Russian Czar that Karaite ancestors could not have killed Jesus; that thus their descendants were free of familial guilt (which was an underlying reason or pretext given at that time for anti-Semitic laws).

Crimean and Lithuanian Karaites

The Karaim (Turkish *Qaraylar*) are a distinctive Karaite community from the Crimea. Their Turkic language is called Karaim. According to a Karaite tradition several hundred Crimean Karaites were invited to Lithuania by Grand Duke Vytautas to settle in Trakai ca. 1397. A small community remains there to this day, which has preserved its language and distinctive customs, such as its traditional dish called "kibinai", a sort of meat pastry, and its houses with three windows, one for God, one for the family, and one for Grand Duke Vytautas. This community has access to two Kenessas.

Spanish Karaites

During the 10th and 11th Centuries, Karaite Jews in Spain had become "a force to be reckoned with." In Castile, high-ranking Rabbinical Jews such as Joseph Ferrizuel persuaded the king to allow the persecution and expulsion of Karaite Jews. With royal assistance, Rabbi Todros Halevi and Joseph ibn Alfakhar successfully drove out a large portion of the surviving Karaite population.

The Karaites Today

In the early 1950s, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate originally objected to the arrival of Karaite Jewish immigrants in the country and unsuccessfully tried to obstruct it.

Moshe Marzouk, one of the Egyptian Jews executed in 1954 for planting bombs at Cairo in the service of Israeli Military Intelligence (the Lavon Affair) was a Karaite. Branded a terrorist by the Egyptians, in Israel he was considered a hero and martyr; however, his Karaite identity was downplayed in official publications, which usually just described him as “an Egyptian Jew”.

In Israel, the Karaite Jewish leadership is directed by a group called “Universal Karaite Judaism”. Most of the members of its Board of Hakhams are of Egyptian Jewish descent.

There are about 2,000 Karaites living in the United States. Most live near Bnei Yisra’el, the only Karaite synagogue in the United States, located in Daly City, California. In the central USA, one will find Karaites-USA Organisation.

On 1 August 2007, the Karaites reportedly converted their first new members in 500 years. At a ceremony in their Northern California synagogue, ten adults and four minors “swore fealty” to Karaite Judaism after completing a year of study. This conversion comes 15 years after the Karaite Council of Sages reversed its centuries-old ban on accepting converts.

There are groups with legal recognition in Lithuania as well as in Poland. There are about 50 Karaites living in Istanbul, Turkey. The only synagogue (Kahal haKadosh be Sukra bene Mikra) is still functional in the Hasköy neighbourhood in the European part of the city. The community also gave its name to another part of the city: Karaköy (“Village of the Karaites” in Turkish), which proves the existence of an important community once.

KARAITE WRITINGS

Karaism has produced a vast library of commentaries and polemics, especially during its “Golden Age.” These writings prompted new and complete defenses of the Talmud and Mishna, the culmination of these in the writings of Saadia Gaon and his criticisms of Karaism. Though he opposed Karaism, the Rabbinic commentator Abraham Ibn Ezra regularly quoted Karaite commentators, particularly Yefet

ben Ali, to the degree that a legend exists among some Karaites that Ibn Ezra was ben Ali's student.

The most well-known Karaite polemic is Isaac Troki's *céæå÷ àâðä* (Faith Strengthened), a comprehensive Counter-Missionary polemic which was later translated into Latin by Wagenseil as part of a larger collection of Jewish anti-Christian polemics entitled *Ignea Tela Satanae* ('The Fiery Darts of Satan'). Many Counter-Missionary materials produced today are based upon or cover the same themes as this book. Scholarly studies of Karaite writings are still in their infancy.

SAMARITAN

The Samaritans are an ethnic group of the Levant. Ethnically, they are descended from a group of Israelite inhabitants that have connections to ancient Samaria from the beginning of the Babylonian Exile up to the beginning of the Common Era. The Samaritans, however, derive their name not from this geographical designation, but rather from the term (Shamerim), "keepers [of the law]". Religiously, they are the adherents to Samaritanism, a religion based on the Torah. Samaritans claim that their worship (as opposed to mainstream Judaism) is the true religion of the ancient Israelites, predating the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

As of November 1, 2007, there were 712 Samaritans according to their tally living almost exclusively in Kiryat Luza on the holy Mount Gerizim near the city of Nablus (Shechem) in the West Bank, and in the city of Holon in Israel.

The Samaritans speak either Modern Hebrew (in Holon) or Palestinian Arabic (in Nablus) as their mother language. For liturgical purposes, Samaritan Hebrew, also known as ancient Hebrew, and Samaritan Aramaic are used.

Early History According to Samaritan Sources

The Samaritans assert that Mount Gerizim was the original Holy Place of Israel from the time that Joshua conquered Israel and the ten tribes settled the land. According to the Bible, the story of Mount Gerizim takes us back to the story of the time when Moses ordered Joshua to take the Twelve Tribes of Israel to the mountains by Shechem and place half of the tribes, six in number, on the top of Mount Gerizim, the Mount of the Blessing, and the other half in Mount Ebal, the Mount of the Curse. The two mountains were used to symbolize the

significance of the commandments and serve as a warning to whoever disobeyed them.

“The Samaritans have insisted that they are direct descendants of the Northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who survived the destruction of the Northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The inscription of Sargon II records the deportation of a relatively small proportion of the Israelites (27,290, according to the annals), so it is quite possible that a sizable population remained that could identify themselves as Israelites, the term that the Samaritans prefer for themselves.

Samaritan historiography would place the basic schism from the remaining part of Israel after the twelve tribes conquered the land of Canaan, led by Joshua. After Joshua’s death, Eli the priest left the tabernacle which Moses erected in the desert and established on Mount Gerizim, and built another one under his own rule in the hills of Shilo (1 Sam 1:1-3; 2:12-17). Thus, he established both an illegitimate priesthood and an illegitimate place of worship.”

Abu’l Fath, who in the fourteenth century C.E. wrote the major work of Samaritan history, comments on Samaritan origins as follows:

“A terrible civil war broke out between Eli son of Yafni, of the line of Ithamar, and the sons of Phineas, because Eli son of Yafni resolved to usurp the High Priesthood from the descendents of Phineas. He used to offer sacrifices on an altar of stones. He was 50 years old, endowed with wealth and in charge of the treasury of the children of Israel...

He offered a sacrifice on the altar, but without salt, as if he were inattentive. When the Great High Priest Ozzi learned of this, and found the sacrifice was not accepted, he thoroughly disowned him; and it is (even) said that he rebuked him.

Thereupon he and the group that sympathised with him, rose in revolt and at once he and his followers and his beasts set off for Shiloh. Thus, Israel split in factions. He sent to their leaders saying to them, anyone who would like to see wonderful things, let him come to me. Then he assembled a large group around him in Shiloh, and built a Temple for himself there; he constructed a place like the Temple (on Mount Gerizim). He built an altar, omitting no detail—it all corresponded to the original, piece by piece.

At this time the Children of Israel split into three factions. A loyal faction on Mount Gerizim; a heretical faction that followed false Gods; and the faction that followed Eli son of Yafni on Shiloh.”

Further, the Samaritan Chronicle Adler, or New Chronicle, believed to have been composed in the 18th century C.E. using earlier chronicles as sources states:

“And the children of Israel in his days divided into three groups. One did according to the abominations of the Gentiles and served other Gods; another followed Eli the son of Yafni, although many of them turned away from him after he had revealed his intentions; and a third remained with the High Priest Uzzi ben Bukki, the chosen place, Mount Gerizim Bethel, in the holy city of Shechem.”

According to the Samaritans this marked the end of the Age of Divine Favour called Ridhwan or Rahuta, which began with Moses. Thus, began the Fanuta Era of Divine Disfavor when God looks away from the people. According to the Samaritans the age of divine favour will only return with the coming of the Taheb (Messiah or Restorer).

The Samaritans claim that there are three periods of the deviation of Jews from Israel. The first was during the time of Elijah the Priest. Elijah decided on his own to relocate the Holy Place to Shilo, but this point was rejected from the beginning by the nation. The second controversy started during the split of the ten tribes of Israel from the tribe of Judea due to a dispute about tax payments in the year 928 BC. The third controversy was during the Return to Zion by the Jews from Babylon in the year 538 BC. In that time there was physical fighting between the two sects, with the Jews claiming that the Samaritans informed the Persian King about their intention to build the Second Temple.

The Samaritans never deny that the Assyrians assimilated with them, but they claim that other nations have assimilated into Judaism as well. The fact is that the Assyrian exile was a long process and took many years. The Assyrians who came to Samaria were few in number and most of them have assimilated with the locals. The Samaritans themselves make a clear distinction between their own ancestors and the inhabitants of Samaria. For example, in the part of the Samaritan Chronicle II which corresponds to I Kings 16 of the Hebrew Bible, the biblical account of the founding of Samaria by Omri is followed by a note which explains that the inhabitants of Samaria and its nearby cities were called “Shomronim after the name Shomron”. Thus, the distinction between the people of Samaria and the Samaritans is clearly maintained in the Samaritan Chronicle II. Put simply, shomronim means the “inhabitants of Samaria” and it has nothing to do with shamerin, “keepers” or “observers” of the Torah, which the Samaritans use for themselves. James Montgomery pointed out that the Samaritans:

“call themselves by the ancient geographical appellative, Shamerim, which they interpret however as meaning “the Observers”, *i.e.*, of the Law.”

Non-Samaritan View of Origins

The emergence of the Samaritans as an ethnic and religious community distinct from other Levant peoples appears to have occurred at some point after the Assyrian conquest of the Israelite Kingdom of Israel. In approximately 721 BC, the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom and captured its capital city of Samaria. The records of Sargon II of Assyria indicate that he deported 27,290 inhabitants of the region.

Jewish tradition maintains a different origin for the Samaritans. The Talmud accounts for a people called “Cuthim” on a number of occasions, mentioning their arrival by the hands of the Assyrians. According to 2 Kings 17 and Josephus (*Antiquities* 9.277–91), the people of Israel were removed by the king of the Assyrians (Sargon II- see special wording of 2 Kings 17 which mentions Shalmaneser in verse 3 but the “king of the Assyrians” from verse 4 onward), to Halah, to Gozan on the Habor River and to the towns of the Medes. The king of the Assyrians then brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avah, Emath, and Sepharvaim to place in Samaria. Because God sent lions among them to kill them, the king of the Assyrians sent one of the priests from Bethel to teach the new settlers about God’s ordinances. The eventual result was that the new settlers worshipped both the God of the land and their own gods from the countries from which they came.

A Midrash (*Genesis Rabbah* Sect. 94) relates about an encounter between Rabbi Meir and a Samaritan. The story that developed includes the following dialogue:

- R. Meir asks the Samaritan: What tribe are you from?
- The Samaritan answers: From Joseph.
- R. Meir: No!
- The Samaritan: From which one then?
- R. Meir: From Issachar.
- The Samaritan: How do you know?
- R. Meir: For it is written (*Gen 46:13*): The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron. These are the Samaritans (shamray).

Zertal dates the Assyrian onslaught at 721 BC to 647 BC and discusses three waves of imported settlers. He shows that Mesopotamian pottery in Samaritan territory cluster around the lands of Menasheh and that the type of pottery found was produced around 689 BC.

Some date their split with the Jews to the time of Nehemiah, Ezra, and the rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. Returning exiles considered the Samaritans to be non-Jews and, thus, not fit for this religious work.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica (under "Samaritans") summarises both past and the present views on the Samaritans' origins. It says:

"Until the middle of the 20th Century it was customary to believe that the Samaritans originated from a mixture of the people living in Samaria and other peoples at the time of the conquest of Samaria by Assyria (722/1 BC). The Biblical account in II Kings 17 had long been the decisive source for the formulation of historical accounts of Samaritan origins. Reconsideration of this passage, however, has led to more attention being paid to the Chronicles of the Samaritans themselves. With the publication of Chronicle II (Sefer ha-Yamim), the fullest Samaritan version of their own history became available: the chronicles, and a variety of non-Samaritan materials.

According to the former, the Samaritans are the direct descendants of the Joseph tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, and until the 17th century C.E. they possessed a high priesthood descending directly from Aaron through Eleazar and Phinehas. They claim to have continuously occupied their ancient territory and to have been at peace with other Israelite tribes until the time when Eli disrupted the Northern cult by moving from Shechem to Shiloh and attracting some northern Israelites to his new followers there. For the Samaritans, this was the 'schism' par excellence. ("Samaritans" in Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972, Volume 14, op. cit., col. 727.)"

Furthermore, even to this day the Samaritans still claim descent from the tribe of Joseph:

"The laymen also possess their traditional claims. They are all of the tribe of Joseph, except those of the tribe of Benjamin, but this traditional branch of people, which, the Chronicles assert, was established at Gaza in earlier days, seems to have disappeared. There exists an aristocratic feeling amongst the different families in this community, and some are very proud over their pedigree and the great men it had produced. (J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans The Earliest Jewish Sect: Their History, Theology And Literature*, 1907, op. cit., p. 32.)"

End of the Judean Exile

When the exile ended in 538 BC and the exiles returned home again, they found that their former homeland was now populated by other people who had claimed this land as their own and that their former glorious capital still lay in ruins.

According to 2 Chronicles 36.22–23, the Persian Emperor Cyrus, who returned the exiles to their homeland, explicitly ordered the people to rebuild the temple. The Prophet Isaiah identified Cyrus as “The Lord’s anointed” (meshiach; see Isa 45.1). The temple was rebuilt over a period of several decades.

“22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.— 2 Chr 36:22-23 in the KJV”

The project was first led by Sheshbazzar (about 538 BC), later by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and later still by Haggai and Zechariah (520–515 BC).

Ezra 4 tells us how the local inhabitants of the land offered to assist with the building of the new temple during the time of Zerubbabel, but their offer was rejected. According to Ezra, this rejection precipitated a further interference not only with the rebuilding of the temple but also with the reconstruction of Jerusalem.

The text is not clear on this matter, but one possibility is that these “people of the land” were thought of as Samaritans. We do know that Samaritan and Jewish antagonism continued to increase, and that the Samaritans eventually built their own temple on Mount Gerizim, perhaps around 330 B.C.

The Temple was completed in 515 BC.

“15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy— Ezra 6:15-16 in the KJV”

The Samaritans built their rival Temple on Mount Gerizim, near Shechem.

Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim

The precise date of the schism between Samaritans and Jews is unknown, but was certainly complete by the end of the fourth century

BCE. Archaeological excavations at Mount Gerizim suggest that a Samaritan temple was built there c. 330 BC according to Samaritans that Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Gerizim Genesis 22:2.

The Torah mentions the place where God shall choose to establish His name (Deut 12:5), and Judaism takes this to refer to Jerusalem. However, the Samaritan text speaks of the place where God *has chosen* to establish His name, and Samaritans identify it as Mount Gerizim, making it the focus of their spiritual values.

The Gospel of John relates an encounter between a Samaritan woman and Jesus in which she asserts that the mountain was the center of their worship John 4:20.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Hellenization

In the second century BC a particularly bitter series of events eventually led to a revolution.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was on the throne of the Seleucid Empire from 175 to 163 BC. His determined policy was to Hellenize his entire kingdom and standardize religious observance. He proclaimed himself the incarnation of the Greek god Zeus and mandated death to anyone who refused to worship him (1 Maccabees 1:41-50). A major obstacle to his ambition was the fidelity of the Jews to their historic religion.

The universal peril led the Samaritans, eager for safety, to repudiate all connection and kinship with the Jews. They sent ambassadors and an epistle asking to be recognised as belonging to the Greek party, and to have their temple on Mt. Gerizim named "The Temple of Jupiter Hellenius". The request was granted. This was evidently the final breach between the two groups indicated in John 4:9, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

Several centuries before the birth of Jesus, the Samaritans had built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim to rival the one in Jerusalem. Here, they offered sacrifices according to the Mosaic code. Anderson notes that during the reign of Antiochus IV (175-164 BC):

"the Samaritan temple was renamed either Zeus Hellenios (willingly by the Samaritans according to Josephus or, more likely, Zeus Xenios, (unwillingly in accord with 2 Macc. 6:2) Bromiley, 4.304)."

Josephus Book 12, Chapter 5 quotes the Samaritans as saying:

"We therefore beseech thee, our benefactor and saviour, to give order to Apolonius, the governor of this part of the country, and to Nicanor, the procurator of thy affairs, to give us no disturbances, nor to lay to

our charge what the Jews are accused for, since we are aliens from their nation and from their customs, but let our temple which at present hath no name at all, be named the Temple of Jupiter Hellenius."

"Shortly afterwards, the king sent Gerontes the Athenian to force the Jews to violate their ancestral customs and live no longer by the laws of God; and to profane the Temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and the one on Mount Gerizim to Zeus, Patron of Strangers, as the inhabitants of the latter place had requested.—II Maccabees 6:1-2"

In 167 BC the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes set up an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offerings in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. He also sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. This event is known as the "abomination of desolation".

The authority of the high priesthood was severely damaged when first Jason and then Meneleus bought their office from Antiochus.

The persecution and death of faithful Jewish persons who refused to worship and kiss Antiochus' image eventually led to a revolt led by Judas Maccabeus and his family.

Judas's priestly family, the Hasmoneans, introduced a dynasty that ruled during a period of conflict, with tensions arising both from within the family as well as from external enemies.

This Samaritan Temple at Mount Gerizim was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in about 128 BC, having existed about 200 years. Only a few stone remnants of it exist today.

164 BC and After

During the Hellenistic period, Samaria (like Judea) was largely divided between a Hellenizing faction based in Samaria (Sebastaea) and a pious faction, led by the High Priest and based largely around Shechem and the rural areas.

Samaria was a largely autonomous state nominally dependent on the Seleucid empire until around 129 BC, when the Jewish Hasmonean king Yohanan Girhan (John Hyrcanus) destroyed the Samaritan temple and devastated Samaria.

Roman Times

Samaritans fared badly under the Roman Empire, when Samaria was part of the Roman province of Judea. However, this period was also something of a golden age for the Samaritan community. The Temple of Gerizim was rebuilt after the Bar Kochba revolt, around AD 135. Much of Samaritan liturgy was set by the high priest Baba

Rabba in the fourth century. There were some Samaritans in the Persian Empire, where they served in the Sassanid army.

Byzantine Times

Later, under the Christian Byzantine Emperor Zeno in the late fifth century, Samaritans and Jews were massacred, and the Temple on Mt. Gerizim was again destroyed. This period is considered the worst for Samaritans. Under a charismatic, messianic figure named Julianus ben Sabar (or ben Sahir), the Samaritans launched a war to create their own independent state in 529 AD. With the help of the Ghassanid Arabs, Emperor Justinian I crushed the revolt; tens of thousands of Samaritans died or were enslaved. The Samaritan faith was virtually outlawed thereafter by the Christian Byzantine Empire; from a population once at least in the hundreds of thousands, the Samaritan community dwindled to near extinction.

Under Islam

By the onset of Islamic rule, Samaritans were living in an area stretching between Egypt and Syria. Like other non-Muslims in the empire, they had Dhimmi status and were expected to pay special taxes. Conversions to Islam to avoid these and other pressures occurred during that period. During the Crusades, Samaritans, like others in the region were persecuted by the Crusaders. In 1624, the last Samaritan high priest of the line of Eleazar son of Aaron died without issue, but descendants of Aaron's other son, Ithamar, remained and took over the office.

In the past, the Samaritans are believed to have numbered several hundred thousand, but persecution and assimilation have reduced their numbers drastically. In 1919, an illustrated *National Geographic* report on the community stated that their numbers were less than 150.

MODERN TIMES

As of November 1, 2007, there were 713 Samaritans half of whom reside in their modern homes at Kiryat Luza on Mount Gerizim, which is sacred to them, and the rest in the city of Holon, just outside Tel Aviv. Until the 1980s, most of the Samaritans resided in the Palestinian town of Nablus below Mount Gerizim. They relocated to the mountain itself near the Israeli settlement of Har Brakha as a result of the First Intifada (1987-1990), and all that is left of the community in Nablus itself is an abandoned synagogue. The Israeli army maintains a constant

presence in the area to monitor activity in Nablus and secure Har Brakha.

Relations of Samaritans with Jewish Israelis and Palestinians in neighbouring areas have been mixed. In 1954, Israeli President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi created a Samaritan enclave in Holon. Those living in Israel have Israeli citizenship. Samaritans in the Palestinian Authority territories are a recognised minority; they had a reserved seat in the Palestinian Legislative Council in the election of 1996, but they no longer have one. Palestinian Samaritans have been granted passports by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. As a small community divided between two mutually hostile neighbours, the Samaritans are generally unwilling to take sides in the conflict, fearing that whatever side they take could lead to repercussions from the other. However, perhaps in part due to the fact those who are Israeli citizens are drafted into the military, both communities tend to be more politically aligned with Israel.

One of the biggest problems facing the community today is the issue of continuity. With such a small population, divided into only four families (Cohen, Tsedakah, Danfi and Marhib; a fifth family died out in the last century) and a general refusal to accept converts, there has been a history of genetic disease within the group due to the small gene pool. To counter this, the Samaritan community has recently agreed that men from the community may marry non-Samaritan (primarily, Israeli Jewish) women, provided that the women agree to follow Samaritan religious practices. This often poses a problem for the women, who are typically less than eager to adopt the strict interpretation of Biblical (Levitical) laws regarding menstruation, by which they must live in a separate dwelling during their periods and after childbirth. Nevertheless, there have been a few instances of intermarriage. In addition, all marriages within the Samaritan community are first approved by a geneticist at Tel HaShomer Hospital, in order to prevent the spread of genetic disease.

In 2004 the Samaritan high priest, Saloum Cohen, died and was replaced by Elazar ben Tsedaka ben Yitzhaq. The Samaritan high priest is selected by age from the priestly family, and resides on Mount Gerizim.

DNA TESTING OF SAMARITANS

Genetic and demographic investigations of the Samaritan community were carried out in the 1960s. Detailed pedigrees of the last 13 generations show that the Samaritans comprise four lineages:

- The Tsedakah lineage, claiming descent from the tribe of Manasseh
- The Joshua-Marhiv lineage, claiming descent from the tribe of Ephraim
- The Danfi lineage, claiming descent from the tribe of Ephraim
- The priestly Cohen lineage from the tribe of Levi.

Of the 12 Samaritan males, 10 (83 per cent) belong to haplogroup J, which has three of the four Samaritan families. The Joshua-Marhiv family belongs to subhaplogroup J1, while the Danfi and Tsedakah families belong to subhaplogroup J2, and can be further distinguished by M67, the derived allele of which has been found in the Danfi family.

Genetic differences between the Samaritans and neighbouring Jewish and non-Jewish populations are corroborated in the present study of 7,280 bp of non-recombining Y-chromosome and 5,622 bp of coding and hypervariable segment (HVS-I) mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) sequences. Comparative sequence analysis was carried out on 12 Samaritan Y-chromosome, and mtDNA samples from 9 male and 7 female Samaritans separated by at least two generations. In addition, 18–20 male individuals were analysed, each representing Ethiopian, Ashkenazi, Iraqi, Libyan, Moroccan, and Yemenite Jews, as well as Druze and Palestinians, all currently living in Israel. The four Samaritan families clustered to four distinct Y-chromosome haplogroups according to their patrilineal identity. Of the 16 Samaritan mtDNA samples, 14 carry either of two mitochondrial haplotypes that are rare or absent among other worldwide ethnic groups.

Principal components analysis suggests a common ancestry of Samaritan and Jewish patrilineages. Most of the former may be traced back to a common ancestor in the paternally-inherited Israelite high priesthood (Cohanim) at the time of the Assyrian conquest of the kingdom of Israel.

RELIGION

The Samaritan religion is based on some of the same books used as the basis of mainstream Judaism, but differs from the latter. Samaritan scriptures include the Samaritan version of the Torah, the Memar Markah, the Samaritan liturgy, and Samaritan law codes and biblical commentaries. Samaritans appear to have texts of the Torah as old as the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint; scholars have various theories concerning the actual relationships between these three texts.

Religious Beliefs

- There is one God, the same God recognised by the Hebrew prophets;
- Their view of God is the same as the Jewish biblical view of God;
- The Torah was given by God to Moses;
- Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem, is the one true sanctuary chosen by Israel's God;
- Many Samaritans believe that at the end of days, the dead will be resurrected by Taheb, a restorer (possibly a prophet, some say Moses);
- They possess a belief in Paradise (heaven);
- The priests are the interpreters of the law and the keepers of tradition; unlike Judaism, there is no distinction between the priesthood and the scholars;
- The authority of classical Jewish rabbinical works, the Mishnah, and the Talmuds are rejected;
- Samaritans reject Jewish codes of law;
- They have a significantly different version of the Ten Commandments (for example, their 10th commandment is about the sanctity of Mt. Gerizim).

The Samaritans retained the Ancient Hebrew script, the high priesthood, animal sacrifices, the eating of lambs at Passover, and the celebration of Aviv in spring as the New Year. Yom Teruah (the biblical name for Rosh Hashanah), at the beginning of Tishrei, is not considered a new year as it is in Judaism. Their main Torah text differs from the Masoretic Text, as well. Some differences are doctrinal: for example, their Torah explicitly mentions that "the place that God HAS CHOSEN" is Mount Gerizim as opposed to Jewish Torah that says, "the place that God WILL choose." Other differences are minor and seem more or less accidental.

Relationship to Mainstream Judaism

Samaritans refer to themselves as *Bene Yisrael* ("Children of Israel") which is a term used by all Jewish denominations as a name for the Jewish people as a whole. They however do not refer to themselves as *Yehudim* the standard Hebrew name for Jews, considering the latter to denote only mainstream Jews.

The Talmudic attitude expressed in tractate Kutim is that they are to be treated as Jews in matters where their practice coincides with the mainstream but are treated as non-Jews where their practice differs. Since the 19th century mainstream Judaism has regarded the Samaritans as a Jewish sect.

Religious Texts

Samaritan law is not the same as *halakha* (Rabbinical Jewish law). The Samaritans have several groups of religious texts, which equate to Jewish halakhah. A few examples of such texts are:

- Torah
 - *Samaritan Pentateuch*—only inspired text. (Contains about 6000 variations from the original Hebrew texts. Most are minor)
- Historical writings
 - *Samaritan Chronicle*, The Tolidah (Creation to the time of Abishah)
 - *Samaritan Chronicle*, The Chronicle of Joshua (Israel during the time of divine favour) (Fourth Century, in Arabic and Aramaic)
 - *Samaritan Chronicle*, Adler (Israel from the time of divine disfavor until the exile)
- Hagiographical texts
 - *Samaritan Halakhic Text*, The Hillukh (Code of halakhah, marriage, circumcision, etc.)
 - *Samaritan Halakhic Text*, the Kitab at-Tabbah (Halacha and interpretation of some verses and chapters from the Torah, written by Abu Al Hassan 12th century CE)
 - *Samaritan Halakhic Text*, the Kitab al-Kafi (Book of Halakhah, written by Yosef Al Ascar 14th century CE)
 - *Al-Asatir*—legendary Aramaic texts from 11th 12th centuries, containing:
 - ◆ *Haggadic Midrash*, Abu'l Hasan al-Suri
 - ◆ *Haggadic Midrash*, Memar Markah—3rd or 4th century theological treatise attributed to *Hakkam* Markha
 - ◆ *Haggadic Midrash*, Pinkhas on the Taheb
 - ◆ *Haggadic Midrash*, Molad Maseh (On the birth of Moses)
- *Defter*, prayer book of psalms and hymns.

List of the Samaritan High Priests (from 1613)

See a complete listing of the Samaritan High Priests

Line of Eleazar:

- 1613–1624 Shelemiah ben Pinhas

Line of Ithamar:

- 1624–1650 Tsedaka ben Tabia Ha'abta'ai
- 1650–1694 Yitzhaq ben Tsedaka
- 1694–1732 Abraham ben Yitzhaq
- 1732–1752 Tabia ben Yiszhaq ben Avraham
- 1752–1787 Levi ben Avraham
- 1787–1855 Shalma ben Tabia
- 1855–1874 Amram ben Shalma
- 1874–1916 Yaacov ben Aaharon ben Shalma
- 1916–1932 Yitzhaq ben Amram ben Shalma ben Tabia
- 1933–1943 Matzliach ben Phinhas ben Yitzhaq ben Shalma
- 1943–1961 Abrisha ben Phinhas ben Yitzhaq ben Shalma
- 1961–1980 Amram ben Yitzhaq ben Amram ben Shalma
- 1980–1982 Asher ben Matzliach ben Phinhas
- 1982–1984 Phinhas ben Matzliach ben Phinhas
- 1984–1987 Yaacov ben Ezzi ben Yaacov ben Aaharon
- 1987–1998 Yosseph ben Ab-Hisda ben Yaacov ben Aaharon
- 1998–2001 Levi ben Abisha ben Phinhas ben Yitzhaq
- 2001–2004 Shalom ben Amram ben Yitzhaq (Saum Is'haq al-Samiri)
- from 2004 Elazar ben Tsedaka ben Yitzhaq (he is the 131st Samaritan High Priest)

SAMARITANS IN THE CHRISTIAN GOSPELS

The Christian Gospels thrice mention good deeds by Samaritans. Jesus, who lived and acted within a society where centuries-long hostility to and prejudice against Samaritans were deeply rooted, evidently sought to teach that actions speak louder than ethnic identity or pious appearances:

- The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Begins in Luke 10:33.
- Jesus asks a Samaritan woman of Sychar for water from Jacob's Well. John 4.

- Jesus healed 10 Lepers, of which only one returned to praise God, and he was a Samaritan. Luke 17:11

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is accused of being a Samaritan and being demon-possessed. John 8:48

Luke has the parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of the Samaritan Leper, but it also contains a story of a Samaritan village denying hospitality to Jesus and his disciples, because they did not want to facilitate a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—a practice which they saw as a violation of the Law of Moses. Luke 9:51

In Matthew 10:5, Jesus forbids his disciples to visit any Samaritan city.

The Gospel of Mark contains no mention of Samaritans, neither positive nor negative.

SAMARITAN MEDIA

The Samaritans have a monthly magazine started in 1969 called A.B.—*The Samaritan News*, which is written in Samaritan, Hebrew, Arabic and English and deals with current and historical issues with which the Samaritan community is concerned.

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22

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Jewish philosophy refers to the conjunction between serious study of philosophy and Jewish theology.

ANCIENT JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Philo of Alexandria

Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-40 CE) was a Hellenized Jewish philosopher born in Alexandria, Egypt.

Philo included in his philosophy both the wisdom of Ancient Greece and Judaism, which he sought to fuse and harmonize by means of the art of allegory that he had learned as much from Jewish exegesis as from the Stoics. His work was not widely accepted. Philo made his philosophy the means of defending and justifying Jewish religious truths. These truths he regarded as fixed and determinate; and philosophy was used as an aid to truth, and as a means of arriving at it. With this end in view Philo chose from the philosophical tenets of the Greeks, refusing those that did not harmonize with the Jewish religion, as, *e.g.*, the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity and indestructibility of the world.

MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Early Jewish philosophy was heavily influenced by the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and Islamic philosophy. Many early medieval Jewish philosophers (from the 8th century to end of the 9th century) were especially influenced by the Islamic Mutazilite philosophers; they denied all limiting attributes of God and were champions of God's unity and justice.

A path towards synthesis is to apply analytical philosophy to one's own religion in order to strengthen the basis of that faith. Among Jewish thinkers who had this view one may note Saadia Gaon, Gersonides, and Abraham Ibn Daud. In this latter case a religious person would also be a philosopher, by asking questions such as:

- What is the nature of God? How do we know that God exists?
- What is the nature of revelation? How do we know that God reveals his will to mankind?
- Which of our religious traditions must be interpreted literally?
- Which of our religious traditions must be interpreted allegorically?
- What must one actually believe to be considered a true adherent of our religion?
- How can one reconcile the findings of philosophy with religion?
- How can one reconcile the findings of science with religion?

According to some views, this may perhaps be the task of Jewish philosophy, but there is no way to end the debate conclusively. Over time Aristotle came to be thought of as the philosopher par excellence among Jewish thinkers. This tendency was no less marked in the Islamic, the Christian Byzantine and the Latin-Christian schools of thought.

Saadia Gaon

Saadia Gaon (892-942) is considered one of the greatest of the early Jewish philosophers. His *Emunoth ve-Deoth* was originally called *Kitab al-Amanat wal-I'tikadat*, the "Book of the Articles of Faith and Doctrines of Dogma". It was the first systematic presentation and philosophic foundation of the dogmas of Judaism, completed in 933.

In it he posits the rationality of the Jewish faith, with the restriction that reason must capitulate wherever it contradicts tradition. Dogma must take precedence of reason. Thus, in the question concerning the eternity of the world, reason teaches since Aristotle, that the world is without beginning; that it was not created; in contrast, Jewish dogma asserts a creation out of nothing. Since the time of Aristotle it was held that logical reasoning could only prove the existence of a general form of immortality, and that no form of individual immortality could exist. Mainstream Jewish dogma, in contrast, maintained the immortality of the individual. Reason, therefore, must give way in Saadia's view.

In the scheme of his work Saadia closely followed the rules of the Mutazilites (the rationalistic dogmatists of Islam, to whom he owed in

part also his thesis and arguments), adhering most frequently to the Mutazilite school of Al-Jubbai. He followed the Mutazilite Kalam, especially in this respect, that in the first two sections he discussed the metaphysical problems of the creation of the world (i.) and the unity of God (ii.), while in the following sections he treated of the Jewish theory of revelation (iii.) and of the doctrines of belief based upon divine justice, including obedience and disobedience (iv.), as well as merit and demerit (v.). Closely connected with these sections are those which treat of the soul and of death (vi.), and of the resurrection of the dead (vii.), which, according to the author, forms part of the theory of the Messianic redemption (viii.). The work concludes with a section on the rewards and punishments of the future life (ix.)

Avicbron, Solomon ibn Gabirol

The Jewish poet-philosopher Solomon Ibn Gabirol is also known as Avicbron. He died about 1070 CE. He was influenced by Plato. His classic work on philosophy was *Mekor Chayim*, "The Source of Life". His work on ethics is entitled *Tikkun Middot HaNefesh*, "Correcting the Qualities of the Soul".

In Gabirol's work Plato is the only philosopher referred to by name. Characteristic of the philosophy of both is the conception of a Middle Being between God and the world, between species and individual. Aristotle had already formulated the objection to the Platonic theory of ideas, that it lacked an intermediary or third being between God and the universe, between form and matter. This "third man," this link between incorporeal substances (ideas) and idealess bodies (matter), is, with Philo, the *Logos*; with Gabirol it is the divine will. Philo gives the problem an intellectual aspect; while Gabirol conceives it as a matter of volition, approximating thus to such modern thinkers as Schopenhauer and Wundt.

Gabirol was one of the first teachers of Neoplatonism in Europe. His role has been compared to that of Philo. Philo had served as the intermediary between Greek philosophy and the Oriental world; a thousand years later Gabirol occidentalised Greco-Arabic philosophy and restored it to Europe. The philosophical teachings of Philo and Ibn Gabirol were largely ignored by their fellow Jews; the parallel may be extended by adding that Philo and Gabirol alike exercised a considerable influence in extra-Jewish circles: Philo upon early Christianity, and Ibn Gabirol upon the scholasticism of medieval Christianity.

Gabirol's philosophy made little impression on later Jewish philosophers. His greatest impact is in the area of the Jewish liturgy. His work is quoted by Moses ibn Ezra and Abraham ibn Ezra. Christian scholastics, including Albertus Magnus and his pupil, Thomas Aquinas, defer to him frequently and gratefully.

Karaite Philosophy

A sect which rejects the Rabbinical Works, Karaism, developed its own form of philosophy, a Jewish version of the Islamic Kalâm. Early Karaites based their philosophy on the Islamic Motazilite Kalâm; some later Karaites, such as Aaron ben Elijah of Nicomedia (fourteenth century), reverts, in his *Etz Hayyim* (Hebrew, "Tree of Life") to the views of Aristotle.

Bahya ibn Paquda's *Duties of the Heart*

Bahya ibn Paquda lived in Spain in the first half of the eleventh century. He was the author of the first Jewish system of ethics, written in Arabic in 1040 under the title *Al Hidayah ila Faraid al-hulub*, "Guide to the Duties of the Heart", and translated into Hebrew by Judah ben Saul ibn Tibbon in 1161-1180 under the title *Chovot ha-Levavot*, 'Duties of the Heart'.

Though he quotes Saadia Gaon's works frequently, he belongs not to the rationalistic school of the Motazilites whom Saadia follows, but, like his somewhat younger contemporary, Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021-1070), is an adherent of Neoplatonic mysticism. He often followed the method of the Arabian encyclopedists known as "the Brothers of Purity," Inclined to contemplative mysticism and asceticism, Bahya eliminated from his system every element that he felt might obscure monotheism, or might interfere with Jewish law. He wanted to present a religious system at once lofty and pure and in full accord with reason.

Yehuda Halevi and the *Kuzari*

The Jewish poet-philosopher Yehuda Halevi (twelfth century) in his polemical work *Kuzari* made strenuous arguments against philosophy. He became thus the Jewish Al-gazali, whose *Destructio Philosophorum* was perhaps the model for the *Kuzari*.

Human reason on a surface level is considered false and illusory; rather inward illumination based on truths instilled by G-d in the human soul is considered paramount. The *Kuzari* describes

representatives of different religions and of philosophy disputing before the king of the Khazars concerning the respective merits of the systems they stand for, the victory being ultimately awarded to Judaism.

The Rise of Aristotelian Thought

Judah ha-Levi could not bar the progress of Aristotelianism among the Arabic-writing Jews. As among the Arabs, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd leaned more and more on Aristotle, so among the Jews did Abraham ibn Daud and Maimonides.

Rabbi Levi ben Gershon, also known as *Gersonides*, or the Ralbag, (1288-1345) is best known for his work *Milhamot HaShem* (or just *Milchamot*), ("Wars of the Lord"). Among scholastics, Gersonides was perhaps the most advanced; he placed reason above tradition. The *Milhamot HaShem* is modelled after the Guide for the Perplexed of Maimonides. It may be seen as an elaborate criticism from a philosophical point of view (mainly Averroistic) of the syncretism of Aristotelianism and Jewish orthodoxy as presented in that work.

Hasdai Crescas (1340-1410) is best known for his *Or Hashem* ("Light of the Lord"). Crescas' avowed purpose was to liberate Judaism from what he saw as the bondage of Aristotelianism, which, through Maimonides, influenced by Ibn Sina, and Gersonides (Ralbag), influenced by Ibn Roshd (Averroes) threatened to blur the distinctness of the Jewish faith, reducing the doctrinal contents of Judaism to a surrogate of Aristotelian concepts. His book, *Or Hashem*, comprises four main divisions (*ma'amar*), subdivided into *kelalim* and chapters (*perakim*): the first treating of the foundation of all belief—the existence of God; the second, of the fundamental doctrines of the faith; the third, of other doctrines which, though not fundamental, are binding on every adherent of Judaism; the fourth, of doctrines which, though traditional, are without obligatory character, and which are open to philosophical construction.

Joseph Albo was a Spanish rabbi, and theologian of the fifteenth century, known chiefly as the author of the work on the Jewish principles of faith, his *Ikkarim*. Albo limited the fundamental Jewish principles of faith to three: (1) The belief in the existence of God; (2) in revelation; and (3) in divine justice, as related to the idea of immortality. Albo finds opportunity to criticize the opinions of his predecessors, yet he takes pains to avoid heresy hunting. A remarkable latitude of interpretation is allowed; so much so, that it would indeed be difficult under Albo's theories to impugn the orthodoxy of even the most

theologically liberal Jews. Albo rejects the assumption that creation *ex nihilo* is an essential implication of the belief in God. Albo freely criticises Maimonides' thirteen principles of belief and Crescas' six principles.

Maimonides

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (1135-1204), known commonly by his Greek name Maimonides, was a Jewish rabbi, physician, and philosopher. Maimonides held that no positive attributes can be predicated to God. The number of His attributes would seem to prejudice the unity of God. In order to preserve this doctrine undiminished, all anthropomorphic attributes, such as existence, life, power, will, knowledge—the usual positive attributes of God in the *Kalâm*—must be avoided in speaking of Him. Between the attributes of God and those of man there is no other similarity than one of words (homonymy), no similarity of essence (“Guide,” I 35, 56). The negative attributes imply that nothing can be known concerning the true being of God, which is what Maimonides really means. Just as Kant declares the Thing-in-itself to be unknowable, so Maimonides declares that of God it can only be said that He is, not what He is.

Maimonides wrote his thirteen principles of faith, which he stated that all Jews were obligated to believe. The first five deal with knowledge of the Creator. The next four deal with prophecy and the Divine Origin of the Torah. The last four deal with Reward, Punishment and the ultimate redemption.

