

# Modern Judaism

# “Jew” can be defined in different ways

1. Religious definition: one who accepts the faith of Judaism.
2. Cultural definition: one without formal religious affiliation; regards teachings of Judaism (ethics, behavior, literature) as his own.
3. Practical definition: one who considers himself a Jew is so regarded by his community

# I. Summary Of Modern Judaism

- *Hebrew*: first used of *Abraham*, Gn.14:13
  - *Eber*, Heb.: ‘*lbrī*’ or ‘*abar*’ – one from beyond, from the other side, i.e. *probably* (in Hebrew Tradition) *from beyond the Euphrates*.
  - Jos.24:2-3
  - But possibly in fact (if name given in Canaan) *from beyond the Jordan* – BDB.
- *Judaism*: no formal mandatory beliefs.
  - Their primary focus is on the relationship between the Creator, mankind, and the land of Israel.

- Practical tenets of Judaism: man can most genuinely worship God by imitating those qualities that are godly:
  - As God is merciful, so must we be; as God is just . . . slow to anger . . .
- Some 1800 years ago, Jewish sages taught: ‘He who is beloved of his fellow men is beloved of God.’
  - To worship God is to love the work of His hands.

- Jewish prayer book: three basic principles of faith –
  1. Love of learning. E.g.: 1<sup>st</sup> Cen., compulsory education.
  2. Worship of God.
  3. Good deeds that stem from the heart.
    - No word for ‘charity’: rabbis taught...

‘We are required to feed the poor of the gentiles as well as Jewish brethren’

- Maimonides [often known as *Rambam* – acronym for his name, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon] – 12<sup>th</sup> Century Jewish scholar
  - Wrote code of Jewish law based on rabbinic oral tradition
  - 13 principles of faith: the most accepted summary (though debated)

# 13 principles of faith: (1/2)

1. God exists
2. God is one and unique
3. God is incorporeal
4. God is eternal
5. Prayer is directed to God alone and no other
6. The words of the prophets are true
7. Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest prophet

## 13 principles of faith: (2/2)

8. Written Torah (first 5 books of Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now found in Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses
9. There will be no other Torah
10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked
12. The Messiah will come
13. The dead will be resurrected

# Jews are deeply divided

1. **Orthodox:** regards his faith as main stream of a tradition that has been unaltered for the past 3000 years.
  - Accepts Bible as revealed Will of God.
  - Observes Sabbath strictly: no work / travel / writing / business dealings / carrying money.
  - Observes every detail of dietary laws.
  - Separate pews for women in synagogue.
  - Uses only Hebrew in prayer / ceremonial services.

# Jews are deeply divided

## 1. Orthodox: but note –

- Orthodox Judaism ‘officially’ teaches God is real, but includes some agnostics and atheists who attend their synagogues.
- They do not consider this contradictory because Judaism emphasizes how to live, not what to believe.
- Many Jews don’t affiliate with a synagogue at all.

# Jews are deeply divided

2. **Conservative:** follows traditional Judaism, by and large, but regards Judaism as evolving and ever-growing religion
  - Change should be result of natural growth.
  - Regards Reform Judaism as too sharp a break with the past.
  - Follows dietary laws (only minor relaxations).
  - Observes Sabbath, high holidays, festivals in traditional ways, but borrows many forms of Reformed Judaism – e.g.: late-Friday evening service and use of English in prayers

# Jews are deeply divided

3. **Reform:** result of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment: reason, not revelation, seen as path to truth.
- 2013: 35% of American Jews – Reform
  - Accepts only *moral* laws of Bible and ceremonies that ‘elevate and sanctify our lives.’
  - Does not follow *customs* he believes are ‘not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.’
  - *Faith* must be rational and capable of withstanding the careful scrutiny of reason and science.
  - *Worship* departs from traditional forms.

# Jews are deeply divided

- **Orthodox** Jews wear hat or skullcap at all times.
- **Conservatives** cover head only during acts of worship.
- **Reformed** generally pray without hats.

