

“Judaism began about 4000 years ago with the Hebrew people in the Middle East. Abraham, a Hebrew man, is considered the father of the Jewish faith because he promoted the central idea of the Jewish faith: that there is one God. At the time many people in the Middle East worshipped many gods.”¹

“Judaism is the oldest of the world's four biggest monotheistic religions (religions with only one god). It's also the smallest, with only about 12 million followers around the world. Jewish history begins with the covenant established between God and Abraham around 1812 BC (over 3,800 years ago), during the Bronze Age, in the Middle East. The Torah (Jewish Law), the primary document of Judaism, was given to the Jews by the Prophet Moses (Moshe) about 3,300 years ago. The Jewish calendar starts with the day when Adam and Eve were created (the Sixth Day of Creation). This year (2010) is 5770 on the Jewish Calendar. It starts with Rosh HaShanah, the two day Jewish New Year. From September 2010, the Jewish Calendar will be 5771.”²

When discussing Judaism as a world religion, it matters where one is historically. This particular study looks at Judaism as it exists apart from the biblical *Story*.

The Bible tells a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is JESUS. Modern day Israel is outside the biblical narrative. What they were up to JESUS and what they are IN CHRIST is not what exists today.

The Jewish narrative beginning in Genesis 12 and Exodus 19 continues IN CHRIST. The Jewish people apart from CHRIST are not part of the biblical narrative no more and no less than any other people group.

What our relationship is to the nation of Israel has two prongs. The first prong is political. As a nation, we should align and support any nation that aligns and supports us. This has nothing to do with theology or the Bible.

The second prong is theological. As Christians, we recognize the historical status of Israel, but currently we have no more or less obligation to them as we would with any nation needing redemption.

Today, the Jews like all of humanity sits outside of God’s redemption. They are Christ rejecting people who need Jesus to save them from their sin and death. They do not hold any special status. If there is any people receiving such status, it is the church of Jesus Christ.

With this said, let us consider Judaism.

I. Historical

- A. “Judaism has the unique distinction of being a religion whose followers have been scattered abroad for a longer period than previously they have been in their original national home.” (Hume, 178).

B. The world's core Jewish population in early 2014 was estimated at 14.2 million people (around 0.2% of the world's population). While dozens of countries host at least a small Jewish population, the community is concentrated in a handful: Israel and the United States account for 83% of the Jewish population.³

C. "Unlike the other major religions, Judaism is the religion of only one people -- the Jews." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177).

"You see, there's Judaism and there's Jewishness, and the two are not one and the same. Judaism is wisdom for every person on the planet and beyond. We call it the Torah, meaning 'the teaching,' and it's a divine message to all human beings containing the principles that much of humanity has already accepted as absolute truths. That's Judaism. Then there is Jewishness. To be Jewish means to belong to an ancient tribe, either by birth or by adoption (a.k.a. conversion)."⁴

D. "Both Christianity and Islam developed from Judaism." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177).

E. To study Judaism is to study the history of the Jewish nation.

1. 2090 BC Abram called out of the Ur of Chaldea (Gen. 12:1-5 [A people became a distinct ethnic/racial group])

Whether or not one sees Hinduism (~1500 BC) or Judaism as being the oldest continuing World Living Religion depends on whether 2090 BC or 1445 BC is considered the starting date of Judaism.

2. 1875 BC Jacob enters Egypt (Gen. 46,47)
3. 1445 BC Israel leaves Egypt (Exod. 13)
4. 1445 BC Israel receives the Mosaic Code (Exodus 20 [A racial/ethnic group becomes a political group {The Mosaic Code is the constitution for the nation}])

Modern Judaism is to be distinguished from that which was practiced in the Old Testament. The Mosaic Code was a unified law with three aspects (civil, ceremonial, moral). It was an indivisible law (Gal 3:10; James 2:10). Beginning with Israel's captivity in 606 BC and ending with their complete and utter demise in AD 70, Israel has no longer been able to keep the Mosaic Code. Thus, the Judaism of today is to be seen as a shadow or reflection of the Mosaic Code and not a literal nor technical continuation of the same.

