

In Conjunction with the



Judaism in the Modern World

Instructor: [Dr. Eliezer Segal](#)



Eliezer Segal holds a Ph.D in Talmud from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and serves as Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary. He has published over one dozen books, has over 300 published articles, and over 50 scholarly articles published. He is committed to bringing the fruits of academic research to wider audiences through his popular newspaper columns in the Calgary Jewish newspapers.

Textbook:

- N. de Lange and M. Freud-Kandel, *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide*.

Course Description:

This course will study the main currents of modern Jewish thought and religious life, dealing with theological, literary and sociological topics. Among the topics to be dealt with are:

- The nature of Jewish society at the end of the Middle Ages
- The European Enlightenment and Emancipation Movements: Moses Mendelssohn.
- The rise of the Reform Movement in Europe and America
- Hasidism and its opponents.
- Orthodoxy and Neo-Orthodoxy.
- Religious attitudes towards Jewish nationalism and the Zionist movement.
- The principal North American Jewish movements: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist.
- The influence of the Holocaust and the State of Israel on Jewish religious life.

Core Competencies:

In addition to familiarizing the student with the important facts, authorities and religious movements of Modern Judaism, this course will provide guidance in the scholarly skills that are necessary for advanced study and research in the Humanities.

Critical analysis and interpretation of the evidence will play a central role in the class. Students will learn how to approach modern Judaism from a variety of methodological perspectives, in order to achieve a broad understanding of the diverse forms of recent Jewish religious life and thought.

Course Requirements:

There will be a final examination in this course.

Judaism in the Modern Age:

Selected Bibliography

General Works:

- ***General Reference:***
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- *The Encyclopedia Judaica*, BM 50 E52 1971
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- **Journals:**

- *Tradition* (Orthodox), BM 1 T7 PERIODICAL Also available in microform.
 - *Conservative Judaism*, BM 1 C64 V.33,1979/80; V.34,NO.1-3,5,6,1980/81-
 - Union of American Hebrew Congregations. *Reform Judaism*. Vol. Began publication with Sept. 1972 issue. New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations.
 - *AJS Review*. Cambridge Mass. Association of Jewish Studies
 - *Judaism*
 - *Prooftexts* (Jewish literature)
 - *Modern Judaism*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
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- **General Studies and Anthologies in Modern Judaism**

- Berger, Alan L. *Judaism in the Modern World, The B.G. Rudolph Lectures in Judaic Studies*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Blau, Joseph Leon. *Modern Varieties of Judaism, Lectures on the History of Religions / Sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies. New Series ; No. 8*. New York: Columbia University, 1966.
- Chazan, Robert, and Marc Lee Raphael. *Modern Jewish History: A Source Reader*.
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- Friesel, Evyatar. *Atlas of Modern Jewish History*. Rev. from the Hebrew ed, *Studies in Jewish History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Glatzer, Nahum Norbert. *Modern Jewish Thought: A Source Reader*. New York: Schocken, 1977.
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- Mahler, R., *A history of modern Jewry, DS 125 M341 1971*.
- Neusner, Jacob. *Judaism in Modern Times: An Introduction and Reader*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995.

- Noveck, Simon. *Great Jewish Personalities in Modern Times, The B'nai B'rith Great Books Series ; V.2*. New York: Farrar Straus and Cudahy, 1960.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul R. / Reinhartz, Jehuda, *The Jew in the modern world: a documentary history*, DS 102 J48 1980
- Patai, Raphael, and Emanuel S. Goldsmith. *Events and Movements in Modern Judaism*. 1st ed. New York: Paragon House, 1995.
- Raphael, Marc Lee, *Approaches to modern Judaism*, BM 195 A66 1983.
- Rosenthal, Gilbert S. *The Many Faces of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform*. New York.
- Sachar, Howard Morley. *The Course of Modern Jewish History*. New rev. ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1990
- Seltzer, Robert M. *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History*. New York: Macmillan, 1980.

Topics in Jewish Law (Halakhah)

- **General Works**

- Bleich, J. David, *Judaism and Healing*, KK 381 B53 1981
- Bleich, J. David. *Contemporary Halakhic Problems, Library of Jewish Law and Ethics ; V.4*. New York: Ktav, 1977, BM 520.3 B42 1977
- Bleich, J. David. *Judaism and Healing: Halakhic Perspectives*. New York: Ktav, 1981
- Cohn, Haim Hermann. *Jewish Law in Ancient and Modern Israel: Selected Essays*. [New York].
- Herring, Basil, *Jewish ethics and Halakhah for our time*,
- Elon, Menachem, *The Principles of Jewish law*, X 381 P67 1975
- Goldman, Alex J., *Judaism confronts contemporary issues*, BM 520.3 G64 1978
- Jacobs, Louis. *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility, and Creativity in Jewish Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Rosner, Fred. *Modern Medicine and Jewish Ethics*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1986.
- Rosner, Fred, *Modern medicine and Jewish law*, K 381 R66 1972
- Jackson, Bernard S. *Modern Research in Jewish Law, Jewish Law Annual. Supplement ; 1*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1980.
- Jackson, Bernard S. *Jewish Law in Legal History and the Modern World, Jewish Law Annual. Supplement ; 2*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1980.
- Novak, David, *Law and Theology in Judaism*, BM 522.74 O92 1974
- Novak, David, *Halakhah in a theological dimension*, BM 520.6 N68 1985
- Quint, Emanuel B., and Neil S. Hecht. *Jewish Jurisprudence: Its Sources and Modern Applications*. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1980.

- **Family, Sexuality and Women's Issues:**

- Berkovits, Eliezer. *Jewish Women in Time and Torah*. Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV Pub. House, 1990.
- Biale, Rachel, *Women and Jewish law: an exploration of women's issues in Halakhic sources*, BM 729 W6 B52 1984 CLASS NO.:
- Linzer, Norman. *The Jewish Family: Authority and Tradition in Modern Perspective*. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1984.
- Brewer, Joan Scherer, Lynn Davidman, and Evelyn Gross Avery. *Sex and the Modern Jewish Woman: An Annotated Bibliography*. Fresh Meadows, N.Y: Biblio Press, 1986.
- Feldman, David Michael, *Birth control in Jewish law / Marital relations, birth control, and abortion in Jewish law*, BM 728 F44 1968 / BM 720 S4 F44r
- Gordis, Robert. *Love & Sex: A Modern Jewish Perspective*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1978.
- Meiselman, Moshe, *Jewish woman in Jewish law*, K 381 M44 1978 / BM 520 M34
- Greenberg, Simon, and Jewish Theological Seminary of America. *The Ordination of Women as Rabbis: Studies and Responsa*, Moreshet Series ; V. 14. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1988.
- Nadell, Pamela Susan. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

- **Eras and Movements**

- **Emancipation and Enlightenment:**

- Graupe, Heinz Mosche. *The Rise of Modern Judaism: An Intellectual History of German Jewry, 1650-1942*. Huntington, N.Y.
 - Meyer, Michael A., *The origins of the modern Jew: Jewish identity and European culture in Germany, 1749-1824*, BM 316 M48 1967
 - Meyer, Michael A. *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824*.
 - Meyer, Michael A., *Response to modernity: a history of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, BM 197 M49 1988
 - Pelli, Moshe. *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany*, *Studies in Judaism in Modern Times* ; V. 5. Leiden.
 - Scult, Melvin Meyer. *The Conversion of the Jews and the Origins of the Jewish Emancipation in England*. [Waltham, Mass.: s.n.], 1968.
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- **Wissenschaft des Judentums and Academic Jewish Studies:**
 - Biale, David. *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*. Cambridge, Mass.
 - Petuchowski, Jakob Josef, and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger: An HUC-JIR Symposium*. New York: Ktav, 1975.
 - Rose, Albert. *A People and Its Faith: Essays on Jews and Reform Judaism in a Changing Canada*. [Toronto].
 - Schweid, Eliezer, and Caroline McCracken-Flesher. *Judaism and Mysticism According to Gershom Scholem: A Critical Analysis and Programmatic Discussion, Scholars Press Reprints and Translations Series*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.
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- **Reform Judaism:**
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 - Greenstein, Howard R. *Turning Point, Zionism and Reform Judaism, Brown Judaic Studies ; No.12*. Chico, Calif.
 - Kaplan, Dana Evan. *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism: Conflicting Visions*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
 - Kraut, Benny. *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler, Monographs of the American Jewish Archives ; No.5*. Cincinnati.
 - Lenn, Theodore I., and Central Conference of American Rabbis. *Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism: [by] Theodore I. Lenn and Associates. Commissioned by the Central Conference of American Rabbis*.
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- **Conservative Judaism:**

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- Davis, Moshe. *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America*. 1st -- ed, *The Jakob R. Schiff Library of Jewish Contributions to American Democracy ; No. 15*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965.
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- Shargel, Baila Round. *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism, Moreshet Series ; V. 10*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1985.

- **Reconstructionism:**

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 - Scult, Mel. *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan, American Jewish Civilization Series*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993.
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- **Orthodoxy:**

- Ellenson, David Harry. *Tradition in Transition: Orthodoxy, Halakhah, and the Boundaries of Modern Jewish Identity, Studies in Judaism*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989.
 - Goldberg, Hillel. *Israel Salanter, Text, Structure, Idea: The Ethics and Theology of an Early Psychologist of the Unconscious*. New York.
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- **Hasidism:**

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- Buber, Martin. *Ten Rungs: Hasidic Sayings*. New York.

- Buber, Martin, and Maurice Friedman. *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*. New York.
- *Hasidism and Modern Man*, Harper Torchbooks. *The Temple Library*. New York.
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- Jacobs, Louis. *Seeker of Unity: The Life and Works of Aaron of Starosselje*.
- Krassen, Miles. *Uniter of Heaven and Earth: Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh and the Rise of Hasidism in Eastern Galicia*, *Suny Series in Judaica*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
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- Rosman, Murray Jay. *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba*Al Shem Tov, Contraversions ; 5*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1996.

- **Zionism:**

- Gitenstein, R. Barbara. *Apocalyptic Messianism and Contemporary Jewish-American Poetry*, *Suny Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
- Hertzberg, Arthur, *The Zionist idea: a historical analysis and reader*, DS 149 H45 1959
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- Ravitzky, Aviezer. *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, *Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

• Modern Jewish Thought, Philosophy and Theology:

• **Modern Jewish Philosophy and Ethics:**

- Agus, Jacob Bernard. *Modern Philosophies of Judaism: A Study of Recent Jewish Philosophies of Religion*, by Jacob B. Agus.
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- Sherwin, Byron L. *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent: The Life and Works of Judah Loew of Prague*. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982.
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- **Individual Philosophers, Thinkers and Theologians:**

- **Abraham Isaac Kook:**

- Kook, Abraham Isaac, and Ben Zion Bokser. *The Lights of Penitence: The Moral Principles: Lights of Holiness: Essays, Letters, and Poems, Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
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○ **Franz Rosenzweig:**

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- **Introduction and Background**

What is "Judaism"?

Can be defined in different ways: Ethnic, cultural, nationalistic, historical, etc.

This course--in Religious Studies!-- will focus on religious questions:

Such as:

- Religious institutions
- Religious law
- Beliefs and ideologies

What is "Modern"?

Time frame? Depends how we define "modern."

What meanings does the term "modern" have in European history? Are they appropriate to Jewish history?

Possible definition: Judaism during the period that is defined as "modern" in European history.

Qualitative features of Jewish modernity:

- Emancipation: Political, social and economic
- Enlightenment: New ideas and beliefs.

Contrast with Medieval Judaism

Principal Features of Medieval Judaism

Economic and Social:

Vocational restrictions: Jews forbidden to own land or join craft guilds: Confined to banking and finance ("middle class").

Live in separate neighbourhoods: "*Ghettos*."

- *Legal autonomy*: Jews as a "corporation" live according to their own laws, using their own languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, etc.).
 - - *Authority of the Rabbis*.
 - "*Kahal*" = Communal leadership. Enforcement by "*Herem*" (Ban).
- Jewish communities administered their own social and religious institutions:

- *Schools*: Elementary (Heder) and advanced (Yeshivah). Widespread literacy.
- *Synagogues*
- *Charitable funds* e.g., Gemilut Hasadim (free-loan society); agencies for dowries, hospitals, burial, etc.