The principle which inspired all of Maimonides' philosophical activity was identical with the fundamental tenet of Scholasticism: there can be no contradiction between the truths which God has revealed and the findings of the human mind in science and philosophy. Moreover, by science and philosophy he understood the science and philosophy of Aristotle. In some important points, however, he departed from the teaching of the Aristotelian text, holding, for instance, that the world is not eternal, as Aristotle taught, but was created *ex nihilo*, as is taught explicitly in the Bible. Again, he rejected the Aristotelian doctrine that God's provident care extends only to humanity, and not to the individual. But, while in these important points Maimonides forestalled the Scholastics and undoubtedly influenced them, he was led by his admiration for the neo-Platonic commentators and by the bent of his own mind, which was essentially Jewish, to maintain many doctrines which the Scholastics could not accept.

Jewish Mysticism, Kabbalah

A fundamental difference between the Kabbalists and exponents of philosophy is due to their different views of the power of human reason. Kabbalists reject the conclusions of reason, and rely upon tradition, inspiration, and intuition. Philosophers, on the other hand, hold that reason is a prior requisite for all perception and knowledge.

Position in the History of Thought

The scholastics preserved the continuity of philosophical thought. Without the activity of these Arabic-Jewish philosophers, the culture of the Western world could scarcely have taken the direction it has, at least not at the rapid rate which was made possible through the agency of the Humanists and of the Renaissance. The Jewish philosophers of the Arab-speaking world were the humanists of the Middle Ages. They established and maintained the bond of union between the Arabic philosophers, physicians, and poets on the one hand, and the Latin-Christian world on the other.

Gersonides, Gabirol, Maimonides, and Crescas are considered of eminent importance in the continuity of philosophy, for they not only illumined those giants of Christian scholasticism, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, but their light has penetrated deeply into the philosophy of modern times.

RENAISSANCE JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Classical Judaism saw the development of a brand of Jewish philosophy drawing on the teachings of Torah mysticism derived from the esoteric teachings of the Zohar and the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria. This was particularly embodied in the voluminous works of Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel known as the *Maharal of Prague*.

MODERN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

One of the major trends in modern Jewish philosophy was the attempt to develop a theory of Judaism through existentialism. One of the primary players in this field was Franz Rosenzweig. While researching his doctoral dissertation on the 19th-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Rosenzweig reacted against Hegel's idealism and favored an existential approach. Rosenzweig, for a time, considered conversion to Christianity, but in 1913, he turned to Jewish philosophy. He became a philosopher and student of Hermann Cohen. Rosenzweig's major work, *Star of Redemption*, is his new

philosophy in which he portrays the relationships between God, humanity and world as they are connected by creation, revelation and redemption. Later Jewish existentialists include Conservative rabbis Neil Gillman and Elliot N. Dorff.

Perhaps the most controversial form of Jewish philosophy that developed in the early 20th century was the religious naturalism of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan. His theology was a variant of John Dewey's philosophy. Dewey's naturalism combined atheist beliefs with religious terminology in order to construct a religiously satisfying philosophy for those who had lost faith in traditional religion. In agreement with the classical medieval Jewish thinkers, Kaplan affirmed that God is not personal, and that all anthropomorphic descriptions of God are, at best, imperfect metaphors. Kaplan's theology went beyond this to claim that God is the sum of all natural processes that allow man to become self-fulfilled. Kaplan wrote that "to believe in God means to take for granted that it is man's destiny to rise above the brute and to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation from human society."

One of the more recent trends has been a reframing of Jewish theology through the lens of process philosophy, and more specifically process theology. Process philosophy suggests that fundamental elements of the universe are occasions of experience. According to this notion, what people commonly think of as concrete objects are actually successions of these occasions of experience. Occasions of experience can be collected into groupings; something complex such as a human being is thus a grouping of many smaller occasions of experience. In this view, everything in the universe is characterised by experience (which is not to be confused with consciousness); there is no mind-body duality under this system, because "mind" is simply seen as a very developed kind of experiencing.

Inherent to this worldview is the notion that all experiences are influenced by prior experiences, and will influence all future experiences. This process of influencing is never deterministic; an occasion of experience consists of a process of prehending other experiences, and then a reaction to it. This is the process in process philosophy. Process philosophy gives God a special place in the universe of occasions of experience. God encompasses all the other occasions of experience but also transcends them; thus process philosophy is a form of panentheism.

The original ideas of process theology were developed by Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000), and influenced a number of Jewish theologians,

including British philosopher Samuel Alexander (1859-1938), and Rabbis Max Kaddushin, Milton Steinberg and Levi A. Olan, Harry Slominsky and to a lesser degree, Abraham Joshua Heschel. Today some rabbis who advocate some form of process theology include Donald B. Rossoff, William E. Kaufman, Harold Kushner, Anton Laytner, Gilbert S. Rosenthal, Lawrence Troster and Nahum Ward.

Perhaps the most unexpected change in Jewish religious thinking in the late 20th century was the resurgence of interest in Kabbalah. Many philosophers do not consider this to be a form of philosophy, as Kabbalah is a form of mysticism. Mysticism is generally understood as an alternative to philosophy, and not a variant of philosophy.

Haredi Theology

At the same time, Haredi Judaism has seen a resurgence of a systematic philosophical format for its beliefs. The founder of this system was Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, a student of the Kelm mussar yeshiva and later Mashgiach (spiritual supervisor) of Ponevezh yeshiva. Although never formally committing his ideas for publication, after his death in 1953 his students compiled and organised his numerous manuscripts in a five-volume work titled "Michtav Ma'Elياهو", later translated into English and published as "Strive for Truth". His ideas have been popularised and promulgated by many Haredi educators. Notable among them are his student Rabbi Aryeh Carmel (main redactor of "Michtav Ma'Elياهو") and Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz (author of many works and a well-known lecturer and activist in the kiruv (outreach) movement). Haredim consider the fusion of religion and philosophy as difficult because classical philosophers start with no preconditions for which conclusions they must reach in their investigation, while classical religious believers have a set of religious principles of faith that they hold one must believe.

Some maintain, however, that in reality this criticism is incorrectly solely directed at religious philosophy. Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (Strive for Truth Vol. 1) contends that no human being can possibly claim objectivity in philosophical investigations with moral implications: "...a person senses in advance that the answer will make a significant difference...On the solution will depend whether he will be obliged for the rest of his life to struggle with his baser desires...or whether he will be able to live without a higher responsibility". On this basis Dessler maintains that only those who have spent years concentrating on the subjugation of their desires to their intellect, can even begin to

claim intellectual impartiality. Indeed, according to this it is more likely for religious philosophy to succeed in attaining the truth than secular philosophy.

Some, however, hold that one cannot simultaneously be a philosopher and a true adherent of a revealed religion. In this view, all attempts at synthesis ultimately fail. For example, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov a Hasidic mystic views all philosophy as untrue and heretical. Approaching this point of view from the opposite direction, Baruch Spinoza, a pantheist, views revealed religion as inferior to philosophy, and thus saw traditional Jewish philosophy as an intellectual failure.

Others hold that a synthesis between the two is possible. One way to find a synthesis is to use philosophical arguments to prove that one's religious principles are true. This is a common technique found in the writings of many religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but this is not generally accepted as true philosophy by philosophers. One example of this approach is found in the writings of Lawrence Kelemen, in his *Permission to Believe*, (Feldheim 1990).

Hasidic Philosophy

Hasidic philosophy is the underlying teachings of the Hasidic movement founded by the Baal Shem Tov. See Hasidic Philosophy for a more detailed treatment.

Holocaust Theology

Judaism has traditionally taught that God is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnibenevolent (all good). Yet, these claims are in jarring contrast with the fact that there is much evil in the world. Perhaps the most difficult question that monotheists have confronted is how can we reconcile the existence of this view of God with the existence of evil? This is the problem of evil. Within all the monotheistic faiths many answers (theodicies) have been proposed. However, in light of the magnitude of evil seen in the Holocaust, many people have re-examined classical views on this subject. How can people still have any kind of faith after the Holocaust? This set of Jewish philosophies is discussed in the article on Holocaust theology.

Enlightenment Jewish Philosophers

- Baruch Spinoza (adopted Pantheism and broke with Orthodox Judaism.)

Post-Enlightenment Jewish Philosophers

- Samuel Hirsch (belonging to Reform Judaism.)
- Salomon Formstecher
- Samson Raphael Hirsch (philosophy of Torah im Derech Eretz; belonged to the Neo-Orthodox movement of 19th century Germany, combating Reform Judaism)

MODERN JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS

The following philosophers have had a substantial impact on the philosophy of modern-day Jews who identify as such. They are writers who consciously dealt with philosophical issues from within a Jewish framework.

Orthodox Judaism Philosophers

- Eliezer Berkovits
- Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler
- Samson Raphael Hirsch
- Steven T. Katz
- Abraham Isaac Kook
- Joseph Soloveitchik

Conservative Judaism Philosophers

- Bradley Shavit Artson
- Elliot N. Dorff
- Neil Gillman
- Abraham Joshua Heschel
- Max Kadushin
- William E. Kaufman
- Harold Kushner

Reform Judaism Philosophers

- Emil Fackenheim

Reconstructionist Judaism Philosophers

- Mordecai Kaplan

Others

- Martin Buber
- Morris Raphael Cohen

- Will Herberg
- Moses Mendelssohn
- Franz Rosenzweig
- Richard Rubenstein

Philosophers Informed by Their Jewish Background

- Theodor Adorno
- Hannah Arendt
- Walter Benjamin
- Constantin Brunner
- Hermann Cohen
- Erich Fromm
- Nachman Krochmal
- Max Horkheimer
- Emmanuel Lévinas
- Leo Strauss
- Henry Bergson

JEWISH PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

Although Jewish movements and religious leaders share a core of monotheistic principles, Judaism has no formal statement of principles of faith such as a creed or catechism that is recognised or accepted by all. In effect, the Shema, a prayer that a religious Jew offers daily, through participation in services or use of phylacteries, is the only Jewish creed.

Judaism has no pope or central religious authority that could formulate or issue a unified creed. The various “principles of faith” that have been enumerated carry no greater weight than that imparted to them by the fame and scholarship of their respective authors. Central authority in Judaism is not vested in any person or group but rather in Judaism’s sacred writings, laws, and traditions. In nearly all its variations, Judaism affirms the existence and oneness of God. Judaism stresses performance of deeds or commandments rather than adherence to a belief system.

Orthodox Judaism has stressed a number of core principles in its educational programmes, most importantly a belief that there is a single, omniscient and transcendent God, who created the universe,

and continues to be concerned with its governance. Traditional Judaism maintains that God established a covenant with the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, and revealed his laws and commandments to them in the form of the Torah. In Rabbinic Judaism, the Torah comprises both the written Torah (Pentateuch) and a tradition of oral law, much of it codified in later sacred writings.

Traditionally, the practice of Judaism has been devoted to the study of Torah and observance of these laws and commandments. In normative Judaism, the Torah and hence Jewish law itself is unchanging, but interpretation of law is more open. It is considered a mitzvah (commandment) to study and understand the law. Although Orthodox and traditional Jews continue to stress the divine origin of Torah, most rabbinical authorities have agreed that there is no halakhic obligation to adhere to any particular statement of principles of faith, other than a belief in the oneness of God.

JEWISH PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

There are a number of basic principles that were formulated by medieval rabbinic authorities. These principles were put forth as fundamental underpinnings inherent in the acceptance and practice of Judaism.

Conception of God

Monotheism

Judaism is based on a strict unitarian monotheism. This doctrine expresses the belief in one *indivisible* God. The concept of multiple gods (polytheism) and the concept of God taking multiple forms (for example Trinity) are equally heretical in Judaism. The prayer par excellence in terms of defining God is the *Shema Yisrael*, originally appearing in the Hebrew Bible: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One", also translated as "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is unique/alone."

God is conceived of as eternal, the creator of the universe, and the source of morality. God has the power to intervene in the world. The term God thus corresponds to an actual ontological reality, and is not merely a projection of the human psyche. Maimonides describes God in this fashion: "There is a Being, perfect in every possible way, who is the ultimate cause of all existence. All existence depends on God and is derived from God."

The Hebrew Bible and classical rabbinic literature affirm theism and reject deism. However, in the writings of medieval Jewish philosophers, perhaps influenced by neo-Aristotelian philosophy, one finds what can be termed limited omniscience.

God is Creator of the Universe

According to the Biblical account, the world was created by God in six days. While many Haredi Jews take this literally, many Modern Orthodox, Conservative and Reform authorities feel that the six days should be interpreted as “stages” in the creation of the universe and the earth, and that Judaism would not be in contradiction to the scientific model that states that the universe is about 15 billion years old.

God is One

The idea of God as a duality or trinity is heretical—it is considered akin to polytheism. “[God], the Cause of all, is one. This does not mean one as in one of a pair, nor one like a species (which encompasses many individuals), nor one as in an object that is made up of many elements, nor as a single simple object that is infinitely divisible. Rather, God is a unity unlike any other possible unity.” This is referred to in the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4): “Hear Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.” (Maimonides, 13 principles of faith Second Principle).

While Jews hold that such conceptions of God are incorrect, they generally are of the opinion that non-Jews that hold such beliefs are not held culpable.

God is All-Powerful

Orthodox Jews believe in the omnipotent, omniscient God of the Bible—“Attribute to the Lord all glory and power” (Psalms 29). Thus, most rabbinic works present God as having the properties of omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence (being all good). This is still the primary way that most Orthodox and many non-Orthodox Jews view God.

The issue of theodicy was raised again, especially after the extreme horrors of the Holocaust and several theological responses surfaced. These are discussed in a separate entry on Holocaust theology. The central questions they address are whether and how God is all powerful and all good, given the existence of evil in the world, particularly the Holocaust.

God is Personal

Most of classical Judaism views God as personal. We have a relationship with God, God has a relationship with us. Much of the

midrash, and many prayers in the siddur portrays God as caring about humanity in much the same way that we care about God.

Harold Kushner, a Conservative rabbi, writes that “God shows His love for us by reaching down to bridge the immense gap between Him and us. God shows His love for us by inviting us to enter into a Covenant (*brit*) with Him, and by sharing with us His Torah”. Hasidism seems to endorse this view to some degree.

On the other hand, Maimonides and many other medieval Jewish philosophers rejected the idea of a personal God as incorrect. This may, however, simply be an emphatic form of the common Jewish view that God is unchanging, not describable and not anthropomorphic: see next section, and negative theology.

The Nature of God

God is non-physical, non-corporeal, and eternal. A corollary belief is that God is utterly unlike man, and can in no way be considered anthropomorphic. All statements in the Hebrew Bible and in rabbinic literature which use anthropomorphism are held to be linguistic conceits or metaphors, as it would otherwise be impossible to talk about God at all. See Divine simplicity; Negative theology; Tzimtzum.

To God Alone May One Offer Prayer

Any belief that an intermediary between man and God could be used, whether necessary or even optional, has traditionally been considered heretical. Maimonides writes that “God is the only one we may serve and praise....We may not act in this way toward anything beneath God, whether it be an angel, a star, or one of the elements....There are no intermediaries between us and God. All our prayers should be directed towards God; nothing else should even be considered.”

Some rabbinic authorities disagreed with this view. Notably, Nachmanides was of the opinion that it is permitted to ask the angels to beseech God on our behalf. This argument manifests notably in the Selichot prayer called “Machnisay Rachamim”, a request to the angels to intercede with God. Modern printed editions of the Selichot include this prayer.

Scripture

The Tanakh and the Talmud are the main holy books in Judaism. The Tanakh contains the Torah (five books of Moses), the prophets,

and the Ketuvim (“writings”). Judaism’s oral law is contained in the Mishnah, Tosefta, classical midrashim, and the two Talmuds.

Moses and the Torah

Orthodox and Conservative Jews hold that the prophecy of Moses is held to be true; he is held to be the chief of all prophets, even of those who came before and after him. This belief was expressed by Maimonides, who wrote that “Moses was superior to all prophets, whether they preceded him or arose afterwards. Moses attained the highest possible human level. He perceived God to a degree surpassing every human that ever existed...God spoke to all other prophets through an intermediary. Moses alone did not need this; this is what the Torah means when God says “Mouth to mouth, I will speak to him.”

However, this does not imply that the text of the Torah should be understood literally, as according to Karaism. Rabbinic tradition maintains that God conveyed not only the words of the Torah, but the meaning of the Torah. God gave rules as to how the laws were to be understood and implemented, and these were passed down as an oral tradition. This oral law was passed down from generation to generation and ultimately written down almost 2,000 years later in the Mishna and the two Talmuds.

For Reform Jews, the prophecy of Moses was not the highest degree of prophecy; rather it was the first in a long chain of progressive revelations in which mankind gradually began to understand the will of God better and better. As such, they maintain, that the laws of Moses are no longer binding, and it is today’s generation that must assess what God wants of them. (For examples see the works of Rabbis Gunther Plaut or Eugene Borowitz). This principle is also rejected by most Reconstructionist Jews, but for a different reason; most posit that God is not a being with a will; thus they maintain that no will can be revealed.

The Origin of the Torah

The Torah is composed of 5 books called in English Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They chronicle the history of the Hebrews and also contain the commandments that Jews are to follow.

Rabbinic Judaism holds that the Torah extant today is the same one that was given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. Maimonides explains: “We do not know exactly how the Torah was transmitted to

Moses. But when it was transmitted, Moses merely wrote it down like a secretary taking dictation....[Thus] every verse in the Torah is equally holy, as they all originate from God, and are all part of God's Torah, which is perfect, holy and true."

Haredi Jews generally believe that the Torah today is no different from what was received from God to Moses, with only the most minor of scribal errors. Many other Orthodox Jews suggest that over the millennia, some scribal errors have crept into the Torah's text. They note that the Masoretes (7th to 10th centuries) compared all known Torah variations in order to create a definitive text. Some Modern Orthodox Jews hold that there are a number of places in the Torah where gaps are seen, and accept that part of the story in these places may have been edited out.

For the viewpoints of non-orthodox Jews, see Richard Elliot Friedman's "Who Wrote the Bible?" and the entry on the documentary hypothesis.

The Words of the Prophets are True

The *Nevi'im* the books of the Prophets, are considered divine and true. This does not imply that the books of the prophets are always read literally. Jewish tradition has always held that prophets used metaphors and analogies. There exists a wide range of commentaries explaining and elucidating those verses consisting of metaphor.

Oral Torah

All Orthodox Jews view the Written and Oral Torah as the same as Moses taught, for all practical purposes. Conservative Jews tend to believe that much of the Oral law is divinely inspired, while Reform and Reconstructionist Jews tend to view all of the Oral law as an entirely human creation. Traditionally, the Reform movement held that Jews were obliged to obey the ethical but not the ritual commandments of Scripture, although today many Reform Jews have adopted many traditional ritual practices.

Reward and Punishment

The mainstream Jewish view is that God will reward those who observe His commandments and punish those who intentionally transgress them. Examples of rewards and punishments are described throughout the Bible, and throughout classical rabbinic literature. See Free will In Jewish thought. The common understanding of this principle

is accepted by most Orthodox and Conservative and many Reform Jews; it is generally rejected by the Reconstructionists.

The Bible contains references to Sheol lit. *gloom*, as the common destination of the dead, which may be compared with the Hades or underworld of ancient religions. In later tradition this is interpreted either as Hell or as a literary expression for death or the grave in general.

According to aggadic passages in the Talmud, God judges who has followed His commandments and who does not and to what extent. Those who do not “pass the test” go to a purifying place (sometimes referred to as *Gehinnom*, i.e. Hell, but more analogous to the Christian Purgatory) to “learn their lesson”. There is, however, for the most part, no eternal damnation. The vast majority of souls can only go to that reforming place for a limited amount of time (less than one year). Certain categories are spoken of as having “no part in the world to come”, but this appears to mean annihilation rather than an eternity of torment.

Philosophical rationalists such as Maimonides believed that God did not actually mete out rewards and punishments as such. In this view, these were beliefs that were necessary for the masses to believe in order to maintain a structured society and to encourage the observance of Judaism. However, once one learned Torah properly, one could then learn the higher truths. In this view, the nature of the reward is that if a person perfected his intellect to the highest degree, then the part of his intellect that connected to God—the active intellect—would be immortalised and enjoy the “Glory of the Presence” for all eternity. The punishment would simply be that this would not happen; no part of one’s intellect would be immortalised with God. See Divine Providence in Jewish thought.

The Kabbalah (mystical tradition in Judaism) contains further elaborations, though many Jews do not consider these authoritative. For example it admits the possibility of reincarnation, which is generally rejected by non-mystical Jewish theologians and philosophers. It also believes in a triple soul, of which the lowest level (*nefesh* or animal life) dissolves into the elements, the middle layer (*ruach* or intellect) goes to *Gan Eden* (Paradise) while the highest level (*neshamah* or spirit) seeks union with God.

Judaism has always considered “Tikkun Olam” (or Perfecting the world) as a fundamental reason for God’s creating the world. Therefore, the concept of “life after death” in the Jewish view, while considered

the eventual eternal reward or punishment for all, is not encouraged as the sole motivating factor in performance of Judaism. Indeed it is held that one can attain closeness to God even in this world through moral and spiritual perfection.

Israel Chosen for a Purpose

God chose the Jewish people to be in a unique covenant with God; the description of this covenant is the Torah itself. Contrary to popular belief, Jewish people do not simply say that “God chose the Jews.” This claim, by itself, exists nowhere in the Tanakh (the Jewish Bible). Such a claim could imply that God loves only the Jewish people, that only Jews can be close to God, and that only Jews can have a heavenly reward. The actual claim made is that the Jews were chosen for a specific mission, a duty: to be a light unto the nations, and to have a covenant with God as described in the Torah. Reconstructionist Judaism rejects also this variant of chosenness as morally defunct.

Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, former Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue of Great Britain, describes the mainstream Jewish view on this issue: “Yes, I do believe that the chosen people concept as affirmed by Judaism in its holy writ, its prayers, and its millennial tradition. In fact, I believe that every people—and indeed, in a more limited way, every individual—is “chosen” or destined for some distinct purpose in advancing the designs of Providence. Only, some fulfill their mission and others do not. Maybe the Greeks were chosen for their unique contributions to art and philosophy, the Romans for their pioneering services in law and government, the British for bringing parliamentary rule into the world, and the Americans for piloting democracy in a pluralistic society. The Jews were chosen by God to be ‘peculiar unto Me’ as the pioneers of religion and morality; that was and is their national purpose.”

The Messianic Age

There will be a Jewish Messiah known as *Mashiach*, a king who will rule the Jewish people independently and according to Jewish law. The Jewish vision of Messianic times has little to do with the Christian definition of this term. Jewish views of the Messiah as derived from the Davidic line, the Messianic era, and the afterlife are discussed in the entry on Jewish eschatology.

The Soul is Pure at Birth

Humans are born morally pure; Judaism has no concept analogous to original sin. Judaism affirms that people are born with a *yetzer ha-*

tov (éöø äèää), a tendency to do good, and with a *yetzer hara* (éöø äòò), a tendency to do evil. Thus, human beings have free will and can choose the path in life that they will take. The rabbis even recognize a positive value to the *yetzer ha-ra*: without the *yetzer ha-ra* there would be no civilisation or other fruits of human labour. The implication is that *yetzer ha-tov* and *yetzer ha-ra* are best understood not only as moral categories of good and evil but as the inherent conflict within man between selfless and selfish orientations. Judaism recognises two classes of “sin”: offenses against other people, and offenses against God. Offenses against God may be understood as violation of a contract (the covenant between God and the Children of Israel).

A classical rabbinic work, *Avoth de-Rabbi Natan*, states: “One time, when Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was walking in Jerusalem with Rabbi Yehosua, they arrived at where the Temple in Jerusalem now stood in ruins. “Woe to us,” cried Rabbi Yehosua, “for this house where atonement was made for Israel’s sins now lies in ruins!” Answered Rabban Yochanan, “We have another, equally important source of atonement, the practice of *gemiluth asadim* (loving kindness)” as it is stated: “I desire loving kindness and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6). Also, the Babylonian Talmud teaches that “Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Eleazar both explain that as long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now, one’s table atones [when the poor are invited as guests]” (Talmud, tractate Berachoth 55a). Similarly, the liturgy of the Days of Awe (the High Holy Days; *i.e.* Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur) states that prayer, repentance and *tzedakah* atone for sin.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

A number of formulations of Jewish beliefs have appeared, and there is some dispute over how many basic principles there are. Rabbi Joseph Albo, for instance, in *Sefer Ha-Ikkarim* counts three principles of faith, while Maimonides lists thirteen. While some later rabbis have attempted to reconcile the differences, claiming that Maimonides’ principles are covered by Albo’s much shorter list, alternate lists provided by other medieval rabbinic authorities seem to indicate a some level of tolerance for varying theological perspectives.

No Formal Text Canonized

The prime reason why no one text was formalised as “the” Jewish principles of belief is the lack of an authoritative sanction from a supreme ecclesiastical body. This is why no one formulation of Jewish principles of faith is recognised as universally binding force.

Though to a certain extent incorporated in the liturgy and utilised for purposes of instruction, these formulations of the cardinal tenets of Judaism carried no greater weight than that imparted to them by the fame and scholarship of their respective authors. None of them had a character analogous to that given in the Church to its three great formulas (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene or Constantinopolitan, and the Athanasian), or even to the Kalimat As-Shahadat of the Muslims. None of the many summaries from the pens of Jewish philosophers and rabbis has been invested with similar importance.

Gaining Converts

Originally, nationality and religion were the same. Birth, not profession, admitted a person to a religio-national fellowship. As long as internal dissention or external attack did not necessitate for purposes of defense the formulation of specific doctrines, the thought of fixing the contents of the religious consciousness did not insinuate itself into the mind of even the most faithful. Missionary or proselytising religions are driven to the definite declaration of their teachings. The admission of the neophyte hinges upon the profession and the acceptance of his part of the belief, and that there may be no uncertainty about what is essential and what non-essential, it is incumbent on the proper authorities to determine and promulgate the cardinal tenets in a form that will facilitate repetition and memorising, and the same necessity arises when the Church or religious fellowship is torn by internal heresies. Under the necessity of combating heresies of various degrees of perilousness and of stubborn insistence, the Church and Islam, were forced to define and officially limit their respective theological concepts. Both of these provocations to creed-building were less intense in Judaism.

The proselytizing zeal, though during certain periods more active than at others, was neutralised, partly by disinclination and partly by force of circumstances. Righteousness, according to Jewish belief, was not conditioned of the acceptance of the Jewish religion. And the righteous among the nations that carried into practice the seven fundamental laws of the covenant with Noah and his descendants were declared to be participants in the felicity of the hereafter. This interpretation of the status of non-Jews precluded the development of a missionary attitude. Moreover, the regulations for the reception of proselytes, as developed in course of time, prove the eminently practical, that is, the non-creedal character of Judaism. Compliance with certain rites—immersion in a mikveh (ritual bath), brit milah (circumcision), and the acceptance of the mitzvot (Commandments of Torah) as

binding—is the test of the would-be convert’s faith. He or she is instructed in the main points of Jewish law, while the profession of faith demanded is limited to the acknowledgment of the unity of God and the rejection of idolatry. Judah ha-Levi (*Kuzari* 1:115) puts the whole matter very strikingly when he says:

We are not putting on an equality with us a person entering our religion through confession alone. We require deeds, including in that term self-restraint, purity, study of the Law, circumcision, and the performance of other duties demanded by the Torah.

For the preparation of the convert, therefore, no other method of instruction was employed than for the training of one born a Jew. The aim of teaching was to convey a knowledge of *halakha* (Jewish law), obedience to which manifested the acceptance of the underlying religious principles; namely, the existence of God and the holiness of Israel as the people of God’s covenant.

Is Dogma Inherent in Mitzvot?

The controversy whether the practice of mitzvot in Judaism is inherently connected to Judaism’s dogma, has been discussed by many scholars. Moses Mendelssohn, in his “Jerusalem,” defended the non-dogmatic nature of the practice of Judaism. Rather, he asserted, the dogma and beliefs of Judaism, although revealed by God in Judaism, consist of universal truths applicable to all mankind. Rabbi Leopold Löw, among others, took the opposite side. Löw made it clear that the Mendelssohnian theory had been carried beyond its legitimate bounds. Underlying the practice of the Law was assuredly the recognition of certain fundamental principles, he asserted, culminating in the belief in God and revelation, and likewise in the doctrine of divine justice.

The first to make the attempt to formulate Jewish principles of faith was Philo of Alexandria. He enumerated five articles: God is and rules; God is one; the world was created by God; Creation is one, and God’s providence rules Creation.

Belief in the Oral Law

Many rabbis were drawn into controversies with both Jews and non-Jews, and had to fortify their faith against the attacks of contemporaneous philosophy as well as against rising Christianity. The Mishnah (Tractate Sanhedrin xi. 1) excludes from the world to come the Epicureans and those who deny belief in resurrection or in the divine origin of the Torah. Rabbi Akiva would also regard as heretical the readers of Sefarim Hetsonim—certain extraneous writings

that were not canonised—as well such persons that would heal through whispered formulas of magic.

Abba Saul designated as under suspicion of infidelity those that pronounce the ineffable name of God. By implication, the contrary doctrine may be regarded as orthodox. On the other hand, Akiva himself declares that the command to love one's neighbour the fundamental the principle of the Torah; while Ben Asa assigns this distinction to the Biblical verse, "This is the book of the generations of man".

The definition of Hillel the Elder in his interview with a would-be convert (Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a), embodies in the golden rule the one fundamental article of faith. A teacher of the 3rd century, Rabbi Simlai, traces the development of Jewish religious principles from Moses with his 613 mitzvot of prohibition and injunction, through David, who, according to this rabbi, enumerates eleven; through Isaiah, with six; Micah, with three; to Habakkuk who simply but impressively sums up all religious faith in the single phrase, "The pious lives in his faith" (Talmud, Mak., toward end). As Jewish law enjoins that one should prefer death to an act of idolatry, incest, unchastity, or murder, the inference is plain that the corresponding positive principles were held to be fundamental articles of Judaism.

Belief During the Medieval Era

Detailed constructions of articles of faith did not find favour in Judaism before the medieval era, when Jews were forced to defend their faith from both Islamic and Christian inquisitions, disputations and polemics. The necessity of defending their religion against the attacks of other philosophies induced many Jewish leaders to define and formulate their beliefs.

Saadia Gaon's "Emunot ve-Deot" is an exposition of the main tenets of Judaism. They are listed as : The world was created by God; God is one and incorporeal; belief in revelation (including the divine origin of tradition; man is called to righteousness and endowed with all necessary qualities of mind and soul to avoid sin; belief in reward and punishment; the soul is created pure; after death it leaves the body; belief in resurrection; Messianic expectation, retribution, and final judgment.

Judah Halevi endeavored, in his *Kuzari* to determine the fundamentals of Judaism on another basis. He rejects all appeal to speculative reason, repudiating the method of the Motekallamin. The

miracles and traditions are, in their natural character, both the source and the evidence of the true faith. In this view, speculative reason is considered fallible due to the inherent impossibility of objectivity in investigations with moral implications.

Maimonides' 13 Principles of Faith

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, better known as Maimonides or “The Rambam” (1135-1204 CE), lived at a time when both Christianity and Islam were developing active theologies. Jewish scholars were often asked to attest to their faith by their counterparts in other religions. The Rambam’s 13 principles of faith were formulated in his commentary on the Mishnah (tractate Sanhedrin, chapter 10).

They were one of several efforts by Jewish theologians in the Middle Ages to create such a list. By the time of Maimonides, centers of Jewish learning and law were dispersed geographically. Judaism no longer had a central authority that might bestow official approval on his principles of faith.

Maimonides’ 13 principles were controversial when first proposed, evoking criticism by Crescas and Joseph Albo. They evoked criticism as minimising acceptance of the entire Torah (Rabbi S. of Montpellier, *Yad Rama*, Y. Alfacher, *Rosh Amanah*). The 13 principles were ignored by much of the Jewish community for the next few centuries. (*Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, Menachem Kellner). Over time two poetic restatements of these principles (*Ani Ma’amin* and *Yigdal*) became canonised in the Jewish prayerbook. Eventually, Maimonides’ 13 principles of faith became the mostly widely accepted statement of belief.

1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is not a body, and that He is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the first and the last.

5. I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both of those who preceded him and of those who followed him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be exchanged, and that there will never be any other Torah from the Creator, blessed be His name.
10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, knows all the deeds of human beings, and all their thoughts, as it says: "Who fashioned the hearts of them all, Who comprehends all their actions." (Psalms 33:15)
11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, rewards those that keep His commandments and punishes those that transgress them.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may tarry, nonetheless I wait every day for his coming.
13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, blessed be His name, and His mention shall be exalted for ever and ever.

Importantly, Maimonides, while enumerating the above, added the following caveat "There is no difference between [the Biblical statement] 'his wife was Mehithabel' [Genesis 10,6] on the one hand [*i.e.* an "unimportant" verse], and 'Hear, O Israel' on the other [*i.e.* an "important" verse]... anyone who denies even such verses thereby denies God and shows contempt for his teachings more than any other skeptic, because he holds that the Torah can be divided into essential and non-essential parts..." The uniqueness of the thirteen fundamental beliefs was that even a rejection out of ignorance placed one outside Judaism, whereas the rejection of the rest of Torah must be a conscious act to stamp one as an unbeliever.

Others, such as Rabbi Joseph Albo and the Raavad, criticised Maimonides' list as containing items that, while true, in their opinion did not place those who rejected them out of ignorance in the category of heretic. Many others criticised any such formulation as minimising acceptance of the entire Torah (see above). As noted however, neither Maimonides nor his contemporaries viewed these principles as encompassing all of Jewish belief, but rather as the core theological underpinnings of the acceptance of Judaism.

Several Orthodox scholars write that the popular Orthodox understanding of these principles are not at all what Maimonides held to be true. See books noted below by Marc Shapiro and Menachem Kellner.

In the last two centuries, some segments of the Orthodox Jewish community have demanded acceptance of Maimonides' principles. Others have rejected this view, stressing the centrality of deeds, of performance of commandments, as the basis of normative Judaism.

Principles of Faith after Maimonides

The successors of Maimonides, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century — Nahmanides, Abba Mari ben Moses, Simon ben Zemah Duran, Joseph Albo, Isaac Arama, and Joseph Jaabez — narrowed his thirteen articles to three core beliefs: Belief in God; in Creation (or revelation); and in providence (or retribution).

Others, like Crescas and David ben Samuel Estella, spoke of seven fundamental articles, laying stress on free-will. On the other hand, David ben Yom-Tob ibn Bilia, in his "Yesodot ha-Maskil" (Fundamentals of the Thinking Man), adds to the thirteen of Maimonides thirteen of his own — a number which a contemporary of Albo also chose for his fundamentals; while Jedaiah Penini, in the last chapter of his "Behinat ha-Dat," enumerated no less than thirty-five cardinal principles.

Isaac Abravanel, his "Rosh Amanah," took the same attitude towards Maimonides' creed. While defending Maimonides against Hasdai and Albo, he refused to accept dogmatic articles for Judaism, criticising any formulation as minimising acceptance of all 613 mitzvot.

The Enlightenment

In the late 18th century Europe was swept by a group of intellectual, social and political movements, together known as The Enlightenment. These movements promoted scientific thinking, free thought, and allowed people to question previously unshaken religious dogmas.

Like Christianity, Judaism developed several responses to this unprecedented phenomenon. One response saw the enlightenment as positive, while another saw it as negative. The enlightenment meant equality and freedom for many Jews in many countries, so it was felt that it should be warmly welcomed. Scientific study of religious texts would allow people to study the history of Judaism. Some Jews felt that Judaism should accept modern secular thought and change in response to these ideas. Others, however, believed that the divine nature of Judaism precluded changing any fundamental beliefs.

Those denominations accepting outside influence on the practice of Judaism are known as Conservative and Reform Judaism. The Jews who did not accept any fundamental changes in Rabbinic Judaism became known as Orthodox. The entry on Reform movement in Judaism discusses in more detail how and why the enlightenment led to the development of the modern Jewish denominations.

Holocaust Theology

Because of the magnitude of the Holocaust, many people have re-examined the classical theological views on God's goodness and actions in the world. Some question whether people can still have any faith after the Holocaust. Some theological responses to these questions are explored in Holocaust theology.

PRINCIPLES OF FAITH IN MODERN JUDAISM

Dogma in Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism considers itself to be in direct continuity with historical rabbinic Judaism. Therefore, as above, it accepts philosophic speculation and statements of dogma only to the extent that they exist within, and are compatible with, the system of written and oral Torah.

Due to this, there is no one official statement of principles. Rather, all formulations by accepted early Torah leaders are considered to have possible validity. Additionally, as a matter of practice Orthodox Judaism lays stress on the performance of the actual commandments. Dogma is considered to be the self-understood underpinning of the practice of the Mitzvot.

Dogma in Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism developed in Europe and the United States in the late 1800s, as Jews reacted to the changes brought about by the enlightenment and emancipation. In many ways it was a reaction to

what were seen as the excesses of the Reform movement. For much of the movement's history, Conservative Judaism deliberately avoided publishing systematic explications of theology and belief; this was a conscious attempt to hold together a wide coalition. This concern became a non-issue after the left-wing of the movement seceded in 1968 to form the Reconstructionist movement, and after the right-wing seceded in 1985 to form the Union for Traditional Judaism.

In 1988, the Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism finally issued an official statement of belief, "Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism". It noted that a Jew must hold certain beliefs. However, the Conservative rabbinate also notes that the Jewish community never developed any one binding catechism. Thus, Emet Ve-Emunah affirms belief in God and in God's revelation of Torah to the Jews; however it also affirms the legitimacy of multiple interpretations of these issues. Atheism, Trinitarian views of God, and polytheism are all ruled out. All forms of relativism, and also of literalism and fundamentalism are also rejected. It teaches that Jewish law is both still valid and indispensable, but also holds to a more open and flexible view of how law has and should develop than the Orthodox view.

Dogma in North American Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism (North America) has had a number of official platforms, but in contrast to Rabbinic Judaism, rejects the view that Jews must have any specific beliefs. The first Reform Jewish platform was the 1885 Declaration of Principles, the Pittsburgh Platform. The next platform was in 1937, "The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism". The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) rewrote its principles in 1976 with its "Centenary Perspective" and rewrote them again in the 1999 "A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism" (3 pages). While original drafts of the 1999 statement called for Reform Jews to consider re-adopting some traditional practices on a voluntary basis, later drafts removed most of these suggestions. The final version is thus similar to the 1976 statement.

According to CCAR, personal autonomy still has precedence over these platforms; lay people need not accept all, or even any, of the beliefs stated in these platforms. Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) President Rabbi Simeon J. Maslin wrote a pamphlet about Reform Judaism, entitled "What We Believe...What We Do...". It states that "if anyone were to attempt to answer these two questions authoritatively for all Reform Jews, that person's answers would have

to be false. Why? Because one of the guiding principles of Reform Judaism is the autonomy of the individual. A Reform Jew has the right to decide whether to subscribe to this particular belief or to that particular practice." Reform Judaism affirms "the fundamental principle of Liberalism: that the individual will approach this body of mitzvot and minhagim in the spirit of freedom and choice. Traditionally Israel started with harut, the commandment engraved upon the Tablets, which then became freedom. The Reform Jew starts with herut, the freedom to decide what will be harut—engraved upon the personal Tablets of his life." [Bernard Martin, Ed., Contemporary Reform Jewish Thought, Quadrangle Books 1968.]

Dogma in Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism is an American denomination that has a naturalist theology; this theology is a variant of the naturalism of John Dewey. Dewey's naturalism combined atheist beliefs with religious terminology in order to construct a religiously satisfying philosophy for those who had lost faith in traditional religion. Reconstructionism denies that God is either personal or supernatural. Rather, God is said to be the sum of all natural processes that allow man to become self-fulfilled. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan wrote that "to believe in God means to take for granted that it is man's destiny to rise above the brute and to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation from human society."

Most Reconstructionist Jews reject theism, and instead define themselves as naturalists or humanists. These views have been criticised on the grounds that they are actually atheism, which has only been made palatable to Jews by rewriting the dictionary. A significant minority of Reconstructionists have refused to accept Kaplan's theology, and instead affirm a theistic view of God.

As in Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism holds that personal autonomy has precedence over Jewish law and theology. It does not ask that its adherents hold to any particular beliefs, nor does it ask that *halakha* be accepted as normative. In 1986, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) and the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations (FRC) passed the official "Platform on Reconstructionism" (2 pages). It is not a mandatory statement of principles, but rather a consensus of current beliefs. [FRC Newsletter, Sept. 1986, pages D, E.] Major points of the platform state that:

- Judaism is the result of natural human development. There is no such thing as divine intervention.

- Judaism is an evolving religious civilisation.
- Zionism and aliyah (immigration to Israel) are encouraged.
- The laity can make decisions, not just rabbis.
- The Torah was not inspired by God; it only comes from the social and historical development of Jewish people.
- All classical views of God are rejected. God is redefined as the sum of natural powers or processes that allows mankind to gain self-fulfillment and moral improvement.
- The idea that God chose the Jewish people for any purpose, in any way, is “morally untenable”, because anyone who has such beliefs “implies the superiority of the elect community and the rejection of others”. This puts Reconstructionist Jews at odds with all other Jews, as it seems to accuse all other Jews of being racist. Jews outside of the Reconstructionist movement strenuously reject this charge.