# Talmud

63 books of legal, ethical, and historical writings of ancient rabbis; edited five centuries after birth of Jesus; a collection of Jewish law & lore.

- . “Give every man the benefit of the doubt.”
- . “An ignorant man cannot be a pious one.”
- . “Why are we born into the world with clenched fists & leave it w. outstretched fingers?...To remind us that we take nothing with us.”

I. Summary Of Modern Judaism

II. Help For Jews

# 1. Jews reject their own Messiah

- Jn.1:11
- Jn.12:42-43
- Jews **omit** Isa.53 from regular synagogue calendar readings

Isaiah: the servant...	700 yrs. later, Yeshua...
Would be disfigured by suffering, 52:14; 53:2-3	Was struck, spat on, mocked, Mk.15:17-19
Would come from humble beginnings, 53:2	Nazareth [poor reputation, 53:2...] Lk.2:39f., 51
Rejected by many, 15:1,3	Mocked, blasphemed, reviled on cross, Mt.27:39...
Bear our sins, 53:4-6, 11	1 Pt.2:24
Heal many, 53:4-5	Mt.8:16-17
Remain silent during His suffering, 53:7	No self-defense [Herod, Pilate, Sanhedrin] Mt;26:62...
Die, 53:8, 12	Died on cross, Jn.19:33f
Buried w. rich man, 53:9	Joseph, Mt.27:57-60
Would not remain dead... see seed..., 53:10-11	Rose 3 <sup>rd</sup> day, still lives... Mt.28:1-10

# 1. Jews reject their own Messiah

- Jews For Jesus: Leah
- 1922: David Baron

“...it is beyond even the wildest credulity to believe that the resemblance in every feature and minutest detail between this prophetic portraiture drawn centuries before his [Jesus'] advent and the story of his life, and death, and glorious resurrection as narrated in the gospels, can be mere accident or fortuitous coincidence.”

## 2. Jews rejected their Messiah, but accepted common men

- Mt.24:11, 24
- Mt.26:59-60
- Jn.12:42-43
- Ac.5:36...37

## 2. Jews rejected their Messiah, but accepted common men

### Rome Hellenized Jews / Jerusalem

- Prohibited circumcision; built pagan temple over ruins of Jewish Temple.
- Jews rebelled; affirmed **Simon Bar Kochba** [*Son of the Star*] their Messiah.
  - Led a bitter revolt (AD 132-135).
- Hadrian sent Severus: 35,000 men of Legion X; retook Jerusalem; killed Bar Kochba.
- Jewish war casualties: 580,000
- Bar Kokhba became 'Bar Koziba'

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- NY 'rabbi' Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1994): is he the messiah?

### 3. Replaced blood atonement with reliance on prayers.

- Sacrifices can be offered only in Temple, by priests
- BUT: temple and priesthood were destroyed AD 70
- Left them only with prayer

Mt.27:22, 24-25, accept guilt [Josh.2:19]

1 Co.1:23, a crucified Messiah??

- Peter, Mt.16
- 1 Co.15

#### 4. Respect traditions / writings of men more than word of God

Claim Talmud of equal value with Torah

More concerned about writings of Maimonides  
than Moses

# Typical response:

## “But the rabbis say...”

- Mt.19:7, Moses
- Mt.21:25, dilemma
- Jn.8:43, not able to listen... (44, 47)

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“But the rabbis say...”

Way to teach honest Jews: NT

- Ac.2:5...41, devout
- Ac.4:36, Levite
- Ac.6:7, priests
- Ac.17:10-11, exemplary

# Typical response: “NT is anti-Semitic”

- Mt.27:24-25 [should not be in NT]??
  - NT writers want to save Jews AND Gentiles
  - Requires us to admit truth
- Ro.9:1-3, accursed [Ga.1:8-9; 1 Co.16:22]
- Ro.10:1-3, his longing, his prayer
  - The obstacle: misdirected zeal, AND misunderstanding of God's way