Main Streams of Medieval Jewish Religious Thought:

1) Rabbinism

- Study of religious texts: Written and Oral Torahs, especially the Babylonian Talmud.
- Study of Bible usually mediated by tradition.
- Centrality of law "Halakhah." Continuing development of practical and theoretical law.
- Basic beliefs: Monotheism, national mission, covenant, study and observance of the Torah, Messianism, etc.

2) Rationalism and Philosophy:

Especially in Islamic countries, influence of Aristotle, as adapted by Moses Maimonides.

- Philosophers' "prime mover," "first cause," etc. is the traditional God of revelation. Fight against anthropomorphism. Downplaying of personal God and nationalism, emphasis on universal truths.
- Emphasis on knowledge of God as chief religious aim. All other aspects, including observance of religious laws, are means to that end. Tendency towards elitism.

3) Kabbalah: Jewish Mysticism.

- God is beyond rational analysis, can only be known through revealed scripture.
- Special way of reading the Bible, as references to the ten "*Sefirot*"--Creative powers through which God interacts and communicates with the world.

- Tension between justice and mercy (female and male, left and right).
- Human actions affect the Divine. Every observance or transgression has cosmic significance. Provides justification for traditional religious values.
- Lurianic Kabbalah (following Spanish Expulsion) emphasizes mystical messianism: Israel's exile is symptomatic of a disunity within God. Therefore the repairing of this flaw is tied to the national restoration of the Jews. Leads to (false) messianic movements: Shabbetai Zvi, Jacob Frank, etc.
- [The Emancipation](#)



Emancipation

Definition:

"The legal process, which began in Europe with the French Revolution, of granting to the Jews equal civic rights in the countries in which they reside."

By Extension:

"The whole cultural and social movement promoting directly and indirectly Jewish integration."

Causes:

- Rise of nation-state and mercantilism. People were valued for their individual contributions to the national treasury.
- Liberal philosophy: Ideals of equality must be applied equally, *even* to Jews.

Implications of Emancipation:

Rights:

- It offered Jews rights as individuals.

Previously they had enjoyed rights *as a group*.

The cost:

- The Jews were expected to give up their *communal, cultural* and *national* identities.

The Ideological Expression of Emancipation	=	"Enlightenment."
The Religious Expression of Emancipation	=	"Reform."

Challenges to traditional Jewish religious ideas:

- **Messianism and National redemption**
 - Often equated with ideals of Emancipation and Enlightenment, universal brotherhood, etc.
 - **Hope for restoration to homeland**
 - Ties to Jews in other countries.
 - Question of "dual loyalties."
 - **Perception of *Galut* (exile).**
 - "Mission" theory of Jewish exile.
 - **Ideas of religious evolution and progress.**
 - **Tension between universalism and need to proclaim superiority of Judaism.**
 - **Use of Hebrew.**
 - **Jewish legal autonomy as a *religious* value.**
 - **Religion would now be treated only as a matter of individual *belief*.**
 - *Less emphasis on practice and observance.*
 - *Transformation of Rabbi into clergyman.*
 - ***New emphasis on Bible.***
 - ***Anti-Jewish assumptions in European society***
 - *It was assumed by Christians that the Jews were a backward, materialistic people, lacking culture and spirituality.*
 - *Introduction of reforms in religious practice in order to conform to the aesthetic standards of the host society.*
 - *Some felt that this was a result of the Jews' forcible segregation, and would be remedied once Jews were permitted access to more advanced ideas and culture.*
 - *Jews often accepted these stereotypes, and felt the need to improve themselves, in order to be worthy of acceptance by the host society.*
 - *Demand for vocational retraining of Jews, often based on the assumption that the Jewish concentration on banking was part of their religion!*
 - *It was widely assumed that European liberal Protestant culture was the embodiment of universal enlightenment.*
-



Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86): Pioneer of Jewish Enlightenment

Biography;

A traditionally observant Jew who also excelled as a philosopher and literary figure. Relationship with Gottfried Lessing (Nathan der Weise).

Challenge by Johann Lavater to either refute Christianity or convert.

Jerusalem:

[Click here to read passage from Jerusalem](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/363_Transp/MendelssohnJerusalem.html)

http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/363_Transp/MendelssohnJerusalem.html

Presentation of Judaism as more universal than Christianity.

Mendelssohn's Programme:

- **Opposition to use of Herem (ban of excommunication)**
 - *the principal means of the Rabbis' control over the Jewish community)*
 - *Weakening of central authority accelerates rise of factionalism.*

- **Education of the Jewish masses:**
 - **Translation of the Bible into German**
 - *(in Hebrew letters).*
 - **New Hebrew Bible Commentary.**
 - **Hebrew Journals**

 - [Passage from Moses Mendelssohn's "Jerusalem"](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/363_Transp/MendelssohnJerusalem.html)
http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/363_Transp/MendelssohnJerusalem.html

MOSES MENDELSSOHN

Judaism as Revealed Legislation

I must, however, do justice to [Herr Moerschel's] penetrating eye. He is, partly, not wrong in his observations. It is true. I *acknowledge no immutable truths, but such as not only may be made conceivable to the human understanding, but as also admit of being demonstrated and warranted by human faculties.* There only he is misled by an erroneous notion of Judaism, when he supposes that I cannot maintain this without deviating from the religion of my forefathers. On the contrary, this is just what I hold an essential point of the Jewish religion; and I think that this doctrine forms a characteristic difference

between it and the Christian. To express it in one word, I believe that Judaism knows nothing of a revealed religion, in the sense in which it is taken by Christians. The Israelites have a divine legislation: laws, commandments, statutes, rules of life, instruction in the will of God, and lessons how to conduct themselves in order to attain both temporal and spiritual happiness: those laws commandments, etc., were revealed to them through Moses, in a miraculous and supernatural manner; but dogmas, no saving truths, no' general self-evident propositions: Those the Lord always reveals to us, the same as to the rest of mankind, by *nature. and by events*; but never in spoken or written words [of revelation]

Now I am able to concentrate my ideas of Judaism of former times, and bring them under one focus. Judaism consisted, or, according to the founder's design was to consist of:

1. Religious dogmas and propositions of *immutable truths* of God, of his government providence, without which man can neither be enlightened nor happy. These were not forced on the belief of the people, by threats of eternal or temporal punishment, but suitably to the nature and evidence of immutable truths, recommended for rational consideration. They needed not be suggested by direct revelation, or promulgated by *words* or *writing*, which are understood only *in this or that place, at this or that time*. The Supreme Being revealed them all to all rational beings, by events and by ideas, and inscribed them in their soul, in a character legible and intelligible at all times, and in all places. Hence sings the frequently quoted bard:

The heavens tell the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work.

One day streams this unto another, and night therein instructeth night.

No lesson or words of which the voice is not heard; their chord rings through the entire globe; their discourse penetrates to the extremes of the inhabited world, where he set a tabernacle to the sun, etc. (Ps. 70:1).

Their effect is as universal as the salutary influence of the sun, which, while revolving round its orbit, diffuses light and heat over the whole globe, as the same bard still more distinctly declares in another place:

From where the sun rises to where it sets, the name of the Lord is praised.

Or, as the prophet Malachi says, in the name of the Lord: "From where the sun rises to where it sets, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in all places, incense, sacrifice, and pure meal-offerings are offered unto my name, for my name is great among the heathen."

2. Historical truths, or accounts of the occurrences of the primitive world, especially memoirs of the lives of the first ancestors of the nation; of their knowledge of the true correction immediately following thereon; of the covenant which God

entered into with them, and his frequent promise to make their descendants a nation dedicated to himself.

These historical truths, contain the groundwork of the national union; and, as historical truths, they cannot, according to their nature, be received otherwise than *on trust*; authority alone gives them the necessary evidence. And they were, moreover, confirmed to the nation by miracles, and supported by an authority which sufficed to place *faith* beyond all doubt and hesitation.

3. Laws, judgments, commandments, rules of life, which were to be peculiar to that nation; and by observing which, it was to arrive at national--as well as every single member thereof, at individual-happiness. The lawgiver was God himself; God, not in his revelations as Creator and Preserver of the universe, but God, as Lord Protector and ally of their forefathers; as the liberator, founder, and leader, as the king and ruler of that people. And he gave the laws a sanction, than which nothing could be more solemn; he gave them publicly, and in a marvellous manner never before heard of, whereby they were imposed on the nation, and on their descendants for ever, as an unalterable duty and obligation.

These laws were *revealed*, that is, they were made known by the Lord, by *words* and *in writing*. Still, only the most essential part thereof was entrusted to letters; and without the unwritten laws, without explanations, limitations, and more particularly definitions, even these written laws are mostly unintelligible, or must become so in the course of time; since neither any words or written characters whatever retain their meaning unaltered, for the natural age of man.

As *directions to general practice*, and rules of conduct, both the written and unwritten laws have public and private happiness for their immediate object. But they must also be mostly considered as a mode of writing; and as *ceremonial laws*, there is no sense and meaning in them. They lead inquiring reason to divine truths; partly to eternal, partly to historical truths, on which the religion of *that* nation was founded. The ceremonial law was the bond for uniting practice with speculation, conduct with doctrine. The ceremonial law was to offer inducements to personal intercourse and social connexion between the school and the professor, the inquirer and the instructor, and to excite and encourage competition and emulation; and that purpose it actually did answer in the first times, before the polity degenerated, and human folly again intermeddled to change, by ignorance and misguidance, good to evil, and the beneficial to the hurtful.

- o [The French Assembly of Jewish Notables: Answers to Questions from Napoleon](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/363_Transp/Sanhedrin.html)
http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/363_Transp/Sanhedrin.html



THE ASSEMBLY OF JEWISH NOTABLES

Answers to Napoleon

Resolved, by the French deputies professing the religion of Moses, that the following Declaration shall precede the answers returned to the questions proposed by the Commissioners of His Imperial and Royal Majesty.

The assembly, impressed with a deep sense of gratitude, love, respect, and admiration, for the sacred person of His Imperial and Royal Majesty, declares, in the name of all Frenchmen professing the religion of Moses, that they are fully determined to prove worthy of the favours His Majesty intends for them, by scrupulously conforming to his paternal intentions; that their religion makes it their duty to consider the law of the prince as the supreme law in civil and political matters; that consequently, should their religious code, or its various interpretations, contain civil or political commands, at variance with those of the French code, those commands would, of course, cease to influence and govern them, since they must, above all, acknowledge and obey the laws of the prince.

That, in consequence of this principle, the Jews have, at all times, considered it their duty to obey the laws of the state, and that, since the revolution, they, like all Frenchmen, have acknowledged no others.

First Question:

Is it lawful for Jews to marry more than one wife?

Answer:

It is not lawful for Jews to marry more than one wife: in all European countries they conform to the general practice marrying only one.

Moses does not command expressly to take several, but he does not forbid it. He seems even to adopt that custom as generally prevailing, since he settles the rights of inheritance between children of different wives. Although this practice still prevails in the East, yet their ancient doctors have enjoined them to restrain from taking more than one wife, except when the man is enabled by his fortune to maintain several.

The case has been different in the West; the wish of adopting the customs of the inhabitants of this part of the world has induced the Jews to renounce polygamy. But as several individuals still indulged in that practice, a synod was convened at Worms in the eleventh century, composed of one hundred Rabbis, with Gershom at their head. This assembly pronounced an anathema against every Israelite who should, in future, take more than one wife.

Although this prohibition was not to last for ever, the influence of European manners has universally prevailed.

Second Question:

Is divorce allowed by the Jewish religion? Is divorce valid when not pronounced by courts of justice by virtue of laws in contradiction with those of the French Code?

Answer:

Repudiation is allowed by the law of Moses; but it is not valid if not Previously pronounced by the French code.

In the eyes of every Israelite, without exception, submission to the prince is the first of duties. It is a Principle generally acknowledged among them, that, in every thing relating to civil or political interests, the law of the state is the supreme law. Before they were admitted in France to share the rights of all citizens, and when they lived under a particular legislation which set them at liberty to follow their religious customs, they had the ability to divorce their wives; but it was extremely rare to see it put into practice. Since the revolution, they have acknowledged no other laws on this head but those of the empire. At the epoch when they were admitted to the rank of citizens, the Rabbis and the principal Jews appeared before the municipalities of their respective places of abode, and took an oath to conform, in every thing to the laws, and to acknowledge no other rules in all civil matters...