MINYAN

A *minyan* in Judaism is a quorum of ten or more adult Jews (over the age of 12 for girls and 13 for boys) for the purpose of communal prayer. It is usually held within a synagogue, but can be held elsewhere, for example, in a home or place of work.

A single *minyan* may be one of several simultaneous prayer services within a synagogue. One synagogue (or any building) can have two or more *minyanim* meeting at the same time; for example, one Ashkenazi minyan and one Sephardi minyan. An Orthodox minyan and one Conservative would typically only happen in a community center or other communally owned building.

In Haredi Judaism, only men may be part of a *minyan* for all purposes. Some Modern Orthodox authorities permit women to count as part of a *minyan* for a small number of practices, although not for purposes of public prayer. Men and women are counted equally in most non-Orthodox minyanim.

ORIGIN

The word *minyan* comes from the Hebrew root *moneh* *îăḏä* meaning to count or to number (based on the requirement of 10 men to be in attendance). The word is related to the Aramaic word *mene*, numbered, appearing in the writing on the wall in Daniel 5:25.

The requirement of ten for purposes of communal prayer comes from the sin of the spies (Numbers 14:27), in which the ten spies who bring a negative report of the land of Israel are referred to as an *eidah* or congregation (Babylonian Talmud Megillah 23b), though the Jerusalem Talmud (Megillah 4,4) relates it to the ten brothers of Joseph who went down to Egypt to get food during a famine. The quorum of ten men is also referred to in the Book of Ruth 4:2.

A common misconception is that the requirement of ten to constitute a quorum comes from the fact that Abraham stopped decreasing his requests for God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah at ten “righteous” individuals, Genesis 18.

The number 10 for a *minyan* for purposes of communal prayer may not always have been consistent throughout history. In Masechet Soferim (10:7) it is stated that in the Land of Israel, sometimes as few as 6 (i.e., one more than half of 10) men were counted as sufficient to say communal prayers. This view has not been codified as *halakha*. However, there is a rule that if six men wish to conduct prayer services, they can bring four additional (non-praying) men into the room to complete the *minyan*.

CLASSICAL LAWS

According to *Halakha* (Jewish law), a *minyan* is required for many parts *D'varim SheB'Kedusha* (“Holy utterances”) of the communal prayer service, including *Barechu*, *Kaddish*, repetition of the *Amidah*, the Priestly Blessing, and the Torah and *Haftarah* readings.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Rabbinic Judaism teaches that all men and women are obligated to pray to God each day, but the formal requirements for prayer are different for the sexes. Classical Rabbinic authorities are in agreement that men are required to pray from a set liturgy three times a day; however, they were of varied opinions as to precisely what the requirements were for women.

It is commonly believed that Jewish law requires that men pray in a *minyan*, but this is not exactly correct according to most authorities. None of the Mishnah, Talmud or later codes of Jewish law hold this as requirement. Rather, it is described as a preferred activity, but not as mandatory. The *Shulkhan Arukh* (section *Orach Chayim* 90:9) says “A person should make every effort to attend services in a synagogue with a quorum; if circumstances prevent him from doing so, he should

pray, wherever he is, at the same time that the synagogue service takes place". According to the author (Rabbi Yosef Karo), no Jew has an obligation to public prayer. That said, *communal prayer*, which requires a minyan, is historically viewed as an almost-obligation—while not a requirement, it is regarded as anti-social to not join in communal prayer.

Rashi and the Tosafot on Talmud Bavli Pesachim 46a are both of the opinion that one is required to travel the distance of 4 *mil* to pray with a minyan. The late Rabbi Moshe Feinstein followed this opinion.

Even according to those who hold that men have no halakhic obligation to pray in a *minyan*, it is strongly encouraged. According to Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilkhos Tefillah* 8.1):

The prayer of the community is always heard; and even if there were sinners among them [i.e., the minyan], the Holy One, blessed be He, never rejects the prayer of the multitude. Hence a person must join himself with the community, and should not pray by himself so long as he is able to pray with the community. And a person should always go to the synagogue morning and evening, for his prayer is only heard at all times in the synagogue. And whoever has a synagogue in his city and does not pray there with the community is called a bad neighbour.

While the required quorum for most activities requiring a quorum is usually ten, it is not always so. For example, the Passover sacrifice or *Korban Pesach* (from the days of the Temple in Jerusalem) must be offered before a quorum of 30. (It must be performed in front of *kahal adat yisrael*, the assembly of the congregation of Israel. Ten are needed for the assembly, ten for the congregation, and ten for Israel.) According to some Talmudic authorities, women counted in the *minyan* for offering the *Korban Pesach* (e.g. Rav, Rav Kahana, *Pesachim* 79b).

Customs

Some congregations (based on the *Shulkhan Arukh* section *Orach Chayim* 55) will include a boy touching a Torah scroll or holding a printed Tanakh as the tenth person if a minyan can be formed in no other way. In other congregations, the tradition is to open the Aron Kodesh and permit the "Spirit of God" serve as the tenth person.

Women and Minyan in Orthodox Judaism

The traditional position in Orthodox Judaism is that only people obligated to perform a mitzvah can count in a minyan for purposes of that mitzvah. Men are obligated to perform public prayer three times a day with additional services on Jewish holidays. According to Jewish

law, each prayer must be performed within specific time ranges, based on the time that the communal sacrifice the prayer is named after would have been performed in the days of the Temple in Jerusalem.

According to the Talmud women are generally exempted from obligations that have to be performed at a certain time. Orthodox authorities have generally interpreted this exemption as necessitated by women's family responsibilities which require them to be available at any time and make compliance with time-specific obligations difficult. In accordance with the general exemption from time-bound obligations, most Orthodox authorities have exempted women from performing time-bound prayer. Orthodox authorities have been careful to note that although women have been exempted from praying at specific fixed times, they are not exempted from the obligation of prayer itself. The 19th century posek Yechiel Michel Epstein, author of the *Arukh HaShulkhan*, notes: "Even though the rabbis set prayer at fixed times in fixed language, it was not their intention to issue a leniency and exempt women from this ritual act".

Authorities have disagreed on the minimum amount that women's prayer should contain. Many Jews rely on the ruling of the (Ashkenazi) Rabbi Avraham Gombiner in his *Magen Avraham* commentary on the *Shulkhan Arukh*, and more recently the (Sephardi) Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (*Yabiah Omer* vol. 6, 17), that women are only required to pray once a day, in any form they choose, so long as the prayer contains praise of (brakhot), requests to (bakashot), and thanks of (hodot) God.

There are some practices in Orthodox Judaism that require a *minyan* and which, according to many authorities women are obligated to perform. According to many early Orthodox authorities women can count as part of the *minyan* of 10 required for these mitzvot. These cases include publicising the miracle of Esther on Purim; public remembrance of Amalek in *Parshat Zachor*; public recitation of the Birkhat Hagomel blessing after surviving severe illness or danger; and public martyrdom, sanctification of G-d's name "in the midst of the children of Israel." (Leviticus 22:32).

A few authorities also hold that because women are obligated to say the Grace after meals, 10 women can, at least under some circumstances, constitute a *minyan* for purposes of *zimmun b'shem* leading Birkat HaMazon.

In addition, not all Orthodox authorities agree that women are completely exempt from time-bound prayer. The *Mishnah Berurah* by

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, an important code of Ashkenzic Jewish law, holds that the Men of the Great Assembly obligated women to say *Shacharit* (morning) and *Minchah* (afternoon) prayer services each day, “just like men”. The *Mishnah Berurah* also states that although women are exempt from reciting the Shema Yisrael, they should nevertheless say it anyway. Nonetheless, even the most liberal Orthodox authorities hold that women cannot count in a *minyan* for purposes of public prayer.

US REFORM AND RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM

US Reform Judaism does not generally require a minyan for communal prayer.

In the mid-20th century some US Reform congregations began counting women as part of the *minyan*

Currently, US Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis are committed to the equality of the sexes. They believe the past has a vote, but not a veto. Both movements have rejected the traditional practice of counting of only men in minyanim because it conflicts with core values.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Until 1973, Conservative Judaism, which views *halakha* as its Rabbinate interprets it as binding, did not count women in a *minyan* for purposes of public prayer. In 1973, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly voted to permit synagogues to count women in a *minyan* if desired and approved by the local Rabbi. Although several responsa (opinions) were proposed at the time, the Committee did not adopt any of them, and did not offer any official reason for its decision. In 2002, the CJLS adopted a responsum offering the Conservative movement’s halakhic reasons for this practice. The Fine responsum indicated that the Conservative rabbinate found itself bound by the the halakhic principle that only those obligated by a commandment can count towards a *minyan* to fulfill that commandment. Rabbi Fine reported that because of this principle, the Conservative movement found it could not simply declare that women counted without also requiring them to take on an obligation to pray at the same fixed times as men. It considered simply declaring all women obligated to pray three times a day, but found that such a declaration would turn its traditionalist female members into sinners. It considered requiring women to take on an individual personal vow to pray three times a day in order to count (the approach taken at the

Jewish Theological Seminary for female rabbinic students), but found this impractical to implement in congregations. Its solution was to hold that Conservative women as a group had collectively obligated themselves to pray three times a day and thus women could count in the *minyan* on the basis of that collective obligation, while also holding that traditionalist congregations and individual traditionalist women could exempt themselves from that obligation..

Currently, a majority of Conservative synagogues count women in the minyan, although a traditionalist minority continues not to.

KABBALAH

Kabbalah literally means “receiving”, and is sometimes transliterated as Cabala, Kabbala, Kabala, Kabalah, Qabalah, or other spellings. Kabbalah refers to a set of esoteric beliefs and practices that supplement traditional Jewish interpretations of the Bible and religious observances. It is held authoritative by most Orthodox Jews, although traditionally limited to married Talmud scholars.

Kabbalah is considered by many Orthodox Jews to be part of the study of Torah, specifically the study of the inner meaning of Torah. Torah study is traditionally divided into four levels:

- *Peshat*, the surface meaning of the text;
- *Remez*, allusions or allegories in the text;
- *Derash*, a rabbinic or midrashic way of reading new lessons into the text;
- *Sod*, the hidden mystical reading of the inner secrets of Torah.

The study of the inner secrets of Torah (*Sod*) is called Kabbalah.

The origins of the actual term *Kabbalah* are unknown and disputed to belong either to Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021–1058) or else to the 13th century AD Spanish Kabbalist Bahya ben Asher. While other terms have been used in many religious documents from the 2nd century AD up to the present day, the term Kabbalah has become the main descriptive of Jewish esoteric knowledge and practices. Main Kabbalistic literature which served as the basis for most of the development of Kabbalistic thought divides between early works such as *Bahir* and *Heichalot* (believed to be dated 1st Century AD) and later works dated to the 13th century AD, of which the main book is the *Zohar* representing the main source for the Contemplative Kabbalah (“Kabbalah Iyunit”).

Because it is by definition esoteric, no popular account (including an encyclopedia) can provide a complete, precise, and accurate explanation of the Kabbalah. However, a number of scholars, most notably Gershom Scholem, Arthur Green, Daniel Matt and Moshe Idel have made Kabbalist texts objects of modern scholarly scrutiny. Some scholars, notably Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber, have argued that modern Hassidic Judaism represents a popularisation of the Kabbalah. According to its adherents, intimate understanding and mastery of the Kabbalah brings one spiritually closer to God and enriches one's experience of Jewish sacred texts and law.

OVERVIEW

According to Kabbalistic tradition, Kabbalistic knowledge was transmitted orally by the Jewish Patriarchs, prophets, and sages (Avot in Hebrew), eventually to be "interwoven" into Jewish religious writings and culture. According to this tradition, Kabbalah was, in around the 10th century BC, an open knowledge practiced by over a million people in ancient Israel, although there is little objective historical evidence to support this thesis.

Foreign conquests drove the Jewish spiritual leadership of the time (the Sanhedrin) to hide the knowledge and make it secret, fearing that it might be misused if it fell into the wrong hands. The Sanhedrin leaders were also concerned that the practice of Kabbalah by Jews deported on conquest to other countries (the Diaspora), unsupervised and unguided by the masters, might lead them into wrong practice and forbidden ways. As a result, the Kabbalah became secretive, forbidden and esoteric to Judaism ("*Torat Ha'Sod*" Hebrew: תּוֹרַת הַסּוֹד) for two and a half millennia.

HISTORY

Origins of Judaic Mysticism

According to the traditional understanding, Kabbalah dates from Eden. It came down from a remote past as a revelation to elect Tzadikim (righteous people), and, for the most part, was preserved only by a privileged few. According to Talmudic Judaism, the proper protocol for teaching this wisdom, as well as many of its concepts, are recorded in the *Talmud*, Tractate *Hagigah*, Ch.2.

Contemporary scholarship suggests that various schools of Jewish esotericism arose at different periods of Jewish history, each reflecting not only prior forms of mysticism, but also the intellectual and cultural

milieu of that historical period. Answers to questions of transmission, lineage, influence, and innovation vary greatly and cannot be easily summarised.

Origins of Terms

Originally, Kabbalistic knowledge was believed to be an integral part of the Judaism's oral law, given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai around 13th century BC, though there is a view that Kabbalah began with Adam.

When the Israelites arrived at their destination and settled in Canaan, for a few centuries the esoteric knowledge was referred to by its aspect practice—meditation *Hitbonenut* (Hebrew). Rebbe Nachman of Breslov referred to a somewhat different approach called *Hitbodedut* (Hebrew), translated as “being alone” or “isolating oneself”, or by a different term describing the actual, desired goal of the practice—prophecy (“*NeVu'a*” Hebrew:).

During the 5th century BC, when the works of the Tanakh were edited and canonised and the secret knowledge encrypted within the various writings and scrolls (“*MeGilot*”), the knowledge was referred to as *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (Hebrew) and *Ma'aseh B'reshit* (Hebrew), respectively “the act of the Chariot” and “the act of Creation”. *Merkavah* mysticism alluded to the encrypted knowledge within the book of the Prophet Ezekiel describing his vision of the “Divine Chariot”. *B'reshit* mysticism referred to the first chapter of Genesis (Hebrew: *áòàùéúý*) in the Torah that is believed to contain secrets of the creation of the universe and forces of nature. These terms are also mentioned in the second chapter of the Talmudic tractate *Haggigah*.

Mystic Elements of the Torah

According to adherents of Kabbalah, its origin begins with secrets that God revealed to Adam. According to a rabbinic midrash God created the universe through the ten sefirot. When read by later generations of Kabbalists, the *Torah's* description of the creation in the Book of Genesis reveals mysteries about the godhead itself, the true nature of Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life, as well as the interaction of these supernal entities with the Serpent which leads to disaster when they eat the forbidden fruit, as recorded in Genesis 2.

The Bible provides ample additional material for mythic and mystical speculation. The prophet Ezekiel's visions in particular attracted much

mystical speculation, as did Isaiah's Temple vision—*Isaiah*, Ch.6. Jacob's vision of the ladder to heaven provided another example of esoteric experience. Moses' encounters with the Burning bush and God on Mount Sinai are evidence of mystical events in the Tanakh that form the origin of Jewish mystical beliefs.

The 72 letter name of God which is used in Jewish mysticism for meditation purposes is derived from the Hebrew verbal utterance Moses spoke in the presence of an angel, while the Sea of Reeds parted, allowing the Hebrews to escape their approaching attackers. The miracle of the Exodus, which led to Moses receiving the Ten Commandments and the Jewish Orthodox view of the acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai, preceded the creation of the first Jewish nation approximately three hundred years before King Saul.

Mystical Doctrines in the Talmudic Era

In early Rabbinic Judaism (the early centuries of the first millennium AD), the terms *Ma'aseh Bereshit* ("Works of Creation") and *Ma'aseh Merkabah* ("Works of the Divine Throne/Chariot") clearly indicate the Midrashic nature of these speculations; they are really based upon Genesis 1 and Book of Ezekiel 1:4-28; while the names *Sitrei Torah* (Hidden aspects of the Torah) (Talmud *Hag.* 13a) and *Razei Torah* (Torah secrets) (*Ab.* vi. 1) indicate their character as secret lore. An additional term also expanded Jewish esoteric knowledge, namely *Chochmah Nistara* (Hidden wisdom).

Talmudic doctrine forbade the public teaching of esoteric doctrines and warned of their dangers. In the Mishnah (Hagigah 2:1), rabbis were warned to teach the mystical creation doctrines only to one student at a time. To highlight the danger, in one Jewish aggadic ("legendary") anecdote, four prominent rabbis of the Mishnaic period (first century CE) are said to have visited the Orchard (that is, Paradise, *pardes*, Hebrew: *orchard*):

Four men entered *pardes* — Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, *Acher* (Elisha ben Abuyah), and Akiba. Ben Azzai looked and died; Ben Zoma looked and went mad; *Acher* destroyed the plants; Akiba entered in peace and departed in peace.

In notable readings of this legend, only Rabbi Akiba was fit to handle the study of mystical doctrines. The *Tosafot*, medieval commentaries on the Talmud, say that the four sages "did not go up literally, but it appeared to them as if they went up." (For further analysis, see The Four Who Entered Paradise.)

Eminent rabbinic teachers in the Land of Israel held the doctrine of the pre-existence of matter (Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* i. 5; iv. 6), in spite of the protest of Gamaliel II. (ib. i. 9).

In dwelling upon the nature of God and the universe, the mystics of the Talmudic period asserted, in contrast to the transcendentalism evident in some parts of the Bible, that "God is the dwelling-place of the universe; but the universe is not the dwelling-place of God". Possibly the designation ("place") for God, so frequently found in Talmudic-Midrashic literature, is due to this conception, just as Philo, in commenting on Genesis 28:11 says, "God is called *ha makom* (אֵימָר "the place") because God encloses the universe, but is Himself not enclosed by anything" (*De Somniis*, i. 11). This type of theology, in modern terms, is known as either pantheism or panentheism. Whether a text is truly pantheistic or panentheistic is often hard to understand; mainstream Judaism generally rejects pantheistic interpretations of Kabbalah, and instead accepts panentheistic interpretations.

Even in very early times in the Land of Israel, Jewish, as well as Jewish Alexandrian theology recognised the two attributes of God, *middat hadin*, the attribute of justice, and *middat ha-rahamim*, the attribute of mercy (see: *Midrash Sifre*, Deuteronomy 27); and so is the contrast between justice and mercy became a fundamental doctrine of the Kabbalah. Other hypostasisations are represented by the ten "agencies", (the Sephiroth) through which God created the world, namely: wisdom, insight, cognition, strength, power, inexorableness, justice, right, love, and mercy.

While the Sefirot are based on these ten creative "potentialities", it is especially the personification of wisdom which, in Philo, represents the totality of these primal ideas; and the Targ. Jerusalem *Talmud* i., agreeing with him, translates the first verse of the Bible as follows: "By wisdom God created the heaven and the earth." *Genesis Rabbah* equates "Wisdom" with "Torah."

So, also, the figure of the Sar Metatron passed into mystical texts from the *Talmud*. In the *Heichalot* literature Metatron sometimes approximates the role of the *demiurgos*, being expressly mentioned as a "lesser" God. One text, however, identifies Metatron as Enoch transubstantiated. Mention may also be made of other pre-existent states enumerated in an old *baraita* (an extra-mishnaic teaching); namely, the Torah, repentance, paradise and hell, the throne of God, the Heavenly Temple, and the name of the Messiah (*Talmud Pesachim* 54a). Although the origin of this doctrine must be sought probably in certain

mythological ideas, the Platonic doctrine of pre-existence has modified the older, simpler conception, and the pre-existence of the seven must therefore be understood as an “ideal” pre-existence, a conception that was later more fully developed in the Kabbalah.

The attempts of the mystics to bridge the gulf between God and the world are evident in the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul, and of its close relation to God before it enters the human body — a doctrine taught by the Hellenistic sages (*Wisdom* viii. 19) as well as by the Palestinian rabbis. The mystics also employ the phrase from (Isaiah 6:3), as expounded by the Rabbinic Sages, “The whole world is filled with His glory,” to justify a panentheistic understanding of the universe.

Middle Ages

From the 8th-11th Century *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Hekalot* texts made their way into European Jewish circles. Modern scholars have identified several mystical brotherhoods that functioned in Europe starting in the 12th Century. Some, such as the “Iyyun Circle” and the “Unique Cherub Circle,” were truly esoteric, remaining largely anonymous.

One well-known group was the “Hasidei Ashkenaz,” (חַסִּידֵי אֲשְׁכֵנַּז) or German Pietists. This 13th Century movement arose mostly among a single scholarly family, the Kalonymus family of the French and German Rhineland.

There were certain rishonim (“Elder Sages”) of exoteric Judaism who are known to have been experts in Kabbalah. One of the best known is Nahmanides (the *Ramban*) (1194-1270) whose commentary on the Torah is considered to be based on Kabbalistic knowledge. Bahya ben Asher (the *Rabbeinu Behaye*) (d. 1340) also combined Torah commentary and Kabbalah. Another was Isaac the Blind (1160-1235), the teacher of Nahmanides, who is widely argued to have written the first work of classic Kabbalah, the *Bahir*.

Sefer Bahir and another work, the “Treatise of the Left Emanation”, probably composed in Spain by Isaac ben Isaac ha-Kohen, laid the groundwork for the composition of *Sefer Zohar*, written by Moses de Leon and his mystical circle at the end of the 13th Century, but credited to the Talmudic sage Shimon bar Yochai, cf. *Zohar*. The *Zohar* proved to be the first truly “popular” work of Kabbalah, and the most influential. From the thirteenth century onward, Kabbalah began to be widely disseminated and it branched out into an extensive literature. Historians in the nineteenth century, for example, Heinrich Greatz, argued that the emergence into public view of Jewish esotericism at this time

coincides with, and represents a response to, the rising influence of the rationalist philosophy of Maimonides and his followers. Gershom Scholem sought to undermine this view as part of his resistance to seeing Kabbalah as merely a response to medieval Jewish rationalism. Arguing for a gnostic influence has to be seen as part of this strategy. More recently, Moshe Idel and Elliot Wolfson have independently argued that the impact of Maimonides can be seen in the change from orality to writing in the thirteenth century. That is, kabbalists committed to writing many of their oral traditions in part as a response to the attempt of Maimonides to explain the older esoteric subjects philosophically.

Most Orthodox Jews reject the idea that Kabbalah underwent significant historical development or change such as has been proposed above. After the composition known as the Zohar was presented to the public in the 13th century, the term “Kabbalah” began to refer more specifically to teachings derived from, or related, to the *Zohar*. At an even later time, the term began to generally be applied to Zoharic teachings as elaborated upon by Isaac Luria Arizal. Historians generally date the start of Kabbalah as a major influence in Jewish thought and practice with the publication of the Zohar and climaxing with the spread of the Arizal’s teachings. The majority of Haredi Jews accept the Zohar as the representative of the *Ma’aseh Merkavah* and *Ma’aseh B’reshit* that are referred to in Talmudic texts.

Early Modern Era: Lurianic Kabbalah

Following the upheavals and dislocations in the Jewish world as a result of the Spanish Inquisition, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, and the trauma of Anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages, Jews began to search for signs of when the long-awaited Jewish Messiah would come to comfort them in their painful exiles. Moses Cordovero and his immediate circle popularised the teachings of the Zohar which had until then been only a modestly influential work. The author of the *Shulkhan Arukh* (the Jewish “Code of Law”), Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575), was also a great scholar of Kabbalah and spread its teachings during this era.

As part of that “search for meaning” in their lives, Kabbalah received its biggest boost in the Jewish world with the explication of the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) by his disciples Rabbi Hayim Vital and Rabbi Israel Sarug, both of whom published Luria’s teachings (in variant forms) gaining them wide-spread

popularity. Luria's teachings came to rival the influence of the Zohar and Luria stands, alongside Moses de Leon, as the most influential mystic in Jewish history.

Ban Against Studying Kabbalah

The ban against studying Kabbalah was lifted by the efforts of the sixteenth century Kabbalist Rabbi Avraham Azulai (1570-1643).

I have found it written that all that has been decreed Above forbidding open involvement in the Wisdom of Truth [Kabbalah] was [only meant for] the limited time period until the year 5,250 (1490 C.E). From then on after is called the "Last Generation", and what was forbidden is [now] allowed. And permission is granted to occupy ourselves in the [study of] Zohar. And from the year 5,300 (1540 C.E.) it is most desirable that the masses both those great and small [in Torah], should occupy themselves [in the study of Kabbalah], as it says in the Raya M'hemna [a section of the Zohar]. And because in this merit King Mashiach will come in the future – and not in any other merit – it is not proper to be discouraged [from the study of Kabbalah]. (Rabbi Avraham Azulai)

Sefardi and Mizrahi

The Kabbalah of the Sefardi (Portuguese or Spanish) and Mizrahi (African/Asian) Torah scholars has a long history. Kabbalah in various forms was widely studied, commented upon, and expanded by North African, Turkish, Yemenite, and Asian scholars from the 16th Century onward. It flourished among Sefardic Jews in Tzfat (Safed), Israel even before the arrival of Isaac Luria, its most famous resident. The great Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Arukh* was part of the Tzfat school of Kabbalah. Shlomo Alkabetz, author of the famous hymn *Lekhah Dodi*, taught there.

His disciple Moses ben Jacob Cordovero authored *Sefer Pardes Rimonim*, an organised, exhaustive compilation of kabbalistic teachings on a variety of subjects up to that point. Rabbi Cordovero headed the Academy of Tzfat until his death, when Isaac Luria, also known as the Ari, rose to prominence. Rabbi Moshe's disciple Eliyahu De Vidas authored the classic work, *Reishit Chochma*, combining kabbalistic and *mussar* (moral) teachings. Chaim Vital also studied under Rabbi Cordovero, but with the arrival of Rabbi Luria became his main disciple. Vital claimed to be the only one authorised to transmit the Ari's teachings, though other disciples also published books presenting Luria's teachings. Among the most famous was the Beit El mystical circle of Jerusalem, originally a brotherhood of twelve, mostly Sefardic, mystics

under the leadership of Gedaliyah Chayon and Shalom Sharabi in the mid-18th century. The group endured into the 20th Century and there is still a yeshivah of that name in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Maharal

One of the most important teachers of Kabbalah recognised as an authority by all serious scholars up until the present time, was Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (1525-1609) known as the *Maharal of Prague*. Many of his written works survive and are studied for their deep Kabbalistic insights. The Maharal is, perhaps, most famous outside of Jewish mysticism for the legends of the golem of Prague, which he reportedly created. During the twentieth century, Rabbi Isaac Hutner (1906-1980) continued to spread the *Maharal's* teachings indirectly through his own teachings and scholarly publications within the modern yeshiva world.

Failure of Sabbatian Mysticism

The spiritual and mystical yearnings of many Jews remained frustrated after the death of Rabbi Isaac Luria and his disciples and colleagues. No hope was in sight for many following the devastation and mass killings of the pogroms that followed in the wake the Chmielnicki Uprising (1648-1654), and it was at this time that a controversial scholar of the Kabbalah by the name of Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) captured the hearts and minds of the Jewish masses of that time with the promise of a newly-minted "Messianic" Millennialism in the form of his own personage.

His charisma, mystical teachings that included repeated pronunciations of the holy Tetragrammaton in public, tied to an unstable personality, and with the help of his own "prophet" Nathan of Gaza, convinced the Jewish masses that the "Jewish Messiah" had finally come. It seemed that the esoteric teachings of Kabbalah had found their "champion" and had triumphed, but this era of Jewish history unravelled when Zevi became an apostate to Judaism by converting to Islam after he was arrested by the Ottoman Sultan and threatened with execution for attempting a plan to conquer the world and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

Many of his followers, known as Sabbateans, continued to worship him in secret, explaining his conversion not as an effort to save his life but to recover the sparks of the holy in each religion, and most leading rabbis were always on guard to root them out. The Donmeh movement in modern Turkey is a surviving remnant of the Sabbatian schism.

Due to the chaos caused in the Jewish world, the Rabbinic prohibition against studying Kabbalah was well intact again, and established itself firmly within the Jewish religion. One of the conditions allowing a man to study and engage himself in the Kabbalah, was to be of age forty. This age requirement came about during this period and is not Talmudic in origin. Many Jews are familiar with this ruling, but are not aware of its origins. Moreover, the prohibition is not halakhic in nature. According to Moses Cordovero, halakhically, one must be of age twenty to engage in the Kabbalah. Many famous Kabbalists, including the ARI, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, were younger than twenty when they began.

Frankists

The Sabbatian movement was followed by that of the “Frankists” who were disciples of another pseudo-mystic Jacob Frank (1726-1791) who eventually became an apostate to Judaism by apparently converting to Catholicism. This era of disappointment did not stem the Jewish masses’ yearnings for “mystical” leadership.

1700s

The eighteenth century saw an explosion of new efforts in the writing and spread of Kabbalah by four well-known rabbis working in different areas of Europe:

1. Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1698-1760) in the area of Ukraine spread teachings based on Rabbi Isaac Luria’s foundations, simplifying the Kabbalah for the common man. From him sprang the vast ongoing schools of Hasidic Judaism, with each successive rebbe viewed by his “Hasidim” as continuing the role of dispenser of mystical divine blessings and guidance.
2. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, revitalised and further expanded the latter’s teachings, amassing a following of thousands in Ukraine, White Russia, Lithuania and Poland. In a unique amalgam of Hasidic and *Mitnagid* approaches, Rebbe Nachman emphasised study of both Kabbalah and serious Torah scholarship to his disciples. His teachings also differed from the way other Hasidic groups were developing, as he rejected the idea of hereditary Hasidic dynasties and taught that each Hasid must “search for the tzaddik (‘saintly/righteous person’)” for himself—and within himself.
3. Rabbi Elijah of Vilna (Vilna Gaon) (1720-1797), based in Lithuania, had his teachings encoded and publicised by his disciples such

as by Rabbi Chaim Volozhin who published the mystical-ethical work *Nefesh HaChaim*. However, he was staunchly opposed to the new Hasidic movement and warned against their public displays of religious fervour inspired by the mystical teachings of their rabbis.

Although the Vilna Gaon was not in favour of the Hasidic movement, he did not prohibit the study and engagement in the Kabbalah. This is evident from his writings in the *Even Shlema*. "He that is able to understand secrets of the Torah and does not try to understand them will be judged harshly, may God have mercy". (The Vilna Gaon, *Even Shlema*, 8:24). "The Redemption will only come about through learning Torah, and the essence of the Redemption depends upon learning Kabbalah" (The Vilna Gaon, *Even Shlema*, 11:3).

4. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746), based in Italy, was a precocious Talmudic scholar who arrived at the startling conclusion that there was a need for the public teaching and study of Kabbalah. He established a yeshiva for Kabbalah study and actively recruited outstanding students and, in addition, wrote copious manuscripts in an appealing clear Hebrew style, all of which gained the attention of both admirers and Rabbinical critics who feared another "Zevi (false messiah) in the making". He was forced to close his school by his rabbinical opponents, hand over and destroy many of his most precious unpublished kabbalistic writings, and go into exile in the Netherlands. He eventually moved to the Land of Israel. Some of his most important works such as *Derekh Hashem* survive and are used as a gateway to the world of Jewish mysticism.

Modern Era

One of the most influential sources spreading Kabbalistic teachings have come from the massive growth and spread of Hasidic Judaism, a movement begun by Yisroel ben Eliezer (The Baal Shem Tov), but continued in many branches and streams until today. These groups differ greatly in size, but all emphasize the study of mystical Hasidic texts, which now consists of a vast literature devoted to elaborating upon the long chain of Kabbalistic thought and methodology. No group emphasises in-depth kabbalistic study, though, to the extent of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, whose Rebbes delivered tens of thousands of discourses, and whose students study these texts for three hours daily.

Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn of Lubavitch urged the study of Kabbala as pre-requisite for one's humanity:

“A person who is capable of comprehending the Seder hishtalshelus (kabbalistic secrets concerning the higher spiritual spheres)—and fails to do so—cannot be considered a human being. At every moment and time one must know where his soul stands. It is a mitzvah (commandment) and an obligation to know the seder hishtalshelus.”

The writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1864-1935) also stress Kabbalistic themes:

“Due to the alienation from the “secret of God” [*i.e.* Kabbalah], the higher qualities of the depths of Godly life are reduced to trivia that do not penetrate the depth of the soul. When this happens, the most mighty force is missing from the soul of nation and individual, and Exile finds favour essentially... We should not negate any conception based on rectitude and awe of Heaven of any form—only the aspect of such an approach that desires to negate the mysteries and their great influence on the spirit of the nation. This is a tragedy that we must combat with counsel and understanding, with holiness and courage.” (Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook *Orot 2*)

Another influential and important Kabbalah character is Rabbi Yehuda Leib Ashlag 1884-1954 (also known as the *Baal HaSulam* — a title that he was given after the completion of one of his masterworks, *The Sulam*). Ashlag is considered by many to be one of the greatest Kabbalists of all time.

He developed a study method that he considered most fitting for the future generations of Kabbalists. He is also notable for his other masterwork *Talmud Eser Hasfirot* — The Study of the Ten Emanations — a commentary on all the writings of the ARI. Some today consider this work as the core of the entire teaching of Kabbalah. Baal Hasulam's goal was to make the study of Kabbalah understandable and accessible to every human being with the desire to know the meaning of life. There are several organisations that are actualising his ideas today.

Renewed interest in Kabbalah has appeared among non-traditional Jews, and even among non-Jews. Neo-Hasidism and Jewish Renewal have been the most influential groups in this trend.

KABBALAH: DIAGRAMS

Sephirot

The Hebrew word literally means “Emanation”. *Sephirot* is the plural, “Emanations”. Sometimes, Jewish midrashic interpretations

reread the Hebrew letters of this word to mean “Spheres” or “Narrations”.

Ten Sephirot as Process of Creation

According to Kabbalistic cosmology, Ten Sephiroth (literally, Ten Emanations) correspond to ten levels of creation. These levels of creation must not be understood as ten different “gods” but as ten different ways of revealing God, one per level. It is not God who changes but the ability to perceive God that changes.

While God may seem to exhibit dual natures (masculine-feminine, compassionate-judgmental, creator-creation), all adherents of Kabbalah have consistently stressed the ultimate unity of God, and that all parts of god are the same. For example, in all discussions of Male and Female, the hidden nature of God exists above it all without limit, being called the Infinite or the “No End” (Ain Soph)—neither one nor the other, transcending any definition. The ability of God to become hidden from perception is called “Restriction” (Tzimtzum). Hiddenness makes creation possible because God can then become “revealed” in a diversity of limited ways, which then form the building blocks of creation.

Ten Sephirot as Process of Ethics

Divine creation by means of the Ten Sefirot is an ethical process. Examples: The Sefirah of “Compassion” (Chesed) being part of the Right Column corresponds to how God reveals more blessings when humans use previous blessings compassionately, whereas the Sefirah of “Overpowering” (Geburah) being part of the Left Column corresponds to how God hides these blessings when humans abuse them selfishly without compassion. Thus, human behaviour determines if God seems present or absent.

“Righteous” humans (Tzadikim) ascend these ethical qualities of the Ten Sefirot by doing righteous actions. If there were no “Righteous” humans, the blessings of God would become completely hidden, and creation would cease to exist. While real human actions are the “Foundation” (Yesod) of this universe (Malchut), these actions must accompany the conscious intention of compassion. Compassionate actions are often impossible without “Faith” (Emunah), meaning to trust that God always supports compassionate actions even when God seems hidden. Ultimately, it is necessary to show compassion toward oneself too in order to share compassion toward others. This “selfish” enjoyment of God’s blessings but only if in order to empower oneself

to assist others, is an important aspect of “Restriction”, and is considered a kind of golden mean in Kabbalah, corresponding to the Sefirah of “Adornment” (Tiferet) being part of the “Middle Column”.

Ten Sephirot as Vowel Sounds

The Scholar and Rabbi Solomon Judah Leib Rappaport notes that according to the Masoretes there are ten vowel sounds. He suggests that the passage in Sefer Yetzirah, which discuss the manipulation of letters in the creation of the world, can be better understood if the Sefirot refer to vowel sounds. He posits that the word sefirah in this case is related to the Hebrew word sippur—to retell. His position is based on his belief that most Kabbalistic works written after Sefer Yetzirah (including the Zohar) are forgeries. (Igrot Shir(Heb.)”

CONCEPTS

Kabbalistic Understanding of God

Kabbalah teaches that God is neither matter nor spirit. Rather God is the creator of both.

This question prompted Kabbalists to envision two aspects of God, (a) God himself, who in the end is unknowable, and (b) the revealed aspect of God that created the universe, preserves the universe, and interacts with mankind. Kabbalists speak of the first aspect of God as *Ein Sof*; this is translated as “the infinite”, “endless”, or “that which has no limits”. In this view, nothing can be said about this aspect of God. This aspect of God is impersonal. The second aspect of divine emanations, however, is at least partially accessible to human thought. Kabbalists believe that these two aspects are not contradictory but, through the mechanism of progressive emanation, complement one another. See Divine simplicity; Tzimtzum. The structure of these emanations have been characterised in various ways: Four “worlds” (Azilut, Yitzirah, Beriyah, and Asiyah), Sefirot, or Partzufim (“faces”). Later systems harmonize these models.

Some Kabbalistic scholars, such as Moses ben Jacob Cordovero, believe that all things are linked to God through these emanations, making us all part of one great chain of being. Others, such as Schneur Zalman of Liadi (founder of Lubavitch [Chabad] Hasidism), hold that God is all that really exists; all else is completely undifferentiated from God’s perspective.

If improperly explained, such views can be interpreted as panentheism or pantheism. In truth, according to this philosophy, God’s existence is higher than anything that this world can express,

yet he includes all things of this world down to the finest detail in such a perfect unity that his creation of the world effected no change in him whatsoever. This paradox is dealt with at length in the Chabad Chassidic texts.

Theodicy: Explanation for the Existence of Evil

Kabbalistic works offer a theodicy, a philosophical reconciliation of how the existence of a good and powerful God is compatible with the existence of evil in the world. There are mainly two different ways to describe why there is evil in the world, according to the Kabbalah. Both make use of the kabbalistic Tree of Life:

- The kabbalistic tree, which consists of Ten Sephirot, the ten “enumerations” or “emanations” of God, consists of three “pillars”: The left side of the tree, the “female side”, is considered to be more destructive than the right side, the “male side”. Gevurah (“Might”), for example, stands for strength and discipline, while her male counterpart, Chesed (çñã, “Mercy”), stands for love and mercy. Chesed is also known as Gedulah (“Glory”), as in the Tree of Life pictured to the right. The “center pillar” of the tree does not have any polarity, and no gender is given to it. Thus, evil is really an emanation of Divinity, a harsh byproduct of the “left side” of creation.
- In the medieval era, this notion took on increasingly gnostic overtones. The Qliphoth (or *Kelippot*), the primeval “husks” of impurity emanating from the left side were blamed for all the evil in the world. Qliphoth are the Sephirot out of balance. Sometimes the *qliphoth* are called the “death angels”, or “angels of death”. References to a word related to “qliphoth” are found in some Babylonian incantations, a fact used as evidence to argue the antiquity of kabbalistic material.
- Not all Kabbalists accepted this notion of evil being in such intimate relationship with God. Moses Cordovero (16th century) and Menasseh ben Israel (17th century) are two examples of Kabbalists who claimed “No evil emanates from God.” They located evil as a byproduct of human freedom, an idea also found in mythic form in Rabbinic traditions that claim most demons are either the “dead of the flood” or products of human sexual debauchery.

Human Soul in Kabbalah

The Zohar posits that the human soul has three elements, the *nefesh*, *ru'ach*, and *neshamah*. The *nefesh* is found in all humans, and

enters the physical body at birth. It is the source of one's physical and psychological nature. The next two parts of the soul are not implanted at birth, but can be developed over time; their development depends on the actions and beliefs of the individual. They are said to only fully exist in people awakened spiritually. A common way of explaining the three parts of the soul is as follows:

- *Nefesh*—the lower part, or “animal part”, of the soul. It is linked to instincts and bodily cravings.
- *Ruach*—the middle soul, the “spirit”. It contains the moral virtues and the ability to distinguish between good and evil.
- *Neshamah*—the higher soul, or “super-soul”. This separates man from all other lifeforms. It is related to the intellect, and allows man to enjoy and benefit from the afterlife. This part of the soul is provided at birth and allows one to have some awareness of the existence and presence of God.

The Raaya Meheimna, a section of related teachings spread throughout the Zohar, discusses the two other parts of the human soul, the *chayyah* and *yehidah* (first mentioned in the Midrash Rabbah). Gershom Scholem writes that these “were considered to represent the sublimest levels of intuitive cognition, and to be within the grasp of only a few chosen individuals”. The Chayyah and the Yehidah do not enter into the body like the other three—thus they received less attention in other sections of the *Zohar*.

- *Chayyah*—The part of the soul that allows one to have an awareness of the divine life force itself.
- *Yehidah*—the highest plane of the soul, in which one can achieve as full a union with God as is possible.