5. 1405 BC Israel enters the promised land (Joshua)
6. 1050 BC Israel anoints Saul as King (1 Sam. 10)

7. 1010 BC Israel anoints David as King (1 Sam. 16)
8. 970 BC Israel anoints Solomon as King (1 Kings 1)
9. 933 BC The 12 tribes of Jacob split. Ten tribes go to the North and are called 'Israel' while two tribes remain in the South and are called 'Judah.' All of the Northern tribes are apostate. The Theocratic Anointing remains in the South (1 Kings 11, 12)
10. 722 BC Israel in the North is taken into captivity by the Assyrians and no longer exists as a national entity.
11. 586 BC Judah in the South is taken into captivity by the Babylonians (2 Chron. 36)
12. 536 BC Judah is allowed to return to the land and rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem (Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah)
13. 433 BC Malachi is the last of the Hebrew Prophets (Malachi)

THE 400 YEARS OF SILENCE

<u>The Restoration</u>

“During the period of restoration, the Jews became exposed to Greek culture (Hellenism) when Alexander the Great conquered the world (336 - 323 BC). Upon Alexander's death, the land fell under the rule of the Ptolemies of Egypt. The Hellenic influence was so strong during this time that many Jews no longer understood biblical Hebrew. Aramaic and Greek became the dominant languages in Palestine. During this period the Old Testament was translated into Greek (this text is commonly called the Septuagint, abbreviated as LXX), for the benefit of those Jews who did not read Hebrew.” (McDowell, p. 366)

<u>The Revolt</u>

“The people soon became part of the Syrian Kingdom, and when one of the kings, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, tried to suppress the Jewish religion, the people revolted. In 167 BC a rebellion led by Judah Maccabaeus resulted in the independence of the Jewish nation, celebrated to this day by the festival of Hanukkah.” (McDowell, p. 366).

14. AD 70 Jerusalem is destroyed, the temple is dismantled and “Israel” ceases to exist as a nation.
15. “On May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv, Jewish Agency Chairman David Ben-Gurion proclaims the State of Israel, establishing the first Jewish state in 2,000 years.”⁵

F. Today Judaism is represented by several branches

Judaism operates on a sliding scale between religious and secular, conservative and liberal.

“Approximately 5 million of the world's 13 million Jews live in the United States. There are basically three major movements in the U.S. today: Reform, Conservative and Orthodox. Some people also include a fourth movement, the Reconstructionist movement, although that movement is substantially smaller than the other three. Orthodox and sometimes Conservative are described as ‘traditional’ movements. Reform, Reconstructionist, and sometimes Conservative are described as ‘liberal’ or ‘modern’ movements.”⁶

“Today, approximately 14 million people identify themselves as Jews. There are three main branches of Judaism, each with different approaches to religious life: Orthodox; Conservative; and Reform. Jewish life is rich in traditions, rituals and holidays, which commemorate the past, celebrate the present, and express hope for the future.”⁷

- Orthodox Judaism

“They accept all the traditional Jewish beliefs and ways of life. They strictly observe all traditional Jewish laws, including the dietary rules and the laws for keeping the Sabbath. Orthodox men wear hats or *yarmulkes* (Skull-caps) at all times as a sign of respect to God.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

- Reform Judaism

“Began in the early 1800's. They consider the Talmud a human creation rather than the revelation of God, and so its authority was weakened for them. These people, who founded Reform Judaism, claimed that Judaism is defined principally by the Bible. Reform Jews have discarded many of the traditional customs and ceremonies.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

“Reform Judaism is the liberal wing of Judaism.” (McDowell, 371).

“Reform Judaism is so culture- and race-oriented that it easily can neglect the spiritual and religious side of Jewish life. There is little consensus on doctrinal or religious belief in Reform Judaism.” (McDowell, 372).