Third Question:

Can a Jewess marry a Christian, and a Jew a Christian woman" Or does the law allow the Jews to marry only among themselves?

Answer:

The law does not say that a Jewess cannot marry a Christian, nor a Jew a Christian woman; nor does it state that the Jews can only marry among themselves. The only marriages expressly forbidden by the law, are those with the seven Canaanite nations, with Amon and Moab, and with the Egyptians. The prohibition is absolute concerning: the seven Canaanite nations: with regard to Amon and Moab, it is limited, according to many Talmudists, to the men of those nations, and does not extend to the women; it is even thought that these last would have embraced the Jewish religion. As to Egyptians,

the prohibition is limited to the third generation. The prohibition in general applies only to nations in idolatry. The Talmud declares formally that modern nations are not to be considered as such, since they worship, like us, the God of heaven and earth. And, accordingly, there have been, at several periods, intermarriages between Jews and Christians in France, in Spain, and in Germany: these marriages were sometimes tolerated, and sometimes forbidden by the laws of those sovereigns, who had received Jews into their dominions.

Unions of this kind are still found in France; but we cannot deny that the opinion of the Rabbis is against these marriages. According to their doctrine, although the religion of Moses has not forbidden the Jews from intermarrying with nations not of their religion, yet, as marriages, according to the Talmud, requires religious ceremonies called Kiduschim, with the benediction used in such cases, no marriage can be religiously valid unless these ceremonies have been performed. This could not be done towards persons who would not both of them consider these ceremonies as sacred; and in that the married couple could separate without the religious divorce; they would then be considered as married civilly but not religiously.

Such is the opinion of the Rabbis, members of this assembly. In general they would be no more inclined to bless the union of a Jewess with a Christian, or of a Jew with a Christian woman, than Catholic priests themselves would be disposed to sanction unions of this kind. The Rabbis acknowledge, however, that a Jew, who marries a Christian woman, does not cease on that account, to be considered as a Jew by his brethren, any more than if he had married a Jewess civilly and not religiously.

Fourth Question:

In the eyes of Jews, are Frenchmen considered as their brethren? Or are they considered as strangers?

Answer:

In the eyes of Jews Frenchmen are their brethren, and are not strangers.

The true spirit of the law of Moses is consonant with this mode of considering Frenchmen. When the Israelites formed a settled land or independent nation, their law made it a rule for them to consider strangers as their brethren.

With the most tender care for their welfare, their lawgiver commands to love them, "Love ye therefore the strangers," says he to the Israelites, "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Respect and benevolence towards strangers are enforced by Moses, not as an exhortation to the practice of social morality only, but as an obligation imposed by God himself.

A religion whose fundamental maxims are such--a religion which makes a duty of loving the stranger--which enforces the practice of social virtues, must surely require that its followers should consider their fellow-citizens as brethren.

And how could they consider them otherwise when they inhabit the same land, when they are ruled and protected by the same government, and by the same laws? When they enjoy the same rights, and have the same duties to fulfil? There exists, even between the Jew and Christian, a tie which abundantly compensates for religion--it is the tie of gratitude. This sentiment was at first excited in us by the mere grant of toleration. It has been increased, these eighteen years, by new favours from government, to such a degree of energy, that now our fate is irrevocably linked with the common fate of all Frenchmen. Yes, France is our country; all Frenchmen are our brethren, and this glorious title, by raising us our own esteem, becomes a sure pledge that we shall never cease to be worthy of it.

Fifth Question:

In either case, what line of conduct does their law prescribe towards Frenchmen not of their religion?

Answer:

The line of conduct prescribed towards Frenchmen not of our religion, is the same as that prescribed between Jews themselves; we admit of no differences but that of worshipping the Supreme Being, every one in his own way.

The answer to the preceding question has explained the line of conduct which the law of Moses and the Talmud prescribe towards French men not of our religion. At the present time, when the Jews no longer form a separate people, but enjoy the advantage of being incorporated with the Great Nation (which privilege they consider as a kind of political redemption), it is impossible that a Jew should treat a Frenchman, not of his religion, in any other manner than he would treat one of his Israelite brethren.

Sixth Question:

Do Jews born in France, and treated by the laws as French citizens, consider France their country?

Are they bound to defend it?

Are they bound to obey the laws and to conform to the dispositions of the civil code?

Answer:

Men who have adopted a country, who have resided in it these many generations-- who, even under the restraint of particular laws which abridged their civil rights, were so

attached to it that they preferred being debarred from the advantages common to all other citizens, rather than leave it--cannot but consider themselves as Frenchmen in France; and they consider as equally sacred and honourable the bounden duty of defending their country.

Jeremiah (chapter 29) exhorts the Jews to consider Babylon as their country, although they were to remain in it only for seventy years. He exhorts them to till the ground, to build houses, to sow, and to plant. His recommendation was so much attended to, that Ezra (chapter 2) says, that when Cyrus allowed them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, 42,360 only, left Babylon; and that this number was mostly composed of the poor people, the wealthy having remained in that city.

The love of the country is in the heart of Jews a sentiment so natural, so powerful, and so consonant to their religious opinions, that a French Jew considers himself in England, as among strangers, although he may be among Jews; and the case is the same with English Jews in France.

To such a pitch is this sentiment carried among them, that during the last war, French Jews have been seen fighting desperately against other Jews, the subjects of countries then at war with France.

Many of them are covered with honourable wounds, and others have obtained, in the field of honour, the noble rewards of bravery.

Seventh Question:

Who names the Rabbis?

Answer:

Since the revolution, the majority of the chiefs of families names the Rabbi, wherever there is a sufficient number of Jews to maintain one, after previous inquiries as to the morality and learning of the candidate. This mode of election is not, however, uniform: it varies according to place, and, to this day, whatever concerns the elections of Rabbis is still in a state of uncertainty.

Eighth Question:

What police jurisdiction do Rabbis exercise among the Jews?

What judicial power do they enjoy among them?

Answer:

The Rabbis exercise no manner of Police Jurisdiction among the Jews. It is only in the Mishnah and in the Talmud that the word Rabbi is found for the first time applied to a

doctor in the law; and he was commonly indebted for this qualification to his reputation, and to the opinion generally entertained of his learning.

When the Israelites were totally dispersed, they formed small communities in those places where they were allowed to settle in certain numbers.

Sometimes, in these circumstances, a Rabbi and two other doctors formed a kind of tribunal, named Beth Din, that is, House of Justice; the Rabbi fulfilled the functions of judge, and the other two those of his assessors.

The attributes, and even the existence of these tribunals, have, to this day, always depended on the will of government under which the Jews have lived, and on the degree of tolerance they have enjoyed. Since the revolution those rabbinical tribunals are totally suppressed in France, and in Italy. The Jews, raised to the rank of citizens, have conformed in every thing to the laws of the state; and, accordingly, the functions of Rabbis, wherever any are established, are limited to preaching morality in the temples, blessing marriages, and pronouncing divorces....

Ninth Question:

Are these forms of Election, and that police-jurisdiction, regulated by law, or are they only sanctioned by custom?

Answer:

The answer to the preceding questions makes it useless to say much on this, only it may be remarked, that, even supposing that Rabbis should have, to this day, preserved some kind of police-judicial jurisdiction among us, which is not the case, neither such jurisdiction, nor the forms of the elections, could be said to be sanctioned by the law; they should be attributed solely to custom.

Tenth Question:

Are there professions which the law of the Jews forbids them from exercising?

Answer:

There are none: on the contrary, the Talmud (vide Kiduschim, chapter 1) expressly declares that "the father who does not teach a profession to his child, rears him up to be a villain."

Eleventh Question:

Does the law forbid the Jews from taking usury from their brethren?

Answer:

Deuteronomy says, "thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother, interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of any thing that is lent upon interest."

The Hebrew word neskeh has been improperly translated by the word usury: in the Hebrew language it means interest of any kind, and not usurious interest. It cannot then be taken in the meaning now given the word usury.

Twelfth Question:

Does it forbid or does it allow to take usury from strangers?

Answer:

We have seen, in the answer to the foregoing question, that the prohibition of usury, considered as the smallest interest, was a maxim of charity and of benevolence, rather than a commercial regulation. In this point of view it is equally condemned by the law of Moses and by the Talmud: We are generally forbidden, always on the score of charity, to lend upon interest to our fellow citizens of different persuasions, as well as to our fellow-Jews.

The disposition of the law, which allows to take interest from the stranger, evidently refers only to nations in commercial intercourse with us; otherwise there would be an evident contradiction between this passage and twenty others of the sacred writings. Thus the prohibition extended to the stranger who dwelt in Israel; the Holy Writ places them under the safe-guard of God; he is a sacred guest, and God orders us to treat him like the widow and like the orphan. Can Moses be considered as the lawgiver of the universe, because he was the lawgiver of the Jews?

Were the laws he gave to the people, which God had entrusted to his care, likely to become the general laws of mankind? Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother. What security had he, that, in the intercourse which would be naturally established between the Jews and foreign nations these last would renounce customs generally prevailing in trade, and lend to the Jews without requiring any interest? Was he then bound to sacrifice the interest of his people, and to impoverish the Jews to enrich foreign nations? Is it not absolutely absurd to reproach him with having put a restriction to the precept contained in Deuteronomy? What lawgiver but would have considered such a restriction as a natural principle of reciprocity?

How far superior in simplicity, generosity, justice, and humanity, is the law of Moses, on this matter, to those of the Greeks and of the Romans! Can we find, in the history of the ancient Israelites, those scandalous scenes of rebellion excited by the harshness of creditors towards their debtors, those frequent abolitions of debts to prevent the multitude, impoverished by the extortions of lenders, from being driven to despair?

The law of Moses and its interpreters have distinguished, with a praiseworthy humanity, the different uses of borrowed money. Is it to maintain a family? Interest is forbidden. Is

it to undertake a commercial speculation, by which the principal is adventured? Interest is allowed, even between Jews. Lend to the Poor, says Moses. Here the tribute of gratitude is the only kind of interest allowed; the satisfaction of obliging is the sole recompense of the conferred benefit. The case is different in regard to capitals employed in extensive commerce: there, Moses allows the lender to come in for a share of the profits of the borrower; and as commerce was scarcely known among the Israelites, who were exclusively addicted to agricultural pursuits, and as it was carried on only with strangers, that is with neighbouring nations, it was allowed to share its profits with them....

It is an incontrovertible point, according to the Talmud, that interest, even among Israelites, is lawful in commercial operations, where the lender, running some of the risk of the borrower, becomes a sharer in his profits, This is the opinion of all Jewish doctors. It is evident that opinions, teeming with absurdities, and contrary to all rules of social morality, although advanced by a Rabbi, can no more be imputed to the general doctrine of the Jews, than similar notions, if advanced by Catholic theologians, could be attributed to the evangelical doctrine. The same may be said of the general charge made against the Hebrews, that they are naturally inclined to usury: it cannot be denied that some of them: are to be found, though not so many as is generally supposed, who follow that nefarious traffic condemned by their religion. But if there are some not over-nice in this particular, is it just to accuse one hundred thousand individuals of this vice?

Would it not be deemed an injustice to lay the same imputation on all Christians because some of them are guilty of usury?

- [The Enlightenment](#)



Enlightenment

Definitions:

A Jewish ideological movement that aimed at modernizing Jewish life and thought.

Seen as necessary step towards political and social Emancipation.

Haskalah: Hebrew term for "Enlightenment"; literally: "Rationalization."

A participant in this movement was known in Hebrew as a **Maskil**.

Ideals of **Reason** (Judaism as rational belief), **Tolerance and Human Perfectibility**.

Emphasis on **Moral** dimension of Judaism

Features of Movement:

Cooperation with liberal-minded Christian thinkers.

Dissemination of ideology through *journals*, usually in Hebrew (Notably: *Ha-Me'assef*, Berlin).

Goal of civilizing Jews. Replacing Yiddish with proper German.

Compare to European Enlightenment:

*Result of the Protestant Reformation, which led to conviction that religion is a matter of individual conscience. Advocated separation of Church and State.

*Conviction that there is a universal natural religion (including theology and morality) that all individual religions must conform to.

Three phases of Jewish Enlightenment:

1. Central European (German)--1783-

2. Galician European--1820-

Struggle against Hassidism.

3. Eastern European--1830-1882

Discredited as tool of government

Major demands:

1. Vocational reform ("productivity").
2. Educational reform: Displacement of **Talmud**.
3. Religious Reform.

The German *Haskalah* was largely a middle-class phenomenon.