Both rabbinic and kabbalistic works posit that there are a few additional, non-permanent states of the soul that people can develop on certain occasions. These extra souls, or extra states of the soul, play no part in any afterlife scheme, but are mentioned for completeness:

- *Ruach HaKodesh*—(“spirit of holiness”) a state of the soul that makes prophecy possible. Since the age of classical prophecy passed, no one (outside of Israel) receives the soul of prophecy any longer. See the teachings of Abraham Abulafia for differing views of this matter.
- *Neshamah Yeseira*—The “supplemental soul” that a Jew can experience on Shabbat. It makes possible an enhanced spiritual enjoyment of the day. This exists only when one is observing

Shabbat; it can be lost and gained depending on one's observance.

- *Neshamah Kedosha*—Provided to Jews at the age of maturity (13 for boys, 12 for girls), and is related to the study and fulfillment of the Torah commandments. It exists only when one studies and follows Torah; it can be lost and gained depending on one's study and observance.

Tzimtzum

The act whereby God “contracted” his infinite light, leaving a “void” into which the light of existence was poured. The primal emanation became *Azilut*, the World of Light, from which the three lower worlds, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Assiyah*, descended.

Number-Word mysticism

Among its many pre-occupations, Kabbalah teaches that every Hebrew letter, word, number, even the accent on words of the Hebrew Bible contains a hidden sense; and it teaches the methods of interpretation for ascertaining these meanings. One such method is as follows:

As early as the 1st Century BCE Jews believed that the *Torah* (first five books of the Bible) contained encoded message and hidden meanings. *Gematria* is one method for discovering its hidden meanings. Each letter in Hebrew also represents a number; Hebrew, unlike many other languages, never developed a separate numerical alphabet. By converting letters to numbers, Kabbalists were able to find a hidden meaning in each word. This method of interpretation was used extensively by various schools.

There is no one fixed way to “do” gematria. Some say there are up to 70 different methods. One simple procedure is as follows: each syllable and/or letter forming a word has a characteristic numeric value. The sum of these numeric tags is the word's “key”, and that word may be replaced in the text by any other word having the same key. Through the application of many such procedures, alternate or hidden meanings of scripture may be derived. Similar procedures are used by Islamic mystics, as described by Idries Shah in his book, “The Sufis”.

PRIMARY TEXTS

On Texts

Like the rest of the Rabbinic literature, the texts of Kabbalah were once part of an ongoing oral tradition, though, over the centuries,

many have been written up. They are mostly meaningless to readers who are unfamiliar with Jewish spirituality and assume extensive knowledge of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), Midrash (Jewish hermeneutic tradition) and Halakhah (practical Jewish law). Nevertheless, Kabbalistic literature uses powerful paradigms that are elegant, universal and easy for anyone to understand when pointed out.

Jewish forms of esotericism existed over 2,000 years ago. Ben Sira warns against it, saying: "You shall have no business with secret things" (*Sirach* iii. 22; compare Talmud, *Hagigah*, 13a; Midrash *Genesis Rabbah*, viii.). Nonetheless, mystical studies were undertaken and resulted in mystical literature, the first being the Apocalyptic literature of the second and first pre-Christian centuries and which contained elements that carried over to later Kabbalah.

Throughout the centuries since, many texts have been produced, among them the *Heichalot* literature, *Sefer Yetzirah*, *Bahir*, *Sefer Raziel HaMalakh* and the *Zohar*.

SCHOLARSHIP

Claims for Authority

Historians have noted that most claims for the authority of Kabbalah involve an argument of the antiquity of authority (see, e.g., Joseph Dan's discussion in his *Circle of the Unique Cherub*). As a result, virtually all works pseudepigraphically claim, or are ascribed, ancient authorship. For example, *Sefer Raziel HaMalach*, an astro-magical text partly based on a magical manual of late antiquity, *Sefer ha-Razim*, was, according to the kabbalists, transmitted to Adam by the angel Raziel after he was evicted from Eden.

Another famous work, the *Sefer Yetzirah*, supposedly dates back to the patriarch Abraham. This tendency toward pseudepigraphy has its roots in Apocalyptic literature, which claims that esoteric knowledge such as magic, divination and astrology was transmitted to humans in the mythic past by the two angels, Aza and Azaz'el (in other places, Azaz'el and Uzaz'el) who 'fell' from heaven (see Genesis 6:4). In Islam, the angels 'Harut' and 'Marut' were sent to teach magic only as a test to mankind (see Qur'an, Ch. 2: 102).

The appeal to antiquity has also shaped modern theories of influence in reconstructing the history of Jewish mysticism. The oldest versions have been theorised to extend from Assyrian theology and mysticism. Dr. Simo Parpola, professor of Assyriology at the University of Helsinki, remarks on the general similarity between the Sefirot of the Kabbalistic

Tree of Life and the Tree of Life of Assyria. He reconstructed what an Assyrian antecedent to the Sephirot might look like, and noted parallels between the characteristics of En Sof on the nodes of the Sefirot and the gods of Assyria. The Assyrians assigned specific numbers to their gods, similar to the numbering of the Sefirot. However, the Assyrians use a sexagesimal number system, whereas the Sefirot is decimal. With the Assyrian numbers, additional layers of meaning and mystical relevance appear in the Sefirot. Normally, floating above the Assyrian Tree of Life was the god Assur (god), corresponding to the Hebrew Ay Sof, which is also, via a series of transformations, derived from the Assyrian word Assur.

Parpola re-interpreted various Assyrian tablets in terms of these primitive Sefirot, such as the Epic Of Gilgamesh. He proposed that the scribes had been writing philosophical-mystical tracts, rather than mere adventure stories, and concluded that traces of this Assyrian mode of thought and philosophy eventually reappeared in Greek Philosophy and the Kabbalah.

Skeptical scholars find attempts to read Kabbalah back into the pre-Israelite Ancient Near East, as Parpola does, to be implausible. They point out that the doctrine of the Sefirot started to seriously develop only in the 12th century CE with the publication of the *Bahir*, and that for this doctrine to have existed undocumented within Judaism from the time of the Assyrian empire (which fell from cultural hegemony in the 7th century BCE) until it “resurfaced” 17–18 centuries later seems far-fetched. A plausible alternative, based in the research of Gershom Scholem, the pre-eminent scholar of Kabbalah in the 20th Century, is to see the Sefirot as a theosophical doctrine that emerged out of Jewish word-mythology of late antiquity, as exemplified in *Sefer Yetzirah*, and the angelic-palace mysticism found in Hekalot literature, and then fused to the Neo-Platonic notion of creation through progressive divine emanations.

CRITIQUE

Dualism

Although Kabbalah propounds the Unity of God, one of the most serious and sustained criticisms is that it may lead away from monotheism, and instead promote dualism, the belief that there is a supernatural counterpart to God. The dualistic system holds that there is a good power versus an evil power. There are two primary models of Gnostic-dualistic cosmology: the first, which goes back to

Zoroastrianism, believes creation is ontologically divided between good and evil forces; the second, found largely in Greco-Roman ideologies like Neo-Platonism, believes the universe knew a primordial harmony, but that a cosmic disruption yielded a second, evil, dimension to reality. This second model influenced the cosmology of the Kabbalah.

According to Kabbalistic cosmology, the Ten Sefirot correspond to ten levels of creation. These levels of creation must not be understood as ten different “gods” but as ten different ways of revealing God, one per level. It is not God who changes but the ability to perceive God that changes.

While God may seem to exhibit dual natures (masculine-feminine, compassionate-judgmental, creator-creation), all adherents of Kabbalah have consistently stressed the ultimate unity of God. For example, in all discussions of Male and Female, the hidden nature of God exists above it all without limit, being called the Infinite or the “No End” (Ein Sof)—neither one nor the other, transcending any definition. The ability of God to become hidden from perception is called “Restriction” (Tzimtzum). Hiddenness makes creation possible because God can become “revealed” in a diversity of limited ways, which then form the building blocks of creation.

- Later Kabbalistic works, including the *Zohar*, appear to more strongly affirm dualism, as they ascribe all evil to a supernatural force known as the Sitra Achra (“the other side”) that emanates from God. The “left side” of divine emanation is a negative mirror image of the “side of holiness” with which it was locked in combat. [*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Volume 6, “Dualism”, p.244]. While this evil aspect exists within the divine structure of the Sefirot, the *Zohar* indicates that the Sitra Ahra has no power over Ein Sof, and only exists as a necessary aspect of the creation of God to give man free choice, and that evil is the consequence of this choice. It is not a supernatural force opposed to God, but a reflection of the inner moral combat within mankind between the dictates of morality and the surrender to one’s basic instincts.
- Rabbi Dr. David Gottlieb notes that many Kabbalists hold that the concepts of, e.g., a Heavenly Court or the Sitra Ahra are only given to humanity by God as a working model to understand His ways within our own epistemological limits. They reject the notion that a Satan or angels actually exist. Others hold that non-divine spiritual entities were indeed created by God as a means for exacting his will.

- According to Kabbalists, humans cannot yet understand the infinity of God. Rather, there is God as revealed to humans (corresponding to Zeir Anpin), and the rest of the infinity of God as remaining hidden from human experience (corresponding to Arich Anpin). One reading of this theology is monotheistic, similar to panentheism; another a reading of the same theology is that it is dualistic. Gershom Scholem writes:

“It is clear that with this postulate of an impersonal basic reality in God, which becomes a person—or appears as a person—only in the process of Creation and Revelation, Kabbalism abandons the personalistic basis of the Biblical conception of God....It will not surprise us to find that speculation has run the whole gamut—from attempts to re-transform the impersonal *En-Sof* into the personal God of the Bible to the downright heretical doctrine of a genuine dualism between the hidden Ein Sof and the personal Demiurge of Scripture.” (*Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* Schocken Books p. 11-12)

Perception of Non-Jews

Another aspect of Kabbalah that Jewish critics object to is its metaphysics of the human soul. Since the *Zohar* was written, most Kabbalistic works assume that Jewish and non-Jewish souls are fundamentally different. While all human souls emanate from God, the *Zohar* posits that at least part of the Gentile soul emanates from the “left side” of the Sefirotic structure and that non-Jews therefore have a dark or demonic aspect to them that is absent in Jews.

Later Kabbalistic works build and elaborate on this idea. The Hasidic work, the *Tanya*, fuses this idea with Judah ha-Levi’s medieval philosophical argument for the uniqueness of the Jewish soul, in order to argue that Jews have an additional level of soul that other humans do not possess.

Theologically framed hostility may be a response to the demonisation of Jews which developed in Western and Christian society and thought, starting with the Patristic Fathers. By the Middle Ages, Jews were widely characterised as minions of Satan, or even devilish non-humans in their own right.

The Kabbalistic view concerning non-Jews can be compared with the Christian doctrine that baptized Christians form part of the Body of Christ while (at least according to Augustine of Hippo) all others remain in the *massa perditionis*.

In an article that appears in *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth*, David Halperin theorises that the collapse of Kabbalah's influence among Western European Jews over the course of the 17th and 18th Centuries was a result of the cognitive dissonance they experienced between Kabbalah's very negative perception of gentiles and their own dealings with non-Jews, which were rapidly expanding and improving during this period due to the influence of the Enlightenment.

For a different perspective, one might consult the first chapter of Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford University Press, 2006). Wolfson provides extensive documentation to illustrate the prevalence of the distinction between the souls of Jews and non-Jews in kabbalistic literature. He provides numerous examples from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, which would challenge the view of Halperin cited above as well as the notion that "modern Judaism" has rejected or dismissed this "outdated aspect" of the Kabbalah. There are still kabbalists today, and many influenced by them, who harbor this view. It is accurate to say that many Jews do and would find this distinction offensive, but it is inaccurate to say that the idea has been totally rejected. As Wolfson has argued, it is an ethical demand on the part of scholars to be vigilant with regard this matter and in this way the tradition can be refined from within.

Orthodox Judaism

The idea that there are ten divine *sefirot* could evolve over time into the idea that "God is One being, yet in that One being there are Ten" which opens up a debate about what the "correct beliefs" in God should be, according to Judaism.

- Rabbi Saadia Gaon teaches in his book *Emunot v'Deot* that Jews who believe in reincarnation have adopted a non-Jewish belief.
- Maimonides (12th Century) belittled many of the texts of the Hekalot, particularly in the work *Shiur Komah* with its starkly anthropomorphic vision of God.
- Rabbi Avraham ben haRambam, in the spirit of his father Maimonides, Rabbi Saadia Gaon, and other predecessors, explains at length in his book *Milhhamot HaShem* that the Almighty is in no way literally within time or space nor physically outside time or space, since time and space simply do not apply to His Being whatsoever. This is in contrast to certain popular understandings of modern Kabbalah which teach a form of panentheism, that His 'essence' is within everything.

- Around the 1230s, Rabbi Meir ben Simon of Narbonne wrote an epistle (included in his *Milhhemet Mitzvah*) against his contemporaries, the early Kabbalists, characterising them as blasphemers who even approach heresy. He particularly singled out the *Sefer Bahir*, rejecting the attribution of its authorship to the *tanna* R. Nehhunya ben ha-Kanah and describing some of its content as truly heretical.
- Rabbi Yitzchak ben Sheshet Perfet, (The *Rivash*), 1326-1408. Although as is evident from his responsa on the topic (157) the *Rivash* was skeptical of certain interpretations of Kabbalah popular in his time, it is equally evident that overall he did accept Kabbalah as received Jewish wisdom, and attempted to defend it from attackers. To this end he cited and rejected a certain philosopher who claimed that Kabbalah was “worse than Christianity”, as it made God into 10, not just into three. Most followers of Kabbalah have never followed this interpretation of Kabbalah, on the grounds that the concept of the Christian Trinity posits that there are three persons existing within the Godhead, one of whom became a human being. In contrast, the mainstream understanding of the Kabbalistic *Sefirot* holds that they have no mind or intelligence; further, they are not addressed in prayer and they cannot become a human being. They are conduits for interaction, not persons or beings. Nonetheless, many important poskim, such as Maimonides in his work *Mishneh Torah*, prohibit any use of mediators between oneself and the Creator as a form of idolatry.
- Rabbi Leone di Modena, a 17th century Venetian critic of Kabbalah, wrote that if we were to accept the Kabbalah, then the Christian trinity would indeed be compatible with Judaism, as the Trinity closely resembles the Kabbalistic doctrine of the *Sefirot*. This critique was in response to the knowledge that some European Jews of the period addressed individual *Sefirot* in some of their prayers, although the practise was apparently uncommon. Apologists explain that Jews may have been praying *for* and not necessarily *to* the aspects of Godliness represented by the *Sefirot*.
- Rabbi Yaakov Emden, 1697-1776, wrote the book *Mitpakhath Sfarim* (Veil of the Books), a detailed critique of the *Zohar* in which he concludes that certain parts of the *Zohar* contain heretical teaching and therefore could not have been written by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Opponents of his work claim that he wrote

the book in a drunken stupor. Emden's rationalistic approach to this work, however, makes neither intoxication nor stupor seem plausible.

- Rabbi Yihyah Qafahh, an early 20th century Yemenite Jewish leader and grandfather of Rabbi Yosef Qafih, also wrote a book entitled *Milhhamoth HaShem*, (Wars of the L-RD) against what he perceived as the false teachings of the *Zohar* and the false Kabbalah of Isaac Luria. He is credited with spearheading the Dor Daim who continue in R. Yihyah Qafahh's view of Kabbalah into modern times.
- Yeshayahu Leibowitz 1903-1994, brother of Nechama Leibowitz, though Modern Orthodox in his world view, publicly shared the views expressed in R. Yihyah Qafahh's book *Milhhamoth HaShem* and elaborated upon these views in his many writings.
- There is dispute among modern Haredim as to the status of Isaac Luria's, the Arizal's kabbalistic teachings. While a portion of Modern Orthodox Rabbis, Dor Daim and many students of the Rambam, Maimonides, completely reject Arizal's kabbalistic teachings, as well as deny that the *Zohar* is authoritative, or from Shimon bar Yohai, all three of these groups completely accept the existence *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and *Ma'aseh B'resheyt* mysticism. Their only disagreement concerns whether the Kabbalistic teachings promulgated today are accurate representations of those esoteric teachings to which the Talmud refers. Within the Haredi Jewish community one can find both rabbis who sympathize with such a view, while not necessarily agreeing with it, as well as rabbis who consider such a view absolute heresy.

Conservative and Reform Judaism

Since all forms of reform or liberal Judaism are rooted in the Enlightenment and tied to the assumptions of European modernity, Kabbalah tended to be rejected by most Jews in the Conservative and Reform movements, though its influences were not completely eliminated. While it was generally not studied as a discipline, the Kabbalistic *Kabbalat Shabbat* service remained part of liberal liturgy, as did the *Yedid Nefesh* prayer. Nevertheless, in the 1960s, Rabbi Saul Lieberman of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is reputed to have introduced a lecture by Scholem on Kabbalah with a statement that Kabbalah itself was "nonsense", but the academic study of Kabbalah was "scholarship". This view became popular among many Jews, who

viewed the subject as worthy of study, but who did not accept Kabbalah as teaching literal truths.

According to Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson (Dean of the Conservative Ziegler School of Rabbinical Studies in the University of Judaism), “many western Jews insisted that their future and their freedom required shedding what they perceived as parochial orientalism. They fashioned a Judaism that was decorous and strictly rational (according to 19th-century European standards), denigrating Kabbalah as backward, superstitious, and marginal”.

However, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries there has been a revival in interest in Kabbalah in all branches of liberal Judaism. The Kabbalistic 12th century prayer *Ani'im Zemirot* was restored to the new Conservative *Sim Shalom siddur*, as was the *B'rikh Shmeh* passage from the Zohar, and the mystical *Ushpizin* service welcoming to the *Sukkah* the spirits of Jewish forbearers. *Ani'im Zemirot* and the 16th Century mystical poem *Lekhah Dodi* reappeared in the Reform Siddur *Gates of Prayer* in 1975. All Rabbinical seminaries now teach several courses in Kabbalah, and both the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Ziegler School of Rabbinical Studies of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles have fulltime instructors in Kabbalah and *Hasidut*, Eitan Fishbane and Pinchas Geller, respectively. Reform Rabbis like Herbert Weiner and Lawrence Kushner have renewed interest in Kabbalah among Reform Jews.

According to Artson “Ours is an age hungry for meaning, for a sense of belonging, for holiness. In that search, we have returned to the very Kabbalah our predecessors scorned. The stone that the builders rejected has become the head cornerstone (Psalm 118:22)... Kabbalah was the last universal theology adopted by the entire Jewish people, hence faithfulness to our commitment to positive-historical Judaism mandates a reverent receptivity to Kabbalah”.

NAMES OF GOD IN JUDAISM

In Judaism, the name of God is more than a distinguishing title. It represents the Jewish conception of the divine nature, and of the relation of God to the Jewish people. To show the sacredness of the names of God, and as a means of showing respect and reverence for them, the scribes of sacred texts took pause before copying them, and used terms of reverence so as to keep the true name of God concealed. The various names of God in Judaism represent God as he is known, as well as the divine aspects which are attributed to him.

The numerous names of God have been a source of debate amongst biblical scholars. Some have advanced the variety as proof that the Torah has many authors (see documentary hypothesis), while others declare that the different aspects of God have different names, depending on the role God is playing, the context in which God is referred to, and the specific aspects which are emphasised (see Negative theology in Jewish thought). This is akin to how a person may be called by: his first name, 'Dad', 'Captain', 'Honey', 'Sir', etc. depending on the role being played, and who is talking.

NAMES OF GOD

The Tetragrammaton

The most important and most often written name of God in Judaism is the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter name of God. "Tetragrammaton" derives from the Greek prefix *tetra-* ("four") and *gramma* ("letter", "grapheme"). The Tetragrammaton appears 6828 times (see 'Counts' in the Yahweh article) in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia edition of the Hebrew Masoretic text. This name is first mentioned in the book of Genesis (2.4) and in English language bibles is traditionally translated as "The LORD". (The epithet "The Eternal One" may increasingly be found instead, particularly in Progressive Jewish communities seeking to use gender-neutral language). Because Judaism forbids pronouncing the name outside the Temple in Jerusalem, the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton may have been lost, as the original Hebrew texts only included consonants. Some scholars conjecture that it was pronounced "Yahweh", but some suggest that it never had a pronunciation (which is extremely unlikely given that it is found as an element in numerous Hebrew names). The Hebrew letters are named *Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh*: éäää; note that Hebrew is written from right to left, rather than left to right as in English. In English it is written as YHWH, YHVH, or JHVH depending on the transliteration convention that is used. The Tetragrammaton was written in contrasting Paleo-Hebrew characters in some of the oldest surviving square Aramaic Hebrew texts, and it is speculated that it was, even at that period, read as *Adonai* ("My Lord") or *Elohim* when encountered.

In appearance, YHWH is the third person singular imperfect of the verb "to be", meaning, therefore, "He is". This explanation agrees with the meaning of the name given in Exodus 3:14, where God is represented as speaking, and hence as using the first person—"I am". It stems from the Hebrew conception of monotheism that God exists by himself for himself, and is the uncreated Creator who is independent of any concept, force, or entity; therefore "I am that I am".

The idea of 'life' has been traditionally connected with the name YHWH from medieval times. Its owner is presented as a living God, as contrasted with the lifeless gods of the 'heathen' polytheists: God is presented as the source and author of life (compare 1 Kings 18; Isaiah 41:26–29, 44:6–20; Jeremiah 10:10, 14; Genesis 2:7; and so forth)

The name YHWH is often reconstructed as *Yahweh*, based on a wide range of circumstantial historical and linguistic evidence. Most scholars do not view it as an "accurate" reconstruction in an absolute sense, but as the best possible guess, superior to all other existing versions, and thus the standard convention for scholarly usage. It is also, however, a historically used name within the Samaritan tradition. See *Yahweh* for a more detailed explanation of this reconstruction. By contrast, the translation "Jehovah" was created by adding the vowel points of "Adonai."

Early Christian translators of the Torah did not know that these vowel points only served to remind the reader not to pronounce the divine name, but instead say "Adonai," so they pronounced the consonants and vowel points together (a grammatical impossibility in Hebrew). They took the letters "IHVH," from the Latin Vulgate, and the vowels "a-o-a" were inserted into the text rendering IAHOVAH or "Iehovah" in 16th century English, which later became "Jehovah."

This name originates from the 16th century teachings of Martin Luther. The name YHWH is likely to be the origin of the Yao of Gnosticism. A minority view considers it to be cognate to an uncertain reading "Yaw" for the god Yam in damaged text of the Baal Epic. If the Hehs in the Tetragrammaton are seen as sacred augmentation similar to those in *Abraham* (from *Abram*) and *Sarah* (from *Sarai*), then the association becomes clearer. Though the final Heh in *Yahweh* would not necessarily have been pronounced in classical Hebrew, the medial Heh would have almost certainly been pronounced. Other possible vocalisations include a mappig in the final Heh, rendering it pronounced — most likely with a gliding *Patah* (a-sound) before it.

The prohibition of blasphemy, for which capital punishment is prescribed in Jewish law, refers only to the Tetragrammaton (Soferim iv., end; comp. Sanh. 66a).

Pronouncing the Tetragrammaton

All modern denominations of Judaism teach that the four-letter name of God, YHWH, is forbidden to be uttered except by the High Priest in the Temple. Since the Temple in Jerusalem no longer exists,

this name is never said in religious rituals by Jews, and the correct pronunciation is disputed. Orthodox and Conservative Jews never pronounce it for any reason. Some religious non-Orthodox Jews are willing to pronounce it, but for educational purposes only, and never in casual conversation or in prayer. Instead of pronouncing YHWH during prayer, Jews say *Adonai*.

Substituting *Adonai* for YHWH dates back at least to the 3rd century BCE. Passages such as:

“And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, YHWH [be] with you. And they answered him, YHWH bless thee” (Ruth 2:4)

strongly indicate that there was a time when the name was in common usage. Also the fact that many Hebrew names consist of verb forms contracted with the tetragrammaton indicates that the people knew the verbalisation of the name in order to understand the connection. The prohibition against verbalising the name never applied to the forms of the name within these contractions (*yeho-*, *yo-*, *-yahoo*, *-yah*) and their pronunciation remains known. (These known pronunciations do not in fact match the conjectured pronunciation *yahweh* for the stand alone form.)

Many English translations of the Bible, following the tradition started by William Tyndale, render YHWH as “LORD” (all caps) or “LORD” (small caps), and *Adonai* as “Lord” (upper and lower case). In a few cases, where “Lord YHWH” (*Adonai* YHWH) appears, the combination is written as “Lord GOD” (*Adonai elohim*). While neither “Jehovah” or “Yahweh” is recognised in Judaism, a number of Bibles, mostly Christian, use the name. The Jewish Publication Society translation of 1917, in *online versions* does use Jehovah once at Exodus 6.3, where this footnote appears in the electronic version: *The Hebrew word (four Hebrew letters: HE, VAV, HE, YOD,) remained in the English text untranslated; the English word ‘Jehovah’ was substituted for this Hebrew word. The footnote for this Hebrew word is: [“The ineffable name, read Adonai, which means the Lord.”]* Electronic versions available today can be found at [E-Sword] or [The Sword Project] (*BUT also see below footnote re:Breslov.com version.*)

The form “Jehovah” has been used in English bibles from the time of William Tyndale in 1530, including:

- Coverdale’s Bible [1535];
- the Matthew Bible [1537];
- the Bishops’ Bible [1568];
- the Geneva Bible [1560].

(for each of the preceding, in print these have 'Iehouah,' which in modern pronunciation equals Jehovah).

It is also found in the King James Bible, the American Standard Version, the Darby Bible, Green's Literal Translation also known as the LITV, Young's Literal Translation, the 1925 Italian Riveduta Luzzi version, the MKJV [1998], the New English Bible and the New World Translation. Rotherham's Emphasised Bible [1902], the New Jerusalem Bible, the World English Bible [in the Public Domain without copyright], the Amplified Bible [1987], the Holman Christian Standard Bible [2003], The Message (Bible) [2002], and the Bible in Basic English [1949/1964], among others, are examples of translations that use the form "Yahweh" to one extent or another.

(As of 2007, the Breslov.com revised copy of the electronic Jewish Publication Society of America Version [1917] contains a single occurrence of "Jehovah" at Exodus 6.3 since at least 2001, but it seems to be a conversion error.)

Hashem

Jared law requires that secondary rules be placed around the primary law, to reduce the chance that the main law will be broken. As such, it is common Jewish practice to restrict the use of the word *Adonai* to prayer only. In conversation, many Jewish people will call God "*Hashem*", which is Hebrew for "the Name" (this appears in Leviticus 24:11). Many Jews extend this prohibition to some of the other names listed below, and will add additional sounds to alter the pronunciation of a name when using it outside of a liturgical context, such as replacing the 'h' with a 'k' in names of God such as 'kel' and 'elokim', or replacing the Hebraic YHWH with 'YDWD' (*Yod-Daleth-Waw-Daleth*).

While other names of God in Judaism are generally restricted to use in a liturgical context, *Hashem* is used in more casual circumstances. *Hashem* is used by Orthodox Jews so as to avoid saying *Adonai* outside of a ritual context. For example, when Orthodox Jews make audio recordings of prayer services, they generally substitute *Hashem* for *Adonai*—for example, this pattern is used during all prayers in the movie *Ushpizin*.

Adoshem

Up until the mid twentieth century, however, another convention was quite common, the use of the word, *Adoshem*—combining the first two syllables of the word *Adonai* with the last syllable of the

word *Hashem*. This convention was discouraged by Rabbi David HaLevi Segal (known as the Taz) in his commentary to the *Shulchan Aruch*. However, it took a few centuries for the word to fall into almost complete disuse. The rationale behind the Taz's reasoning was that it is disrespectful to combine a Name of God with another word. Despite being obsolete in most circles, it is used occasionally in conversation in place of *Adonai* by Orthodox Jews who do not wish to say *Adonai* but need to specify the use of the particular word as opposed to God.

Other Names of God

Adonai

Jews also call God *Adonai*, Hebrew for "Lord" (Hebrew). Formally, this is plural ("my Lords"), but the plural is usually construed as a respectful, and not a syntactic plural. (The singular form is *Adoni*, "my lord". This was used by the Phoenicians for the god Tammuz and is the origin of the Greek name Adonis. Jews only use the singular to refer to a distinguished person: in the plural, "rabotai", lit. "my masters", is used in both Mishnaic and modern Hebrew.)

Since pronouncing YHWH is considered sinful, Jews use *Adonai* instead in prayers, and colloquially would use *Hashem* ("the Name"). When the Masoretes added vowel pointings to the text of the Hebrew Bible around the eighth century CE, they gave the word YHWH the vowels of *Adonai*, to remind the reader to say *Adonai* instead. The Sephardi translators of the Ferrara Bible go further and substitute *Adonai* with *A*.

Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh

The name *Ehyeh* (Hebrew:) denotes God's potency in the immediate future, and is part of YHWH. The phrase "*ehyeh-asher-ehyeh*" (Exodus 3:14) is interpreted by some authorities as "I will be because I will be", using the second part as a gloss and referring to God's promise, "Certainly I will be [ehyeh] with thee" (Exodus 3:12). Other authorities claim that the whole phrase forms one name. The Targum Onkelos leaves the phrase untranslated and is so quoted in the Talmud (B. B. 73a). The "I am that I am" of the Authorised Version is based on this view.

"I am that I am" (Hebrew, pronounced *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*) is the sole response used in (Exodus 3:14) when Moses asked for God's name. It is one of the most famous verses in the Hebrew Bible. *Hayah* means "existed" or "was" in Hebrew; *ehyeh* is the first-person singular

imperfect form. *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* is generally interpreted to mean "I will be what I will be", *I shall be what I shall be* or *I am that I am* (King James Bible and others). The Tetragrammaton itself may derive from the same verbal root.

"I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE." Heb., ('Eh·yeh' 'Asher' 'Eh·yeh'), God's own self-designation; Leeser, "I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE"; Rotherham, "I Will Become whatsoever I please." Gr., E·go' ei·mi ho on, "I am The Being," or, "I am The Existing One"; Lat., e'go sum qui sum, "I am Who I am." 'Eh·yeh' comes from the Heb. verb ha·yah', "become; prove to be." Here 'Eh·yeh' is in the imperfect state, first person sing., meaning "I shall become"; or, "I shall prove to be." The reference here is not to God's self-existence but to what he has in mind to become toward others. Compare Ge 2:4 ftn, "Jehovah," where the kindred, but different, Heb. verb ha·wah2 appears in the divine name.

El

The word *El* appears in other northwest Semitic languages such as Phoenician and Aramaic. In Akkadian, *ilu* is the ordinary word for god. It is also found in Old South Arabian and in Amharic/Ethiopian, and, as in Hebrew, it is often used as an element in proper names. In northwest Semitic texts it often appears to be used of one single god, perhaps the head of the pantheon, sometimes specifically said to be the creator.

El (Hebrew) is used in both the singular and plural, both for other gods and for the God of Israel. As a name of God, however, it is used chiefly in poetry and prophetic discourse, rarely in prose, and then usually with some epithet attached, as "a jealous God." Other examples of its use with some attribute or epithet are: *El `Elyon* ("Most High God"), *El Shaddai* ("God Almighty"), *El `Olam* ("Everlasting God"), *El Hai* ("Living God"), *El Ro'i* ("God of Seeing"), *El Elohe Israel* ("God, the God of Israel"), *El Gibbor* ("God of Strength"). In addition, names such as Gabriel ("Strength of God"), Michael ("Who is Like God?"), Raphael ("God's medicine") and Daniel ("God is My Judge") and Israel ("one who has struggled with God") use God's name in a similar fashion.

Elohim

A common name of God in the Hebrew Bible is *Elohim* (Hebrew); as opposed to other names mentioned in this article, this name also describes gods of other religions.

Despite the *-im* ending common to many plural nouns in Hebrew, the word *Elohim*, when referring to God is grammatically singular, and takes a singular verb in the Hebrew Bible. The word is identical to the usual plural of *el* meaning a god or magistrate, and is cognate to the *'lhm* found in Ugaritic, where it is used for the pantheon of Canaanite Gods, the children of *El* and conventionally vocalised as “Elohim” although the original Ugaritic vowels are unknown. When the Hebrew Bible uses *elohim* not in reference to God, it is plural (for example, Exodus 20:3). There are a few other such uses in Hebrew, for example *Behemoth*. In Modern Hebrew, the singular word *ba'alim* (“owner”) looks plural, but likewise takes a singular verb.

Another popular explanation comes from the interpretation of *El* to mean “power”; *Elohim* is thus the plural construct “powers”. Hebrew grammar allows for this form to mean “He is the Power (singular) over powers (plural)”, just as the word *Ba'alim* means “owner” (see above). “He is lord (singular) even over any of those things that he owns that are lordly (plural).”

Other scholars interpret the *-im* ending as an expression of majesty (*pluralis majestatis*) or excellence (*pluralis excellentiae*), expressing high dignity or greatness: compare with the similar use of plurals of *ba'al* (master) and *adon* (lord). For these reasons many Trinitarians cite the apparent plurality of *elohim* as evidence for the basic Trinitarian doctrine of the Trinity. This was a traditional position but modern Christian theologians now largely accept that this is an exegetical fallacy.

Theologians who dispute this claim, cite the hypothesis that plurals of majesty came about in more modern times. Richard Toporoski, a classics scholar, asserts that plurals of majesty first appeared in the reign of Diocletian (284-305 CE). Indeed, Gesenius states in his book *Hebrew Grammar* the following:

The Jewish grammarians call such plurals ... *plur. virium* or *virtutum*; later grammarians call them *plur. excellentiae, magnitudinis, or plur. maiestaticus*. This last name may have been suggested by the *we* used by kings when speaking of themselves (compare 1 Maccabees 10:19 and 11:31); and the plural used by God in Genesis 1:26 and 11:7; Isaiah 6:8 has been incorrectly explained in this way). It is, however, either *communicative* (including the attendant angels: so at all events in Isaiah 6:8 and Genesis 3:22), or according to others, an indication of *the fullness of power and might* implied. It is best explained as a plural of *self-deliberation*. The use of the plural as a form of respectful address is quite foreign to Hebrew.

The plural form ending in *-im* can also be understood as denoting abstraction, as in the Hebrew words *chayyim* ("life") or *betulim* ("virginity"). If understood this way, *Elohim* means "divinity" or "deity". The word *chayyim* is similarly syntactically singular when used as a name but syntactically plural otherwise.

The Hebrew form *Eloah* (אֱלֹהַּ, which looks as though it might be a singular form of *Elohim*) is comparatively rare, occurring only in poetry and late prose (in the Book of Job, 41 times). What is probably the same divine name is found in Arabic (*Ilah* as singular "a god", as opposed to *Allah* meaning "The God" or "God") and in Aramaic (*Elaha*). This unusual singular form is used in six places for heathen deities (examples: 2 Chronicles 32:15; Daniel 11:37, 38;). The normal *Elohim* form is also used in the plural a few times, either for gods or images (Exodus 9:1, 12:12, 20:3; and so forth) or for one god (Exodus 32:1; Genesis 31:30, 32; and elsewhere). In the great majority of cases both are used as names of the one God of Israel.

The root-meaning of the word is unknown. One theory is that it may be connected with the old Arabic verb *alih* ("to be perplexed, afraid; to seek refuge because of fear"). *Eloah*, *Elohim*, would, therefore, be "He who is the object of fear or reverence", or "He with whom one who is afraid takes refuge". Another theory is that it is derived from the Semitic root "uhl" meaning "to be strong". *Elohim* then would mean "the all-powerful One", based on the usage of the word "el" in certain verses to denote power or might (Genesis 31:29, Nehemiah 5:5). In many of the passages in which *Elohim* occurs in the Bible it refers to non-Israelite deities, or in some instances to powerful men or judges, and even angels (Exodus 21:6, Psalms 8:5).

'Elyon

The name *'Elyon* (Hebrew) occurs in combination with *El*, *YHWH* or *Elohim*, and also alone. It appears chiefly in poetic and later Biblical passages. The modern Hebrew adjective "'Elyon" means "supreme" (as in "Supreme Court") or "Most High". *El Elyon* has been traditionally translated into English as 'God Most High'. The Phoenicians used what appears to be a similar name for God. It is cognate to the Arabic *'Aliyy*.

Shaddai

Shaddai was a late Bronze Age Amorite city on the banks of the Euphrates river, in northern Syria. The site of its ruin-mound is called

Tell eth-Thadyen: “Thadyen” being the modern Arabic rendering of the original West Semitic “Shaddai”. It has been conjectured that *El Shaddai* was therefore the “god of Shaddai” and associated in tradition with Abraham, and the inclusion of the Abraham stories into the Hebrew Bible may have brought the northern name with them (see Documentary hypothesis).

In the vision of Balaam recorded in the Book of Numbers 24:4 and 16, the vision comes from Shaddai along with El. In the fragmentary inscriptions at Deir Alla, though Shaddai is not, or not fully present, *shaddayin* appear, less figurations of Shaddai. These have been tentatively identified with the *Jedim* of Deuteronomy 34:17 and Psalm 106:37-38, who are Canaanite deities.

According to Exodus 6:2, 3, *Shaddai* is the name by which God was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The name *Shaddai* (Hebrew) is used as a name of God later in the Book of Job.

In the Septuagint and other early translations *Shaddai* was translated with words meaning “Almighty”. The root word “shadad” means “to overpower” or “to destroy”. This would give *Shaddai* the meaning of “destroyer” as one of the aspects of God. Thus, it is essentially an epithet. Harriet Lutzky has presented evidence that *Shaddai* was an attribute of a Semitic goddess, linking the epithet with Hebrew *šad* “breast” as “the one of the Breast”, as Asherah at Ugarit is “the one of the Womb”.

Another theory is that *Shaddai* is a derivation of a Semitic stem that appears in the Akkadian *shadû* (“mountain”) and *shaddâ`û* or *shaddû`a* (“mountain-dweller”), one of the names of Amurru. This theory was popularised by W.F. Albright but was somewhat weakened when it was noticed that the doubling of the medial *d* is first documented only in the Neo-Assyrian period. However, the doubling in Hebrew might possibly be secondary. In this theory God is seen as inhabiting a mythical holy mountain, a concept not unknown in ancient West Asian mythology (see El), and also evident in the Syriac Christian writings of Ephrem the Syrian, who places Eden on an inaccessible mountaintop.

An alternative view proposed by Albright is that the name is connected to *shadayim* which means “breasts” in Hebrew. It may thus be connected to the notion of God’s fertility and blessings of the human race. In several instances it is connected with fruitfulness: “May God Almighty [El Shaddai] bless you and make you fruitful and increase

your numbers..." (Gen. 28:3). "I am God Almighty [El Shaddai]: be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 35:11). "By the Almighty [El Shaddai] who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts [shadayim] and of the womb [racham]" (Gen. 49:25).

It is also given a Midrashic interpretation as an acronym standing for "Guardian of the Doors of Israel" (Hebrew). This acronym, which is commonly found as carvings or writings upon the mezuzah (a vessel which houses a scroll of parchment with Biblical text written on it) that is situated upon all the door frames in a home or establishment.

Still another view is that "El Shaddai" is comprised the Hebrew relative pronoun She (Shin plus vowel segol), or as in this case as Sha (Shin plus vowel patach followed by a dagesh), cf. *A Beginner's Handbook to Biblical Hebrew*, John Marks and Virgil Roger, Nashville: Abingdon, 1978 "Relative Pronoun, p.60, par.45) The noun containing the dagesh is the Hebrew word Dai meaning "enough, sufficient, sufficiency" (cf. *Ben Yehudah's Pocket English-Hebrew/Hebrew-English*, New York, NY: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster Inc., 1964, p.44). This is the same word used in Judaism's celebration of the Passover using the song "Dai, Dai, Eynu" or "It would have been sufficient". That song celebrates the various miracles God performed while extricating the Hebrews from Egyptian servitude.

It is understood as such by The Stone Edition of the Chumash (Torah) published by the Orthodox Jewish publisher Art Scroll, editors Rabbi Nosson Scherman/Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, Brooklyn, New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd. 2nd edition, 1994, cf. Exodus 6:3 commentary p.319. It is often paraphrased in English translations as "Almighty" although this is an interpretive element. The name then refers to the pre-Mosaic patriarchal understanding of deity as "God who is sufficient." God is sufficient, that is, to supply all of one's needs, and therefore by derivation "almighty". It may also be understood as an allusion to the singularity of deity "El" as opposed to "Elohim" plural being sufficient or enough for the early patriarchs of Judaism. To this was latter added the Mosaic conception of YHWH as God who is sufficient in Himself, that is, a self-determined eternal Being qua Being, for whom limited descriptive names cannot apply. This may have been the probable intent of "eyeh asher eyeh" which is by extension applied to YHWH (a likely anagram for the three states of Being past, present and future conjoined with the conjunctive letter vav), cf. Exodus 3:13-15.