- Conservative Judaism

“Began in the mid-1800's. Conservative Jews consider the Talmud as much an authority as the Bible. However, they believe that the scriptures should be interpreted in light of modern knowledge and culture. Like Reform Jews, Conservative Jews de-emphasize the rituals of Judaism. But they follow more of the traditional practices than do Reform Jews.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

“Conservative Judaism is sort of a happy medium between Orthodox and Reform Judaism.” (McDowell, 371).

- Zionist Judaism

“They are most interested in returning to Palestine. **Not all Jews are Zionists, as many of them are satisfied in the countries of their dispersion.** Zionism is the strongest passion among the Jews of today.” (Stilson, 74).

The term “Zionism” was coined in 1890 by Nathan Birnbaum. Its general definition means the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Zionism has come to include the movement for the development of the State of Israel and the protection of the Jewish nation in Israel through support for the Israel Defense Forces. From inception, Zionism advocated [sp. advocated] tangible as well as spiritual aims. Jews of all persuasions - left, right, religious and secular - formed the Zionist movement and worked together toward its goals. Disagreements in philosophy has led to rifts in the Zionist movement of the years and a number of separate forms have emerged, notably: Political Zionism; Religious Zionism; Socialist Zionism and Territorial Zionism. ⁸

- Hasidic Judaism

Hasidic (or Chasidic) Judaism arose in 12th-century Germany as a mystical movement emphasizing asceticism and experience born out of love and humility before God.

- Kabbalah

The mystical form of Judaism is Kabbalah. Broadly speaking, Kabbalah refers to Jewish mysticism dating back to the time of the second Temple.



II. Theological

- A. "The most important teaching of Judaism is that there is one God." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177 [Deut 6:4,5]).

"Ethical monotheism has been Judaism's noblest feature, and also its noblest contribution to the religious thought of the world." (Hume, 178).

- B. "Judaism teaches that a person serves God by studying the Scriptures and **practicing what they teach.**" (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177).

"The most fundamental of these teaching concern behavior toward other people. Judaism teaches that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177).

"Thus, moral and ethical teachings play a more important role in Judaism than do teachings about God." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177). (Micah 6:8*)

- C. "Judaism does not try to convince others to adopt its beliefs and practices. However, it does accept people who choose to convert to Judaism." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 177).
- D. "**Many Jews still expect a Messiah to come.** But others speak instead of a Messianic Kingdom. They believe a period of justice and peace will come through the cooperation of all people and the help of God." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178). (Rom. 11:26)
- E. "Judaism has two major collections of sacred writings, the Bible and the Talmud." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

1. The Bible for them is divided into three sections: The Law, The Prophets and The Writings (Matt. 11:13; Luke 11:50; 24:27).

"The Jews do not hold each part of their writings in equal importance. The Law, the Torah, is the most authoritative, followed by the Prophets, which have lesser authority, and lastly the Writings." (McDowell, 373).

"They were all composed in Hebrew, except that about half the book of Daniel, some official documents in Ezra, and a single verse in Jeremiah are in Aramaic." (Hume, 178).

2. "The Talmud is a collection of legal and ethical writings, as well as Jewish history and folklore. It serves primarily as a guide to the civil and religious laws of Judaism." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

“Orthodox Jews believe the laws in the Talmud were given to Moses by God and passed down orally from generation to generation.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

“About AD 200, scholars wrote down these oral laws in a work called the Mishnah. Later scholars explained and interpreted the Mishnah. Their comments were recorded in the Gemara, which was written between 200 and 500. The Mishnah and Gemara together make the Talmud.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

“Around the sacred law there had developed a large body of commentary, at first oral, by leading scholars and teachers. Then came commentary on the accepted commentaries. Often illustrated by stories and legends this mass of material continued to grow after the dispersion. Much of it was written down to form two collections known as the Mishna and the Gemara, and finally these were joined to form what today is known as the Jewish Talmud. This occurred around the sixth century AD. The Talmud has ever since been a major basis of the education of the rabbis of Judaism. It is secondary, of course, to the Law and the Prophets and the Writings, which make up the Jewish Bible, but it is the Talmud which interprets the meaning of the original scriptures. No rabbi would think himself capable of interpreting the Judaic law without knowing what the Talmudic literature had to say on the matter.” (Hume, 194).