Inability to provide justification for Jewish continuity: Many of the *Maskilim* or their children converted to Christianity, considered the precondition to acceptance in European society.

Many Jews accepted the claims of liberal Protestantism to be a universal, non-dogmatic religion. [Note example of David Friedlander].

- [Passage from Spinoza's "Theologico-Political Treatise"](#)

Spinoza's "A Theologico-Political Treatise"

CHAPTER V

THE CEREMONIAL LAW

(5:1) In the foregoing chapter we have shown that the Divine law, which renders men truly blessed, and teaches them the true life, is universal to all men; nay, we have so intimately deduced it from human nature that it must be esteemed innate, and, as it were, ingrained in the human mind.

(5:2) But with regard to the ceremonial observances which were ordained in the Old Testament for the Hebrews only, and were so adapted to their state that they could for the most part only be observed by the society as a whole and not by each individual, it is evident that they formed no part of the Divine law, and had nothing to do with blessedness and virtue, but had reference only to the election of the Hebrews, that is (as I have shown in Chap. III.), to their temporal bodily happiness and the tranquillity of their kingdom, and that therefore they were only valid while that kingdom lasted.

(5:3) If in the Old Testament they are spoken of as the law of God, it is only because they were founded on revelation, or a basis of revelation.

(5:4) Still as reason, however sound, has little weight with ordinary theologians, I will adduce the authority of Scripture for what I here assert, and will further show, for the sake of greater clearness, why and how these ceremonials served to establish and preserve the Jewish kingdom.

(5:5) Isaiah teaches most plainly that the Divine law in its strict sense signifies that universal law which consists in a true manner of life, and does not signify ceremonial observances.

(5:6) In chapter i:10, the prophet calls on his countrymen to hearken to the Divine law as he delivers it, and first excluding all kinds of sacrifices and all feasts, he at length sums up the law in these few words, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well: seek judgment, relieve the oppressed.

(5:7) Not less striking testimony is given in Psalm xl:7- 9, where the Psalmist addresses God: "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required; I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart."

(5:8) Here the Psalmist reckons as the law of God only that which is inscribed in his heart, and excludes ceremonies therefrom, for the latter are good and inscribed on the heart only from the fact of their institution, and not because of their intrinsic value.

(5:9) Other passages of Scripture testify to the same truth, but these two will suffice.

(5:10) We may also learn from the Bible that ceremonies are no aid to blessedness, but only have reference to the temporal prosperity of the kingdom; for the rewards promised for their observance are merely temporal advantages and delights, blessedness being reserved for the universal Divine law.

(5:11) In all the five books commonly attributed to Moses nothing is promised, as I have said, beyond temporal benefits, such as honours, fame, victories, riches, enjoyments, and health.

(5:12) Though many moral precepts besides ceremonies are contained in these five books, they appear not as moral doctrines universal to all men, but as commands especially adapted to the understanding and character of the Hebrew people, and as having reference only to the welfare of the kingdom.

(5:13) For instance, Moses does not teach the Jews as a prophet not to kill or to steal, but gives these commandments solely as a law-giver and judge; he does not reason out the doctrine, but affixes for its non-observance a penalty which may and very properly does vary in different nations.

(5:14) So, too, the command not to commit adultery is given merely with reference to the welfare of the state; for if the moral doctrine had been intended, with reference not only to the welfare of the state, but also to the tranquillity and blessedness of the individual, Moses would have condemned not merely the outward act, but also the mental acquiescence, as is done by Christ, Who taught only universal moral precepts, and for this cause promises a spiritual instead of a temporal reward.

(5:15) Christ, as I have said, was sent into the world, not to preserve the state nor to lay down laws, but solely to teach the universal moral law, so we can easily understand that He wished in nowise to do away with the law of Moses, inasmuch as He introduced no new laws of His own. His sole care was to teach moral doctrines, and distinguish them from the laws of the state; for the Pharisees, in their ignorance, thought that the observance of the state law and the Mosaic law was the sum total of morality; whereas such laws merely had reference to the public welfare, and aimed not so much at instructing the Jews as at keeping them under constraint.

(5:16) But let us return to our subject, and cite other passages of Scripture which set forth temporal benefits as rewards for observing the ceremonial law, and blessedness as reward for the universal law.

(5:17) None of the prophets puts the point more clearly than Isaiah.

(5:18) After condemning hypocrisy he commends liberty and charity towards one's self and one's neighbours, and promises as a reward: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily, thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward." (Isa. lviii:8).

(5:19) Shortly afterwards he commends the Sabbath, and for a due observance of it, promises: "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

(5:20) Thus the prophet for liberty bestowed, and charitable works, promises a healthy mind in a healthy body, and the glory of the Lord even after death; whereas, for ceremonial exactitude, he only promises security of rule, prosperity, and temporal happiness.

(5:21) In Psalms xv. and xxiv. no mention is made of ceremonies, but only of moral doctrines, inasmuch as there is no question of anything but blessedness, and blessedness is symbolically promised: it is quite certain that the expressions, "the hill of God," and "His tents and the dwellers therein," refer to blessedness and security of soul, not to the actual mount of Jerusalem and the tabernacle of Moses, for these latter were not dwelt in by anyone, and only the sons of Levi ministered there.

(5:22) Further, all those sentences of Solomon to which I referred in the last chapter, for the cultivation of the intellect and wisdom, promise true blessedness, for by wisdom is the fear of God at length understood, and the knowledge of God found.

(5:23) That the Jews themselves were not bound to practise their ceremonial observances after the destruction of their kingdom is evident from Jeremiah.

(5:24) For when the prophet saw and foretold that the desolation of the city was at hand, he said that God only delights in those who know and understand that He exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, and that such persons only are worthy of praise. (Jer. ix:23.)

(5:25) As though Go had said that, after the desolation of the city, He would require nothing special from the Jews beyond the natural law by which all men are bound.

(5:26) The New Testament also confirms this view, for only moral doctrines are therein taught, and the kingdom of heaven is promised as a reward, whereas ceremonial observances are not touched on by the Apostles, after they began to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

(5:27) The Pharisees certainly continued to practise these rites after the destruction of the kingdom, but more with a view of opposing the Christians than of pleasing God: for after the first destruction of the city, when they were led captive to Babylon, not being then, so far as I am aware, split up into sects, they straightway neglected their rites, bid farewell to the Mosaic law, buried their national customs in oblivion as being plainly superfluous, and began to mingle with other nations, as we may abundantly learn from Ezra and Nehemiah.

(5:28) We cannot, therefore, doubt that they were no more bound by the law of Moses, after the destruction of their kingdom, than they had been before it had been begun, while they were still living among other peoples before the exodus from Egypt, and were subject to no special law beyond the natural law, and also, doubtless, the law of the state in which they were living, in so far as it was consonant with the Divine natural law.

(5:29) As to the fact that the patriarchs offered sacrifices, I think they did so for the purpose of stimulating their piety, for their minds had been accustomed from childhood to the idea of sacrifice, which we know had been universal from the time of Enoch; and thus they found in sacrifice their most powerful incentive.

(5:30) The patriarchs, then, did not sacrifice to God at the bidding of a Divine right, or as taught by the basis of the Divine law, but simply in accordance with the custom of the time; and, if in so doing they followed any ordinance, it was simply the ordinance of the country they were living in, by which (as we have seen before in the case of Melchisedek) they were bound.

(5:31) I think that I have now given Scriptural authority for my view: it remains to show why and how the ceremonial observances tended to preserve and confirm the Hebrew kingdom; and this I can very briefly do on grounds universally accepted.

(5:32) The formation of society serves not only for defensive purposes, but is also very useful, and, indeed, absolutely necessary, as rendering possible the division of labour.

(5:33) If men did not render mutual assistance to each other, no one would have either the skill or the time to provide for his own sustenance and preservation: for all men are not equally apt for all work, and no one would be capable of preparing all that he individually stood in need of. <

(5:34) Strength and time, I repeat, would fail, if every one had in person to plough, to sow, to reap, to grind corn, to cook, to weave, to stitch, and perform the other numerous functions required to keep life going; to say nothing of the arts and sciences which are also entirely necessary to the perfection and blessedness of human nature.

(5:35) uncivilized barbarism lead a wretched and almost animal life, and even they would not be able to acquire their few rude necessities without assisting one another to a certain extent.

(5:36) Now if men were so constituted by nature that they desired nothing but what is designated by true reason, society would obviously have no need of laws: it would be sufficient to inculcate true moral doctrines; and men would freely, without hesitation, act in accordance with their true interest

(5:37) But human nature is framed in a different fashion: every one, indeed, seeks his own interest, but does not do so in accordance with the dictates of sound reason, for most men's ideas of desirability and usefulness are guided by their fleshly instincts and emotions, which take no thought beyond the present and the immediate object.

(5:38) Therefore, no society can exist without government, and force, and laws to restrain and repress men's desires and immoderate impulses.

(5:39) Still human nature will not submit to absolute repression.

(5:40) Violent governments, as Seneca says, never last long; the moderate governments endure.

(5:41) So long as men act simply from fear they act contrary to their inclinations, taking no thought for the advantages or necessity of their actions, but simply endeavouring to escape punishment or loss of life.

(5:42) They must needs rejoice in any evil which befalls their ruler, even if it should involve them- selves; and must long for and bring about such evil by every means in their power.

(5:43) Again, men are especially intolerant of serving and being ruled by their equals.

(5:44) Lastly, it is exceedingly difficult to revoke liberties once granted.

(5:45) From these considerations it follows, firstly, that authority should either be vested in the hands of the whole state in common, so that everyone should be bound to serve, and yet not be in subjection to his equals; or else, if power be in the hands of a few, or one man, that one man should be something above average humanity, or should strive to get himself accepted as such.

(5:46) Secondly, laws should in every government be so arranged that people should be kept in bounds by the hope of some greatly desired good, rather than by fear, for then everyone will do his duty willingly.

(5:47) Lastly, as obedience consists in acting at the bidding of external authority, it would have no place in a state where the government is vested in the whole people, and where laws are made by common consent.

(5:48) In such a society the people would remain free, whether the laws were added to or diminished, inasmuch as it would not be done on external authority, but their own free consent.

(5:49) The reverse happens when the sovereign power is vested in one man, for all act at his bidding; and, therefore, unless they had been trained from the first to depend on the words of their ruler, the latter would find it difficult, in case of need, to abrogate liberties once conceded, and impose new laws.

(5:50) From these universal considerations, let us pass on to the kingdom of the Jews.

(5:51) The Jews when they first came out of Egypt were not bound by any national laws, and were therefore free to ratify any laws they liked, or to make new ones, and were at liberty to set up a government and occupy a territory wherever they chose.

(5:52) However, they were entirely unfit to frame a wise code of laws and to keep the sovereign power vested in the community; they were all uncultivated and sunk in a wretched slavery, therefore the sovereignty was bound to remain vested in the hands of one man who would rule the rest and keep them under constraint, make laws and interpret them.

(5:53) This sovereignty was easily retained by Moses, because he surpassed the rest in virtue and persuaded the people of the fact, proving it by many testimonies (see Exod. chap. xiv., last verse, and chap. xix:9).

(5:54) He then, by the Divine virtue he possessed, made laws and ordained them for the people, taking the greatest care that they should be obeyed willingly and not through fear, being specially induced to adopt this course by the obstinate nature of the Jews, who would not have submitted to be ruled solely by constraint; and also by the imminence of war, for it is always better to inspire soldiers with a thirst for glory than to terrify them with threats; each man will then strive to distinguish himself by valour and courage, instead of merely trying to escape punishment.

(5:55) Moses, therefore, by his virtue of the Divine command, introduced a religion, so that the people might do their duty from devotion rather than fear.

(5:56) Further, he bound them over by benefits, and prophesied many advantages in the future; nor were his laws very severe, as anyone may see for himself, especially if he remarks the number of circumstances necessary in order to procure the conviction of an accused person.

(5:57) Lastly, in order that the people which could not govern itself should be entirely dependent on its ruler, he left nothing to the free choice of individuals (who had hitherto been slaves); the people could do nothing but remember the law, and follow the ordinances laid down at the good pleasure of their ruler; they were not allowed to plough, to sow, to reap, nor even to eat; to clothe themselves, to shave, to rejoice, or in fact to do

anything whatever as they liked, but were bound to follow the directions given in the law; and not only this, but they were obliged to have marks on their door-posts, on their hands, and between their eyes to admonish them to perpetual obedience.