Shalom

The Talmud says “the name of God is ‘Peace’” (*Pereq ha-Shalom*, Shab. 10b), (Judges 6:24); consequently, one is not permitted to greet another with the word *shalom* in unholy places such as a bathroom (Talmud, *Shabbat*, 10b). The name *Shlomo*, “His peace” (from *shalom*, Solomon), refers to the God of Peace. *Shalom* can also mean “hello” and “goodbye.”

Shekhinah

Shekhinah (Hebrew: שְׁכִינָה) is the presence or manifestation of God which has descended to “dwell” among humanity. The term never appears in the Hebrew Bible; later rabbis used the word when speaking of God dwelling either in the Tabernacle or amongst the people of Israel. The root of the word means “dwelling”. Of the principal names of God, it is the only one that is of the feminine gender in Hebrew grammar. Some believe that this was the name of a female counterpart of God, but this is unlikely as the name is always mentioned in conjunction an article (*e.g.*: “the Shekhina descended and dwelt among them” or “He removed Himself and His Shekhina from their midst”). This kind of usage does not occur in Semitic languages in conjunction with proper names.

The Arabic form of the word “*Sakina ÓßiäÉ*” is also mentioned in the Qur’an. This mention is in the middle of the narrative of the choice of Saul to be king and is mentioned as descending with the ark of the covenant here the word is used to mean “security” and is derived from the root sa-ka-na which means dwell:

And (further) their Prophet said to them: “A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant, with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels. In this is a Symbol for you if ye indeed have faith.”

Yah

The name *Yah* is composed of the first two letters of YHWH. It appears often in names, such as Elijah. The Rastafarian Jah is derived from this, as well as the expression Hallelujah.

YHWH Tzevaot/Sabaoth

The name YHWH and the title *Elohim* frequently occur with the word *tzevaot* or *sabaoth* (“hosts” or “armies”, Hebrew) as *YHWH Elohe Tzevaot* (“YHWH God of Hosts”), *Elohe Tzevaot* (“God of Hosts”), *Adonai*

YHWH *Tzevaot* (“Lord YHWH of Hosts”) or, most frequently, *YHWH Tzevaot* (“YHWH of Hosts”). This name is traditionally transliterated in Latin as *Sabaoth*, a form that will be more familiar to many English readers, as it was used in the King James Version of the Bible.

This compound divine name occurs chiefly in the prophetic literature and does not appear at all in the Pentateuch, Joshua or Judges. The original meaning of *tzevaot* may be found in 1 Samuel 17:45, where it is interpreted as denoting “the God of the armies of Israel”. The word, apart from this special use, always means armies or hosts of men, as, for example, in Exodus 6:26, 7:4, 12:41, while the singular is used to designate the heavenly host.

The Latin spelling *Sabaoth* combined with the large, golden vine motif over the door on the Herodian Temple (built by the Idumean Herod the Great) led to identification by Romans with the god Sabazius. In Christianity this title is translated as “God of the Universe”.

The name *Sabaoth* is also associated with a demi-god in the gnostic Nag Hammadi Text; he is the son of Yaltabaoth.

Ha-Makom / HaMakom

“The Place” (Hebrew)

Used in the traditional expression of condolence; *Ha-Makom yenachem etchem betoch sh’ar aveilei Tziyon V’Yerushalayim*. “The Place will comfort you (pl.) among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem”

Eight Names of God

In medieval times, God was sometimes called *The Seven*. Among the ancient Hebrews, the seven names for the Deity over which the scribes had to exercise particular care were:

1. El
2. Elohim
3. Adonai
4. Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh
5. YHWH (*i.e.* Jehovah)
6. Shaddai
7. Zebaot

Lesser used names of God

- *Adir* — “Strong One”.

Problems listening to the file? See media help.

- *Ehiyeh sh'Ehiyeh* — “I Am That I Am”: a modern Hebrew version of “Ehyeh asher Ehyeh”.
- *Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak ve Elohei Ya'aqov* — “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob”.
- *El ha-Gibbor* — “God the hero” or “God the strong one”.
- *Emet* — “Truth”.
- *E'in Sof* — “endless, infinite”, Kabbalistic name of God.
- *Ro'eh Yisra'el* — “Shepherd of Israel”.
- *Ha-Kaddosh, Baruch Hu* — “The Holy One, Blessed be He”.
- *Kaddosh Israel* — “Holy One of Israel”.
- *Melech ha-Melachim* — “The King of Kings” or *Melech Malchei ha-Melachim* “King of Kings of Kings”, to express superiority to the earthly rulers title.
- *Makom* or *Hamakom* — literally “the place”, meaning “The Omnipresent”; see Tzimtzum.
- *Magen Avraham* — “Shield of Abraham”.
- *Ribbono shel 'Olam* — “Master of the World”.
- *YHWH-Yireh (Jehovah-jireh)* — “The Lord will provide” (Genesis 22:13-14).
- *YHWH-Rapha* — “The Lord that healeth” (Exodus 15:26).
- *YHWH-Niss"i (Yahweh-Nissi)* — “The Lord our Banner” (Exodus 17:8-15).
- *YHWH-Shalom* — “The Lord our Peace” (Judges 6:24).
- *YHWH-Ra-ah* — “The Lord my Shepherd” (Psalm 23:1).
- *YHWH-Tsidkenu* — “The Lord our Righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6).
- *YHWH-Shammah (Jehovah-shammah)* — “The Lord is present” (Ezekiel 48:35).
- *Tzur Israel* — “Rock of Israel”.

In English

The words “God” and “Lord” (used for the Hebrew Adonai) are often written by many Jews as “G-d” and “L-rd” as a way of avoiding writing a name of God, so as to avoid the risk of sinning by erasing or defacing His name. In Deuteronomy 12:3-4, the Torah exhorts one to

destroy idolatry, adding, “you shall not do such to the LORD your God.” From this verse it is understood that one should not erase the name of God. The general rabbinic opinion is that this only applies to the sacred Hebrew names of God — but not to the word “God” in English or any other language. Even among Jews who consider it unnecessary, many nonetheless write the name “God” in this way out of respect, and to avoid erasing God’s name even in a non-forbidden way.

British Folklore

A partial coincidence with this list appears in a medieval verbal charm from British folk medicine:

† El † Elye † Sabaoth
† Adonay † Alpha † Omega † Messias
† Pastor † Agnus † Fons

Kabbalistic Use

The system of cosmology of the Kabbalah explains the significance of the names. One of the most important names is that of the En Sof àéï ñáo (“Infinite” or “Endless”), who is above the Sefirot.

The forty-two-lettered name contains the combined names, that when spelled in letters it contains 42 letters. The equivalent in value of YHWH (spelled = 45) is the forty-five-lettered name.

The seventy-two-lettered name is based from three verses in Exodus (14:19-21) beginning with “Vayyissa,” “Vayyabo,” “Vayyet,” respectively. Each of the verses contains 72 letters, and when combined they form 72 names, known collectively as the Shemhamphorasch.

The kabbalistic book *Sefer Yetzirah* explains that the creation of the world was achieved by the manipulation of the sacred letters that form the names of God. Much in the same way, a golem is created using all permutations of God’s name.

LAWS OF WRITING DIVINE NAMES

According to Jewish tradition, the sacredness of the divine names must be recognised by the professional scribe who writes the Scriptures, or the chapters for the tefillin and the mezuzah. Before transcribing any of the divine names he prepares mentally to sanctify them. Once he begins a name he does not stop until it is finished, and he must not be interrupted while writing it, even to greet a king. If an error is made in writing it, it may not be erased, but a line must be drawn

round it to show that it is cancelled, and the whole page must be put in a genizah (burial place for scripture) and a new page begun.

The Tradition of Seven Divine Names

According to Jewish tradition, the number of divine names that require the scribe's special care is seven: *El*, *Elohim*, *Adonai*, *YHWH*, *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*, *Shaddai*, and *Tzevaot*.

However, Rabbi Jose considered *Tzevaot* a common name (Soferim 4:1; Yer. R. H. 1:1; Ab. R. N. 34). Rabbi Ishmael held that even *Elohim* is common (Sanh. 66a). All other names, such as "Merciful," "Gracious," and "Faithful," merely represent attributes that are common also to human beings (Sheb. 35a).



23

JEWISH ESCHATOLOGY, ETHICS AND MOVEMENTS

JEWISH ESCHATOLOGY

Jewish eschatology is concerned with the Jewish Messiah, afterlife, and the revival of the dead.

THE MESSIAH

The Hebrew word *Mashiach* (or *Moshiach*) means anointed one, and refers to a human being who will usher in a messianic era of peace and prosperity for both the living and the deceased.

Judaism has taught that a *moshiach* (“messiah”) will bring about a revival of both the ancient united Kingdom of Israel and its ancient form of sacrificial worship in the Temple in Jerusalem.

In the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)

Most of the textual requirements concerning the messiah, what he will do, and what will be done during his reign are located within the Book of Isaiah, although requirements are mentioned in other prophets as well.

- The Sanhedrin will be re-established (Isaiah 1:26)
- Once he is King, leaders of other nations will look to him for guidance. (Isaiah 2:4)
- The whole world will worship the One God of Israel (Isaiah 2:17)
- He will be descended from King David (Isaiah 11:1) via King Solomon (1 Chron. 22:8–10)
- The Moshiach will be a man of this world, an “observant Jew” with “fear of God” (Isaiah 11:2)

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- Evil and tyranny will not be able to stand before his leadership (Isaiah 11:4)
 - Knowledge of God will fill the world (Isaiah 11:9)
 - He will include and attract people from all cultures and nations (Isaiah 11:10)
 - All Israelites will be returned to their homeland (Isaiah 11:12)
 - Death will be swallowed up forever (Isaiah 25:8)
 - There will be no more hunger or illness, and death will cease (Isaiah 25:8)
 - All of the dead will rise again (Isaiah 26:19)
 - The Jewish people will experience eternal joy and gladness (Isaiah 51:11)
 - He will be a messenger of peace (Isaiah 52:7)
 - Nations will end up recognising the wrongs they did Israel (Isaiah 52:13–53:5)
 - For My House (the Temple in Jerusalem) shall be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:3–7)
 - The peoples of the world will turn to the Jews for spiritual guidance (Zechariah 8:23)
 - The ruined cities of Israel will be restored (Ezekiel 16:55)
 - Weapons of war will be destroyed (Ezekiel 39:9)
 - The Temple will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 40) resuming many of the suspended *mitzvot*
 - He will then perfect the entire world to serve God together (Zephaniah 3:9)
 - Jews will know the Torah without Study (Jeremiah 31:33)
 - He will give you all the desires of your heart (Psalms 37:4)
 - He will take the barren land and make it abundant and fruitful (Isaiah 51:3, Amos 9:13–15, Ezekiel 36:29–30, Isaiah 11:6–9)

In the Talmud

The Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin, contains a long discussion of the events leading to the coming of the Messiah, for example:

R. Johanan said: When you see a generation ever dwindling, hope for him [the Messiah], as it is written, And the afflicted people thou wilt

save. R. Johanan said: When thou seest a generation overwhelmed by many troubles as by a river, await him, as it is written, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him; which is followed by, And the Redeemer shall come to Zion.

R. Johanan also said: The son of David will come only in a generation that is either altogether righteous or altogether wicked. 'in a generation that is altogether righteous,' — as it is written, Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever. 'Or altogether wicked,' — as it is written, And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; and it is [elsewhere] written, For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it.

Throughout Jewish history Jews have compared these passages (and others) to contemporary events in search of signs of the Messiah's imminent arrival, continuing into present times. For example, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement of Hassidic Judaism, along with many other Orthodox Jewish leaders, has suggested that the devastation among Jews wrought by the Holocaust may represent a sign of hope for the Messiah's present imminent arrival.

The Talmud tells many stories about the Messiah, some of which represent famous Talmudic rabbis as receiving personal visitations from Elijah the Prophet and the Messiah. For example:

R. Joshua b. Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance of R. Simeon b. Yohai's tomb. He asked him: 'Have I a portion in the world to come?' He replied, 'if this Master desires it.' R. Joshua b. Levi said, 'I saw two, but heard the voice of a third.' He then asked him, 'When will the Messiah come?' — 'Go and ask him himself,' was his reply. 'Where is he sitting?' — 'At the entrance.' And by what sign may I recognise him?' — 'He is sitting among the poor lepers: all of them untie [them] all at once, and rebandage them together, whereas he unties and rebandages each separately, [before treating the next], thinking, should I be wanted, [it being time for my appearance as the Messiah] I must not be delayed [through having to bandage a number of sores].' So he went to him and greeted him, saying, 'peace upon thee, Master and Teacher.' 'peace upon thee, O son of Levi,' he replied. 'When wilt thou come Master?' asked he, 'To-day', was his answer. On his returning to Elijah, the latter enquired, 'What did he say to thee?' — 'peace Upon thee, O son of Levi,' he answered. Thereupon he [Elijah] observed, 'He thereby assured thee and thy father of [a portion in] the world to come.' 'He spoke falsely to me,' he rejoined, 'stating that he would come to-day, but has not.' He [Elijah] answered him, 'This is what he said to thee, To-day, if ye will hear his voice.'

In Rabbinic Commentaries

The Medieval rabbinic figure Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon), also known as the Rambam, notable for efforts to synthesize classical Jewish tradition with Aristotelian rationalism and the scientific beliefs of his age, wrote a commentary to tractate Sanhedrin stressing a relatively naturalistic interpretation of the Messiah and de-emphasising miraculous elements. His commentary became widely (although not universally) accepted in the non- or less-mystical branches of Orthodox Judaism:

The Messianic age is when the Jews will regain their independence and all return to the land of Israel. The Messiah will be a very great king, he will achieve great fame, and his reputation among the gentile nations will be even greater than that of King Solomon. His great righteousness and the wonders that he will bring about will cause all peoples to make peace with him and all lands to serve him.... Nothing will change in the Messianic age, however, except that Jews will regain their independence. Rich and poor, strong and weak, will still exist. However it will be very easy for people to make a living, and with very little effort they will be able to accomplish very much.... it will be a time when the number of wise men will increase.... war shall not exist, and nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation.... The Messianic age will be highlighted by a community of the righteous and dominated by goodness and wisdom. It will be ruled by the Messiah, a righteous and honest king, outstanding in wisdom, and close to God. Do not think that the ways of the world or the laws of nature will change, this is not true. The world will continue as it is. The Prophet Isaiah predicted "The wolf shall live with the sheep, the leopard shall lie down with the kid." This, however, is merely allegory, meaning that the Jews will live safely, even with the formerly wicked nations. All nations will return to the true religion and will no longer steal or oppress. Note that all prophecies regarding the Messiah are allegorical Only in the Messianic age will we know the meaning of each allegory and what it comes to teach us. Our sages and prophets did not long for the Messianic age in order that they might rule the world and dominate the gentiles, the only thing they wanted was to be free for Jews to involve themselves with the Torah and its wisdom.

In Orthodox Judaism

Belief in a personal messiah is a universal tenet of faith among Orthodox Jews. Some authorities in Orthodox Judaism believe that this era will lead to supernatural events culminating in a bodily resurrection of the dead. Maimonides, on the other hand, holds that the events of the messianic era are not specifically connected with the resurrection.

In Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism varies in its teachings. While it retains traditional references to a personal redeemer and prayers for the restoration of the House of David in the liturgy, not all Conservative Jews retain a belief in a personal messiah. Some affirm a personal messiah, while others affirm a messianic era:

We do not know when the Messiah will come, nor whether he will be a charismatic human figure or is a symbol of the redemption of mankind from the evils of the world. Through the doctrine of a Messianic figure, Judaism teaches us that every individual human being must live as if he or she, individually, has the responsibility to bring about the messianic age. Beyond that, we echo the words of Maimonides based on the Prophet Habakkuk (2:3) that though he may tarry, yet do we wait for him each day... (Emet ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism)

In Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism generally concurs with the more liberal Conservative perspective. Reflecting its philosophical position, Reform Judaism, unlike Conservative Judaism, has altered the traditional prayers to refer to "Redemption" rather than "a Redeemer" and removed petitions for restoration of the House of David.

In Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism rejects the idea that God will send a personal messiah or bring about a messianic age, but it does teach that man can use the power or process to help bring about such a world. Reconstructionist Judaism has also altered traditional prayers so that they no longer refer to a personal Messiah.

THE AFTERLIFE AND OLAM HABA (THE "WORLD TO COME")

Although Judaism concentrates on the importance of the Earthly world (*Olam Ha'zeh* — "this world"), all of classical Judaism posits an afterlife. Jewish tradition affirms that the human soul is immortal and thus survives the physical death of the body. The Hereafter is known as *Olam Haba* (the "world to come"), *Gan Eden* (the Heavenly "Garden of Eden", or Paradise) and *Gehinom* ("Purgatory").

Talmudic Views

The Mishnah (c. CE 200) lists belief in the resurrection as one of three essential beliefs necessary for a Jew to participate in it:

All Israel have a portion in the world to come, for it is written: Thy people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch

of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.’ But the following have no portion therein: one who maintains that resurrection is not a biblical doctrine, the Torah was not divinely revealed, and an Apikoros (“Epicurean, apostate”). Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1, Talmud Sanhedrin 90a.

The Gemara (Berachos 18b) relates several stories of people who visited cemeteries and either overheard conversations among dead people or actually conversed with the dead themselves, and received information that was later verified as factually correct. The *Shem HaGedolim* by the Chida (entry on Rebbe Eliezer bar Nosson) relates and discusses several incidents of dead Sages returning to our world to visit their families and friends.

Medieval Rabbinical Views

While all classic rabbinic sources discuss the afterlife, the classic Medieval scholars dispute the nature of existence in the “End of Days” after the messianic period. While Maimonides describes an entirely spiritual existence for souls, which he calls “disembodied intellects,” Nahmanides discusses an intensely spiritual existence on Earth, where spirituality and physicality are merged. Both agree that life after death is as Maimonides describes the “End of Days.” This existence entails an extremely heightened understanding of and connection to the Divine Presence. This view is shared by all classic rabbinic scholars.

There is much rabbinic material on what happens to the soul of the deceased after death, what it experiences, and where it goes. At various points in the afterlife journey, the soul may encounter: *Hibbut ha-kever*, the pains of the grave; *Dumah*, the angel of silence; Satan as the angel of death; the *Kaf ha-Kela*, the catapult of the soul; *Gehinom* (purgatory); and *Gan Eden* (heaven or paradise). All classic rabbinic scholars agree that these concepts are beyond typical human understanding. Therefore, these ideas are expressed throughout rabbinic literature through many varied parables and analogies.

Gehinom is fairly well defined in rabbinic literature. It is sometimes translated as “hell”, but one should note that the Christian view of hell differs greatly from the classical Jewish view. In Judaism, *gehinom*—while certainly a terribly unpleasant place—is not hell. The overwhelming majority of rabbinic thought maintains that souls are not tortured in *gehinom* forever; the longest that one can be there is said to be twelve months, with extremely rare exception. This is the reason that even when in mourning for near relatives, Jews will not

recite mourner's kaddish for longer than an eleven month period. *Gehinom* is considered a spiritual forge where the soul is purified for its eventual ascent to *Gan Eden* ("Garden of Eden").

In Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism maintains the tenet of the bodily resurrection of the dead, including traditional references to it in the liturgy.

In Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism has generally retained the tenet of the bodily resurrection of the dead, including traditional references to it in the liturgy. However, many Conservative Jews interpret the tenet metaphorically rather than literally. See *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism*.

In Liberal Judaism

Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism have altered traditional references to the resurrection of the dead ("who gives life to the dead") to refer to "who gives life to all". Conservative Judaism has retained the traditional language although some interpret it non-literally.

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ON AN AFTERLIFE

Although the belief in an afterlife is common to Judaism, in recent times Biblical scholars have argued that the concept of an afterlife was developed after the Tanakh was written. Others argue the more traditional view, that the belief in an afterlife is found throughout the Tanakh.

Interpretations Supporting an Afterlife

The Tanakh speaks of several noteworthy people being "gathered to their people." See, for example, Genesis 25:8 (Abraham), 25:17 (Ishmael), 35:29 (Isaac), 49:33 (Jacob), Deuteronomy 32:50 (Moses and Aaron), 2 Kings 22:20 (King Josiah). This gathering may be seen as a separate event from the physical death of the body or the burial (although physical family burial sites were often used). In Genesis 15:15, God told Abraham that he would go to his fathers in peace. But Abraham was not buried with his fathers. His father died in Haran (Genesis 11:32); this would not be a contradiction if there was an afterlife.

The Torah also prohibits contacting the spirit of the dead in Leviticus 19–20 and Deuteronomy 18, indicating that something of a person

lives on after physical death. As well, Saul, in 1 Samuel 28:19, employs a sorceress to raise the spirit of the Prophet Samuel who had died some time prior.

Job 19:26 has traditionally been considered a reference to the afterlife: “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God”. Other verses suggesting an afterlife include:

- Isaiah 26:19 “Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!...”
- Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it”

Interpretations Opposing Afterlife

Interpretations opposing an afterlife do not exist in Judaism. Some liberal movements are agnostic on the subject, but none actually oppose it. Many of the ancient Sadducees, however, did not believe in the afterlife.

REINCARNATION

The notion of reincarnation, while held as a mystical belief by some, is not an essential tenet of traditional Judaism. It is not mentioned in traditional classical sources such as the Tanakh (“Hebrew Bible”), the classical rabbinic works (Mishnah and Talmud), the writings of the Geonim, or Maimonides’ 13 Principles of Faith

However, books of Kabbalah—Jewish mysticism—teach a belief in *gilgul*, transmigration of souls, and hence the belief is found in Hassidic Judaism, which generally regards the Kabbalah as canonical sacred texts.

Rabbis who accepted the idea of reincarnation include the founder of Chassidism, the Baal Shem Tov, Levi ibn Habib (the Raibah), Nahmanides (the Ramban), Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher, Rabbi Shelomoh Alkabez and Rabbi Hayyim Vital. Among well known Rabbis who rejected the idea of reincarnation are Saadia Gaon, Hasdai Crescas, Yedayah Bedershi (early 14th century), Joseph Albo, Abraham ibn Daud and Leon de Modena. The idea of reincarnation, called *gilgul*, became popular in folk belief, and is found in much Yiddish literature among Ashkenazi Jews.

KASHRUT

Kashrut refers to Jewish dietary laws. Food in accord with *halakha* (Jewish law) is termed kosher in English, from the Hebrew term *kashér*,

meaning “fit” (in this context, fit for consumption by Jews according to traditional Jewish law). Jews may not consume non-kosher food (but there are no restrictions for non-dietary use, for example, injection of insulin of porcine origin). Food that is not in accord with Jewish law is called *treif*, (or *treyf*, Hebrew). *Treif* meat is meat from a non-kosher animal or a kosher animal that has not been properly slaughtered according to Jewish law, but the term is applied by extension to all non-kosher food.

Many of the basic laws of *kashrut* are derived from the Torah’s Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, with their details set down in the oral law (the Mishnah and the Talmud) and codified by the *Shulchan Aruch* and later rabbinical authorities. The Torah does not explicitly state the reason for most *kashrut* laws, and many varied reasons have been offered for these laws, ranging from philosophical and ritualistic, to practical and hygienic.

By extension, the word *kosher* means legitimate, acceptable, permissible, genuine or authentic, in a broader sense.

Islam has a related but different system, named *halal*, and both systems have a comparable system of ritual slaughter (*shechita* in Judaism and *abîah* in Islam).

PRINCIPLES

The laws of *kashrut* derive from various passages in the Torah, and are numerous and complex, but the key principles are as follows:

- Only meat from particular species is permissible:
 - Mammals that *both* chew their cud (ruminant) and have cloven hooves are kosher. Animals with one characteristic but not the other (the camel, the hyrax and the hare because they have no cloven hooves, and the pig because it does not ruminate) are specifically excluded (Leviticus 11:3-8).
 - Birds must fit certain criteria; birds of prey are not kosher. There must be an established tradition that a bird is kosher before it can be consumed.
 - Fish must have fins and scales to be kosher (Leviticus 11:9-12). Shellfish and non-fish water fauna are not kosher.
 - Insects are not kosher, except for certain species of kosher locust (unrecognised in most communities).
- Meat and milk (or derivatives) cannot be mixed, *i.e.* meat and dairy products are not served at the same meal, served or cooked

in the same utensils, or stored together. Observant Jews have separate sets of dishes for meat and milk.

- Mammals and fowl must be slaughtered in specific fashion: slaughter is done by a trained individual (a *shochet*) using a special method of slaughter, *shechita* (Leviticus 12:21). Among other features, *shechita* slaughter severs the jugular vein, carotid artery, esophagus and trachea in a single continuous cutting movement with an unserrated, sharp knife, avoiding unnecessary pain to the animal. Failure of one of these criteria renders the meat of the animal unsuitable. The body must be checked post-slaughter so as to be certain that the animal had no medical condition or defect that would have caused it to die of its own accord within a year, which would make the meat unsuitable.
- Blood must be removed as much as possible (Leviticus 17:10) through the *kashering* process; this is usually done through soaking and salting the meat, but organs rich in blood (the liver) are grilled over an open flame.
- Utensils used for non-kosher foods are rendered non-kosher, and will transfer that non-kosher status to kosher foods. Some utensils, depending on the material they are made from, can be made kosher again by immersion in boiling water.
- Food that is prepared by Jews in a manner which violates the *Shabbat* (Sabbath) may not be eaten until the Shabbat is over.
- Passover has special dietary rules, the most important of which is the prohibition on eating leavened bread or derivatives of this (*chametz*, Exodus 12:15). Utensils used in preparing and serving *chametz* are also forbidden on Passover unless they have been cleansed (*kashering*). Observant Jews traditionally have separate sets of meat and dairy utensils for Passover use only.
- Certain foods must have been prepared in whole or in part by Jews, including:
 - Wine
 - Certain cooked foods (*bishul akum*)
 - Cheese (*gvinat akum*) and according to some also butter (*chem'at akum*)
 - According to many: certain dairy products (Hebrew: חלב ישראל "chalav Yisrael" "milk of Israel")
 - According to some: bread (under certain circumstances) (Pat Yisrael)

- Biblical rules control the use of agriculture produce: for produce grown in the Land of Israel a modified version of the Biblical tithes must be applied, including Terumat HaMaaser, Maaser Rishon, Maaser Sheni, and Maaser Ani (untithed produce is called *tevel*); the fruit of the first three years of a tree's growth or replanting are forbidden for eating or any other use as *orlah*; produce grown in the Land of Israel on the seventh year is *Shviis*, and unless managed carefully is forbidden as a violation of the *Shmita* (Sabbatical Year).

The following rules of *kashrut* are not universally observed:

- The rule against eating new grain (*yashan*) outside the Land of Israel
- In addition, some groups follow various eating restrictions on Passover which go beyond the rules of *kashrut*, such as the eating of *gebrochts* or garlic.

Conservative Judaism follows a number of leniencies, including:

- Permitting kashering with less than boiling water under certain circumstances (which permits a dishwasher to be used for meat and dairy dishes, although not at the same time, provided the dishwasher will not absorb particles of the food)
- Classifying various chemical additives derived from non-kosher meat products as non-food and permissible (for example, permitting rennet from cow's stomachs to be used in cheese and horse-hoof gelatin in foods)
- A variety of additional details.

Although Reconstructionist Judaism and some perspectives within Reform Judaism encourage individuals to follow some or all aspects of the *kashrut* rules required by the more traditional branches, these branches do not require their observance and do not maintain their own sets of required rules.

TYPES OF FOODS

Foods are kosher when they meet all criteria that Jewish law applies to food and drinks. Invalidating characteristics may range from the presence of a mixture of meat and milk, to the use of produce from Israel that has not been tithed properly, or even the use of cooking utensils which had previously been used for non-kosher food.

IDENTIFICATION OF KOSHER FOODS

Store-bought foods can be identified as kosher by the presence of a *hechsher* (plural *hechsherim*), a graphical symbol that indicates that

the food has been certified as kosher by a rabbinical authority. (This might be an individual rabbi, but is more often a rabbinic organisation.) One of the most common symbols in the United States is the “OU”, a U inside a circle, standing for the Union of Orthodox Congregations (or “Orthodox Union”). Many rabbis and organisations, however, have their own certification mark, and the other symbols are too numerous to list.

Many *kashrut* certification symbols are accompanied by additional letters or words to indicate the category of the food. In common usage is “D” for Dairy, “M” for Meat or poultry, “Pareve” for food that is neither meat nor dairy, “Fish” for foods containing such, and “P” for Passover (not to be confused with Pareve). Note that many foods meet the US FDA standard for “Non-Dairy” while they do not meet the Jewish standard for “Pareve” and are labeled with the “D” next to the kosher symbol.

A single K is sometimes used as a symbol for *kosher*, but as a letter cannot be trademarked (the method by which other symbols are protected from misuse) in many countries, it only indicates that the company producing the food claims it is kosher.

The *hechsherim* of certain authorities are sometimes considered invalid by certain other authorities.

It is not sufficient to read the list of ingredients on a product label in order to determine a food’s kosher status, as many things are not included in this list, such as pan lubricants and release agents (which may be derived from lard), flavorings (“natural flavorings” are more likely to be derived from non-kosher substances than others) and others. Reading the label can, however, identify obviously unkosher ingredients.

Producers of foods and food additives can contact Jewish authorities to have their products certified as kosher: a committee will visit their facilities to inspect production methods and contents, and issue a certificate if everything is in order. In many cases constant supervision is required.

For various reasons, such as changes in manufacturing processes, products which were kosher may cease to be so; for example, a kosher lubricating oil may be replaced by one containing tallow. Such changes are often coordinated with the supervising rabbi or organisation to ensure that new packaging, which will not suggest any *hechsher* or *kashrut*, is used for the new formulation. But in some cases existing

stocks of preprinted labels with the *hechsher* may continue to be used on the now non-kosher product; for such reasons, there is an active “grapevine” among the Jewish community, as well as newspapers and periodicals, identifying which products are now questionable, as well as products which have become kosher but whose labels have yet to carry the *hechsher*.

ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THE LAWS OF KASHRUT

There continues to be a debate among various theories about the purposes and meaning of the laws regarding *kashrut*.

Jewish Religious Explanations

Traditional Jewish philosophy divides the 613 *mitzvot* into *mishpatim* (laws which can be explained rationally) and *chukim* (laws which cannot be explained rationally). Those categorised as *chukim* include such laws as the Red Heifer (Numbers 19). There are three basic points of view regarding these laws:

- One view is that these laws were ordained for the protection and health of God’s people in a time where basic hygiene was not yet understood. For example, carrion was against Jewish law. As we know today many such animals are ridden with diseases as they begin to decompose. Also, shellfish can be easily contaminated with hepatitis and other diseases if they are not cared for properly, these were also against Jewish law.
- A second view holds that these laws *do* have a reason, but it is not understood because the ultimate explanation for *mitzvot* is beyond the human intellect; and
- A third view holds that these laws have no meaning other than to instill obedience.

Some Jewish scholars have held that these dietary laws should simply be categorised with a group of laws that are considered irrational in that there is no particular explanation for their existence. The reason for this is that there are some of God’s regulations for mankind that the human mind is not necessarily capable of understanding. Related to this is the idea that the dietary laws were given as a demonstration of God’s authority and that man should obey without asking for a reason.

This last view, however, has been rejected by most classical and modern Jewish authorities. For example, Maimonides holds that we are permitted to seek out reasons for the laws of the Torah.

There is also the view that the obedience to the laws of kashrut are a necessary precondition for a Jew to be able to reach his utmost spiritual capacity. According to this understanding, the laws are meant to say that one must first have obedience in his base, animalistic sectors of life in order to achieve obedience and spirituality in the more lofty pursuits of Judaism.

Hasidic View of the Laws of Kashrut

According to the teachings of Hasidism, when a Jew manipulates any object for a holy reason (which includes eating, if it is done with a proper intention—to provide strength to follow laws of Torah), he releases “sparks of Holiness” which are found in every object. These “sparks” are actually channels of connection with the Divinity, and their “activation” allows the drawing of the Divine Presence into the physical world.

However, there are some types of animals, whose products are not applicable for performance of commandments, because the “sparks of holiness” cannot be released from their matter. Therefore, we are provided with “signs” of the animals whose sparks can be released. These signs are split hooves (hooves symbolize connection with the material world which, however, is not so complete as to lose connection with the spiritual world), and rechewing of food (food symbolises Torah or in more general terms, holiness; rechewing of food symbolises ability to penetrate deeper into some holy concepts or penetrate deeper into holiness, as is necessary to separate sparks from their matter). For fish (which symbolize sages), these signs are scales (protection from water, which is a symbol of intellectual influence) and fins (that gives fish ability to move in water better, which symbolises ability to move from one area of Torah or holiness to another).

It must be noted that these signs are not the causes of these animals not being kosher (so, according to Talmud, if a camel is born with completely split hooves, it does not become kosher), they are merely signs that alert us to spiritual characteristics of these animals’ products (namely, whether it’s possible to activate their “sparks of Divinity”) which cannot be seen from the physical perspective.

Contemporary Academic Opinions

Ritual Purity and Holiness

Cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas has written on just how the Israelites may have used the idea of distinction as a way to create

holiness. Her work, *Purity and Danger* (1966), is still studied today. One theory is that the laws serve as a distinction between the Israelites and the non-Israelite nations of the world. Gordon Wenham writes: "The laws reminded Israel what sort of behaviour was expected of her, that she had been chosen to be holy in an unclean world."

Similarly, according to this theory, the practice of *kashrut* serves as a daily exercise in self-discipline and self-control, strengthening the practitioner's ability to choose other difficult paths. The ability to rationally curb one's most basic appetites can be seen as the prerequisite to living in a civilised society. Also, Jews consider the aspects of kosher slaughter which emphasize and incorporate the need to avoid unnecessary suffering of the animal a reminder to the believer that having the power of life and death or to cause suffering, even to a farm animal born and bred to be eaten, is a serious responsibility rather than a pleasure to be sought after; and that to actually indulge in pleasure in the power to cause suffering, even in so common a practice as hunting, is to damage our own moral sensibilities.

The prohibition against eating the fruits of a tree for the first three years also represents a capacity for self-discipline and self-denial, as well as a lengthy period of appreciation for the bounty of God, prior to losing oneself in its enjoyment. Similarly, the requirement to tithe one's harvest, aside from the social justice aspect, serves as a reminder that this material wealth is not purely the result of one's own efforts, but represents a gift from God; and as such, to share the gift with one's fellows does not represent a real loss to anyone, even oneself.

Symbolic Purpose

During the first few centuries of the Common Era some philosophers held that the laws of *kashrut* were symbolic in character. In this view, kosher animals represent virtues, while non-kosher animals represent vices. The first indication of this view can be found in the 1st century BCE Letter of Aristeas (par. 145-148, 153). It later reappears in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and in the writings of some of the early Church Fathers.

This hypothesis has long since been rejected by most Jewish and Christian scholars. Modern Biblical criticism also has found nothing to support this hypothesis, although the concept of the pig as a particularly 'unclean' animal persists among Jews.

Although the symbolic explanation for *kashrut* has been largely rejected, a number of authorities maintain that the laws are intended

to promote ethical and moral behaviour. A recent authority who has reexamined the symbolic/ethical meaning of *kashrut* is Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 19th century).

To some degree, the prohibition on combining milk with meat represents a symbolic separation between death, represented by the flesh of a dead animal, and life, represented by the milk required to sustain a newborn creature. The often-quoted humane component to this law is also of symbolic value; the Torah prohibits 'seething the kid (goat, sheep, calf) in its mother's milk', a practice cruel only in concept, which would not be understood as cruelty by either the kid or its mother and would not cause them additional suffering; but which could still potentially inflame a human's taste for ultimate power over those creatures who are weaker. Thus, *kashrut* prohibits the practice itself, even if the resulting mixture is to be discarded.

Similarly, the prohibition against consuming carnivorous mammals and birds, 'loathsome crawling creatures', and scavengers, as well as the prohibition against consuming sick or diseased animals, would seem to rely, at least in part, on their perceived symbolic character.

Maintenance of a Separate Culture

According to Christian theologian Gordon J. Wenham, the purpose of *kashrut* is to help maintain Jews as a separate people. The laws of *kashrut* had the effect of preventing socialisation and intermarriage with non-Jews, helping the Jewish community maintain its identity. Wenham writes that "circumcision was a private matter, but the food laws made one's Jewish faith a public affair. Observance of the food laws was one of the outward marks of a practising Jew, and this in turn enhanced Jewish attachment to them as a reminder of their special status."

Hygiene

There have been attempts to provide empirical support for the view that *kashrut* laws have hygienic benefits.

It was believed by some people that kosher animals were healthier to eat than non-kosher animals. It was also noted that the laws of purity (Leviticus 11–15) not only describe the difference between clean and unclean animals, but also describe other phenomena that appear to be related to health. For instance, *glatt*, the requirement that lungs be checked to be free of adhesions, would prevent consumption of animals who had been infected with tuberculosis; similarly, the ban

on slaughtering of an unconscious animal would eliminate many sick and possibly infectious animals from being consumed. Such a rationale seems reasonable when considering the laws prohibiting the consumption of carrion birds or birds of prey (which are advantageous scavengers), as they may carry disease from the carrion they consume; shellfish, which as filter feeders can accumulate harmful parasites or toxins; or pork, which can harbor trichinosis if not properly cooked. Thus, it was natural for many to assume that all the laws of *kashrut* were merely hygienic in intent and origin. One of the rabbinical authorities that mention the hygiene hypothesis is Maimonides in his *Guide for the Perplexed*.

For a number of reasons, however, this idea has fallen out of favour among Biblical scholars. Fruits and vegetables may be eaten without prohibition even though there are many poisonous herbs, seeds, berries, and fruits. Additionally, this hypothesis does not explain other parts of the Jewish dietary laws; for instance forbidding the consumption of fish without true scales, such as sharks and swordfish (though see kosher foods for discussion on *kashrut* of swordfish), fruit from trees which are less than four years old, or residual blood in meat.

In 1953, Dr. David I. Macht, a Johns Hopkins University researcher, performed experiments on many different kinds of animals and fish, and concluded that the concentration of zoological toxins of the “unclean” animals was higher than that of the “clean” animals, and that the correlation with the description in Leviticus was 100 per cent. In addition, Dr. Macht’s research indicated harmful physiological effects of mixtures of meat and milk, and ritually slaughtered meat appeared to be lower in toxins than meat from other sources. The conclusions of the paper published in *Johns Hopkins Bulletin of the History of Medicine* were challenged in a paper by biologists written at the request of a Seventh-day Adventist Church publication.

Other Reasons

Others have hypothesised that there are multiple reasons for the laws of *kashrut*, with each law serving one or more than one purpose.

Anthropologist Marvin Harris has proposed that the Jewish prohibition of pork results from the fact that in arid countries such as Israel, it is possible to raise pork only by feeding it grains that are also eaten by people, since the pigs cannot forage in non-existent forests. In bad harvest years, there would be a social conflict between those

who could afford to raise and eat pork and those who would be at risk of starvation due to the scarcity of edible grains. Thus, in the interest of social survival, the prohibition entered the Jewish religion. Harris in *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches* cites worldwide examples of similar ecologically determined religious practices, including other prohibitions of pork for similar reasons. According to Harris, pork requires too much salt to guarantee the elimination of the carcass liquids due to high fat content. The reverse process of washing out the preserving salt when it came to eating the meat also made it difficult to justify. This same reason would apply to many other forbidden foods either because salting preservation was impossible or because the salting process was not reversible.

U.S. LAWS REGARDING USE OF THE WORD 'KOSHER'

In some states in the U.S. (Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia, as well as local ordinances in two counties in Florida and the Independent City of Baltimore), statutes defined "kosher" and made it a crime to sell a product which was called "kosher" if, in general, it was not processed in accordance with the Jewish religion. Earlier court decisions upheld some of these laws. Courts have since determined that because this represents a state establishment of a religious practice, when such laws have been challenged, they have been struck down. Those who oppose the above rulings argue that *kashrut* is simply a set of standards for food preparation, nothing more; there is no difference between labelling something "low sodium", "high-fiber", "pasteurized", "kosher", "calcium-enriched", or "contains no cholesterol".

- Baltimore's City ordinance creating a kosher law was found to be unconstitutional: *Barghout v. Bureau of Kosher Meat & Food Control*, 66 F. 3d 1337 (4th Cir. 1995).
- New Jersey's Kosher laws were found to violate the Establishment clauses of both the New Jersey state constitution and the First Amendment: *Perretti v. Ran-Dav's County Kosher Inc.*, 289 N.J. Super 618, 674 A. 2d 647 (Superior Ct. Appellate Div 1996). The opinion was affirmed by the New Jersey Supreme Court in which it found that the State's use of "Orthodox Jewish law" as a basis for the definition of kosher was an adoption of substantive religious standards which violated the State and Federal constitutions. 129 N.J. 155. The State's response was to create a new law which avoids any definition of a standard for what is

or is not considered kosher. Instead, establishments which claim to be kosher must publicize what they mean by that, and the State will check to ensure that this standard is adhered to. For example, kosher restaurants must display a poster (provided by the Kosher Food Enforcement Bureau) on which they display the name of their rabbinic certifier, how often he inspects the place, whether or not he requires all ingredients to be kosher-supervised, and so on. In this manner, government enforcement becomes a consumer-protection issue, and avoids the problems of advancing any particular religious view.