F. The Structure of Judaism

“Judaism has no one person as its head and no international body with authority over religious practices. Each local congregation chooses its own rabbi and manages its own affairs.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

1. The Synagogue

The synagogue is a multi-purpose building. “Most synagogues are constructed so that the worshipers face toward the holy city of Jerusalem during the service. At the front of the sanctuary stands the ark, a chest in which the scrolls of the Torah are kept. In front of the ark hangs the eternal light, an oil lamp whose constant flame symbolizes God's eternal presence. The sanctuary of a synagogue also includes a branched candlestick called a menorah and a tablet bearing the first two words of each of the Ten Commandments written in Hebrew.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

The Synagogue arose out of the dispersion. Being removed from the Temple forced them to improvise. In every city, if there is a set quorum of male leadership, there will be a synagogue.

“Synagogue” Sunagoge = “A bringing together, gathering; an assembling together of men, an assembly of men.” Used 57xNT [54xGospels-Acts], its occurrences suggest a Jewish element/phenomena.

2. The Rabbi

“The rabbi serves as a spiritual leader, teacher, and interpreter of Jewish Law.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

“Rabbi” Rhabbi = “My great one, my honorable sir; Rabbi, a title used by the Jews to address their teachers (and also honor them when not addressing them).” 7xNT (Matt. 23:7,8; John 1:32,49; 3:2,26; 6:25)

3. The Cantor

“The cantor chants the prayers during worship in the synagogue.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 178).

4. Worship

“Worship in Judaism takes place both in the home and in the synagogue. Important parts of home worship include daily prayers, the lighting of the Sabbath candles, and the blessing of the wine and bread at the Sabbath meal. Jews also observe many holiday rituals at home.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

G. Holy Days and Festivals

Rosh Hashana	Oct 3-4, 2016	The Jewish New Year
Yom Kippur	Oct 12, 2016	Day of Atonement
Sukkot	Oct 17-18, 2016 [or] Oct 19-23, 2016	Feast of Tabernacles

1. The Sabbath

“The seventh day of the week, Saturday, which is a holy day of rest. The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. Orthodox Jews do not work, travel, or carry money on the Sabbath.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

89xOT / 62xNT (60xMatt-Acts). Its occurrences suggest it is a Jewish element/phenomena.

2. The High Holidays

These two days are the most sacred days of the Jewish year.

a. Rosh Ha-Shanah / 'Head of the year' / “Feast of Trumpets”

“The Jewish New Year, begins on the first day of Tishri and lasts two days. Rosh Ha-Shanah is the celebration of the creation of the world and God's rule over it. According to Jewish tradition, people are judged on Rosh Ha-Shanah for their deeds of the past year. **The chief symbol of Rosh Ha-Shanah is the shofar, a ram's horn that is sounded during the holiday worship.**” ([Emphasis Added] *World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

b. Yom Kippur / “Day of Atonement”

“Rosh Ha-Shanah beings the Ten Days of Penitence, which end on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

“Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year.” (McDowell, 369).

“The Day of Atonement” Lev 16; 25:9

3. The Pilgrim Festivals

“In ancient times, Jews were expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during three major festivals.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

“Each of these festivals is associated with some part of the Jews' escape from Egypt and their journey to Canaan.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

a. Pessah / Passover

“Passover, or Pesah, comes in March or April and celebrates the exodus of the Jews from Egypt.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

“Passover, the festival of spring, is celebrated one month after Purim. It constitutes the beginning of the time of harvest; therefore, it is a time of celebration. The deeper reason is to celebrate the deliverance of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.” (McDowell, p. 368).