(5:58) This, then, was the object of the ceremonial law, that men should do nothing of their own free will, but should always act under external authority, and should continually confess by their actions and thoughts that they were not their own masters, but were entirely under the control of others.

(5:59) From all these considerations it is clearer than day that ceremonies have nothing to do with a state of blessedness, and that those mentioned in the Old Testament, i.e. the whole Mosaic Law, had reference merely to the government of the Jews, and merely temporal advantages.

(5:60) As for the Christian rites, such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, festivals, public prayers, and any other observances which are, and always have been, common to all Christendom, if they were instituted by Christ or His Apostles (which is open to doubt), they were instituted as external signs of the universal church, and not as having anything to do with blessedness, or possessing any sanctity

(5:61) Therefore, though such ceremonies were not ordained for the sake of upholding a government, they were ordained for the preservation of a society, and accordingly he who lives alone is not bound by them: nay, those who live in a country where the Christian religion is forbidden, are bound to abstain from such rites, and can none the less live in a state of blessedness.

(5:62) We have an example of this in Japan, where the Christian religion is forbidden, and the Dutch who live there are enjoined by their East India Company not to practise any outward rites of religion.

(5:63) I need not cite other examples, though it would be easy to prove my point from the fundamental principles of the New Testament, and to adduce many confirmatory instances; but I pass on the more willingly, as I am anxious to proceed to my next proposition.

(5:64) I will now, therefore, pass on to what I proposed to treat of in the second part of this chapter, namely, what persons are bound to believe in the narratives contained in Scripture, and how far they are so bound. Examining this question by the aid of natural reason, I will proceed as follows.

(5:66) If anyone wishes to persuade his fellows for or against anything which is not self-evident, he must deduce his contention from their admissions, and convince them either by experience or by ratiocination; either by appealing to facts of natural experience, or to self-evident intellectual

(5:67) Now unless the experience be of such a kind as to be clearly and distinctly understood, though it may convince a man, it will not have the same effect on his mind and disperse the clouds of his doubt so completely as when the doctrine taught is deduced entirely from intellectual axioms --that is, by the mere power of the understanding and logical order, and this is especially the case in spiritual matters which have nothing to do with the senses.

(5:68) But the deduction of conclusions from general truths *à priori*, usually requires a long chain of arguments, and, moreover, very great caution, acuteness, and self-restraint--qualities which are not often met with; therefore people prefer to be taught by experience rather than deduce their conclusion from a few axioms, and set them out in logical order.

(5:69) Whence it follows, that if anyone wishes to teach a doctrine to a whole nation (not to speak of the whole human race), and to be understood by all men in every particular, he will seek to support his teaching with experience, and will endeavour to suit his reasonings and the definitions of his doctrines as far as possible to the understanding of the common people, who form the majority of mankind, and he will not set them forth in logical sequence nor adduce the definitions which serve to establish them.

(5:70) Otherwise he writes only for the learned -- that is, he will be understood by only a small proportion of the human race.

(5:71) All Scripture was written primarily for an entire people, and secondarily for the whole human race; therefore its contents must necessarily be adapted as far as possible to the understanding of the masses, and proved only by examples drawn from experience.

(5:72) We will explain ourselves more clearly.

(5:73) The chief speculative doctrines taught in Scripture are the existence of God, or a Being Who made all things, and Who directs and sustains the world with consummate wisdom; furthermore, that God takes the greatest thought for men, or such of them as live piously and honourably, while He punishes, with various penalties, those who do evil, separating them from the good.

(5:74) All this is proved in Scripture entirely through experience -- that is, through the narratives there related.

(5:75) No definitions of doctrine are given, but all the sayings and reasonings are adapted to the understanding of the masses.

(5:76) Although experience can give no clear knowledge of these things, nor explain the nature of God, nor how He directs and sustains all things, it can nevertheless teach and enlighten men sufficiently to impress obedience and devotion on their minds.

(5:77) It is now, I think, sufficiently clear what persons are bound to believe in the Scripture narratives, and in what degree they are so bound, for it evidently follows from what has

been said that the knowledge of and belief in them is particularly necessary to the masses whose intellect is not capable of perceiving things clearly and distinctly.

(5:78) Further, he who denies them because he does not believe that God exists or takes thought for men and the world, may be accounted impious; but a man who is ignorant of them, and nevertheless knows by natural reason that God exists, as we have said, and has a true plan of life, is altogether blessed --yes, more blessed than the common herd of believers, because besides true opinions he possesses also a true

(5:79) Lastly, he who is ignorant of the Scriptures and knows nothing by the light of reason, though he may not be impious or rebellious, is yet less than human and almost brutal, having none of God's gifts.

(5:80) We must here remark that when we say that the knowledge of the sacred narrative is particularly necessary to the masses, we do not mean the knowledge of absolutely all the narratives in the Bible, but only of the principal ones, those which, taken by themselves, plainly display the doctrine we have just stated, and have most effect over men's minds.

(5:81) If all the narratives in Scripture were necessary for the proof of this doctrine, and if no conclusion could be drawn without the general consideration of every one of the histories contained in the sacred writings, truly the conclusion and demonstration of such doctrine would over-task the understanding and strength not only of the masses, but of humanity; who is there who could give attention to all the narratives at once, and to all the circumstances, and all the scraps of doctrine to be elicited from such a host of diverse histories?

(5:82) I cannot believe that the men who have left us the Bible as we have it were so abounding in talent that they attempted setting about such a method of demonstration, still less can I suppose that we cannot understand Scriptural doctrine till we have given heed to the quarrels of Isaac, the advice of Achitophel to Absalom, the civil war between Jews and Israelites, and other similar chronicles; nor can I think that it was more difficult to teach such doctrine by means of history to the Jews of early times, the contemporaries of Moses, than it was to the contemporaries of Esdras.

(5:83) But more will be said on this point hereafter, we may now only note that the masses are only bound to know those histories which can most powerfully dispose their mind to obedience and devotion.

(5:84) However, the masses are not sufficiently skilled to draw conclusions from what they read, they take more delight in the actual stories, and in the strange and unlooked-for issues of events than in the doctrines implied; therefore, besides reading these narratives, they are always in need of pastors or church ministers to explain them to their feeble intelligence.

(5:85) But not to wander from our point, let us conclude with what has been our principal object -- namely, that the truth of narratives, be they what they may, has nothing to do

with the Divine law, and serves for nothing except in respect of doctrine, the sole element which makes one history better than another.

(5:86) The narratives in the Old and New Testaments surpass profane history, and differ among themselves in merit simply by reason of the salutary doctrines which they inculcate.

(5:87) Therefore, if a man were to read the Scripture narratives believing the whole of them, but were to give no heed to the doctrines they contain, and make no amendment in his life, he might employ himself just as profitably in reading the Koran or the poetic drama, or ordinary chronicles, with the attention usually given to such writings; on the other hand, if a man is absolutely ignorant of the Scriptures, and none the less has right opinions and a true plan of life, he is absolutely blessed and truly possesses in himself the spirit of Christ.

(5:88) The Jews are of a directly contrary way of thinking, for they hold that true opinions and a true plan of life are of no service in attaining blessedness, if their possessors have arrived at them by the light of reason only, and not like the documents prophetically revealed to Moses.

(5:89) Maimonides ventures openly to make this assertion: " Every man who takes to heart the seven precepts and diligently follows them, is counted with the pious among the nation, and an heir of the world to come; that is to say, if he takes to heart and follows them because God ordained them in the law, and revealed them to us by Moses, because they were of aforetime precepts to the sons of Noah: but he who follows them as led thereto by reason, is not counted as a dweller among the pious or among the wise of the nations."

(5:90) Such are the words of Maimonides, to which R. Joseph, the son of Shem Tob , adds in his book which he calls "*Kebod Elohim, or God's Glory*," that although Aristotle (whom he considers to have written the best ethics and to be above everyone else) has not omitted anything that concerns true ethics, and which he has adopted in his own book, carefully following the lines laid down, yet this was not able to suffice for his salvation, inasmuch as he embraced his doctrines in accordance with the dictates of reason and not as Divine documents prophetically revealed.

(5:91) However, that these are mere figments, and are not supported by Scriptural authority will, I think, be sufficiently evident to the attentive reader, so that an examination of the theory will be sufficient for its refutation.

(5:92) It is not my purpose here to refute the assertions of those who assert that the natural light of reason can teach nothing, of any value concerning the true way of salvation.

(5:93) People who lay no claims to reason for themselves, are not able to prove by reason this their assertion; and- or to reason, it is a mere figment, and far below reason, as their general method of life sufficiently shows.

(5:94) But there is no need to dwell upon such persons.

(5:95) I will merely add that we can only judge of a man by his works.

(5:96) If a man abounds in the fruits of the Spirit, charity, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, chastity, against which, as Paul says (Gal. v:22), there is no law, such an one, whether he be taught by reason only or by the Scripture only, has been in very truth taught by God, and is altogether blessed.

(5:97) Thus have I said all that I undertook to say concerning Divine law.

- [Reform Judaism](#)

Reform Judaism

Attempt to modernize Jewish religion in keeping with the needs of modern society ("the spirit of the age").

First phase (c. 1790-1830):

Lay initiative. Emphasis on features that would impede the acceptance of Jews as individuals and as a group into European society.

- **Esthetic changes in Jewish worship** (often in imitation of practices in Christian churches)
 - **Decorum in synagogue**
 - **Instrumental and choral music**
 - **Vernacular sermons on theological themes**
 - **Confirmation ceremonies**
 - **Removal of obsolete items** (e.g., *piyyut* [liturgical poetry]. *Yequm Purqan*, etc.)
 - **Redefinition of Rabbi's role: Theologian and Pastor**
- **Deletion of theologically problematic passages from prayers:**

(--Motive: Ideological or political?)

 - **Return to Zion**
 - **Restoration of sacrificial cult**
- **Removal of halakhic restrictions** to participation in general society.
- Justified changes by means of:
 - **Evolutionary conception of Jewish religion**

Alliance with *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement.

- **Distinction between goals** (primarily theological) **and means** (practices, etc.).
- Conviction that their current situation was radically different from previous eras
- Countered by **extreme positions of traditionalists**: *All* change is illegitimate.

Involvement of government in internal Jewish conflict.

- Removal (or reinterpretation) of elements in religions (especially liturgy) that were not in keeping with **ideals of Emancipation**.

e.g.:

National aspirations (restoration of Palestine, perception of being in Exile).

German Reform Judaism: The Next Generation (c. 1840-1880):

Characteristics of Second Generation:

- Involvement of **scholars and rabbis**.
- Important figures: Abraham Geiger, Samuel Holdheim
- Broad **range** of opinions, from traditionalist to radicals.
- **Conferences**:

Wiesbaden 1837; Brunswick 1844; Frankfurt 1845.

- Attempts at ideological and theological **formulations of policies**:
- Distinction between eternally valid ideas of Judaism, and historically contingent elements that must be adapted to the changing circumstances.
- "Mosaism"--Acceptance of the authority of the Torah only with respect to the principles of monotheism and revelation (?).
- Rabbinic literature is not binding (though could be used as a source of guidance). The Reformers themselves also had the right to introduce changes.
- Use of academic study of Jewish history and literature (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) in support of Reform positions:

E.g., A. **Geiger** on liberalism of Pharisees and evolutionary nature of Judaism; L. **Zunz** on Jewish names and homiletics.

Controversial Issues:

- Ideological Issues in Prayer Book:
 - Messianism and national restoration

Messianism should be retained, but not the nationalist elements.

- Physical Resurrection
- Use of Hebrew (whether required / desirable).
- *Kol Nidre* ceremony
- "...Who did not create me a woman."
- **Status of ritual:**

E.g., dietary laws, circumcision, *shofar*, *lulav* ceremony, Purim.

- Should **they issue an official "creed"**?
- Legitimacy of Intermarriage (had been permitted by the Napoleonic Sanhedrin)
- **Esthetics of synagogue:**
 - Instrumental music
 - "Triennial cycle" of reading Torah, with vernacular translation.
 - Mourning rituals (tearing garments, not shaving, etc.).
- **Sabbath:**

All such activity as is part and parcel of the daily business or professional vocation is forbidden, while any activity that makes for recreation or spiritual elevation, particularly if it tends to arouse a religious mood, not only does not harm the Sabbath observance, but furthers it.