- The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit found that the challenged provisions of New York's Kosher Fraud law "on their face violate the Establishment Clause because they excessively entangle the State of New York with religion and impermissibly advance Orthodox Judaism." *Commack Self-Serv. Kosher Meats, Inc. v. Weiss*, 294 F.3d 415 (2d Cir. 2002), 45 ATLA L. Rep. 282 (October 2002). The Supreme Court refused to hear the case, and denied certiorari (123 S. Ct. 1250 (mem.) (2003)). The statute has since been revised and a new statute, The McKinney's Agriculture and Markets Law Sec. 201-a has since been passed.

HOW KASHRUT IS VIEWED BY CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

In Contemporary Judaism

Orthodox Judaism and Conservative Judaism hold that Jews should follow the laws of *kashrut* as a matter of religious obligation. Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism hold that these laws are no longer binding. Historically, Reform Judaism actively opposed *kashrut* as an archaism inhibiting the integration of Jews in the general society. More recently, some parts of the Reform community have begun to explore the option of a more traditional approach. This tradition-leaning faction agrees with mainstream Reform that the rules concerning *kashrut* are not obligatory, but believe that Jews should consider keeping kosher because it is a valuable way for people to bring holiness into their lives. Thus, Jews are encouraged to consider adopting some or all of the rules of *kashrut* on a voluntary basis. The Reconstructionist movement advocates that its members accept some of the rules of *kashrut*, but does so in a non-binding fashion; their stance on *kashrut* is the same as the tradition-leaning wing of Reform.

Many Jews who do not meet the complete requirements of *kashrut* nevertheless maintain some subset of the laws; for instance, abstaining

from pork or shellfish. Many Jews will likewise avoid drinking milk with a meat dish. Similarly, many keep a degree of *kashrut* at home while having no problems eating in a non-kosher restaurant, or will follow leniencies when eating out that they would not follow at home.

In Common Vernacular

In English and Hebrew, the term *kosher* is frequently used in a metaphorical sense to mean “fitting” or “correct”. This is also its conventional meaning in Hebrew. For example, a *mezuzah*, a *tefillin*, a Torah scroll or even an *etrog* can be kosher (if it is fit for ritual use) or non-kosher (if it is unfit for ritual use), but their “kashrut” has nothing to do with food.

It is also part of some common product names. For example, “kosher salt” (technically “koshering salt”) is a form of salt which has irregularly-shaped crystals, making it particularly suitable for preparing meat in accordance with *kashrut* law because the increased surface area of the crystals absorbs blood more effectively. Likewise, a “kosher” dill pickle is usually not kosher in the sense that it was prepared under rabbinical supervision, which would ensure that no utensil in contact with the pickles had been in contact with food that was not kosher. Rather, it is a pickle made in the traditional manner of Jewish New York City pickle makers with generous addition of garlic to the brine. This is the same reason why the usage of the term “kosher-style” became frequently used in the food industry, from delis to restaurants, and even street vendors.

Protection of the Term

Consumer-protection laws in many jurisdictions prohibit use of the term “kosher” unless it is shown to conform to Jewish dietary laws, however this will be defined differently for different jurisdictions and situations. For example, in some places the law may require that a rabbi certify the *kashrut*, and in others it is sufficient that the manufacturer believes the product to be kosher. Most packaged food products that are labelled “kosher” will therefore have some level of certification of compliance with the laws of *kashrut*, though individuals must determine if that level is adequate for themselves. More detail on the “legal” usage of the term “kosher” can be found in the section above entitled “U.S. Laws regarding use of the word *Kosher*”.

Israeli Usage of the Term

A new movement in Israel demands that an establishment—a grocery store or restaurant — will only be considered fully kosher if

its employees are paid a decent wage and treated fairly, and there is access for the handicapped. This will require a second certificate of *kashrut* in addition to the standard one.

ETHICAL EATING

The translation of the root (K-Sh-R, Kaf-Shin-Resh) when used in this context is generally accepted to be about the “fitness” or “kosherness” of the food for consumption. There are two major strains of thought on alternative ways that “kashrut” should be practiced in order to more broadly categorize food as fit for consumption. In addition to these two major strains of thought, some, especially in the United Kingdom, have taken the fitness of the food they eat as directly dependent on how ethically it was produced, specifically in relation to its impact on the world and its people. For instance, only Fairtrade teas and coffees are served in some synagogues and community centers and eggs used are organic or free range.

Vegetarianism

Since there are few laws of *kashrut* restricting the consumption of plant products, many people assume that a strictly vegetarian meal would usually be inherently kosher. In practice, however, those who follow the laws of *kashrut* do not automatically regard all restaurants or prepared or canned food which claim to be vegetarian as kosher, due to the likelihood that the utensils were used previously with non-kosher products, as well as the concern that there may be non-kosher ingredients mixed in, which, although they may still be considered vegetarian, would make the food not kosher. Additionally, *kashrut* does provide special requirements for some vegetarian products, such as wine and bread.

Many vegetarian restaurants and producers of vegetarian foods do in fact acquire a *hechsher*, certifying that a Rabbinical organisation has approved their products as being kosher. In addition to the above concerns, the *hechsher* will usually certify that certain suspect vegetables have been checked for insect infestation, and that steps have been taken to ensure that any cooked food meets the requirements of *bishul Yisrael*.

Most vegetables, particularly leafy vegetables (lettuce, cabbage, parsley, dill, etc.), must be thoroughly checked for insect infestation (see link below for video instruction on proper checking procedure from the OU). The consumption of insects involves between three and six violations of Torah law; so, according to Jewish Law, it is a greater

sin than the consumption of pork. The proper procedure for inspecting and cleaning will vary by species, growing conditions, and the views of any particular rabbi.

The situation is not always reversible, however; although *pareve* food can contain neither meat nor dairy, that label on a product cannot be always used by vegetarians as a reliable indication, since *kashrut* considers fish to be *pareve*. Because of potential issues of mixing meat and fish (see Fish and seafood) some *kashrut* supervising authorities specifically indicate the presence of fish products when they are found in *pareve* foods.

People who have specific dietary needs should be aware that their standards for certain concepts may differ from the halachic standards for similar concepts.

- Many coffee creamers currently sold in the United States are labeled as “non-dairy”, yet also have a “D” alongside their *hechsher*, which indicates a dairy status. This is because of an ingredient (usually sodium caseinate) which is derived from milk. The rabbis categorize it as dairy that cannot be mixed with meat, but the US government considers it to lack the nutritional value of milk. Such products are also unsuitable for vegans and other strict dairy abstainers.
- On the other hand, *kashrut* does recognize some processes as capable of converting a meat or dairy product into a *pareve* one. For example, rennet is sometimes made from stomach linings, yet is acceptable for making kosher cheese, but such cheeses might not be acceptable to some vegetarians, who would eat only cheese made from a vegetarian rennet. The same applies to kosher gelatin which in some cases is an animal product, despite its *pareve* status.
- *Kashrut* has procedures by which equipment can be cleaned of its previous non-kosher use, but that might be inadequate for vegetarians or other religions. For example, dairy manufacturing equipment can be cleaned well enough that the rabbis will grant *pareve* status to products manufactured afterward. Nevertheless, someone with a strong allergic sensitivity to dairy products might still react to the dairy residue, and that is why some products will have a “milk” warning on a product which is legitimately *pareve*.

Kashrut and Animal Welfare

Kashrut prohibits slaughter of an unconscious animal, and the slaughtering is done by cutting the front of the throat first. Some animal rights groups object to kosher slaughter, claiming that it can take several minutes for the animal to die and can often cause suffering. Since the spinal cord is not severed completely at the first cut, it is thought that the slaughtered animal's nervous system continues to function during the initial moments of the slaughter, causing the animal to undergo a slow and painful death.

Jewish groups point to studies showing that the kosher slaughter technique is no more painful than conventional techniques, and in most cases much quicker and less painful; the idealised emphasis on flawless procedure and tools contrasts with the often real-life sloppy production line methodology of the non-kosher slaughterhouse resulting in failure to stun the animal, as often described by animal rights advocates in other contexts.

Specific *kashrut* laws counter some of the rituals of ancient times, such as eating only one leg of a live animal so that people would not have to deal with eating the entire animal at one time (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 56b); this law applies even to non-Jews and is part of the Noahide Laws. Some authorities have ruled that any unnecessary suffering by the animal can render otherwise kosher meat *treife*.

Kashrut and Working Conditions

Heksher Tzedek, a proposed certification that food was produced under safe and just working conditions, has been endorsed by the Rabbinical Assembly, the national association of Conservative rabbis, but specific requirements for implementation of certification remain under development. It would be an additional certification, not a replacement for kosher certification.

One counterargument is that an entity certifying *kashrut* should remain outside political issues of labour. In particular, the laws of labour, as dictated by Torah, are being addressed by the laws of the United States of America as noted by Rabbi A. Zeilingold in an interview. The Government of the United States of America provides many means for individuals to report and prosecute employers that violate the law, however this information is never made transparent to consumers through certification or product markings, such as Kosher labeling.

Some questions posed by critics remain open in the matter of the Tzedek Heksher:

- If there is an accident in a meat plant certified by the Heksher Tzedek as safe, will the rabbinical group that certified the plant be liable to a lawsuit?
- How are the people certifying the Heksher Tzedek going to oversee that a plant is fair to workers or not?
- How are the people certifying the Heksher Tzedek determine what is fair or not fair in matters of labour?

TZNIUT

Tzniut or Tznius is a term used within Judaism and has its greatest influence as a notion within Orthodox Judaism. It is used to describe both a character trait and a group of Jewish religious laws pertaining to conduct in general and especially between the sexes.

Humility is a paramount ideal within Judaism. Moses is referred to as “exceedingly humble, more than any man in the world” (Bamidbar 12:3). The Talmud states that humility is one of the characteristic traits of the Jewish people. (Talmud, Tractate Yevamot 79a.)

DESCRIPTION

Tzniut includes a group of laws concerned with modesty, in both dress and behaviour. It is first mentioned in this context by the Prophet Micah (6:8): “[...] and to walk humbly (*hatzne’a leches*) with your God”. In the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Elazar Bar Tzadok connected this prophetic precept with modesty and discretion in dress and in behaviour (Tractate Sukkah 49b).

One of the defining characteristics of the Jewish religious personality is Tzniut, which means, roughly, “modesty”. In the legal dimension of Orthodox Rabbinic literature, the issue of Tzniut is discussed in more technical terms: how low or how high a female’s hemline should be, the length of sleeves, and so on. Notwithstanding these details, the concept of humility and modesty as a positive character trait, a practice, and a way of life—a “way of walking”—is also taught to be important in Rabbinic literature. This awareness informs the concept and the practice of Tzniut in its rules and details.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Sexual Relations

Orthodox Judaism prohibits sexual relations outside of marriage.

Dress

Orthodox Judaism requires both men and women to substantially cover their bodies. In Haredi communities, men generally wear long pants and often long-sleeve shirts, and women wear long-sleeve blouses and below-the-knee dresses and skirts. Some women try not to follow the fashion, while others wear fashionable but modest clothing.

In Modern Orthodox practice it is generally accepted for sleeves to reach the elbows and shirts to cover the collarbone, skirts to cover the knees with or without tights, and not wear pants in the presence of men. Socks are considered optional, based on the concept of *minhag hamakom* (custom of the community).

Haredi women avoid skirts with slits, preferring instead kick-pleats. They also avoid overly eye-catching colors, especially bright red. A recent trend has been to wear all black. Some insist on closed-toe shoes and always wear stockings, the thickness of which varies by community. In some Haredi communities women wear loose vests over shirts.

Men must wear shirts with sleeves. Modern Orthodox men will wear shorts, but Haredi men will not, and many will not wear short sleeves at all. Sandals without socks, while generally not worn in a synagogue, are usually accepted in Modern Orthodox and Religious Zionist Communities in Israel for daily dress. Haredi Ashkenazi practice discourages sandals without socks both in and out of the synagogue. Haredi Sefardic communities tend to accept sandals at least outside of synagogue and sometimes in synagogue as well. Dress in a synagogue and, according to many, in public should be comparable to that worn by the community when meeting royalty/government.

Conservative Judaism formally requires modest dress, although this requirement is often unobserved on a day-to-day basis, but is somewhat more observed with respect to synagogue attendance. While day-to-day dress often simply reflects the general society, many Conservative synagogues expect somewhat more modest dress (although not necessarily as stringent as in Orthodox Judaism) for synagogue attendance, and may have specific dress requirements to receive synagogue honors (such as being called for a Torah reading). Reform Judaism does not regard religious dress requirements as applicable.

Style of dress involves cultural considerations distinct from religious requirements. There are many Conservative and Reform synagogues

in which suits and ties are socially expected, while there are many Orthodox synagogues (especially in Israel) where dress, while meeting religious modesty requirements, is quite casual. Many Haredi and Hassidic communities have special customs and styles of dress which serve to identify members of their communities, but regard these special dress features as customs of their communities rather than as general religious requirements expected of all observant Jews.

Hair Covering

Halacha (Jewish law) requires married women to cover their hair. The most common hair coverings in the Haredi community are the snood, the tichel (scarf), and the sheitel (wig); some Haredi women cover their hair with hats or berets. Some married Modern Orthodox women cover their heads, some cover their hair (except for a few inches at the hairline), and some do not cover their heads or hair at all, though this arguably contradicts the Halacha (in Hilkhoth Ishuth chapter 24, of the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides quotes the Talmudic literature as teaching that the covering of a woman's hair is *Dat Moshe* (originates from Moses' teaching), *i.e.*, is Biblically mandatory). Rashi also comments that in the procedure regarding a woman who is suspected of adultery, the kohen uncovers her hair, and from this we learn that it is shameful for Jewish women to have their hair uncovered.

Virtually all married Modern Orthodox women wear a head or hair covering in synagogue. The most common head/hair covering for Modern Orthodox women is a hat or beret; younger married Modern Orthodox women will wear baseball caps and bandanas when dressed casually. Modern Orthodox women whose clothes are somewhat "hippyish" wear bright and colorful scarves tied in a number of ways. A style of half wig known as a "fall" has become increasingly common in many segments of Modern and Haredi Orthodox communities. It is usually worn either with a hat or headband.

Men, married or not, must cover their heads. The most common head covering is the kippah. This custom, however, does not stem from ideas of modesty, but as a symbol of 'Fear of heaven.'

Conservative and Reform Judaism do not generally require women to wear headcoverings. However, some liberal Conservative synagogues suggest that women, married or not, wear head-coverings similar to those worn by men, and some require it, not for modesty, but as a feminist gesture of egalitarianism.

Female Singing Voice

In Orthodox Judaism men, under at least some circumstances, are not allowed to hear women sing, a prohibition called *kol isha* (Babylonian Talmud Tractate Berachot 24a). This is derived from Song of Solomon 2:14: "Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet ("arev") and your face is beautiful." The Talmud classifies this as *ervah* (literally "nakedness"). The majority view of later interpreters is that this prohibition applies at all times, similarly to other prohibitions classified as *ervah* (Rosh Berachot 3:37, Shulkhan Arukh Even ha-Ezer 21:2). A minority view holds that the prohibition of *kol isha* applies only while reciting a single prayer, Shema Yisrael (based on the opinion of Rav Hai Gaon, cited in Mordechai Berachot 80).

There is debate between the *poskim* (authorities of Jewish law) whether the prohibition applies to a recorded voice, where the singer cannot be seen, where the woman is not known to the man who is listening and where he has never seen her or a picture of her. There are also opinions, following Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, that exclude singing in mixed groups from this prohibition, such as synagogue prayer or dinner-table *Zemiroth* (religious songs), based on the idea that the female voice is not distinctly heard as separate from the group in these cases.

Conservative and Reform Judaism do not have these requirements. Conservative Judaism interprets the relevant passage of the Talmud as expressing a Rabbi's opinion rather than imposing a requirement. Reform Judaism does not regard this traditional law as applicable to modern times.

Touch

In Orthodox Judaism, men and women who are not married and are not closely related are not allowed to touch each other. Examples of relatives that one may touch include parents, grandparents, grandchildren, and one's spouse if not *Nidda*. This prohibition is colloquially called *shmirath negiah* (observance of the laws of touching) or *shomer negiah*. Whether or not children adopted at a young age are included in this prohibition is a matter of dispute and case-by-case decision.

A person who refrains from touching the opposite sex is said to be *shomer negiah*. *Shmirath negiah* applies to touching which is *derech chiba* (related to affection). According to many authorities, quick handshake,

particularly in the context of earning a living in a business setting, may not fall under this category, as opposed to a hug or kiss. However, people who are stringently *shomer negiah* will avoid shaking hands with a member of the opposite sex, even in a business context. It is almost universally observed within the Haredi community and somewhat observed within the Modern Orthodox community where the term originated in recent decades. Conservative and Reform Judaism do not regard these rules as applicable.

Yichud

In Orthodox Judaism, men and women who are not married to each other and are not immediate blood relatives are not allowed to enter into a secluded situation (“yichud”) in a room or in an area that is private for more than several seconds. According to some authorities this applies even between adoptive parents and adoptive children over the age of majority, while others are more lenient with children adopted from a young age. Simply being in a room together alone does not necessarily constitute seclusion. The situation must be private, where no one else is expected to enter. Originally, this prohibition applied only to married women secluded with men other than their husbands, but it was extended to include single woman in the time of King David, when his son Amnon raped Absalom’s sister, Tamar. Conservative and Reform Judaism do not regard these rules as applicable.

Synagogue Services

In Orthodox Judaism, men and women are not allowed to mingle during prayer services, and Orthodox synagogues generally include a divider, called a Mechitza, creating separate men’s and women’s sections. In many synagogues this requirement is fulfilled by having a balcony for the women’s section.

Liberal, Reform, Reconstructionist, and most Conservative congregations do not separate the sexes during services. Masorti, Traditional, and other Traditional/Observant congregations differ individually as to their mechitza practices. Some separate fully, some do not separate, and some have both separate seating and a third, mixed area.

Public Gatherings and Dancing

In Orthodox Judaism, men and women are separated at certain other public religious gatherings, especially where dancing is expected

to take place. While Orthodox Jews agree that mixed dancing is prohibited and dancing requires separation, the extent to which separation is required under other circumstances varies considerably within Orthodox Judaism. Many Haredi authorities require separation at celebratory meals and events such as weddings, although noted Haredi Rabbi Moshe Feinstein holds that such separation is not required (except for the dancing component). Modern Orthodox authorities generally do not require separation except for dancing. Where separation occurs, it often includes setting up a temporary Mechitza (partition).

Conservative and Reform Judaism do not require separation between men and women at religious gatherings.

INTERPRETATIONS

Tzniut is the subject of differing interpretations among various segments of Judaism.

Issues that have received wide interpretation are:

The degree to which a woman's legs must be covered (thickness of tights/stockings/socks as well as different length socks vs. knee-highs vs. thigh-highs)

The principal guiding point is that a Jew should not dress in a way that attracts attention. This does not mean dressing poorly, but neither men nor women should dress in a way that overly emphasises the physical or attracts undue attention.

OBSERVANCES

There are several levels to the observance of physical and personal modesty (*tzniut*) according to Orthodox Judaism as derived from various sources in *halakha*. Observance of these rules varies from aspirational to mandatory to routine across the spectrum of Orthodox stricture and observance.

- Not dwelling on lascivious or immoral thoughts.
- Avoiding staring at members of the opposite sex, particularly at any part of the opposite sex's "private" anatomy.
- Keeping the majority of one's body clothed in respectable clothing.
- Avoiding the company of uncouth individuals or situations where an atmosphere of levity and depravity prevails.
- Avoiding looking at pictures or scenes that will be sexually arousing.

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- Refraining from touching a person of the opposite sex, especially in a lingering arousing manner (shaking hands very quickly in greeting between sexes is a point of dispute, and depends on one's rabbi's halachic decision).
 - Not wearing clothing usually worn by the opposite sex.
 - Not looking at animals or birds copulating.
 - Not erotically hugging or kissing one's spouse in public, or when the wife is a *niddah* ("menstruant" who has not immersed in a mikva).
 - Masturbation by men (*hotza'at zera levatala* – "discharging semen in vain") is not allowed.
 - Sexual relations with anyone of the same gender, with an animal, or with a corpse is forbidden.

CRITICISM

Many feminists argue that these laws focus excessively on women, and claim that Jewish law is pessimistic about (male) human nature. They further argue that in the last several decades, excessive focus on, and objectification of the female form may perversely engender or reflect a greater preoccupation with female sexuality than was previously found in Rabbinic Jewish literature.

From the 1960s to 1980s, this issue became a major topic of conversation within the non-Orthodox Jewish community and many people began to express an interest in practicing some of these observances. Conversely, by the 1980s some within the Orthodox Jewish community debated these issues publicly.

TZEDAKAH

Tzedakah is a Hebrew word most commonly translated as *charity*, though it is based on a root meaning *justice* (*tzedek*). In Judaism, *tzedakah* refers to the religious obligation to perform charity, and philanthropic acts, which Judaism emphasises are important parts of living a sufficiently sacred life; Jewish tradition argues that the second highest form of *tzedakah* is to anonymously give donations to unknown recipients. Unlike philanthropy, which is completely voluntary, *tzedakah* is seen as a religious obligation, which must be performed regardless of financial standing, and must even be performed by the poor; *tzedakah* is considered to be one of the three main acts that grant forgiveness of sin, and the annulment of bad decrees.

IN THE BIBLE

According to the Holiness Code and the Deuteronomic Code of the Torah, farmers should leave the corners of their fields unharvested, and they should not attempt to harvest any left-overs that had been forgotten when they had harvested the majority of a field. On one of the two occasions that this is mentioned by the Holiness Code, it adds that, in vineyards, some grapes should be left ungathered, an argument made also by the Deuteronomic Code; the Deuteronomic Code additionally argues that olive trees should not be beaten on multiple occasions, and whatever remains from the first set of beatings should be left. According to the Holiness Code, these things should be left for the poor and for strangers, while the Deuteronomic Code argues instead that it should be left for widows, strangers, and for paternal orphans.

According to biblical scholars, the biblical prohibitions against total harvest may have originally derived from a belief in a spirit living in the corn, which had to be kept alive, and needed some of the crop to be left for it to live in; similar beliefs in early European culture lead to the construction of corn dollies to protect the spirit of the fields after the harvest.

IN RABBINICAL LITERATURE OF THE CLASSICAL AND MIDDLE AGES

In classical rabbinical literature, it was argued that the biblical regulations concerning left-overs only applied to corn fields, orchards, and vineyards, and not to vegetable gardens; the classical rabbinical writers were much stricter in regard to who could receive the remains. It was stated that the farmer was not permitted to benefit from the gleanings, and was not permitted to discriminate among the poor, nor try to frighten them away with dogs or lions; the farmer was not even allowed to help one of the poor to gather the left-overs. However, it was also argued that the law was only applicable in Canaan, although many classical rabbinical writers who were based in Babylon observed the laws there; it was also seen as only applying to Jewish paupers, but poor non-Jews were allowed to benefit for the sake of civil peace.

Despite the narrowness of the law's interpretation, it was perceived as encouraging charity; giving anonymously to an unknown recipient came to be considered the second highest form of *tzedakah*, since the regulation allows the poor to gather food in a dignified manner, rather than having to beg for it. Maimonides was driven to enumerate the forms of charity, from the greatest to the most weak:

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1. Giving a pauper independence so that he will not have to depend on charity. Maimonides enumerates four forms of this, from the greatest to the weakest:
 - (1) Giving a poor person work.
 - (2) Making a partnership with him or her (this is lower than work, as the recipient might feel he doesn't put enough into the partnership).
 - (3) Giving a loan.
 - (4) Giving a gift.
 2. Giving charity anonymously to an unknown recipient.
 3. Giving charity anonymously to a known recipient.
 4. Giving charity publicly to an unknown recipient.
 5. Giving charity before being asked.
 6. Giving adequately after being asked.
 7. Giving willingly, but inadequately.
 8. Giving unwillingly.

IN PRACTICE

In practice, most Jews carry out *tzedakah* by donating a portion of their income to charitable institutions, or to a needy person that they may encounter; the perception among many modern day Jews is that if donation of this form is not possible, the obligation of *tzedakah* still requires that something is given. Special acts of *tzedakah* are performed on significant days; at weddings, Jewish brides and bridegrooms would traditionally give to charity, to symbolise the sacred character of the marriage; at Passover, a major holiday in Jewish tradition, it is traditional to be welcoming towards hungry strangers, and feed them at the table; at Purim, in Orthodox Judaism, it is considered obligatory for every Jew to give food to two other people, in an amount that would equate to a meal each, for the purpose of increasing the total happiness during the month.

As for the more limited form of *tzedakah* expressed in the biblical laws, namely the leaving of *gleanings* from certain crops, the Shulchan Aruk argues that Jewish farmers are no longer obliged to obey it. Nevertheless, in modern Israel, rabbis of Orthodox Judaism insist that Jews allow *gleanings* to be consumed by the poor and by strangers, during Sabbatical years.

JEWISH ETHICS

Jewish ethics stands at the intersection of Judaism and the Western philosophical tradition of ethics. Like other types of religious ethics, the diverse literature of Jewish ethics primarily aims to answer a broad range of moral questions and, hence, may be classified as a normative ethics. For two millennia, Jewish thought has also grappled with the dynamic interplay between law and ethics. The rich tradition of Rabbinic religious law (known as *halakhah*) addresses numerous problems often associated with ethics, including its semi-permeable relation with duties that are usually not punished under law.

Jewish ethics may be said to originate with the Hebrew Bible, its broad legal injunctions, wisdom narratives and prophetic teachings. Most subsequent Jewish ethical claims may be traced back to the texts, themes and teachings of the written Torah.

In early Rabbinic Judaism, the oral Torah both interprets the Hebrew Bible and delves afresh into many other ethical topics. The best known rabbinic text associated with ethics is the non-legal Mishnah tractate of *Avot* ("forefathers"), popularly translated as "Ethics of the Fathers". Similar ethical teachings are interspersed throughout the more legally-oriented portions of the Mishnah, Talmud and other rabbinic literature. Generally, ethics is a key aspect of non-legal rabbinic literature, known as *aggadah*.

In the medieval period, direct Jewish responses to Greek ethics may be seen in major Rabbinic writings. Notably, Maimonides offers a Jewish interpretation of Aristotle (*e.g.*, *Nicomachean Ethics*), who enters into Jewish discourse through Islamic writings. Maimonides, in turn, influences Thomas Aquinas, a dominant figure in Catholic ethics and the natural law tradition of moral theology. The relevance of natural law to medieval Jewish philosophy is a matter of dispute among scholars.

Medieval and early modern rabbis also created a pietistic tradition of Jewish ethics (see references, below). This ethical tradition was given expression through the mussar literature. The Hebrew term *mussar*, while literally derived from a word meaning "tradition," is usually translated as ethics or morals.

In the modern period, Jewish ethics sprouted many offshoots, partly due to developments in modern ethics and partly due to the formation of Jewish denominations. Trends in modern Jewish normative ethics include:

- The pietistic *mussar* tradition was revived by the Jewish ethics education movement that developed in the 19th century Orthodox Jewish European (Ashkenazi) community. There is a separate article on the Mussar Movement.
- Modern Jewish philosophers have pursued a range of ethical approaches, with varying degrees of reliance upon traditional Jewish sources. Notably, Hermann Cohen authored *Religion of Reason* in the tradition of Kantian ethics. Martin Buber wrote on various ethical and social topics, including the dialogical ethics of his *I and Thou*. Hans Jonas, a student of Martin Heidegger, draws upon phenomenology in his writings on bioethics, technology and responsibility. Emmanuel Levinas sought to distinguish his philosophical and Jewish writings; nevertheless, some scholars are constructing Jewish ethics around his innovative and deeply-Jewish approach. Inspired by both Maimonides and the success of Catholic social ethics, David Novak has promoted a natural law approach to Jewish social ethics. While Jewish feminists are not prominent in ethics *per se*, the principles of feminist ethics arguably play a pivotal role in the ebb and flow of Jewish denominational politics and identity-formation.
- In the liberal tradition, the 19th Century Reform movement promoted the idea of Judaism as “ethical monotheism”. The liberal movements (especially Reform and Reconstructionist) have fostered novel approaches to Jewish ethics. (For example, Eugene Borowitz).
- In 20th Century, Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, Jewish writers typically tackle contemporary ethical, social and political issues by interpreting Rabbinic law (*Halakha*) in responsa (formal opinions). The Reform movement also employs a Rabbinic law approach in its responsa. The dominant topic for such applied ethics has been medical ethics and bioethics.

In terms of descriptive ethics, the study of Jewish moral practices and theory is situated more in the disciplines of history and the social sciences than in *ethics* proper, with some exceptions (*e.g.*, Newman 1998).

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ETHICAL LITERATURE

Rabbinic Jewish works of ethics and moral instruction include:

- *Chovot ha-Levavot* (‘Duties of the Heart’), by Bahya ibn Paquda (11th century). This work discusses ten moral virtues, each the subject of its own chapter.

- *Ma'alot ha-Middot*, Yehiel ben Yekutiel Anav of Rome. This work discusses 24 moral virtues,
- *Orhot Zaddikim* (The Ways of the Righteous) by an anonymous author. The book was probably written in the late 14th century. Original Title: *Sefer ha-Middot* (The Book of Character Traits).
- *Kad ha-Kemah*, Bahya ben Asher, a Spanish kabbalist.
- *Mesillat Yesharim*, Moshe Chaim Luzzatto

JEWISH FAMILY ETHICS

Great stress is laid on reverence for parents. Central to society is the nuclear family. In traditional Judaism, the Jewish family's head is the father; yet the mother, who is an integral part of the family unit, is also entitled to honor and respect at the hands of sons and daughters. In more modern forms and movements within Judaism, the mother and father are considered equal in all things.

Monogamy is the ideal (Gen. ii. 24). Marriage within certain degrees of consanguinity or in relations arising from previous conjugal unions is forbidden; chastity is regarded as of highest moment (Ex. xx. 14; Lev. xviii. 18-20); and abominations to which the Canaanites were addicted are especially loathed.

Virtue is believed to flow from the recognition of God, therefore idolatry is the progenitor of vice and oppression.

The non-Israelite is within the covenant of ethical considerations (Ex. xxii. 20; Lev. xix. 33). "You shall love him as yourself," a law the phraseology of which proves that in the preceding "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18) "neighbour" does not connote an Israelite exclusively. There was to be one law for the native and the stranger (Lev. xix. 34; comp. Ex. xii. 49). Non-Israelites were not forced to follow the Israelite faith. The family plays a central role in Judaism, both socially and in transmitting the traditions of the religion. To honour one's father and mother is one of the Ten Commandments. Jewish families try to have close, respectful family relationships, with care for both the elderly and young. Religious observance is an integral part of home life, including the weekly Sabbath and keeping kosher dietary laws. The Talmud tells parents to teach their children a trade and survival skills, and children are asked to look after their parents.

MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL RELATIONS

Marriage is called *kidushin*, or 'making holy'. To set up a family home is to take part in an institution imbued with holiness. Celibacy

is regarded as wrong because in the Torah (Genesis 2:18 and Isaiah 45:18), God told Jews to multiply. Sex is not considered acceptable outside marriage, but it is an important part of the love and care shown between partners. Sexual relations are forbidden during the time of the woman's period. A week after her period has ended, she will go to the mikveh (the ritual immersion pool) where she will fully immerse herself and become ritually clean again. Sexual relations may then resume. Married couples need to find other ways of expressing their love for each other during these times, and many say that the time of abstention enhances the relationship.

Adultery, incest, and by some interpretations homosexuality are prohibited in the Torah (Leviticus 18:6–23). However, Reform and Liberal Jews accept homosexuality, and homosexuals are not persecuted by Orthodox Jews. Prostitution is forbidden.

ALTRUISTIC VIRTUES

Honesty and *haq* are absolutely pre-requisite. Stealing, flattery, falsehood, perjury and false swearing, oppression, even if only in holding back overnight the hired man's earnings, are forbidden.

The reputation of a fellow man is sacred (Ex. 21:1). Tale-bearing and unkind insinuations are proscribed, as is hatred of one's brother in one's heart (Lev. 19:17). A revengeful, relentless disposition is unethical; reverence for old age is inculcated; justice shall be done; right weight and just measure are demanded; poverty and riches shall not be regarded by the judge (Lev. 19:15, 18, 32, 36; Ex. 23:3).

Even animals have a right to be treated well (Ex. 23:4), even ones that might belong to one's enemy.

PROPHETIC ETHICS

The Biblical prophets exhort all people to lead a righteous life. The ritual elements and sacerdotal institutions incidental to Israel's appointment are regarded as secondary by the preexilic prophets, while the intensely human side is emphasized (Isa. 1:11).

The prophets preached that the people of Israel were chosen by God because of the virtues of the Patriarchs, having been "alone singled out" by God; in this view, choseness means that the Jewish nation's conduct is under more rigid scrutiny (Amos 3:1-2) than other nations. Israel is seen as the "wife" (Hosea), or the "bride" (Jer. 2:2-3) of God; in this view, the laws of Judaism are a covenant of love (Hosea 6:7). This leads to the corollary that idolatry is an adulterous abandoning

of God. From this infidelity proceeds all manner of vice, oppression, untruthfulness. Fidelity, on the other hand, leads to “doing justly and loving mercy” (Micah 6:8).

Kindness to the needy, benevolence, faith, pity to the suffering, a peace-loving disposition, and a truly humble and contrite spirit, are the virtues which the Prophets hold up for emulation. Civic loyalty, even to a foreign ruler, is urged as a duty (Jer. 29:7). “Learn to do good” is the keynote of the prophetic appeal (Isa. 1:17); thus, the end-time will be one of peace and righteousness; war will be no more (Isa. 2:2 et seq.)

ETHICS IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

Hillel the elder formulated the Golden rule of Jewish ethics “What is painful to you, do not do unto others”. (Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a; Midrash Avot de Rabbi Natan.) His contemporary, Akiva states “Whatever you hate to have done unto you, do not do to your neighbour; wherefore do not hurt him; do not speak ill of him; do not reveal his secrets to others; let his honor and his property be as dear to thee as thine own” (Midrash *Avot de Rabbi Natan*.)

Ben Azzai says: “The Torah, by beginning with the book of the generations of man, laid down the great rule for the application of the Law: Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18; Midrash Genesis Rabbah 24)

Rabbi Simlai taught “Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses; then David came and reduced them to eleven in Psalm 15.; Isaiah (33:15), to six; Micah (6:8), to three; Isaiah again (56:1), to two; and Habakkuk (2:4), to one: ‘The just lives by his faithfulness’.”

Jewish ethics denies self-abasement. “He who subjects himself to needless self-castigations and fasting, or even denies himself the enjoyment of wine, is a sinner” (Taanit 11a, 22b). A person has to give account for every lawful enjoyment he refuses (Talmud Yer. 2id. iv. 66d).

Man is in duty bound to preserve his life (Berachot 32b) and his health. Foods dangerous to health are more to be guarded against than those ritually forbidden.

A person should show self-respect in regard to both his body, “honoring it as the image of God” (Hillel: Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 34), and his garments (Talmud Shabbat 113b; Ned. 81a).

One must remove every cause for suspicion in order to appear blameless before men as well as before God (Yoma 38a).

Man is enjoined to take a wife and obtain posterity (Yeb. 63b; Mek., Yitro, 8). "He who lives without a wife lives without joy and blessing, without protection and peace"; he is "not a complete man" (Yeb. 62a, 63a), and for it he has to give reckoning at the great Judgment Day (Shab. 31a).

JUSTICE

Social ethics is defined by Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel's words: "The world rests on three things: justice, truth, and peace" (Avot 1:18). Justice ("din," corresponding to the Biblical "mishpat") being God's must be vindicated, whether the object be of great or small value (Sanh. 8a). "Let justice pierce the mountain" is the characteristic maxim attributed to Moses (Sanh. 6b). They that ridicule Talmudic Judaism for its hair-splitting minutiae overlook the important ethical principles underlying its judicial code.

The Talmud denounces as fraud every mode of taking advantage of a man's ignorance, whether he be Jew or Gentile; every fraudulent dealing, every gain obtained by betting or gambling or by raising the price of breadstuffs through speculation, is theft (B. B. 90b; Sanh. 25b). The Talmud denounces advantages derived from loans of money or of victuals as usury; every breach of promise in commerce is a sin provoking God's punishment; every act of carelessness which exposes men or things to danger and damage is a culpable transgression.

The Talmud extends far beyond Biblical statutes responsibility for every object given into custody of a person or found by him. A rabbi in the Talmud opines that putting one's fellow man to shame, in the same category as murder (B. M. 58b), and brands as calumny the spreading of evil reports, even when true. Also forbidden is listening to slanderous gossip, or the causing of suspicion, or the provoking of unfavorable remarks about a neighbour.

TRUTH, PEACE AND HATRED

"The first question asked at the Last Judgment is whether one has dealt justly with his neighbour" (Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a).

"A good deed brought about by an evil deed is an evil deed" (Suk. 30a).

The Jewish concept of peace, or shalom, is not a passive ideal, but can only be achieved through truth, justice, and mercy. Aaron, the

elder brother of Moses, is regarded as a role model for maintaining peace between individuals. He would go separately to two quarrelling individuals and tell them how much the other wanted to make peace between them.

Jews believe that they should always work for reconciliation, and that the same ethics apply between nations. They believe that war is avoidable if justice prevails, and should be avoided if at all possible. However, defence, particularly of life, home, or belief, is permissible if other attempts at resolution have failed. War fought to build an empire or take revenge on others is strictly forbidden. Jews are expected to treat their enemies with care and thought (Proverbs 25:21, Kings 2 6:21–23).

Peace is everywhere recommended, and urged as the highest boon of man (Midrash Numbers Rabbah xi.; Talmud Pesachim i. 1.) Hatred, quarrelling and anger are condemned as unethical, and potentially leading to murder.

From the thought of a holy God emanated four virtues: (a) Chastity (“tzeniut” = “modesty”), which shuts the eye against unseemly sights and the heart against impure thoughts. Hence R. Meïr’s maxim (Ber. 17a): “Keep your mouth from sin, your body from wrong, and I {God} will be with thee.” (b) Humility. The presence of God rests only upon the humble (Mek., Yitro, 9; Ned. 38), whereas the proud is like one who worships another god and drives God away (Somah 4b). (c) Truthfulness. “Liars, mockers, hypocrites, and slanderers cannot appear before God’s face” (Sotah 42a). (d) Reverence for God. “Fear of God leads to fear of sin” (Ber. 28b), and includes reverence for parents and teachers.

CHARITY

The Jewish idea of righteousness (“tzedakah”) includes benevolence and charity. The owner of property has no right to withhold from the poor their share.

The Rabbis decreed *against* Essene practice, and against advice given in the New Testament, that one give away much, most or all of their possessions. Since they did not expect a supernatural savior to come and take care of the poor, they held that one must not make themselves poor. Given that nearly all Jews of their day were poor or middle-class (even the rich of that time were only rich relative to the poor), they ruled that one should not give away more than a fifth of his income to charity, while yet being obligated to give away no less

than 10 per cent of his income to charity (Ket. 50a; 'Ar. 28a). Many folios of the Talmud are devoted to encouragement in giving charity (see, for example, B.B. 9b-11a; A.Z. 17b; Pes. 8a; Rosh. 4a), and this topic is the focus of many religious books and Rabbinic responsa.

RELATIONSHIP TO NON-JEWS (GENTILES)

Jews are strongly influenced by the exhortation, 'Remember the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt' (Deuteronomy 10:9), especially as this refers to the Exodus celebrated at Passover. Jews are expected to show hospitality to all, and to consider the needs and feelings of anyone who may be marginalised, for whatever reason. In biblical times, the slaves of Jewish people had special rights that preserved their dignity as equal human beings, allowed them freedoms, and forbade mistreatment.

Jews do not actively convert others to Judaism; in fact conversion to Judaism is a lengthy and difficult process. They are respectful of other religions, but cannot actively approve of religions that appear to worship iconic figures, for example, Hinduism.

Jews believe that Gentiles who follow the Noachide code, the minimum ethical and religious requirements for all non-Jews, will be equally recognised by God. The laws of the Noachide code are: worship only one God; do not insult God with blasphemy; do not murder; do not steal; do not commit adultery; do not mistreat animals or cause them pain; live in harmony through just laws.

SANCTIFICATION OF GOD'S NAME

The idea of God's holiness became in Rabbinical ethics one of the most powerful incentives to pure and noble conduct. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. vi. 5) is explained (Sifre, Deut. 32; Yoma 86a) to mean "Act in such a manner that God will be beloved by all His creatures." Consequently a Jew is not only obliged to give his life as witness or martyr for the maintenance of the true faith, but so to conduct himself in every way as to prevent the name of God from being dishonored by non-Israelites.

The greatest sin of fraud, therefore, is that committed against a non-Israelite, because it leads to the reviling of God's name. The desire to sanctify the name of God leads one to treat adherents of other creeds with the utmost fairness and equity.