“Passover” Pecach = “A pretermission, i.e. exemption; used only technically of the Jewish Passover (the festival or the victim).” 71xBible (Exod. 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48)

b. Shabuot / The Feast Of Weeks

“Shabuot, or Pentecost, comes 50 days after the beginning of Passover and commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

“Pentecost” Pentekoste = “Pentecost meaning 'the fiftieth day' or Harvest Feast or Feast of Weeks, may be regarded as a supplement to the Passover. It lasted for but one day. From the sixteenth of Nisan seven weeks were reckoned inclusively, and the next of fiftieth day was the

day of Pentecost which fell on the sixth of Sivan (about the end of May). Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-22; Nu. 28. The Pentecost was the Jewish harvest-home, and the people were especially exhorted to rejoice before Jehovah with their families, their servants, the Levite within their gates, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, in the place chosen by God for his name, as they brought a free-will offering of their hand to Jehovah their God (Deut. 16:10,11). The Pentecost is the only one of the three great feasts which is not mentioned as the memorial of events in the history of the Jews; but such a significance has been found in the fact that the law was given from Sinai on the fiftieth day after the deliverance from Egypt (Ex 12 and 19). In the exodus the people were offered to God as being first fruits; at Sinai their consecration to Him as a nation was completed.”

c. Sukkot / The Feast Of Tabernacles

“Sukkot is a harvest festival that begins five days after Yom Kippur. Jews build small huts for Sukkot as a reminder of the huts the Israelites lived in during their wandering in the wilderness.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

Lev 23:34; Deut 16:13,16; 31:10; 2 Chron 8:13; Ezra 3:4; Zech 14:6,18,19; John 7:2

4. Other Holidays

a. Hanukkah

“Hanukkah, or the Feast of Lights, is a celebration of God's deliverance of the Jews in 165 BC. That year, the Jews won their first struggle for religious freedom by defeating the Syrians, who wanted them to give up Judaism.” Usually comes in December. (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

b. Purim

“Purim is a festive holiday in February or March that commemorates the rescue of the Jews of Persia from a plot to kill them. On Purim, Jews read the book of Esther, which tells the story of this rescue.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179). Esther 9:18-32

H. “Food prepared in accordance with Jewish dietary laws is called kosher, which means ritually correct.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

I. “At the age of 13, a boy becomes a full member of the Jewish community. This event is celebrated in the synagogue with a ceremony called a bar mitzvah.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 179).

III. Practical

“The all-important difference between Christianity and Judaism is the Person of Jesus Christ. Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of a coming Messiah / Savior (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2). Judaism often recognizes Jesus as a good teacher, and perhaps even a prophet of God. Judaism does not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Taking it a step further, Christianity teaches that Jesus was God in the flesh (John 1:1,14; Hebrews 1:8). Christianity teaches that God became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ so He could lay down His life to pay the price for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Judaism strongly denies that Jesus was God or that such a sacrifice was necessary. Jesus Christ is the all-important distinction between Christianity and Judaism. The Person and work of Jesus Christ is the one primary issue that Christianity and Judaism cannot agree upon.”⁹

“The essential difference between Jews and Christians is that Christians accept Jesus as messiah and personal savior. **Jesus is not part of Jewish theology.** Amongst Jews, Jesus is not considered a divine being. Therefore all holidays which have a connection to the life of Jesus are not part of Jewish life and/or practice (Christmas, Easter, Lent, Advent, Palm Sunday, etc.).”¹⁰

- A. The Bible [Bibliology]
- B. Trinity – Jesus [Christology]
- C. Salvation [Soteriology]

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² <http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/jewish.htm>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population_by_country

⁴ http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/857823/jewish/Should-I-Convert-to-Judaism.htm

⁵ <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/state-of-israel-proclaimed>

⁶ <http://www.jewfaq.org/movement.htm>

⁷ <http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism>

⁸ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsources/Zionism/zionism.html>

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¹⁰ <http://www.reformjudaism.org/what-are-main-differences-between-jew-and-christian>