- Emphasis on spiritual quality of Sabbath rather than ritual prohibitions.

Justified riding to synagogue, organ music, etc.

- Not ready to permit working on Saturday (except for government!)

- **Equality for women:**
 - Equal obligation in all religious precepts (including time-defined ones), counted in prayer quorum (*minyan*).
 - Equality in education.
 - Changes in marriage laws (*Agunah*), levirate marriage?
 - Age or majority: 12 or 13?

Reform Judaism in America

The movement has undergone some far-reaching changes. Thus, the 1886 "Pittsburg Platform" typifies the most radical positions of German Reform, rejecting most rituals and defining Jews as a purely religious community, without any national or ethnic component.

On the other hand, the "Columbus Platform" of 1937 expresses a most positive attitude towards observance in all its venues, Zionism, Jewish national solidarity.

Recent Developments in Reform Judaism:

- "Covenant Theology":
 - Return to faith in personal God.
 - Increased reverence for "Torah" (though without belief in literal revelation).
 - Efforts to develop Reform religious law (Halakhah) and responsa.
 - Negative stance on intermarriage (1973 CCAR resolution confirming 1909 position).
 - "Patrilineal descent" decision (1983).
 - Stronger involvement in Israel, adoption of Zionist ideals.
 - Increased involvement of women, especially rabbis.
 - Broader range of communal and cultural activities.
 - Day schools.
 - *Havurot* (small prayer groups).
-

Click here to read texts of:

1. [The Pittsburg Platform \(1885\)](#)

Declaration of Principles

1885 Pittsburgh Conference

Convening at the call of Kaufmann Kohler of New York, Reform rabbis from around the United States met from November 16 through November 19, 1885 with Isaac Mayer Wise presiding. The meeting was declared the continuation of the Philadelphia Conference of 1869, which was the continuation of the German Conference of 1841 to 1846. The rabbis adopted the following seminal text:

1. We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

2. We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and at times clothing its conception of divine Providence and Justice dealing with men in miraculous narratives.

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

5. We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

6. We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past.. Christianity and Islam, being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission, to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

7. We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding the belief on the divine nature of human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

8. In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.

2. [The Columbus Platform \(1937\)](#)

THE COLUMBUS PLATFORM:

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF REFORM JUDAISM (1937)

In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis makes the following declaration of principles. It presents them not as a fixed creed but as a guide for the progressive elements of Jewry.

A. Judaism and its Foundations

1. *Nature of Judaism.* Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people. Though growing out of Jewish life, its message is universal, aiming at the union and perfection of mankind under the sovereignty of God. Reform Judaism recognizes the principle of progressive development in religion and consciously applies this principle to spiritual as well as to cultural and social life. Judaism welcomes all truth, whether written in the pages of scripture or deciphered from the records of nature. The new discoveries of science, while replacing the older scientific views underlying our sacred literature, do not conflict with the essential spirit of religion as manifested in the consecration of man's will, heart and mind to the service of God and of humanity.
2. *God.* The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love. In Him all existence has its creative source and mankind its ideal of conduct. Though transcending time and space, He is the indwelling Presence of the world. We worship Him as the Lord of the universe and as our merciful Father.
3. *Man.* Judaism affirms that man is created in the Divine image. His spirit is immortal. He is an active co-worker with God. As a child of God, he is endowed with moral freedom and is charged with the responsibility of overcoming evil and striving after ideal ends.
4. *Torah.* God reveals Himself not only in the majesty, beauty and orderliness of nature, but also in the vision and moral striving of the human spirit. Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and of holiness. Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth. But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the teachings of the Torah to its basic needs in consonance with the genius of Judaism.
5. *Israel.* Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. Though we recognize in the group loyalty of Jews who have become estranged from our religious tradition, a bond which still unites them with us, we maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people has lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community. In all lands where our people live, they assume

and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. 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.

B. Ethics

6. *Ethics and Religion.* In Judaism religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity. Seeking God means to strive after holiness, righteousness and goodness. The love of God is incomplete without the love of one's fellowmen. Judaism emphasizes the kinship of the human race, the sanctity and worth of human life and personality and the right of the individual to freedom and to the pursuit of his chosen vocation. Justice to all, irrespective of race, sect or class, is the inalienable right and the inescapable obligation of all. The state and organized government exist in order to further these ends.
7. *Social justice.* Judaism seeks the attainment of a just society by the application of its teachings to the economic order, to industry and commerce, and to national and international affairs. It aims at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife. It advocates the promotion of harmonious relations between warring classes on the basis of equity and justice, and the creation of conditions under which human personality may flourish. It pleads for the safeguarding of childhood against exploitation. It champions the cause of all who work and of their right to an adequate standard of living, as prior to the rights of property. Judaism emphasizes the duty of charity, and strives for a social order which will protect men against the material disabilities of old age, sickness and unemployment.
8. *Peace.* Judaism, from the days of the prophets, has proclaimed to mankind the ideal of universal peace. The spiritual and physical disarmament of all nations has been one of its essential teachings. It abhors all violence and relies upon moral education, love and sympathy to secure human progress. It regards justice as the foundation of the well-being of nations and the condition of enduring peace. It urges organized international action for disarmament, collective security and world peace.

C. Religious Practice

9. *The Religious Life.* Jewish life is marked by consecration to these ideals of Judaism. It calls for faithful participation in the life of the Jewish community as it

finds expression in home, synagogue and school and in all other agencies that enrich Jewish life and promote its welfare. The Home has been and must continue to be a stronghold of Jewish life, hallowed by the spirit of love and reverence, by moral discipline and religious observance and worship. The Synagogue is the oldest and most democratic institution in Jewish life. It is the prime communal agency by which Judaism is fostered and preserved. It links the Jews of each community and unites them with all Israel. The perpetuation of Judaism as a living force depends upon religious knowledge and upon the Education of each new generation in our rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

Prayer is the voice of religion, the language of faith and aspiration. It directs man's heart and mind Godward, voices the needs and hopes of the community and reaches out after goals which invest life with supreme value. To deepen the spiritual life of our people, we must cultivate the traditional habit of communion with God through prayer in both home and synagogue.

Judaism as a way of life requires in addition to its moral and spiritual demands, the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value, the cultivation of distinctive forms of religious art and music and the use of Hebrew, together with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction.

These timeless aims and ideals of our faith we present anew to a confused and troubled world. We call upon our fellow Jews to rededicate themselves to them, and, in harmony with all men, hopefully and courageously to continue Israel's eternal quest after God and His kingdom.

3. [The Centenary Perspective \(San Francisco 1976\)](#)

Reform Judaism: A Centenary Perspective Adopted at San Francisco, 1976

The Central Conference of American Rabbis has on special occasions described the spiritual state of Reform Judaism. The centenaries of the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion seem an appropriate time for another such effort. We therefore record our sense of the unity of our movement today.

One Hundred Years: What We Have Taught

We celebrate the role of Reform Judaism in North America, the growth of our movement on this free ground, the great contributions of our membership to the dreams and

achievements of this society. We also feel great satisfaction at how much of our pioneering conception of Judaism has been accepted by the Household of Israel. It now seems self-evident to most Jews: that our tradition should interact with modern culture; that its forms ought to reflect a contemporary esthetic; that its scholarship needs to be conducted by modern, critical methods; and that change has been and must continue to be a fundamental reality in Jewish life. Moreover, though some still disagree, substantial numbers have also accepted our teachings: that the ethics of universalism implicit in traditional Judaism must be an explicit part of our Jewish duty; that women have full rights to practice Judaism; and that Jewish obligation begins with the informed will of every individual. Most modern Jews, within their various religious movements, are embracing Reform Jewish perspectives. We see this past century as having confirmed the essential wisdom of our movement.

One Hundred Years: What We Have Learned

Obviously, much else has changed in the past century. We continue to probe the extraordinary events of the past generation, seeking to understand their meaning and to incorporate their significance in our lives. The Holocaust shattered our easy optimism about humanity and its inevitable progress. The State of Israel, through its many accomplishments, raised our sense of the Jews as a people to new heights of aspiration and devotion. The widespread threats to freedom, the problems inherent in the explosion of new knowledge and of ever more powerful technologies, and the spiritual emptiness of much of Western culture have taught us to be less dependent on the values of our society and to reassert what remains perennially valid in Judaism's teaching. We have learned that the survival of the Jewish people is of highest priority and that in carrying out our Jewish responsibilities we help move humanity toward its messianic fulfillment.

Diversity Within Unity, the Hallmark of Reform

Reform Jews respond to change in various ways according to the Reform principle of the autonomy of the individual. However, Reform Judaism does more than tolerate diversity; it engenders it. In our uncertain historical situation we must expect to have far greater diversity than previous generations knew. How we shall live with diversity without stifling dissent and without paralyzing our ability to take positive action will test our character and our principles. We stand open to any position thoughtfully and conscientiously advocated in the spirit of Reform Jewish belief. While we may differ in our interpretation and application of the ideas enunciated here, we accept such differences as precious and see in them Judaism's best hope for confronting whatever the future holds for us. Yet in all our diversity we perceive a certain unity and we shall not allow our differences in some particulars to obscure what binds us together.

1. *God* -- The affirmation of God has always been essential to our people's will to survive. In our struggle through the centuries to preserve our faith we have experienced and conceived of God in many ways. The trials of our own time and the challenges of modern culture have made steady belief and clear understanding difficult for some. Nevertheless, we ground our lives, personally and communally,

- on God's reality and remain open to new experiences and conceptions of the Divine. Amid the mystery we call life, we affirm that human beings, created in God's image, share in God's eternity despite the mystery we call death.
2. *The People Israel* -- The Jewish people and Judaism defy precise definition because both are in the process of becoming. Jews, by birth or conversion, constitute an uncommon union of faith and peoplehood. Born as Hebrews in the ancient Near East, we are bound together like all ethnic groups by language, land, history, culture, and institutions. But the people of Israel is unique because of its involvement with God and its resulting perception of the human condition. Throughout our long history our people has been inseparable from its religion with its messianic hope that humanity will be redeemed.
 3. *Torah* -- Torah results from the relationship between God and the Jewish people. The records of our earliest confrontations are uniquely important to us. Lawgivers and prophets, historians and poets gave us a heritage whose study is a religious imperative and whose practice is our chief means to holiness. Rabbis and teachers, philosophers and mystics, gifted Jews in every age amplified the Torah tradition. For millennia, the creation of Torah has not ceased and Jewish creativity in our time is adding to the chain of tradition.
 4. *Our Religious Obligations: Religious Practice* -- Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life, the means by which we strive to achieve universal justice and peace. Reform Judaism shares this emphasis on duty and obligation. Our founders stressed that the Jew's ethical responsibilities, personal and social, are enjoined by God. The past century has taught us that the claims made upon us may begin with our ethical obligations but they extend to many other aspects of Jewish living, including: creating a Jewish home centered on family devotion; lifelong study; private prayer and public worship; daily religious observance; keeping the Sabbath and the holy days; celebrating the major events of life; involvement with the synagogues and community; and other activities which promote the survival of the Jewish people and enhance its existence. Within each area of Jewish observance Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge.
 5. *Our Obligations: The State of Israel and the Diaspora* -- We are privileged to live in an extraordinary time, one in which a third Jewish commonwealth has been established in our people's ancient homeland. We are bound to that land and to the newly reborn State of Israel by innumerable religious and ethnic ties. We have been enriched by its culture and ennobled by its indomitable spirit. We see it providing unique opportunities for Jewish self-expression. We have both a stake and a responsibility in building the State of Israel, assuring its security, and defining its Jewish character. We encourage *aliyah* for those who wish to find maximum personal fulfillment in the cause of Zion. We demand that Reform Judaism be unconditionally legitimized in the State of Israel.

At the same time that we consider the State of Israel vital to the welfare of Judaism everywhere, we reaffirm the mandate of our tradition to create strong

Jewish communities wherever we live. A genuine Jewish life is possible in any land, each community developing its own particular character and determining its Jewish responsibilities. The foundation of Jewish community life is the synagogue. It leads us beyond itself to cooperate with other Jews, to share their concerns, and to assume leadership in communal affairs. We are therefore committed to the full democratization of the Jewish community and to its hallowing in terms of Jewish values.