Respect for one's fellow creatures is of such importance that Biblical prohibitions may be transgressed on its account (Ber. 19b). Especially

do unclaimed dead require respectful burial (see Burial in Jew. Encyc. iii. 432b: "met mi" wah"). Gentiles are to have a share in all the benevolent work of a township which appeals to human sympathy and on which the maintenance of peace among men depends, such as supporting the poor, burying the dead, comforting the mourners, and even visiting the sick (Tosef., Gim. v. 4-5; Gim. 64a).

Friendship is highly prized in the Talmud; the very word for "associate" is "friend" ("chaver"). "Get thyself a companion" (Abot i. 6). "Companionship or death" (Ta'an. 23a).

ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Biblical commands regarding the treatment of the brute (Ex. xx. 10; Lev. xxii. 28; Deut. xxv. 4; Prov. xii. 10) are amplified in Rabbinical ethics, and a special term is coined for Cruelty to Animals ("tza'ar ba'ale hayyim"). Not to sit down to the table before the domestic animals have been fed is a lesson derived from Deut. xi. 15. Compassion for the brute is declared to have been the merit of Moses which made him the shepherd of his people (Ex. R. ii.), while Judah ha-Nasi saw in his own ailment the punishment for having once failed to show compassion for a frightened calf.

Trees and other things of value also come within the scope of Rabbinical ethics, as their destruction is prohibited, according to Deut. xx. 19 (Talmud, tractate Shabbat 105b, 129a, 140b, et al.)

Consideration for animals is an important part of Judaism. It is part of the Noachide code. Resting on the Sabbath also meant providing rest for the working animals, and people are instructed to feed their animals before they sit down to eat. At harvest time, the working animals must not be muzzled, so that they can eat of the harvest as they work. All animals must be kept in adequate conditions. Sports like bullfighting are forbidden. Animals may be eaten as long as they are killed as painlessly and humanely as possible using the method known as shechitah, where the animal is killed by having its throat cut swiftly using a specially sharpened knife. Jewish butchers have a special training in this which must meet the requirements of *kashrut*. Animals may also be used in medical research if it will help people in need, and if the animals do not undergo any unnecessary suffering.

MEDICAL ETHICS AND BIOETHICS

Jewish medical ethics is one of the major spheres of contemporary Jewish ethics. Beginning primarily as an applied ethics based on halakhah,

more recently it has broadened to bioethics, weaving together issues in biology, science, medicine and ethics, philosophy and theology. Jewish bioethicists are usually rabbis who have been trained in medical science and philosophy, but may also be Jewish laypeople experts in medicine and ethics who have received training in Jewish texts. The goal of Jewish medical ethics and bioethics is to use Jewish law and tradition and Jewish ethical thought to determine which medical treatments or technological innovations are moral, when treatments may or may not be used, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Jews believe that God gave people control over the fish, birds, animals, and earth (Genesis 1:26). Genesis 2:15 emphasises that people were put in the world to maintain it and care for it. The Talmud teaches that wasting or destroying anything on earth is wrong. Pollution is an insult to the created world, and it is considered immoral to put commercial concerns before care for God's creation. However, humans are regarded as having a special place in the created order, and their well-being is paramount. Humans are not seen as just another part of the ecosystem, so moral decisions about environmental issues have to take account of the well-being of humans.

MUSSAR MOVEMENT

Mussar movement refers to a Jewish ethical, educational and cultural movement (a "Jewish Moralistic Movement") that developed in 19th century Orthodox Eastern Europe, particularly among the Lithuanian Jews. The Hebrew term *mussar*, while literally derived from a word meaning "tradition," usually refers to Jewish ethics in general.

Mussar is a path of contemplative practices and exercises that have evolved over the past thousand years to help an individual soul to pinpoint and then to break through the barriers that surround and obstruct the flow of inner light in our lives. Mussar is a treasury of techniques and understandings that offers immensely valuable guidance for the journey of our lives.

The Orthodox Jewish community spawned the mussar movement to help people overcome the inner obstacles that hinder them from living up to the laws and commandments—the mitzvot—that form the code of life. That community tends to see mussar as inseparable from its own beliefs and practices, but the human reality mussar addresses is actually universal, and the gifts it offers can be used by all people.

The goal of mussar practice is to release the light of holiness that lives within the soul. The roots of all of our thoughts and actions can be traced to the depths of the soul, beyond the reach of the light of consciousness, and so the methods Mussar provides include meditations, guided contemplations, exercises and chants that are all intended to penetrate down to the darkness of the subconscious, to bring about change right at the root of our nature.

From its origins in the 10th century, mussar was a practice of the solitary seeker, until in the 19th century it became the basis for a popular social/spiritual movement.

FOUNDERS

The Mussar movement arose among the non-Hasidic Orthodox Lithuanian Jews, and became a trend in their yeshivas ("Talmudical schools"). Its founding is attributed to Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin Salanter (1810-1883), who was inspired greatly by the teachings of Reb Zundel Salant, although the roots of the movements can be traced to earlier developments and rabbinic personalities and their writings.

Rabbi Zundel Salant

Rabbi Yosef Zundel Salant (1786-1866) or Zundel Salant was a layman who had studied under Rabbis Chaim Volozhin and Akiva Eiger; he spent most of his life in Salantai, Lithuania. His profoundly ethical, good-hearted and humble behaviour and simple lifestyle attracted the interest of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, then a promising young rabbi with exceptional knowledge of Jewish law. Rabbi Salanter absorbed the ways of Zundel Salant, and became the *de facto* founder of the Mussar movement. After tutoring Rabbi Salanter, Rabbi Yosef Zundel relocated to Jerusalem (then under Turkish rule), where he refused support from public funds and made a living in the vinegar business.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter

After establishing himself as a rabbi of exceptional talent early on, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter soon became head of a yeshivah in Vilna, where he quickly became well-known in the community for his scholarship. He soon resigned this post to open up his own Yeshiva, where he emphasised moral teachings based on the ethics taught in traditional Jewish rabbinic works. He referred to his philosophy as *mussar*, Hebrew for ethics.

Despite the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) Rabbi Salanter set an example for the Lithuanian Jewish

community during the cholera epidemic of 1848. He made certain that any necessary relief work on Shabbat for Jews was done by Jews; some wanted such work to be done on Shabbat by non-Jews, but Rabbi Salanter held that both Jewish ethics and law mandated that the laws of the Sabbath must be put aside in order to save lives. During Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) Rabbi Salanter ordered that Jews that year must not abide by the traditional fast, but instead must eat in order to maintain their health; again for emergency health reasons. By 1850 he left Vilna for Kovno, where he founded a yeshiva based on Mussar, with a student body of 150.

In 1857 he moved to Germany, and by 1860 he began publication of a periodical entitled *Tevunah* dedicated to *mussar*. By 1877 he founded a Kovno kollel (adult education center of Jewish study). By this time his own students had begun to set up their own yeshivot in Volozhin, Kelme, Telz, and Slobodka.

EARLY WORKS OF MUSSAR

Many of Rabbi Salanter's articles from *Tevunah* were collected and published in *Imrei Binah* (1878). His *Iggeret ha-Mussar* ("ethical letter") was first published in 1858 and then repeatedly thereafter. Many of his letters were published in *Or Yisrael*, "The Light of Israel", in 1890 (Edited by Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer.) Many of his discourses were published in *Even Yisrael* (1883).

ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT

This movement began among non-Hasidic Jews as a response to the social changes brought about by The Enlightenment, and the corresponding Haskalah movement among many European Jews. In this period of history anti-Semitism, assimilation of many Jews into Christianity, poverty, and the poor living conditions of many Jews in the Pale of Settlement caused severe tension and disappointment. Many of the institutions of Lithuanian Jewry were beginning to break up. Many religious Jews felt that their way of life was slipping away from them, observance of traditional Jewish law and custom was on the decline, and what they felt was worst of all, many of those who remained loyal to the tradition were losing their emotional connection to the tradition's inner meaning and ethical core.

During this time Rabbi Lipkin wrote "The busy man does evil wherever he turns. His business doing badly, his mind and strength become confounded and subject to the fetters of care and confusion. Therefore appoint a time on the Holy Sabbath to gather together at a

fixed hour... the notables of the city, whom many will follow, for the study of morals. Speak quietly and deliberately without joking or irony, estimate the good traits of man and his faults, how he should be castigated to turn away from the latter and strengthen the former. Do not decide matters at a single glance, divide the good work among you, not taking up much time, not putting on too heavy a burden. Little by little, much will be gathered... In the quiet of reflection, in reasonable deliberation, each will strengthen his fellow and cure the foolishness of his heart and eliminate his lazy habits."

In later years some opposition to the Mussar Movement developed in large segments of the Orthodox community. Many opposed the new educational system that Lipkin set up, and others charged that deviations from traditional methods would lead to assimilation no less surely than the path of classic German Reform Judaism. However, by the end of the 19th century most opposition to Mussar withered away, and it was accepted within much of Orthodoxy.

ETHICAL SOURCES FOR THE MUSSAR MOVEMENT

The teaching of Jewish ethics was based in a primary sense in the ethical teachings of the Torah and the books of the Prophets of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), and was directly based on books written by authors such as Moses ben Jacob Cordovero, and Moshe Chaim Luzzatto.

CLASSICAL JEWISH ETHICAL LITERATURE

The classical Rabbinic Jewish works of ethics and moral instruction, still studied today, include:

- *Chovot ha-Levavot*, by Bahya ibn Paquda (11th century). This work discusses ten moral virtues, each the subject of its own chapter.
- *Ma'alot ha-Middot*, Yehiel ben Yekutiel Anav of Rome. This work discusses 24 moral virtues,
- *Kad ha-Kemah*, Bahya ben Asher, a Spanish kabbalist.
- *Mesillat Yesharim*, Moshe Chaim Luzzatto
- "*Orchos Tzaddikim*" anonymous

Other classic works that show the Mussar Way:

1. "Cheshbon ha-Nefesh (Accounting of the Soul)" by Rabbi Mendel of Satanov (based on Benjamin Franklin's Thirteen Virtues).
2. "Strive for Truth (Michtav me Eliyahu)" by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler

These too are essential Mussar texts available on-line in the English language:

- “Tomer Devorah” (The Palm Tree of Deborah) by Rabbi Moses ben Jacob Cordovero
- “Shaarei Teshuvah” (Igeret HaTeshuva) (The Gates of Repentance) by Rabbi Yonah Gerondi
- “Mesilat Yesharim” (The Path of the Just) by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto
- “The Mussar Letter” of the Vilna Gaon
- “Hilchot Deot” by Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam; Maimonides)
- “Iggeret ha’Mussar” (The Mussar Letter) of Rabbi Israel Salanter (trans. Rabbi Zvi Miller)
- Other books:
 - *Derech Hashem*

JUDEO-PAGANISM

Judeo-Paganism, or Jewish Paganism, is a religious movement that mixes principles of Judaism, Neopaganism and the Kabbalah. Judeo-Pagans explore the origins of the Jewish religion and its ancient neighbours, the religions of the Canaanites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Ugarit folk, and Egyptians.

Judeo-pagan religious groups are generally small, often linked with one another and often organised into “circles”. Many of these “circles” of Judeo-pagans are often discussion groups. Among these groups, common topics of discussion among Jewish Pagans include the historical links between El/Yahweh, Asherah, the Hebrew Goddess, the Kabbalah and Baal, along with their respective cults. The question of Lilith in the Jewish tradition; and the monotheism/pantheism of Judaism. Issues and topics facing both contemporary Judaism and Neopaganism are also discussed.

Judeo-Paganism, like the religion Natib Qadish, is based on the pagan beliefs of the ancient Near East. Natib Qadish emphasises ancient Canaanite beliefs, while Judeo-Paganism is more based on Judaism and the pagan religions. Judeo-Pagans believe that Judaism emerged from among Canaanite beliefs, as well as Eretz Yisrael).

JEWISH TRIBAL IDENTITY

Some might consider “Jewish Pagan” a contradiction in terms, as many define a Pagan as a member of a non-Abrahamic religion (that

is, a religion that is neither Jewish, Christian nor Muslim). However, being a Jew is an issue of tribal identity rather than belief; the child of a Jewish mother, or a non-Jew who converts to Judaism (and therefore joins the Jewish people), is a Jew (a “member of the tribe”) regardless of their beliefs. Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people, and a Jew who adopts a Pagan religion and/or practices Pagan ritual might be considered by mainstream Jews to be in violation of Jewish law, perhaps even a heretic, but is still a Jew nonetheless. One who merely adopts the traditions and beliefs of Judaism without converting is not considered to be a Jew.

HISTORY

Judeo-Paganism is an outgrowth of the New Age and Neopagan movements of the 1970s USA.

Some Jewish Pagan groups, such as the Order of the Temple of Astarte, have been around since the 1970s. It is considered that many Jewish Pagan groups are offshoots of either Reconstructionist Judaism, Neopaganism or both.

AMHA

One Israeli nature-based spiritual group is known as Am Ha Aretz, “Amha” for short, which means “People of the Land”. Like the term pagan, the term “Amha” has a history of being a derogatory term for “uncivilised people”. The “Land” is the land of Israel, which is itself worshipped. Some members of Amha are polytheist, some are mystics and others are animists. They call themselves Hebrews, rather than Jews, to distinguish between Hebrews (pre-exile) and Jews (post exile/ rabbinical traditions). The group considers itself to be reclaiming Hebrew tribal and animist traditions. In the Amha tradition, the gods are “Elohim”, the spirits of warrior ancestors are “Rephaim”, and the land spirits and those ancestor spirits that tie members to the land are “Teraphim”.



24

ANTI-SEMITISM, PHILOSEMINISM AND CRITICISM OF JUDAISM

ANTI-SEMITISM

Anti-semitism (alternatively spelled anti-semitism or anti-Semitism, also known as *judophobia*) is hostility, prejudice, toward Jews as a religious, racial, or ethnic group. This hostility may be manifested in discrimination against individual Jews, or in extreme cases violent attacks on entire communities. While the term's etymology may imply that antisemitism is directed against all Semitic peoples, it is in practice used exclusively to refer to hostility towards Jews.

Instances of antisemitism range from individual hatred to institutionalised, violent persecutions. Extreme instances of persecution include the German Crusade of 1096, the expulsion from England in 1290, the Spanish Inquisition, the expulsion from Spain in 1492, the expulsion from Portugal in 1497, various pogroms, and the most infamous, the Holocaust under Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany.

According to James Carroll, "Jews accounted for 10 per cent of the total population of the Roman Empire. By that ratio, if other factors such as pogroms and conversions had not intervened, there would be 200 million Jews in the world today, instead of something like 13 million."

Accusations of antisemitism also represent a device in argumentation. A recent example is the claim that "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy" is antisemitic.

FORMS

The Catholic historian Edward Flannery distinguished five varieties of antisemitism:

- Political and economic antisemitism, giving as examples Cicero and Charles Lindbergh;
- Theological or religious antisemitism, sometimes known as anti-Judaism;
- Nationalistic antisemitism, citing Voltaire and other Enlightenment thinkers, who attacked Jews for supposedly having certain characteristics, such as greed and arrogance, and for observing customs such as kashrut and shabbat;
- Racial antisemitism, which culminated in the holocaust unleashed by the Nazis.

From the 1990s, some writers have identified a new antisemitism, a form of antisemitism coming simultaneously from the left, the far right, and radical Islam, which tends to focus on opposition to Zionism and a Jewish homeland in the State of Israel, and which may deploy traditional antisemitism motifs. Proponents of the concept argue that anti-Zionism, anti-Americanism, anti-globalisation, third worldism, and demonisation of Israel or double standards applied to its conduct may be linked to antisemitism, or constitute disguised antisemitism.

Critics of the concept argue that it conflates anti-Zionism with antisemitism, defines legitimate criticism of Israel too narrowly and demonisation too broadly, trivialises the meaning of antisemitism, and exploits antisemitism in order to silence debate.

ETYMOLOGY AND USAGE

The term *Semite* refers broadly to speakers of a language group which includes both Arabs and Jews. However, the term *antisemitism* is specifically used in reference to attitudes held towards Jews. The word *antisemitic* (*antisemitische* in German) was probably first used in 1860 by the Austrian Jewish scholar Moritz Steinschneider in the phrase "antisemitic prejudices" (German: "*antisemitische Vorurteile*"). Steinschneider used this phrase to characterize Ernest Renan's ideas about how "Semitic races" were inferior to "Aryan races." These pseudo-scientific theories concerning race, civilisation, and "progress" had become quite widespread in Europe in the second half of the 19th century, especially as Prussian nationalistic historian Heinrich von Treitschke did much to promote this form of racism. In Treitschke's writings *Semitic* was synonymous with *Jewish*, in contrast to its usage by Renan and others.

In 1879 German political agitator Wilhelm Marr used the phrase *Judenhass* (*hatred of Jews*) in his book "*The Victory of Judaism over*

Germanicism. Observed from a non-religious perspective." ("Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum. Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet.") to make hatred of the Jews seem rational and sanctioned by scientific knowledge. In his next book, "*The Way to Victory of Germanicism over Judaism*", published in 1880, Marr developed his ideas further and coined the related German word *Antisemitismus*—*antisemitism*.

The book became very popular, and in the same year he founded the "*League of Antisemites*" ("*Antisemiten-Liga*"), the first German organisation committed specifically to combating the alleged threat to Germany posed by the Jews, and advocating their forced removal from the country.

So far as can be ascertained, the word was first widely printed in 1881, when Marr published "*Zwanglose Antisemitische Hefte*," and Wilhelm Scherer used the term "*Antisemiten*" in the January issue of "*Neue Freie Presse*". The related word *semitism* was coined around 1885. See also the coinage of the term "*Palestinian*" by Germans to refer to ethnic Jews, as distinct from the religion of Judaism.

Despite the use of the prefix "anti," the terms *Semitic* and *anti-Semitic* are not directly opposed to each other (unlike similar-seeming terms such as anti-American or anti-Hellenic). To avoid the confusion of the misnomer, many scholars on the subject (such as Emil Fackenheim) now favour the unhyphenated *antisemitism* in order to emphasize that the word should be read as a single unified term, not as a meaningful root word-prefix combination.

The term *antisemitism* has historically referred to prejudice against Jews alone, and this was the only use of the word for more than a century. It does not traditionally refer to prejudice against other people who speak Semitic languages (e.g. Arabs or Assyrians). Bernard Lewis, Professor of Near Eastern Studies Emeritus at Princeton University, says that "Antisemitism has never anywhere been concerned with anyone but Jews." Yehuda Bauer also articulated this view in his writings and lectures: (the term) "Antisemitism, especially in its hyphenated spelling, is inane nonsense, because there is no Semitism that you can be anti to." A similar point is made by Professor Shmuel Almog, of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who writes "So the hyphen, or rather its omission, conveys a message; if you hyphenate your 'anti-Semitism', you attach some credence to the very foundation on which the whole thing rests."

In recent decades some groups have argued that the term should be extended to include prejudice against Arabs or Anti-Arabism, in the context of answering accusations of Arab antisemitism; further, some, including the Islamic Association of Palestine, have argued that this implies that Arabs cannot, *by definition*, be antisemitic. The argument runs that since the Semitic language family includes Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic languages and the historical term "Semite" refers to all those who consider themselves descendants of the Biblical Shem, "anti-Semitism" should be likewise inclusive. However, this usage is not generally accepted.

Definitions

Though the general definition of anti-semitism is hostility or prejudice against Jews, a number of authorities have developed more formal definitions. Holocaust scholar and City University of New York professor Helen Fein defines it as "a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs towards Jews as a collective manifested in individuals as attitudes, and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore and imagery, and in actions – social or legal discrimination, political mobilisation against the Jews, and collective or state violence—which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews."

Professor Dietz Bering of the University of Cologne further expanded on Professor Fein's definition by describing the structure of anti-semitic beliefs. To antisemites, "Jews are not only partially but totally bad by nature, that is, their bad traits are incorrigible. Because of this bad nature: (1) Jews have to be seen not as individuals but as a collective. (2) Jews remain essentially alien in the surrounding societies. (3) Jews bring disaster on their 'host societies' or on the whole world, they are doing it secretly, therefore the anti-semites feel obliged to unmask the conspiratorial, bad Jewish character."

Bernard Lewis defines antisemitism as a special case of prejudice, hatred, or persecution directed against people who are in some way different from the rest. According to Lewis, anti-semitism is marked by two distinct features: Jews are judged according to a standard different from that applied to others, and they are accused of "cosmic evil." Thus, "it is perfectly possible to hate and even to persecute Jews without necessarily being anti-Semitic" unless this hatred or persecution displays one of the two features specific to anti-semitism.

There have been a number of efforts by international and governmental bodies to define anti-semitism formally. The United States Department of State defines antisemitism in its 2005 Report on

Global Anti-semitism as “hatred toward Jews—individually and as a group—that can be attributed to the Jewish religion and/or ethnicity.”

In 2005, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), a body of the European Union, developed a more detailed discussion: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for ‘why things go wrong’.”

The EUMC then listed “contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere.” These included: “Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Jews; accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group; denying the Holocaust; and accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations. The EUMC also discussed ways in which attacking Israel could be antisemitic, depending on the context, while clarifying that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” (see anti-Zionism below).

Emotionality

Before the extent of the Nazi genocide became widely known and the term “antisemitism” acquired emotional connotations, it was not uncommon for a person to self-identify as an antisemite. In 1879 Wilhelm Marr founded the *Antisemiten-Liga*. In 1895 A.C. Cuza organised the *Alliance Anti-semitique Universelle* in Bucharest. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, Goebbels announced: “The German people is anti-Semitic. It has no desire to have its rights restricted or to be provoked in the future by parasites of the Jewish race.” Yehuda Bauer wrote in 1984: “There are no antisemites in the world... Nobody says, ‘I am antisemitic.’” You cannot, after Hitler. The word has gone out of fashion.”

HISTORY

Ancient World

Examples of antipathy to Jews and Judaism during ancient times are easy to find. There is the story in the Exodus of the Egyptian

Pharaoh ordering all new-born Hebrew boys to be drowned in the Nile. There is also the example of most of the elite of the Kingdom of Judah being forced into Babylonian Exile in 586 BCE (*2 Kings* 25:8-21). And there are examples of Greek rulers desecrating the Temple and banning Jewish religious practices, such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, study of Jewish religious books, etc. Examples may also be found in anti-Jewish riots in Alexandria in the 3rd century BCE. Philo of Alexandria described an attack on Jews in Alexandria in 38 CE in which thousands of Jews died.

Statements exhibiting prejudice towards Jews and their religion can be found in the works of many pagan Greek and Roman writers.

Relationships between the Jewish people and the occupying Roman Empire were at first antagonistic and resulted in several rebellions. According to Suetonius, the Emperor Tiberius expelled from Rome Jews who had gone to live there. The nineteenth century English historian Edward Gibbon identified a more tolerant period beginning in about 160 CE. However, Jews were murdered by the Roman authorities in Bar Kokhba's revolt in the second century.

Accusations of Deicide

Deicide is the killing of a god. The first accusation that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus came in a sermon in 167 CE attributed to Melito of Sardis entitled *Peri Pascha (On the Passover)*. This text blames the Jews for allowing King Herod and Caiaphas to execute Jesus, despite their calling as God's people. It says "you did not know, O Israel, that this one was the firstborn of God". The author does not attribute particular blame to Pontius Pilate, but only mentions that Pilate washed his hands of guilt. The sermon is written in Greek, so does not use the Latin word for deicide, *deicida*. At a time when Christians were widely persecuted, Melito's speech was an appeal to Rome to spare Christians. According to a Latin dictionary, the Latin word *deicidas* was used by the 4th century, by Peter Chrystologus in his sermon number 172.

Persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages

From the 9th century CE the Islamic world imposed dhimmi laws on both Christian and Jewish minorities. The 11th century saw Muslim pogroms against Jews in Spain; those occurred in Cordoba in 1011 and in Granada in 1066. Decrees ordering the destruction of synagogues were enacted in the Middle Ages in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Jews were also forced to convert to Islam or face death in some parts of Yemen, Morocco and Baghdad at certain times.

The Almohads, who had taken control of the Almoravids' Maghribi and Andalusian territories by 1147, far surpassed the Almoravides in fundamentalist outlook, and they treated the *dhimmi*s harshly. Faced with the choice of either death or conversion, many Jews and Christians emigrated. Some, such as the family of Maimonides, fled east to more tolerant Muslim lands, while others went northward to settle in the growing Christian kingdoms.

During the Middle Ages in Europe there was full-scale persecution in many places, with blood libels, expulsions, forced conversions and massacres. A main justification of prejudice against Jews in Europe was religious. Jews were frequently massacred and exiled from various European countries. The persecution hit its first peak during the Crusades. In the First Crusade (1096) flourishing communities on the Rhine and the Danube were utterly destroyed; see German Crusade, 1096. In the Second Crusade (1147) the Jews in France were subject to frequent massacres. The Jews were also subjected to attacks by the Shepherds' Crusades of 1251 and 1320. The Crusades were followed by expulsions, including in 1290, the banishing of all English Jews; in 1396, 1,00,000 Jews were expelled from France; and, in 1421 thousands were expelled from Austria. Many of the expelled Jews fled to Poland.

As the Black Death epidemics devastated Europe in the mid-14th century, annihilating more than half of the population, Jews were used as scapegoats. Rumors spread that they caused the disease by deliberately poisoning wells. Hundreds of Jewish communities were destroyed by violence. Although the Pope Clement VI tried to protect them by the July 6, 1348 papal bull and another 1348 bull, several months later, 900 Jews were burnt alive in Strasbourg, where the plague hadn't yet affected the city.

Continuing Accusations of Deicide

Though not part of Roman Catholic dogma, many Christians, including members of the clergy, held the Jewish people collectively responsible for killing Jesus. According to this interpretation, both the Jews present at Jesus' death and the Jewish people collectively and for all time had committed the sin of deicide, or God-killing.

Seventeenth Century

During the mid-to-late 17th century the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was devastated by several conflicts, in which the

Commonwealth lost over a third of its population (over 3 million people), and Jewish losses were counted in hundreds of thousands. First, the Chmielnicki Uprising when Bohdan Khmelnytsky's Cossacks massacred tens of thousands of Jews in the eastern and southern areas he controlled (today's Ukraine). The precise number of dead may never be known, but the decrease of the Jewish population during that period is estimated at 1,00,000 to 2,00,000, which also includes emigration, deaths from diseases and *jasyr* (captivity in the Ottoman Empire).

Eighteenth Century

In 1744, Frederick II of Prussia limited the number of Jews allowed to live in Breslau to only ten so-called "protected" Jewish families and encouraged a similar practice in other Prussian cities. In 1750 he issued the *Revidiertes General Privilegium und Reglement vor die Judenschaft*: the "protected" Jews had an alternative to "either abstain from marriage or leave Berlin" (quoting Simon Dubnow). In the same year, Archduchess of Austria Maria Theresa ordered Jews out of Bohemia but soon reversed her position, on the condition that Jews pay for their readmission every ten years. This extortion was known as *malke-geld* (queen's money). In 1752 she introduced the law limiting each Jewish family to one son. In 1782, Joseph II abolished most of these persecution practices in his *Toleranzpatent*, on the condition that Yiddish and Hebrew were eliminated from public records and that judicial autonomy was annulled. Moses Mendelssohn wrote that "Such a tolerance... is even more dangerous play in tolerance than open persecution".

Nineteenth Century

Historian Martin Gilbert writes that it was in the 19th century that the position of Jews worsened in Muslim countries.

There was a massacre of Jews in Baghdad in 1828. In 1839, in the eastern Persian city of Meshed, a mob burst into the Jewish Quarter, burned the synagogue, and destroyed the Torah scrolls. It was only by forcible conversion that a massacre was averted. There was another massacre in Barfurush in 1867.

In the middle of the 19th century, J. J. Benjamin wrote about the life of Persian Jews:

"...they are obliged to live in a separate part of town...; for they are considered as unclean creatures... Under the pretext of their being unclean, they are treated with the greatest severity and should they enter a street, inhabited by

Mussulmans, they are pelted by the boys and mobs with stones and dirt... For the same reason, they are prohibited to go out when it rains; for it is said the rain would wash dirt off them, which would sully the feet of the Mussulmans... If a Jew is recognised as such in the streets, he is subjected to the greatest insults. The passers-by spit in his face, and sometimes beat him... unmercifully... If a Jew enters a shop for anything, he is forbidden to inspect the goods... Should his hand incautiously touch the goods, he must take them at any price the seller chooses to ask for them... Sometimes the Persians intrude into the dwellings of the Jews and take possession of whatever please them. Should the owner make the least opposition in defense of his property, he incurs the danger of atoning for it with his life... If... a Jew shows himself in the street during the three days of the Katel (Muharram)..., he is sure to be murdered."

In 1840, the Jews of Damascus were falsely accused of having murdered a Christian monk and his Muslim servant and of having used their blood to bake Passover bread. A Jewish barber was tortured until he "confessed"; two other Jews who were arrested died under torture, while a third converted to Islam to save his life. Throughout the 1860s, the Jews of Libya were subjected to what Gilbert calls punitive taxation. In 1864, around 500 Jews were killed in Marrakech and Fez in Morocco. In 1869, 18 Jews were killed in Tunis, and an Arab mob looted Jewish homes and stores, and burned synagogues, on Jerba Island. In 1875, 20 Jews were killed by a mob in Demnat, Morocco; elsewhere in Morocco, Jews were attacked and killed in the streets in broad daylight. In 1891, the leading Muslims in Jerusalem asked the Ottoman authorities in Constantinople to prohibit the entry of Jews arriving from Russia. In 1897, synagogues were ransacked and Jews were murdered in Tripolitania.

Benny Morris writes that one symbol of Jewish degradation was the phenomenon of stone-throwing at Jews by Muslim children. Morris quotes a 19th century traveler: "I have seen a little fellow of six years old, with a troop of fat toddlers of only three and four, teaching [them] to throw stones at a Jew, and one little urchin would, with the greatest coolness, waddle up to the man and literally spit upon his Jewish gaberdine. To all this the Jew is obliged to submit; it would be more than his life was worth to offer to strike a Mahammedan."

During the American Civil War Major General Ulysses S. Grant issued an order (quickly rescinded by President Abraham Lincoln) expelling Jews from areas under his control:

The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department orders, are hereby expelled ...within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order.

Grant later issued an order “that no Jews are to be permitted to travel on the road southward.” His aide, Colonel John V. DuBois, ordered “all cotton speculators, Jews, and all vagabonds with no honest means of support”, to leave the district. “The Israelites especially should be kept out...they are such an intolerable nuisance.” Nevertheless, when he ran for President in the election of 1868, Grant was able to carry the Jewish vote and appointed several Jews.

Some Jewish traders were forced to relocate forty miles. In Paducah, Kentucky, military officials gave the town’s thirty Jewish families — all long-term residents, none of them speculators and at least two of them Union Army veterans—24 hours to leave. A group of Paducah’s Jewish merchants successfully appealed in person to Lincoln two days after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect.

Twentieth Century

In the first half of the twentieth century, in the USA, Jews were discriminated against in employment, access to residential and resort areas, membership in clubs and organisations, and in tightened quotas on Jewish enrolment and teaching positions in colleges and universities. The Leo Frank lynching by a mob of prominent citizens in Marietta, Georgia in 1915 turned the spotlight on antisemitism in the United States and led to the founding of the Anti-Defamation League. The case was also used to build support for the renewal of the Ku Klux Klan which had been inactive since 1870.

Antisemitism in America reached its peak during the interwar period. The pioneer automobile manufacturer Henry Ford propagated antisemitic ideas in his newspaper *The Dearborn Independent*. The radio speeches of Father Coughlin in the late 1930s attacked Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal and the notion of a Jewish financial conspiracy. Such views were also shared by some prominent politicians; Louis T. McFadden, Chairman of the United States House Committee on Banking and Currency, blamed Jews for president Roosevelt’s decision to abandon the gold standard, and claimed that “in the United States today, the Gentiles have the slips of paper while the Jews have the lawful money.”

In the 1940s the aviator Charles Lindbergh and many prominent Americans led The America First Committee in opposing any involvement in the war against Fascism. During his July 1936 visit he wrote letters saying that there was “more intelligent leadership in Germany than is generally recognised.”

“While I still have my reservations, I have come away with great admiration for the German people... Hitler must have far more vision and character than I thought...With all the things we criticize he is undoubtedly a great man.... He is a fanatic in many ways and anyone can see there is fanaticism in Germany today.... On the other hand, Hitler has accomplished results (good and bad), which could hardly have been accomplished without some fanaticism.”

America First avoided any appearance of antisemitism and voted to drop Henry Ford as a member for the same reason. Ford continued his good friendship with Lindbergh. Lindbergh visited Ford in the summer of 1941. “One month later; Lindbergh gave a speech in Des Moines, Iowa in which he expressed the decidedly Ford-like view that, ‘The three most important groups which have been pressing this country towards war are the British, the Jews, and the Roosevelt Administration.’” In an expurgated portion of his published diaries Lindbergh wrote: “We must limit to a reasonable amount the Jewish influence....Whenever the Jewish percentage of the total population becomes too high, a reaction seems to invariably occur. It is too bad because a few Jews of the right type are, I believe, an asset to any country.”

The German American Bund held parades in New York City during the late 1930s where Nazi uniforms were worn and flags featuring swastikas were raised along side American flags. The zenith of the Bund’s history occurred at Madison Square Garden in 1939. Some 20,000 people heard Bund leader Fritz Kuhn criticize President Franklin Delano Roosevelt by repeatedly referring to him as “Frank D. Rosenfeld”, calling his New Deal the “Jew Deal”, and espousing his belief in the existence of a Bolshevik-Jewish conspiracy in America. The New York district attorney prosecuted Kuhn. The US House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was very active in denying the Bund’s ability to operate. With the start of US involvement in World War II most of the Bund’s members were placed in internment camps, and some were deported at the end of the war.

Sometimes, during race riots, as in Detroit in 1943, Jewish businesses were targeted for looting and burning. Of course, the Holocaust in Europe is one of the most prominent examples of antisemitism. Six million Jews, along with five million in other groups targeted by the Nazis were killed.

This is seen by many as the culmination of generations of antisemitism in Europe.

Antisemitism was commonly used as an instrument for personal conflicts in Soviet Russia, starting from conflict between Stalin and Trotsky (“Jews are trotskists, trotskists are Jews”) and continuing through numerous conspiracy theories spread by official propaganda. Department IV of NKVD was called “Jewsekcia” for its activity in “cleansing” party structures from Jews. Antisemitism in USSR reached its peak after 1948 during “rootless cosmopolitan” hatred campaign, when several hundreds of yidish-writing poets, writers, painters and sculptors were killed.

After the war, the Kielce pogrom and “March 1968 events” in communist Poland represented a further incidents of antisemitism in Europe. The common theme behind the anti-Jewish violence in the post-war Poland were blood libel rumours.

The cult of Simon of Trent was disbanded in 1965 by Pope Paul VI, and the shrine erected to him was dismantled. He was removed from the calendar, and his future veneration was forbidden, though a handful of extremists still promote the narrative as a fact. In the 20th century, the Beilis Trial in Russia represented incidents of blood libel in Europe. Unproven rumours of Jews killing Christians were used as justification for killing of Jews by Christians.

In the late twentieth century there were allegations of antisemitism against certain prominent American politicians. In 1981 the Senator Ernest Hollings referred to fellow Democrat Howard Metzenbaum as the “Senator from B’nai Brith” on the floor of the Senate. In the context of the first US-Iraq war, on September 15, 1990 Pat Buchanan appeared on the McLaughlin Group and said that “there are only two groups that are beating the drums for war in the Middle East—the Israeli defense ministry and its ‘amen corner’ in the United States.” He also said, “The Israelis want this war desperately because they want the United States to destroy the Iraqi war machine. They want us to finish them off. They don’t care about our relations with the Arab world.” When he delivered a keynote address at the 1992 Republican National Convention, known as the culture war speech, he described “a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America”.

The Crown Heights riots of 1991 were a violent expression of tensions within a very poor urban community. They pitted African American residents against followers of Hassidic Judaism.

RELIGIOUS ANTISEMITISM

Religious antisemitism is also known as anti-Judaism. As the name implies, it was the practice of Judaism itself that was the defining

characteristic of the antisemitic attacks. Under this version of antisemitism, attacks would often stop if Jews stopped practising or changed their public faith, especially by conversion to the “official” or “right” religion, and sometimes, liturgical exclusion of Jewish converts (the case of Christianised *Marranos* or Iberian Jews in the late 15th and 16th centuries convicted of secretly practising Judaism or Jewish customs).

Jews have lived as a religious minority in Christian and Muslim lands since the Roman Empire became Christian. Christianity and Islam have both portrayed Jews as those who rejected God’s truth. Christians and Muslims have, over the centuries, alternately lived in peace with Jews and persecuted them.

Christian World

New Testament and Anti-Judaism

The New Testament is a collection of religious books and letters written by various authors. These writings, together with the Hebrew Bible (commonly known to Christians as the “Old Testament”) are the foundation documents of the Christian faith. Most of this collection was written by the end of the first century. The majority of the New Testament was written by Jews who became followers of Jesus, and all but two books (Luke and Acts) are traditionally attributed to such Jewish followers. Nevertheless, there are a number of passages in the New Testament that some see as antisemitic, or have been used for antisemitic purposes, most notably:

Jesus speaking to a group of Pharisees: “I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.” They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do what Abraham did.... You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is you are not of God.” (John 8:37-39, John 8:44-47)

Stephen speaking before a synagogue council just before his execution: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always

resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.” (Acts 7:51-53, RSV)

“Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you.” (Revelation 3:9, RSV).

Some biblical scholars point out that Jesus and Stephen are presented as Jews speaking to other Jews, and that their use of broad accusation against Israel is borrowed from Moses and the later Jewish prophets (*e.g.* Deuteronomy 9:12-14; Deuteronomy 31:27-29; Deuteronomy 32:5, Deuteronomy 32:20-21; 2 Kings 17:13-14; Isaiah 1:4; Deuteronomy 9:12-14 Hosea q:12-149; Hosea 10:9). Jesus once calls his own disciple Peter ‘Satan’ (Mark 8:33). Other scholars hold that verses like these reflect the Jewish-Christian tensions that were emerging in the late first or early second century, and do not originate with Jesus.

Drawing from the Jewish Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34), the New Testament taught that with the death of Jesus a new covenant was established which rendered obsolete and in many respects superseded the first covenant established by Moses (Hebrews 8:7-13; Luke 22:20). Observance of the earlier covenant traditionally characterises Judaism. This New Testament teaching, and later variations to it, are part of what is called supersessionism. However, the early Jewish followers of Jesus continued to practice circumcision and observe dietary laws, which is why the failure to observe these laws by the first Gentile Christians became a matter of controversy and dispute some years after Jesus’ death (Acts 11:3; Acts 15:1; Acts 16:3).

The New Testament holds that Jesus’ (Jewish) disciple Judas Iscariot (Mark 14:43-46), the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate along with Roman forces (John 19:11; Acts 4:27) and Jewish leaders and people of Jerusalem were (to varying degrees) responsible for the death of Jesus (Acts 13:27) Diaspora Jews are not blamed for events which were outside their control.

After Jesus’ death, the New Testament portrays the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem as hostile to Jesus’ followers, and as occasionally using force against them. Stephen is executed by stoning (Acts 7:58). Before his conversion, Saul puts followers of Jesus in prison (Acts 8:3; Galatians 1:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:13). After his conversion, Saul is whipped

at various times by Jewish authorities (2 Corinthians 11:24), and is accused by Jewish authorities before Roman courts (*e.g.*, Acts 25:6-7). However, opposition from Gentiles is also cited repeatedly (2 Corinthians 11:26; Acts 16:19; Acts 19:23). More generally, there are widespread references in the New Testament to suffering experienced by Jesus' followers at the hands of others (Romans 8:35; 1 Corinthians 4:11; Galatians 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 10:32; 1 Peter 4:16; Revelation 20:4).

See Joseph Atwill's interview on the The Roots of Anti-Semitism.

Early Christianity

A number of early and influential Church works—such as the dialogues of Justin Martyr, the homilies of John Chrysostom, and the testimonies of church father Cyprian—are strongly anti-Jewish.

During a discussion on the celebration of Easter during the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, Roman emperor Constantine said,

...it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. (...) Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way.

Prejudice against Jews in the Roman Empire was formalised in 438, when the *Code of Theodosius II* established Roman Catholic Christianity as the only legal religion in the Roman Empire. The Justinian Code a century later stripped Jews of many of their rights, and Church councils throughout the sixth and seventh century, including the Council of Orleans, further enforced anti-Jewish provisions. These restrictions began as early as 305, when, in Elvira, (now Granada), a Spanish town in Andalusia, the first known laws of any church council against Jews appeared. Christian women were forbidden to marry Jews unless the Jew first converted to Catholicism. Jews were forbidden to extend hospitality to Catholics. Jews could not keep Catholic Christian concubines and were forbidden to bless the fields of Catholics. In 589, in Catholic Spain, the Third Council of Toledo ordered that children born of marriage between Jews and Catholic be baptized by force. By the Twelfth Council of Toledo (681) a policy of forced conversion of all Jews was initiated (*Liber Judicum*, II.2 as given in Roth). Thousands fled, and thousands of others converted to Roman Catholicism.