The State of Israel and the Diaspora, in fruitful dialogue, can show how a people transcends nationalism even as it affirms it, thereby setting an example for humanity which remains largely concerned with dangerously parochial goals.

6. *Our Obligations: Survival and Service* -- Early Reform Jews, newly admitted to general society and seeing in this the evidence of a growing universalism, regularly spoke of Jewish purpose in terms of Jewry's service to humanity. In recent years we have become freshly conscious of the virtues of pluralism and the values of particularism. The Jewish people in its unique way of life validates its own worth while working toward the fulfillment of its messianic expectations.

Until the recent past our obligations to the Jewish people and to all humanity seemed congruent. At times now these two imperatives appear to conflict. We know of no simple way to resolve such tensions. We must, however, confront them without abandoning either of our commitments. A universal concern for humanity unaccompanied by a devotion to our particular people is self-destructive; a passion for our people without involvement in humankind contradicts what the prophets have meant to us. Judaism calls us simultaneously to universal and particular obligations.

Hope: Our Jewish Obligation

Previous generations of Reform Jews had unbound confidence in humanity's potential for good. We have lived through terrible tragedy and been compelled to reappropriate our tradition's realism about the human capacity for evil. Yet our people has always refused to despair. The survivors of the Holocaust, being granted life, seized it, nurtured it, and, rising above catastrophe, showed humankind that the human spirit is indomitable. The State of Israel, established and maintained by the Jewish will to live, demonstrates what a united people can accomplish in history. The existence of the Jew is an argument against despair; Jewish survival is warrant for human hope.

We remain God's witness that history is not meaningless. We affirm that with God's help people are not powerless to affect their destiny. We dedicate ourselves, as did the generations of Jews who went before us, to work and wait for that day when "They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

- [Conservative Judaism](#)



Conservative Judaism

Origins:

Breslau Reform Conference 1846: *Zacharias Frankel* withdrew over issue of Hebrew in liturgy.

Objected to Reformers' disregard for historical continuity and nationalism.

Proposes programme for *Positive Historical Judaism*.

- Combination of commitment to Jewish Halakhah and rational faith.
- Authority of Jewish law rests on its use by Jews over the generations.
- Human need for concrete symbols, not just abstract ideas.
- Encouraged *Wissenschaft*, but rejected Biblical criticism. Human origins of Oral Torah (Mishnah).

Frankel's essay "On Changes in Judaism"

Zecharias Frankel



On Changes in Judaism

Maintaining the integrity of Judaism simultaneously with progress, this is the essential problem of the present. Can we deny the difficulty of a satisfactory solution? Where is the point where the two apparent contraries can meet? What ought to be our point of departure in the attempt to reconcile essential Judaism and progress and what type of opposition may we expect to encounter? How can we assure rest for the soul so that it shall not be torn apart or be numbed by severe doubts while searching for the warm ray of faith, and yet allot to reason its right, and enable it to lend strength and lucidity to the religious feeling which springs from the emotions? The opposing elements which so seldom are in balance must be united and this is our task....

Judaism is a religion which has a direct influence on life's activity. It is a religion of action, demanding the performance of precepts which either directly aim at ennobling man or, by reminding man of the divine, strengthen his feelings of dependence on God. And because of this trait neither pure abstract contemplation nor dark mysticism; could ever strike root in Judaism. This, in turn, guaranteed that the lofty religious ideas were maintained in their purity, with the result that even today the divine light shines in Judaism.

By emphasizing religious activity, Judaism is completely tied to life and becomes the property of every individual Jew. A religion of pure ideas belongs primarily to the theologians; the masses who are not adapted to such conceptions concern themselves little with the particulars of such religions because they have little relationship to life. On the other hand, a religion of action is always present, demanding practice in activity and an expression of will, and its demands are reflected in the manifold life of the individual, with the result that the faith becomes the common property of every follower. Thus we have reached the starting point for the consideration of the current parties in Judaism. The

viewpoint of the Orthodox party is clear. It has grown up in pious activity; to it the performance of precepts is inseparable from faith, for to it, the two are closely and inwardly connected. Were it to tear itself away from observance and give up the precepts, then it would find itself estranged from its own self and feel as though plunged into an abyss. Given this viewpoint, the direction and emphasis of the Orthodox party is clear. Where else, save in the combination of faith and meticulous observance of the precepts, can it find that complete satisfaction which it has enjoyed in the heritage of the fathers? When will it reject that which it has so long kept holy and inviolable? No--that is unthinkable.

Against this party there has arisen of late another one [Reform] which finds its aim in the opposite direction. This party sees salvation in overcoming the past, in carrying progress to the limit, in rejecting religious forms and returning merely to the simple original idea. In fact, we can hardly call it a party in Judaism, though its adherents still bear the name Jew, and are considered as such in social and political life, and do not belong to another faith. They do not, however, belong wholly to Judaism, for by limiting Judaism to some principles of faith, they place themselves partly outside the limits of Judaism. We will now turn to a third party which has arisen from the first party, and not only stands within the bound of Judaism, but is also filled with real zeal for its preservation and endeavours to hand it over to the descendants and make it the common good of all times.

This party bases itself upon rational faith and recognizes that the task of Judaism is religious action, but it demands that this action shall not be empty of spirit and that it shall not become merely mechanical, expressing itself mainly in the form. It has also reached the view that religious activity itself must be brought up to a higher level through giving weight to the many meanings with which it should be endowed. Furthermore, it holds that we must omit certain unimportant actions which are not inherently connected either with the high ideas or with the religious forms delineated by the revealed laws.

We must, it feels, take into consideration the opposition between faith and conditions of the time. True faith, due to its divine nature, is above time, and just as the nobler part of man is not subjected to time, so does faith rise above all time, and the word which issued from the mouth of God is rooted in eternity; But time has a force and might which must be taken account of. There is then created a dualism in which faith and time face each other, and man chooses either to live beyond time or to be subjected to it. It is in this situation that the Jew finds himself today; he cannot escape the influence of the conditions of the time and yet when the demands of faith bring him to opposition with the spirit of the time, it is hoped that he will heed its call-- find the power to resist the blandishments of the times. This third party, then, declares that Judaism must be saved for all time. It affirms both the divine value and historical basis of Judaism and, therefore believes that introducing some changes it may achieve some agreement with the concepts and conditions of the time.

In order to have a conception of what changes should and can be introduced, we must ask ourselves the question--does Judaism allow any changes in any of its religious forms? Does it consider all of them immutable, or can they be altered? Without entering into the

citation of authorities pro and con, we may point out that Judaism does indeed allow changes. The early teachers, by interpretation, changed the literal meaning of the Scriptures; later scholars that of the Mishnah and the post-talmudic scholars that of the Talmud. All these interpretations were not intended as speculation. They addressed themselves to life precepts. Thanks to such studies, Judaism achieved stabilization and avoided estrangement from the conditions of the time in various periods.... [The rabbis] established a rule which was intended as a guardian and protector against undue changes. It reads as follows: That which was adopted by the entire community of Israel and was accepted by the people and became a part of its life, can not be changed by any authority.

In this fundamental statement there lies a living truth. Through it there speaks a profound view of Judaism which can serve for all times as a formula for needed changes and can be employed both against destructive reform and against stagnation.

This fundamental statement helps to make clear to us what changes in Judaism are justified and how they can be realized. True, Judaism demands religious activity, but the people is not altogether mere clay to be molded by the will of theologians and scholars. In religious activities, as in those of ordinary life, it decides for itself. This right was conceded by Judaism to the people. At such times as an earlier religious ordinance was not accepted by the entire community of Israel, it was given up. Consequently, when a new ordinance was about to be enacted it was necessary to see whether it would find acceptance by the people. When the people allows certain practices to fall into disuse, then the practices cease to exist. There is in such cases no danger for faith. A people used to activity will not hurt itself and will not destroy its practices. Its own sense of religiosity warns against it. Only those practices from which it is entirely estranged and which yield it no satisfaction will be abandoned and will thus die of themselves. On the whole there is always a great fund of faith and religious activity to afford security against negation and destruction.

We have, then, reached a decisive point in regard to moderate changes, namely, that they must come from the people and that the will of the entire community must decide. Still, this rule alone may accomplish little. The whole community is a heavy unharmonious body and its will is difficult to recognize. It comes to expression only after many years. We must find a way to carry on such changes in the proper manner, and this can be done by the help of the scholars. Judaism has no priests as representatives of faith nor does it require special spiritual sanctimoniousness in its spokesmen. The power to represent it is not the share of any one family, nor does it pass from father to son. Knowledge and mastery of the law supply the sanctity, and these can be attained by everybody. In Jewish life, spiritual and intellectual ability ultimately took the place of the former priesthood which, even in early times, was limited in its function primarily to the sacrificial cult. Even in early days, Judaism recognized the will of the people as a great force and because of this recognition a great religious activity came into being. But this activity, in turn was translated into a living force by the teachers of the people through the use of original ordinances and through interpretation of the Scriptures. At times these actions of the sages lightened the amount of observance; at times they increased it. That the results of the studies and research of the teachers found acceptance among the people proves, on

the one hand, that the teachers knew the character of their time, and, on the other hand, that the people had confidence in them and that they considered them true representatives of their faith. Should Jewish theologians and scholars of our time succeed in acquiring such a confidence, then they will attain influence with the introduction of whatever changes may be necessary. The will of the community of Israel will then find its representatives and knowledge will be its proper exercise.

The scholars thus have an important duty in order to make their work effective. It is to guard the sense of piety of the people and to raise their spirit to the height of the great ideas. For this they need the confidence of the people. Opposition to the views of the people, such as some reformers display, is unholy and fruitless. The teacher thereby loses the power to make the essence of faith effective, for in place of that confidence which is the basis in correct relations between teacher and community there comes mistrust and an unwillingness to follow. The truths of faith must be brought nearer to the people so that they may learn to understand the divine content within them and thus come to understand the spiritual nature and inner worth of the forms which embody these truths. Once the people are saturated with an awareness of the essential truths and the forms which embody them, a firm ground will have been established for adhering to Jewish practices. And if the people then cease to practice some unimportant customs and forms of observances it will not be a matter of great concern. And it will not, as recent changes have, lead some Jews into shock and hopelessness. They will no longer see all such changes as leading to the disappearance of our faith and language, as their pusillanimity leads them to believe, the end of the existence of Judaism.

Conservative Judaism in America:



1880--

Only 12 out of 200 American congregations were not Reform. Reform in America was largely radical. Many non-Reformers were from established Sephardic communities, concentrated on Eastern seaboard. Some had been moderate Reformers or Positive-Historical in Europe. The minority broke off with the adoption of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885.

Attempts to establish Jewish Theological Seminary of America:

For the preservation in America of the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism as ordained in the law of Moses expounded by the prophets and sages in Israel in Biblical and Talmudic writings.

1898--

Break with conservative (Eastern European) Orthodoxy.

1902--

Successful establishment of JTS in New York, financed by established Reform Jews.

Why?

Leadership of *Solomon Schechter*. Faculty included some of the leading Jewish scholars of the world.



Solomon Schechter

Institutional Evolution:

- Rabbinic Assembly
- United Synagogues of America
- World Union of Synagogues
- United Synagogue Youth
- Women's League
- Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs
- Teachers' College
- Cantorial School
- Cantors' Assembly
- Jewish Museum
- Jerusalem Campus
- Camp Ramah
- Solomon Schechter Day Schools

General Trends in Expansion of Movement:

Tensions between traditionalist Seminary faculty and more liberal congregational rabbis and laity.

"De-legitimization" by more extreme movements as a compromise between traditionalism and modernism.

Successful expansion of movement as Jews move into suburban communities (in '40's and '50's). Leads to watering down of commitment to standards and ideals of observance, etc.

Halakhic pluralism: *Committee on Law and Standards* gives sanction to minority positions. Autonomy of individual synagogues. More lenient rulings become widespread.

Congregant as *observer*, rather than *participant* in services:

- Use of professional cantors.
- Cantor facing congregation.
- Bima at front of sanctuary.

Incidents:

- 1934--

Publication of *Judaism as a Civilization* by *Mordecai Kaplan*, presents radically liberal theology: Religion is basically a human creation, and halakhah has the status of "folkways." Schechter maintains principle of academic freedom.

- 1950's--

Conservative Judaism becomes largest American Jewish movement.

- 1960's--

Havurah movement, move away from large institutionalized synagogues towards more intimate prayer groups.