Europe (Middle Ages)

Antisemitism was widespread in Europe during the Middle Ages. In those times, a main cause of prejudice against Jews in Europe was the religious one. Although not part of Roman Catholic dogma, many Christians, including members of the clergy, held the Jewish people collectively responsible for the death of Jesus, a practice originated by Melito of Sardis. Among socio-economic factors were restrictions by the authorities. Local rulers and church officials closed the doors for many professions to the Jews, pushing them into occupations considered socially inferior such as accounting, rent-collecting and moneylending, which was tolerated then as a "necessary evil". During the Black Death, Jews were accused as being the cause, and were often killed. There were expulsions of Jews from England, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain during the Middle Ages as a result of antisemitism.

German for "Jews' sow", *Judensau* was the derogatory and dehumanizing imagery of Jews that appeared around the 13th century. Its popularity lasted for over 600 years and was revived by the Nazis. The Jews, typically portrayed in obscene contact with unclean animals such as pigs or owls or representing a devil, appeared on cathedral or church ceilings, pillars, utensils, etchings, etc. Often, the images combined several antisemitic motifs and included derisive prose or poetry.

"Dozens of Judensaus... intersect with the portrayal of the Jew as a Christ killer. Various illustrations of the murder of Simon of Trent blended images of Judensau, the devil, the murder of little Simon himself, and the Crucifixion. In the seventeenth-century engraving from Frankfurt... a well-dressed, very contemporary-looking Jew has mounted the sow backward and holds her tail, while a second Jew sucks at her milk and a third eats her feces. The horned devil, himself wearing a Jewish badge, looks on and the butchered Simon, splayed as if on a cross, appears on a panel above."

In Shakespeare's "*Merchant of Venice*," considered to be one of the greatest romantic comedies of all time, the villain Shylock was a Jewish moneylender. By the end of the play he is mocked on the streets after his daughter elopes with a Christian. Shylock, then, compulsorily converts to Christianity as a part of a deal gone wrong. This has raised profound implications regarding Shakespeare and antisemitism.

During the Middle Ages, the story of Jephonias, the Jew who tried to overturn Mary's funeral bier, changed from his converting to Christianity into his simply having his hands cut off by an angel.

On many occasions, Jews were subjected to blood libels, false accusations of drinking the blood of Christian children in mockery of the Christian Eucharist. Jews were subject to a wide range of legal restrictions throughout the Middle Ages, some of which lasted until the end of the 19th century. Jews were excluded from many trades, the occupations varying with place and time, and determined by the influence of various non-Jewish competing interests. Often Jews were barred from all occupations but money-lending and peddling, with even these at times forbidden.

19th and 20th Centuries (Catholicism)

Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, the Roman Catholic Church still incorporated strong antisemitic elements, despite increasing attempts to separate anti-Judaism, the opposition to the Jewish religion on religious grounds, and racial antisemitism. Pope Pius VII (1800-1823) had the walls of the Jewish Ghetto in Rome rebuilt after the Jews were released by Napoleon, and Jews were restricted to the Ghetto through the end of the Papal States in 1870.

Additionally, official organisations such as the Jesuits banned candidates “who are descended from the Jewish race unless it is clear that their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather have belonged to the Catholic Church” until 1946. Brown University historian David Kertzer, working from the Vatican archive, has further argued in his book *The Popes Against the Jews* that in the 19th and early 20th centuries the Roman Catholic Church adhered to a distinction between “good antisemitism” and “bad antisemitism”. The “bad” kind promoted hatred of Jews because of their descent. This was considered un-Christian because the Christian message was intended for all of humanity regardless of ethnicity; anyone could become a Christian.

The “good” kind criticised alleged Jewish conspiracies to control newspapers, banks, and other institutions, to care only about accumulation of wealth, etc. Many Catholic bishops wrote articles criticising Jews on such grounds, and, when accused of promoting hatred of Jews, would remind people that they condemned the “bad” kind of antisemitism. Kertzer’s work is not, therefore, without critics; scholar of Jewish-Christian relations Rabbi David G. Dalin, for example, criticised Kertzer in the *Weekly Standard* for using evidence selectively. The Second Vatican Council, the *Nostra Aetate* document, and the efforts of Pope John Paul II have helped reconcile Jews and Catholicism in recent decades, however. The controversial document *Dabru Emet*

was issued by many American Jewish scholars in 2000 as a statement about Jewish-Christian relations. This document says,

“Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity.”

The Christian Social Party of Austria had the backing of the Catholic institution. The serpent is red, the colour of socialism, and is wearing a Kippah.

Passion Plays

Passion plays, dramatic stagings representing the trial and death of Jesus, have historically been used in remembrance of Jesus' death during Lent. These plays historically blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus in a polemical fashion, depicting a crowd of Jewish people condemning Jesus to crucifixion and a Jewish leader assuming eternal collective guilt for the crowd for the murder of Jesus, which, *The Boston Globe* explains, “for centuries prompted vicious attacks—or pogroms—on Europe's Jewish communities”. *Time* magazine in its article, *The Problem With Passion*, explains that “such passages (are) highly subject to interpretation”.

Although modern scholars interpret the “blood on our children” (Matthew 27:25) as “a specific group's oath of responsibility” some audiences have historically interpreted it as “an assumption of eternal, racial guilt”. This last interpretation has often incited violence against Jews; according to the Anti-Defamation League, “Passion plays historically unleashed the torrents of hatred aimed at the Jews, who always were depicted as being in partnership with the devil and the reason for Jesus' death”. The *Christian Science Monitor*, in its article, *Capturing the Passion*, explains that “historically, productions have reflected negative images of Jews and the long-time church teaching that the Jewish people were collectively responsible for Jesus' death.

Violence against Jews as ‘Christ-killers’ often flared in their wake. *Christianity Today* in *Why some Jews fear The Passion (of the Christ)* observed that “Outbreaks of Christian antisemitism related to the Passion narrative have been...numerous and destructive.” The Religion Newswriters Association observed that

“in Easter 2001, three incidents made national headlines and renewed their fears. One was a column by Paul Weyrich, a conservative Christian

leader and head of the Free Congress Foundation, who argued that “Christ was crucified by the Jews.” Another was sparked by comments from the NBA point guard and born-again Christian Charlie Ward, who said in an interview that Jews were persecuting Christians and that Jews “had his [Jesus’] blood on their hands.” Finally, the evangelical Christian comic strip artist Johnny Hart published a B.C. strip that showed a menorah disintegrating until it became a cross, with each panel featuring the last words of Jesus, including “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

In 1988, the Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatisations of the Passion*, in order to ensure that Passion Plays adhere to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the Pontifical Biblical Commission as expressed in *Nostra Aetate* no. 4 (October 28, 1965). These criteria were summarised for the Archdiocese of Boston as:

- The over-riding pre-occupation of any dramatisation of the Passion must be, in the words of Ellis Rivkin, not who killed Christ, but what killed Christ, namely, our sins.
- Those scripting a Passion play must use the best available biblical scholarship to elucidate the gospel texts which were not written to preserve historical facts so much as to proclaim the saving truth about Jesus.
- Harmonizing the four accounts of Jesus’ Passion—*i.e.* constructing a single story of the Passion by combining elements from the four gospel versions—risks violating the integrity of the texts, each of which offers a distinct theological interpretation of Jesus’ death.
- Because of the nature of the gospels, the choice of what gospel passages to use in the making of a Passion play must be guided by the Church’s teaching that “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God as if this followed from Sacred Scripture” (*Nostra Aetate* 4). The claim that a passage is “in the Bible” does not suffice to justify its inclusion.
- As ignorance of Judaism often leads to misinterpretation of events, the complexity of the Jewish world of Jesus must be carefully researched and correctly represented; *e.g.*, it is important to know that the high priest was appointed by the Roman procurator.
- Crowd scenes must represent this rich diversity and reflect a range of responses to Jesus among the crowd as among their leaders.

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- The Jewishness of Jesus and his followers must be taken seriously. They must be portrayed as Jews among Jews and not set apart by means of costuming or makeup.
 - Stereotypes of Jews and Judaism (e.g. depicting Jews as avaricious) must be avoided. [This is especially important in portraying Judas, whose name means Jew, and who is given money for betraying Jesus.]
 - The Pharisees are not mentioned in the gospel accounts of Jesus' Passion and therefore should not be depicted as responsible for his death. The Jews most directly implicated in the death of Jesus are the Temple priests.
 - Roman soldiers should be on stage throughout the play to keep before the audience the pervasive and oppressive reality of Roman occupation.
 - Problematic passages, like Matthew's "his blood be on us and on our children" (27:25), that can be misconstrued as blaming all Jews of all time for the death of Jesus, should be omitted. As a general rule in these cases, the Bishops suggest that "if one cannot show beyond reasonable doubt that the particular gospel element selected or paraphrased will not be offensive or have the potential for negative influence on the audience for whom the presentation is intended, the element cannot, in good conscience, be used" ("Criteria," p. 12).

On January 6, 2004, the Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America similarly issued a statement urging any Lutheran church presenting a Passion Play to adhere to their *Guidelines for Lutheran-Jewish Relations*, stating that "the New Testament... must not be used as justification for hostility towards present-day Jews," and that "blame for the death of Jesus should not be attributed to Judaism or the Jewish people."

In 2003 and 2004 some compared Mel Gibson's recent film *The Passion of the Christ* to these kinds of passion plays, but this characterisation is hotly disputed; an analysis of that topic is in the article on The Passion of the Christ. Despite such fears, there have been no publicised antisemitic incidents directly attributable to the movie's influence. However, the film's reputation for antisemitism led to the movie being distributed and well-received throughout the Muslim world, even in nations that typically suppress public expressions of Christianity.

Muslim World

Context

Various definitions of Antisemitism in the context of Islam are given. The extent of antisemitism among Muslims varies depending on the chosen definition:

- Scholars like Claude Cahen and Shelomo Dov Goitein define it to be the animosity specifically applied to Jews only and do not include discriminations practiced against Non-Muslims in general. For these scholars, antisemitism in Medieval Islam has been local and sporadic rather than general and endemic [Shelomo Dov Goitein], not at all present [Claude Cahen], or rarely present.
- According to Bernard Lewis, antisemitism is marked by two distinct features: Jews are judged according to a standard different from that applied to others, and they are accused of “cosmic evil.” For Lewis, from the late nineteenth century, movements appear among Muslims of which for the first time one can legitimately use the term anti-semitic.

Jews in Islamic Texts

Leon Poliakov, Walter Laqueur, and Jane Gerber, suggest that passages in the Qur’an contain attacks on Jews for their refusal to recognize Muhammad as a Prophet of God. “The Qur’an is engaged mainly in dealing with the sinners among the Jews and the attack on them is shaped according to models that one encounters in the New Testament.” Muhammad had also friends among Jews and there are also Qur’anic verses showing respect for the Jews (*e.g.* see Qur’an 2:47, Qur’an 2:62) and preaching tolerance (*e.g.* see Qur’an 2:256). The Qur’an differentiates between “good and bad” Jews, Poliakov states. Laqueur argues that the conflicting statements about Jews in the Muslim holy text has defined Arab and Muslim attitude towards Jews to this day, especially during periods of rising Islamic fundamentalism.

During Muhammad’s life, Jews lived in the Arabian Peninsula, especially in and around Medina. They refused to accept Muhammad’s teachings and mocked him. According to F.E. Peters, they also began to secretly connive with Muhammad’s enemies in Mecca to overthrow him (despite having signed a peace treaty). After each major battle, Muhammad accused one of the Jewish tribes of treachery and attacked it. Two Jewish tribes were expelled and the last one was wiped out. Samuel Rosenblatt states that these incidents were not part of policies directed exclusively against Jews, and that Muhammad was more severe with his pagan Arab kinsmen than foreigner monotheists.

The words “humility” and “humiliation” occur frequently in the Qur’an and later Muslim literature in relation to Jews. According to Lewis, “This, in Islamic view, is their just punishment for their past rebelliousness, and is manifested in their present impotence between the mighty powers of Christendom and Islam.”

The standard Qur’anic reference to Jews is verse [Qur’an 2:61]: “And remember ye said: “O Moses! we cannot endure one kind of food (always); so beseech thy Lord for us to produce for us of what the earth groweth, -its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, Its garlic, lentils, and onions.” He said: “Will ye exchange the better for the worse? Go ye down to any town, and ye shall find what ye want!” They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah. This because they went on rejecting the Signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause. This because they rebelled and went on transgressing.”

Cowardice, greed, and chicanery are but a few of the characteristics that the Qur’an ascribes to the Jews. The Qur’an further associates Jews with interconfessional strife and rivalry (Qur’an [Qur’an 2:113]). It claims that Jews believe that they alone are beloved of God (Qur’an [Qur’an]) and that only they will achieve salvation.([Qur’an 2:111]) According to the Qur’an, Jews blasphemously claim that Ezra is the son of God, as Christians claim Jesus is, (Qur’an [Qur’an 9:30]) and that God’s hand is fettered. (Qur’an [Qur’an 5:64]) Together with the pagans, Jews are, “the most vehement of men in enmity to those who believe”. (Qur’an [Qur’an 5:82]) Some of those who are Jews, “pervert words from their meanings”, (Qur’an [Qur’an 4:44]) have committed wrongdoing, for which God has “forbidden some good things that were previously permitted them”, (Qur’an [Qur’an 4:160]) they listen for the sake of mendacity,(Qur’an [Qur’an 5:41]) and some of them have committed usury and will receive “a painful doom.” (Qur’an [Qur’an 4:161]) The Qur’an gives credence to the Christian claim of Jews scheming against Jesus, “...but God also schemed, and God is the best of schemers.”(Qur’an [Qur’an 3:54]) In the Muslim view, the crucifixion of Jesus was an illusion, and thus the Jewish plots against him ended in complete failure.

In numerous verses ([Qur’an 3:63]; [Qur’an 3:71]; [Qur’an 4:46]; [Qur’an 4:160-161]; [Qur’an 5:41-44], [Qur’an 5:63-64], [Qur’an 5:82]; [Qur’an 6:92]) the Qur’an accuses Jews of deliberately obscuring and perverting scripture.

The traditional biographies of Muhammad recount the expulsion of the Jewish tribes of Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nadir from Medina, the massacre of Banu Qurayza, and Muhammad's attack on the Jews of Khaybar. The rabbis of Medina are singled out as "men whose malice and enmity was aimed at the Apostle of God [*i.e.*, Muhammad]". Jews appear in the biographies of Muhammad not only as malicious, but also deceitful, cowardly, and totally lacking in resolve. Their ignominy is presented in marked contrast to Muslim heroism, and in general conforms to the Qur'anic image of people with "wretchedness and baseness stamped upon them". (Qur'an [Qur'an 2:61])

According to one hadith: "He who wrongs a Jew or Christian will have myself as his indicter on the Day of Judgment." Another hadith says: "A Jew will not be found alone with a Muslim without plotting to kill him." According to another hadith, Muhammad said: "The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say. "O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'" (Sahih Bukhari 4:52:177) This hadith has been quoted countless times, and has become part of the charter of Hamas.

Differences with Christianity

Bernard Lewis holds that Muslims were not antisemitic for the most part because: 1. The gospels are not part of the educational system in Muslim society and therefore Muslims are not brought up with the stories of Jewish deicide; on the contrary the notion of deicide is rejected by the Qur'an as a blasphemous absurdity 2. Muhammad and his early followers were not Jew and therefore they did not present themselves as the true Israel nor felt threatened by survival of the old Israel 3. The Qur'an was not viewed by Muslims as a fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible but rather a restorer of its original messages that had been distorted over time; Thus, no clash of interpretations between Judaism and Islam could arise 3. Muhammad was not killed by the Jewish community and he was victorious in the clash with the Jewish community in Medina 4. Muhammad did not claim to have been Son of God or Messiah but only an apostle; a claim to which Jews reproached less 5. Muslims saw the conflict between Muhammad and the Jews as something of minor importance in Muhammad's career.

Status of Jews Under Muslim Rule

Traditionally Jews living in Muslim lands, known (along with Christians) as dhimmis, were allowed to practice their religion and to

administer their internal affairs but subject to certain conditions. They had to pay the *jizya* (a per capita tax imposed on free adult non-muslim males) to Muslims. Dhimmis had an inferior status under Islamic rule. They had several social and legal disabilities such as prohibitions against bearing arms or giving testimony in courts in cases involving Muslims. Many of the disabilities were highly symbolic. The most degrading one was the requirement of distinctive clothing, not found in the Qur'an or hadith but invented in early medieval Baghdad; its enforcement was highly erratic. Jews rarely faced martyrdom or exile, or forced compulsion to change their religion, and they were mostly free in their choice of residence and profession.

The notable examples of massacre of Jews include the 1066 Granada massacre, when a Muslim mob stormed the royal palace in Granada, crucified Jewish vizier Joseph ibn Naghrela and massacred most of the Jewish population of the city. "More than 1,500 Jewish families, numbering 4,000 persons, fell in one day." This was the first persecution of Jews on the Peninsula under Islamic rule.

There was also the killing or forcibly conversion of them by the rulers of the Almohad dynasty in Al-Andalus in the 12th century. Notable examples of the cases where the choice of residence was taken away from them includes confining Jews to walled quarters (*mellahs*) in Morocco beginning from the 15th century and especially since the early 19th century. Most conversions were voluntary and happened for various reasons. However, there were some forced conversions in the 12th century under the Almohad dynasty of North Africa and Al-Andalus as well as in Persia.

Antisemitism in Muslim countries increased in the 19th century. The nature and extent of antisemitism among Muslims, and its relation to anti-Zionism, are hotly-debated issues in contemporary Middle East politics.

Pre-Modern Times

The portrayal of the Jews in the early Islamic texts played a key role in shaping the attitudes towards them in the Muslim societies. According to Jane Gerber, "the Muslim is continually influenced by the theological threads of anti-Semitism embedded in the earliest chapters of Islamic history." In the light of the Jewish defeat at the hands of Muhammad, Muslims traditionally viewed Jews with contempt and as objects of ridicule.

Jews were seen as hostile, cunning, and vindictive, but nevertheless weak and ineffectual. Cowardice was the quality most frequently attributed to Jews. Another stereotype associated with the Jews was their alleged propensity to trickery and deceit. While most anti-Jewish polemicists saw those qualities as inherently Jewish, Ibn Khaldun attributed them to the mistreatment of Jews at the hands of the dominant nations. For that reason, says ibn Khaldun, Jews “are renowned, in every age and climate, for their wickedness and their slyness”.

Some Muslim writers have inserted racial overtones in their anti-Jewish polemics. Al-Jahiz speaks of the deterioration of the Jewish stock due to excessive inbreeding. Ibn Hazm also implies racial qualities in his attacks on the Jews. However, these were exceptions, and the racial theme left little or no trace in the medieval Muslim anti-Jewish writings.

Anti-Jewish sentiments usually flared up at times of the Muslim political or military weakness or when Muslims felt that some Jews had overstepped the boundary of humiliation prescribed to them by the Islamic law. In Moorish Spain, ibn Hazm and Abu Ishaq focused their anti-Jewish writings on the latter allegation. This was also the chief motivation behind the 1066 Granada massacre, when “[m]ore than 1,500 Jewish families, numbering 4,000 persons, fell in one day”, and in Fez in 1033, when 6,000 Jews were killed. There were further massacres in Fez in 1276 and 1465.

Islamic law does not differentiate between Jews and Christians in their status as dhimmis. According to Bernard Lewis, the normal practice of Muslim governments until modern times was consistent with this aspect of sharia law. This view is countered by Jane Gerber, who maintains that of all dhimmis, Jews had the lowest status. Gerber maintains that this situation was especially pronounced in the latter centuries, when Christian communities enjoyed protection, unavailable to the Jews, under the provisions of Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire.

For example, in 18th century Damascus, a Muslim noble held a festival, inviting to it all social classes in descending order, according to their social status: the Jews outranked only the peasants and prostitutes. In 1865, when the equality of all subjects of the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed, Cevdet Pasha, a high-ranking official observed: “whereas in former times, in the Ottoman State, the communities were ranked, with the Muslims first, then the Greeks, then the Armenians,

then the Jews, now all of them were put on the same level. Some Greeks objected to this, saying: 'The government has put us together with the Jews. We were content with the supremacy of Islam.'

Some scholars have questioned the correctness of the term "antisemitism" to Muslim culture in pre-modern times. Robert Chazan and Alan Davies argue that the most obvious difference between pre-modern Islam and pre-modern Christendom was the "rich melange of racial, ethnic, and religious communities" in Islamic countries, within which "the Jews were by no means obvious as lone dissenters, as they had been earlier in the world of polytheism or subsequently in most of medieval Christendom."

According to Chazan and Davies, this lack of uniqueness ameliorated the circumstances of Jews in the medieval world of Islam. According to Norman Stillman, antisemitism, understood as hatred of Jews as Jews, "did exist in the medieval Arab world even in the period of greatest tolerance".

Modern Period

19th Century

Historian Martin Gilbert writes that it was in the 19th century that the position of Jews worsened in Muslim countries.

There was a massacre of Jews in Baghdad in 1828. In 1839, in the eastern Persian city of Meshed, a mob burst into the Jewish Quarter, burned the synagogue, and destroyed the Torah scrolls. It was only by forcible conversion that a massacre was averted. There was another massacre in Barfurush in 1867.

In 1840, the Jews of Damascus were falsely accused of having murdered a Christian monk and his Muslim servant and of having used their blood to bake Passover bread or Matza. A Jewish barber was tortured until he "confessed"; two other Jews who were arrested died under torture, while a third converted to Islam to save his life. Throughout the 1860s, the Jews of Libya were subjected to what Gilbert calls punitive taxation. In 1864, around 500 Jews were killed in Marrakech and Fez in Morocco. In 1869, 18 Jews were killed in Tunis, and an Arab mob looted Jewish homes and stores, and burned synagogues, on Jerba Island. In 1875, 20 Jews were killed by a mob in Demnat, Morocco; elsewhere in Morocco, Jews were attacked and killed in the streets in broad daylight. In 1891, the leading Muslims in Jerusalem asked the Ottoman authorities in Constantinople to prohibit the entry

of Jews arriving from Russia. In 1897, synagogues were ransacked and Jews were murdered in Tripolitania.

Benny Morris writes that one symbol of Jewish degradation was the phenomenon of stone-throwing at Jews by Muslim children. Morris quotes a 19th century traveler: "I have seen a little fellow of six years old, with a troop of fat toddlers of only three and four, teaching [them] to throw stones at a Jew, and one little urchin would, with the greatest coolness, waddle up to the man and literally spit upon his Jewish gaberdine. To all this the Jew is obliged to submit; it would be more than his life was worth to offer to strike a Mohammedan."

According to Mark Cohen in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, most scholars conclude that Arab anti-Semitism in the modern world arose in the nineteenth century, against the backdrop of conflicting Jewish and Arab nationalism, and was imported into the Arab world primarily by nationalistically minded Christian Arabs (and only subsequently was it "Islamized").

20th Century

The massacres of Jews in Muslim countries continued into the 20th century. Martin Gilbert writes that 40 Jews were murdered in Taza, Morocco in 1903. In 1905, old laws were revived in Yemen forbidding Jews from raising their voices in front of Muslims, building their houses higher than Muslims, or engaging in any traditional Muslim trade or occupation. The Jewish quarter in Fez was almost destroyed by a Muslim mob in 1912. There were Nazi-inspired pogroms in Algeria in the 1930s, and massive attacks on the Jews in Iraq and Libya in the 1940s (see Farhud). Pro-Nazi Muslims slaughtered dozens of Jews in Baghdad in 1941.

George Gruen attributes the increased animosity towards Jews in the Arab world to several factors, including the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire and traditional Islamic society; domination by Western colonial powers under which Jews gained a disproportionately larger role in the commercial, professional, and administrative life of the region; the rise of Arab nationalism, whose proponents sought the wealth and positions of local Jews through government channels; resentment against Jewish nationalism and the Zionist movement; and the readiness of unpopular regimes to scapegoat local Jews for political purposes. Antagonism and violence increased still further as resentment against Zionist efforts in the British Mandate of Palestine spread. Anti-Zionist propaganda in the Middle East frequently adopts the terminology

and symbols of the Holocaust to demonize Israel and its leaders. At the same time, Holocaust denial and Holocaust minimisation efforts have found increasingly overt acceptance as sanctioned historical discourse in a number of Middle Eastern countries. Arabic- and Turkish-editions of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* have found an audience in the region with limited critical response by local intellectuals and media. See International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust.

According to Robert Satloff, Muslims and Arabs were involved both as rescuers and as perpetrators of the Holocaust during Italian and German Nazi occupation of Morocco, Tunisia and Libya.

Antisemitism has been reportedly found in Arab and Iranian media and schoolbooks. For example, the Center for Religious Freedom of Freedom House analysed a set of Saudi Ministry of Education textbooks in use during the current academic year in Islamic studies courses for elementary and secondary school students. Among the statements and ideas found against non-Wahhabi Muslims and "non-believers" were those that teach Muslims to "hate" Christians, Jews, "polytheists" and other "unbelievers," including non-Wahhabi Muslims, though, incongruously, not to treat them "unjustly"; teach the infamous forgeries. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, as historical fact and relate modern events to it; teach that "Jews and the Christians are enemies of the [Muslim] believers" and that "the clash" between the two realms is perpetual; instruct that "fighting between Muslims and Jews" will continue until Judgment Day, and that the Muslims are promised victory over the Jews in the end; cite a selective teaching of violence against Jews, while in the same lesson, ignoring the passages of the Qur'an and hadiths that counsel tolerance; include a map of the Middle East that labels Israel within its pre-1967 borders as "Palestine: occupied 1948"; discuss Jews in violent terms, blaming them for virtually all the "subversion" and wars of the modern world. A 38-page overviewPDF (204 KiB) of Saudi Arabia's curriculum has been released to the press by the Hudson Institute.

RACIAL ANTISEMITISM

Racial antisemitism is the idea that the Jews are a distinct and inferior race. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it gained mainstream acceptance as part of the eugenics movement, which categorised non-whites as inferior. It more specifically claims that the so-called Nordic Europeans are superior. Racial antisemites saw the Jews as part of a semitic race and emphasised their "alien" extra-

European origins. They saw Jews as beyond redemption even if they converted to the majority religion. Anthropologists discussed whether the Jews possessed any Arabic-Armenoid, African-Nubian or Asian-Turkic ancestries. Since the second world war racial antisemitism has rarely appeared outside of Neo-Nazi and white supremacist movements.

Racial antisemitism replaced the hatred of Judaism with the hatred of Jews as a group. In the context of the Industrial Revolution, following the emancipation of the Jews, Jews rapidly urbanised and experienced a period of greater social mobility. With the decreasing role of religion in public life tempering religious antisemitism, a combination of growing nationalism, the rise of eugenics, and resentment at the socio-economic success of the Jews led to the newer, and more virulent, racist antisemitism.

NEW ANTISEMITISM

In recent years some scholars have advanced the concept of *New antisemitism*, coming simultaneously from the left, the far right, and radical Islam, which tends to focus on opposition to the creation of a Jewish homeland in the State of Israel, and argue that the language of Anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel are used to attack the Jews more broadly. In this view, the proponents of the new concept believe that criticisms of Israel and Zionism are often disproportionate in degree and unique in kind, and attribute this to antisemitism. The concept has been criticised by those who argue it is used to stifle debate and deflect attention from legitimate criticism of the State of Israel, and, by associating anti-Zionism with antisemitism, is intended to taint anyone opposed to Israeli actions and policies. Due to this quick labelling of people as anti-semitic a new term was coined 'Goyist' or 'Goyism' to refer to racist people who label others anti-semitic.

BANS ON KOSHER SLAUGHTER

The kosher slaughter of animals is currently banned in Norway, Switzerland and Sweden, and partially banned in the Netherlands (for older animals only, who are considered to take longer to lose consciousness). The Swiss banned kosher slaughter in 1902 and saw an antisemitic backlash against a proposal to lift the ban a century later. Both the Netherlands and Switzerland have considered extending the ban in order to prohibit importing kosher products. The former chief rabbi of Norway, Michael Melchior, argues that antisemitism is a motive for the bans: "I won't say this is the only motivation, but it's certainly no coincidence that one of the first things Nazi Germany

forbade was kosher slaughter. I also know that during the original debate on this issue in Norway, where shechitah has been banned since 1930, one of the parliamentarians said straight out, 'If they don't like it, let them go live somewhere else.'"

21ST CENTURY

According to the 2005 U.S. State Department Report on Global Antisemitism, antisemitism in Europe has increased significantly in recent years (but see fn.31 below). Beginning in 2000, oral attacks directed against Jews increased while incidents of vandalism (*e.g.* graffiti, fire bombings of Jewish schools, desecration of synagogues and cemeteries) surged. Physical assaults including beatings, stabbings and other violence against Jews in Europe increased markedly, in a number of cases resulting in serious injury and even death. In the context of the "Global War on Terrorism" there have been statements by both the Democrat Ernest Hollings and the Republican Pat Buchanan that suggest that the George W. Bush administration went to war in order to win Jewish supporters. This has some echoes of Lindberg's claim before WW2 that a Jewish minority was pushing America into a war against its interests. Hollings wrote an editorial in the May 6, 2004 *Charleston Post and Courier*, where he argued that Bush invaded Iraq possibly because "spreading democracy in the Mideast to secure Israel would take the Jewish vote from the Democrats."

France is home to Europe's largest population of Muslims — about 6 million — as well as the continent's largest community of Jews, about 6,00,000. Jewish leaders perceive an intensifying antisemitism in France, mainly among Muslims of Arab or African heritage, but also growing among Caribbean islanders from former colonies.

However, it is Muslims rather than Jews who can expect to suffer more from bigotry in France, stated Holocaust survivor and former French cabinet minister Simone Veil. "Let's not exaggerate," she said. "'Anti-Arab sentiment is much stronger in France than anti-Semitism.'" France's Jewish community is much more integrated than its almost 6 million Muslims, she noted, claiming Muslim youth are moved by a militant and anti-Jewish hierarchy.

Former Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy denounced the killing of Ilan Halimi as an antisemitic crime.

In 2004 the UK Parliament set up an all-Parliamentary inquiry into antisemitism, which published its findings in 2006. The inquiry stated that "until recently, the prevailing opinion both within the Jewish

community and beyond [had been] that antisemitism had receded to the point that it existed only on the margins of society." It found a reversal of this progress since 2000. It aimed to investigate the problem, identify the sources of contemporary antisemitism and make recommendations to improve the situation.. On January 1, 2006, Britain's chief rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, warned that what he called a "tsunami of antisemitism" was spreading globally.

In an interview with BBC's Radio Four, Sacks said that antisemitism was on the rise in Europe, and that a number of his rabbinical colleagues had been assaulted, synagogues desecrated, and Jewish schools burned to the ground in France. He also said that: "People are attempting to silence and even ban Jewish societies on campuses on the grounds that Jews must support the state of Israel, therefore they should be banned, which is quite extraordinary because... British Jews see themselves as British citizens. So it's that kind of feeling that you don't know what's going to happen next that's making... some European Jewish communities uncomfortable."

Much of the new European antisemitic violence can actually be seen as a spill over from the long running Arab-Israeli conflict since the majority of the perpetrators are from the large immigrant Arab communities in European cities. According to *The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism*, most of the current antisemitism comes from militant Islamic and Muslim groups, and most Jews tend to be assaulted in countries where groups of young Muslim immigrants reside.

Similarly, in the Middle East, anti-Zionist propaganda frequently adopts the terminology and symbols of the Holocaust to demonize Israel and its leaders — for instance, comparing Israel's treatment of the Palestinians to Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews. At the same time, Holocaust denial and Holocaust minimisation efforts find increasingly overt acceptance as sanctioned historical discourse in a number of Middle Eastern countries.

On April 3, 2006, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announced its finding that incidents of antisemitism are a "serious problem" on college campuses throughout the United States. The Commission recommended that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights protect college students from antisemitism through vigorous enforcement of *Title VI* of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and further recommended that Congress clarify that Title VI applies to discrimination against Jewish students.

On July 28, 2006, at around 4:00 p.m. Pacific time, the Seattle Jewish Federation shooting occurred when Naveed Afzal Haq shot six women, one fatally, at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle building in the Belltown neighbourhood of Seattle, Washington, United States. Police have classified the shooting as a hate crime based on what Haq said during a 9-1-1 call. On September 19, 2006, Yale University founded The Yale Initiative for Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism, the first North American university-based center for study of the subject, as part of its Institution for Social and Policy Studies. Director Charles Small of the Center cited the increase in antisemitism worldwide in recent years as generating a “need to understand the current manifestation of this disease”.

The Interior Minister of Germany, Wolfgang Schaueble, points out the official policy of Germany: “We will not tolerate any form of extremism, xenophobia or anti-Semitism.” Although the number of right-wing groups and organisations grew from 141 (2001) to 182 (2006), especially in the formerly communist East Germany, Germany’s measures against right wing groups and antisemitism are effective: According to the annual reports of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution the overall number of far-right extremists in Germany dropped during the last years from 49,700 (2001), 45,000 (2002), 41,500 (2003), 40,700 (2004), 39,000 (2005), to 38,600 in 2006. Germany provided several million Euro’s to fund “nationwide programmes aimed at fighting far-right extremism, including teams of traveling consultants, and victims’ groups.” Despite these facts, Israeli Ambassador Shimon Stein warned in October 2006 that Jews in Germany feel increasingly “unsafe,” stating that they “are not able to live a normal Jewish life” and that heavy security surrounds most synagogues or Jewish community centers. Yosef Havlin, Rabbi at the Chabad Lubavitch Frankfurt does not agree with the Israeli Ambassador and states in an interview with Der Spiegel magazine in September 2007, that the German public does not support Nazis, instead he has personally experienced the support of Germans, as a Jew and Rabbi he “feels welcome in his (hometown) Frankfurt, he is not afraid, the city is no no-go-area”. Despite this comment, on the 11th of September, 2007 an anti-Semitic incident occurred whereby Frankfurt Rabbi, Zalman Gurevitch, was stabbed repeatedly, the attacker subsequently threatening in German “I’ll kill you, you (expletive) Jew.”

Independent voices, including leading Jewish philanthropist Baron Eric de Rothschild who received an honorary doctorate from Hebrew

University, suggest that the extent of antisemitism in Europe has been exaggerated. In an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* he says that “some of the complaints emanating from Israel about the treatment of French Jews amount to ‘an element of schadenfreude (taking pleasure at another’s misfortune) on the part of those who have already made aliya: When the cousins come over, they say, it’s terrible [in France]—you have to come to Israel.” About France he says: “People are in fact philo-Semitic in the government, mayors, to an extent which goes beyond pure electoral calculations” and “[t]he one thing you can’t say is that France is an anti-Semitic country.”

Even in the United States of America, synagogues and temples are frequently put under police guard during major holidays, so as to prevent any attack.

According to an Anti-Defamation League survey 14 per cent of U.S. residents had anti-Semitic views. The 2005 survey found “36 per cent of African-Americans hold strong anti-Semitic beliefs, four times more than the 9 per cent for whites”.

CRITICISM OF JUDAISM

Criticism of Judaism has existed since Judaism’s formative stages, as with many other religions, on philosophical, scientific, ethical, political and theological grounds.

FORMER AND PRESENT MEMBERS

In many religions ex-members and excommunicates became known for criticism of their former faith. In Judaism a process similar to excommunication is called *Cherem*. The process is a form of ecclesiastical censure that states the person is not to be listened to by the community. Among people declared *cherem* there were a few critics of Judaism.

The most famous might be Baruch Spinoza who was excommunicated primarily for rejecting the orthodox understanding of the Torah and its view of God. His *Theologico-Political Treatise* in particular rejected the idea of the Jews as a chosen people and saw the Torah as merely a kind of Jewish constitution. He further felt that Judaism allowed for little in the way of speculation or internal reflection. That the religion was “to them rather a bondage than the true liberty, the gift and grace of Deity.” An earlier convert of Jewish ancestry, Uriel da Costa, largely agreed and felt Judaism to be a human invention devoid of spirituality.

CLAIMS BY MUHAMMAD

The Qur'an claims that the Jews called Ezra the son of God and by doing so they are "deluded away from the Truth". [Qur'an 9:30]. No Jewish text makes the claim that Ezra is the son of God and no branch of Judaism makes Ezra a son of God. Moreover, Abraham Geiger, a Jewish theologian said Muhammad misunderstood the Jewish text. The American historian and archaeologist, Charles Cutler Torrey maintains that Muhammad made this assertion so as to claim pure monotheism for the Muslims alone, in his day. The New Encyclopedia of Islam on page 467, states, "... The reference to Ezra as the "son of God" is obscure, and cannot be explained by anything in the Bible or from other sources. However, the Encyclopaedia Judaica mention an assumption, based on the words of the Muslim scholar Ibn Hazm, that a sect that was living in Yemen was known to say that he was the son of God. According to other Muslim sources there were some Yemenite Jews who believed that Ezra was the messiah. For Muhammad the Jewish view of the messiah could be seen in the same light as the Christian saw Jesus, the messiah, the son of God. On the other hand Ishmael Instructs Isaac: An Introduction to the Qur'an for Bible Readers page 273, states, "This is the only text in the Qur'an which levels shirk against the Jews. The reference of their worship of Ezra as Allah is obscure and a mystery. Some (Muslim) commentators claim that this was a belief among the Jews of Medina, but there is no solid evidence to support this...". Edward Henry Palmer, an expert on Eastern studies stated that, "There is no Jewish tradition whatever in support of this accusation of Muhammed's, which was probably due to his own invention of misinformation."

KOSHER SLAUGHTER

Kosher slaughter as a practice has attracted widespread criticism from animal welfare groups who claim that the absence of any form of anesthesia or stunning prior to the severance of the animal's jugular vein entails prolonged and unnecessary pain. The British Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), an independent body which advises the British Government in matters of animal welfare, has demanded that kosher slaughter no longer be exempted under relevant legislation, demanding that animals be subjected to stunning before slaughter. FAWC Chairperson, Dr Judy MacArthur (herself a farmer and qualified veterinarian) has defended the organisation's stance, criticising her detractors by claiming that "(kosher slaughter involves) a major incision into the animal and to say that it doesn't suffer is quite ridiculous."

This claim is contrary to those made by supporters of kosher slaughter, who claim that the extreme blood loss caused in the process results in a rapid loss of consciousness and therefore an absence of pain.

PHILO-SEMITISM

Philo-Semitism or Philosemitism, is an interest in respect for, and appreciation of the Jewish people, their historical significance and the positive impacts of Judaism in the history of the western world, in particular. Within the Jewish community it also includes the significance of Jewish culture and the love of everything Jewish. The word is not new, but it has recently (ca. 2000) become a significantly growing phenomenon in the modern world. It is characterised (among other things) by an interest in Jewish culture and history, as well as increasing university enrolment by non-Jews in courses relating to Judaism (including Judaism, Hebrew and Jewish languages). A Philosemite is one who substantially subscribes to, or practices, any of the above.

Philo-Semitism has been the subject of a series of books and journal articles (see partial listing below). The rise of Philo-Semitism has been met by a mixed response among world Jewry. Some warmly welcome it and argue that it must lead Jews to reconsider their identity. This viewpoint has been expressed by the leading liberal Jewish publication *The Forward* (Editorial, 10 November 2000):

Others reject Philo-Semitism, as they feel it (like its apparent opposite anti-Semitism) implicitly gives a special status to Jews. This contradicts the traditional goal of Zionism to make Jewry "a nation among nations." Daniel Goldhagen, Harvard scholar and author of the controversial *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, argues that Philo-Semites are often closet anti-Semites. His detractor Norman Finkelstein agrees. The thesis is that Jew haters feel a need to talk about Jews, and with anti-Semitism no longer being socially acceptable they must instead make exaggerated positive statements.

But in modern transcultural contexts, where the terminologies used to describe people are more clearly seen, the issue of the terminology is perhaps more important than the term itself. In this case, a Jew does not think of his non-Jewish friends as automatically "Philo-semitic" (ethnicity having little or nothing to do with friendship). Similarly, there may be certain people whom he or she finds unfavorable, on grounds that are completely unrelated to Judaism. Thus, philo-Semitism, and similarly anti-Semitism, are rather new perceptual terms used by Jews to describe their perceptual relationship to the views of non-Jews (both in their common society and abroad).

The rise of Philo-Semitism has also prompted some to reconsider Jewish history. While the significance of anti-Semitism must be acknowledged, they claim, it would be wrong to reduce the history of the Jewish people to one of suffering. Indeed, Jews have not only survived, but also often prospered throughout history. In many cases, this was helped by Philo-Semitism among surrounding Gentiles. While the existence of so-called “righteous Gentiles” during Jewry’s darkest hour, the Holocaust, has long been recognised, they were by no means a new phenomenon at the time.

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