Features of Conservative Halakhah:

Status of Women:

- "Family seating" in synagogue.
- Retroactive annulment of marriages--1968
- Counting of women in prayer quorum (*minyan*) and granting them *Aliyyot* to read Torah--1973.
- Ordination of women as rabbis--1977-79.

Sabbath observance:

- Driving to synagogue on sabbath--1950. Permission granted originally only for rare and special circumstances. Evolves into general norm.
- Use of electricity on Sabbath--1950.

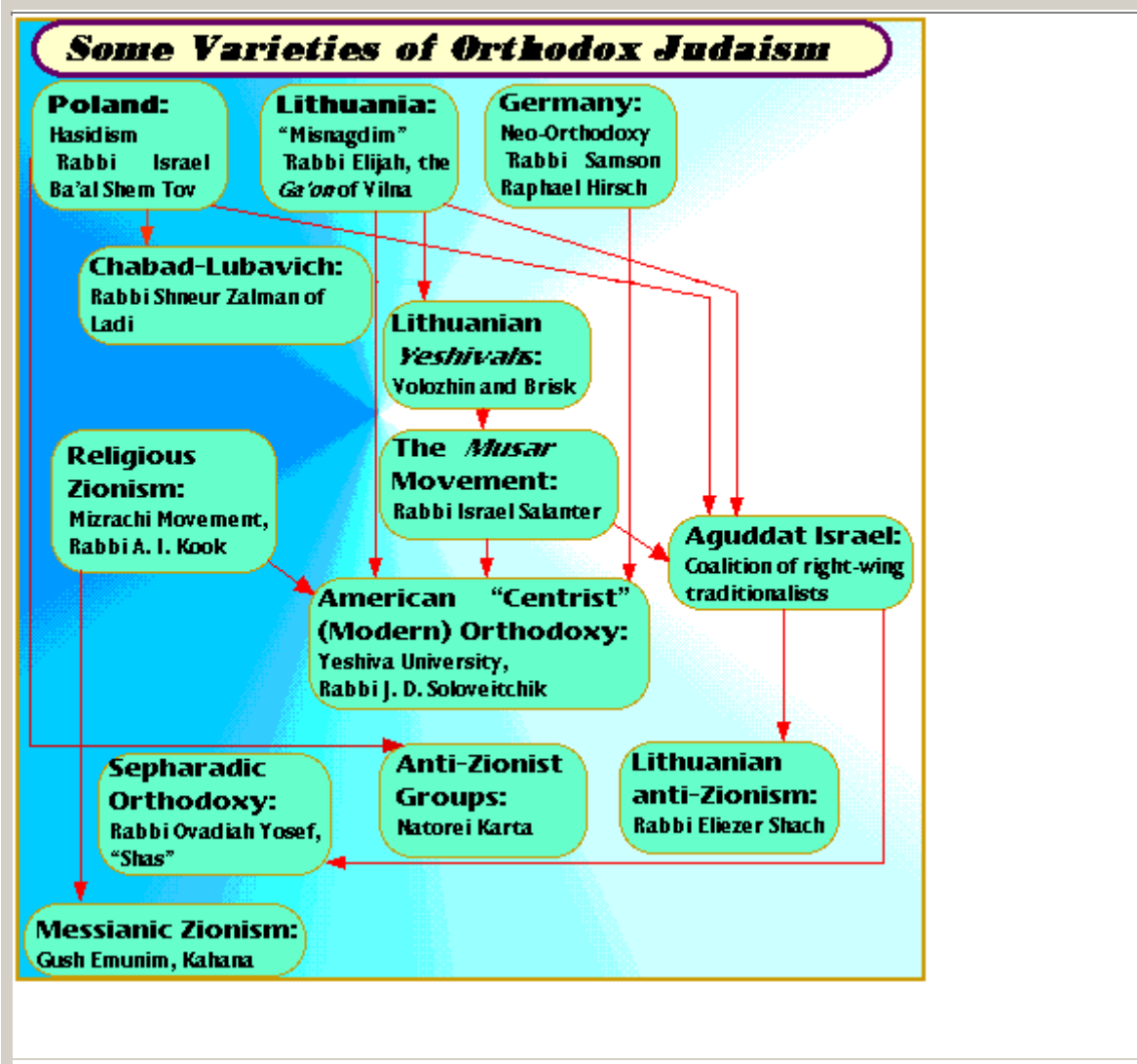
Other issues:

- Second day of festivals.
 - Friday night services
 - Prayer book reform
 - Triennial cycle of Torah reading.
- ["Varieties of Orthodox Judaism" Image Map site](#)

Varieties of Orthodox Judaism

The major groupings of Orthodoxy from its inception until the present day are represented in the following diagram.

Note that this diagram is an HTML image map. Clicking on any of its components in a graphic World Wide Web browser will link you to a detailed description of the movement in question.



The term "Orthodoxy" is applied to Jewish traditionalist movements that have consciously resisted the influences of modernization that arose in response to the European [Emancipation](#) and [Enlightenment](#) movements. It is not usually employed to designate Jewish traditionalism prior to the modern era, nor does the phenomenon appear in communities that were unaffected by the [Reform movement](#); e.g., in North Africa, or in Eastern Europe before the mid-nineteenth-century.

The adjective "Orthodox" ("correct belief") is taken from the conceptual world of Christianity, where it denotes a conservative and ritualistic religious outlook, as viewed from the perspective of liberal Protestantism. It appears to have been first applied derisively to Jewish conservatives by a Reform polemicist in an article published in 1795.

[Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch](#) commented bitterly 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 at first resented by "old" Jews. And rightfully so...

Yet so pervasive was the use of the term that in 1886, when Hirsch established an alliance of the traditionalist congregations in Europe, he named it the "Freie Vereinigung für die Interessen des *Orthodoxen* Judentums" (Free Union for the Interests of *Orthodox* Judaism)!

Of all the movements on the contemporary Jewish scene, Orthodoxy is the least centralized and the most diverse. Whereas the [Conservative](#) and [Reform](#) movements in America each has a single seminary, Rabbinical association and synagogue union, the Orthodox world is fragmented into diverse institutional structures. Though they agree on basic issues of religious authority (e.g., the divine origins of the Bible and Oral Tradition) and the commitment to the study and observance of Jewish law, the *halakhah* as interpreted in a relatively inflexible manner, Orthodox Jews diverge on a broad range of secondary issues, such as:

- the importance or legitimacy of mysticism
- policies towards Zionism and Jewish nationalism
- the eschatological status of the State of Israel
- educational philosophies
- leadership models
- cooperation with non-Orthodox Jews
- differing ethnic styles
- etc.

-
- [Hasidism](#)

Hasidism

Note: The Hebrew word *Hasid* means "pious" and is employed in classical Jewish sources to designate one whose spiritual devotion extends beyond the technical requirements of Jewish religious law. The term came to denote an adherent of the popular East European Jewish religious movement whose history and doctrines are outlined below.

Background to the Rise of Hasidism

17th- Century Massacres and Pogroms

- 1648--Cossack massacres led by Bogdan Chmielnicki murdered thousands of Jews in Ukraine and Poland--about one half of the population--utterly devastating hundreds of Jewish communities.

In addition to the death tolls, the impoverished Jewish communities had to cope with excessive taxation, support for widows, orphans and disabled; and extortion from bandits and Christian clergy

- After 1654--Poles massacred more Jews, who were accused of collusion with the Swedes during the Swedish invasion of Poland.

These events were followed by church-instigated pogroms.

- 1668--Russian peasant revolts produced further riots that killed thousands more Polish Jews.

Internal Developments

- The above catastrophes brought about a decline in Jewish learning in Poland. The intellectual of the community centre now moved to Lithuania. Polish Jewry fell into ignorance and superstition, with a preference for the eschatological speculations of the Kabbalah.
- Like other communities, Polish Jews were caught up in the enthusiasm for Shabbetai Zvi, the Turkish Jew who was widely believed to be a mystical Messiah. Shabbetai's subsequent apostasy to Islam, and his death in 1676, deepened the demoralization.
- Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a Polish messianic pretender, encouraged an orgiastic cult. After he was rejected by the Rabbinic leadership, he converted to Christianity. Frank's slanders of his former correligionists led to further persecutions.
- **Class divisions in the Polish Jewish communities:**

The wealthy Jews and the Talmudic scholars who led the communities often did not distribute the tax burdens fairly, imposing the heaviest obligations upon the poor. The Rabbinic leadership was not vocal in protesting this situation, leading to their being discredited among the common people.

- Rabbinic learning continued to focus on casuistic Talmud study (*pilpul*), providing little spiritual nourishment or consolation.
- The educated classes looked down on the ignorant Jewish masses.
- Popularity of magic and wonder-workers who could perform miracles through magical manipulations of the names of God ("Masters of the Name"--Hebrew: *Ba'alei Shem*). Widespread faith in demons, incantations, amulets, etc.

Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (c. 1700-1760)

- **Life**

His name: Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, *Ba'al Shem Tov*. The epithet means: Master of the *good* name; to distinguish him from the other "Masters of the [divine] name,"

i.e., common magicians or "practical Kabbalists."

He is frequently designated by the Hebrew acronym: **BeshT**. **Note:** Much of the biographical information about him must be extrapolated from the immense quantities of legendary traditions that were woven around him.

- c. 1700--born in Okopy, Ukraine. Was a poor student, and preferred to meditate in the forests.
- Worked as a teacher's assistant, leading the children to and from school. Inspired his charges with songs and stories. Became sexton of the synagogue. Spent his nights studying Kabbalah.
- c. 1718--Married, but his first wife died soon afterwards.
- Moved to Brody, Galicia, where he married the sister of the local Rabbi. His brother, embarrassed at Israel's ignorance, encouraged him to live elsewhere.
- He moved to a remote Carpathian village, supporting his family as a lime-digger. His expertise in medicinal herbs earned him a reputation as a "*ba'al shem*." As he practiced his healing craft he also began to preach his religious teachings.
- c. 1736--Hasidic legend speaks of the Besht publicly revealing his mission at the age of 36. This signifies his widespread acceptance as a figure of religious authority.

He spread his teachings effectively by means of simple stories and parables that appealed to the uneducated Jewish masses.

- **Principal Teachings**

- **Priority of emotion over intellect:**

Simple, sincere, intuitive devotion is preferable to the ideal of Talmudic erudition that was commonly regarded as the hallmark of religious authority.

- **God's Immanence:**

Overwhelming consciousness of God's presence ("sparks of holiness," to use the Kabbalistic imagery) in all things, even in outwardly simple objects and actions. Appreciation of God in nature. The experience of the Divine is thus accessible to all.

- **Joy:**

The consciousness of a loving, ever-present Creator should lead to a feeling of profound joy. Therefore the appropriate mood for worship is one of good cheer; whereas suffering impedes a proper relationship with God.

The Ba'al Shem Tov was providing an effective antidote to the overwhelming demoralizing forces that beset Polish and Russian Jewry when he taught his followers to feel good about themselves and their relationships with God.

He encouraged the cultivation of joy through activities of singing, dancing, story-telling, drinking, etc.

Hasidic doctrine explained that peasant love songs and fairy tales were in reality profoundly allegorical religious texts (e.g., the songs that the Levites had sung in the Holy Temple, expressing the love of God and Israel) that were now being "restored" to their proper purpose.

○ **Customs:**

Hasidism, true to the longstanding traditions of Central and Eastern European ("Ashkenazic") Jewry, attached much importance to popular customs. However it replaced the established Ashkenazic liturgical rite with a version of the Spanish ("Sepharadic") liturgy that had been sanctified by its use among the Kabbalists, especially in the school of Rabbi Isaac Luria in 16th-century Safed.

Unlike the "fire-and-brimstone" preaching that was so common in his time, the Ba'al Shem Tov eschewed asceticism and self-imposed deprivations as expressions of lack of faith in a loving Father.

○ **Good and Evil:**

Evil differs from Good only by degree in the hierarchy of holiness. Therefore the sinner is not completely rejected by the compassionate God, but always has the potential for self-improvement.

○ **Prayer:**

Strong emphasis on the importance of sincere prayer, which can elevate the soul of the worshippers towards their Creator, as well as invoking divine blessings.

The Ba'al Shem Tov's doctrine of prayer imbued it with two important mystical ideals:

- *Devekus* ("clinging"; constant devotion): The unceasing consciousness of God's presence.
- *Hislahavus* ("bursting into flame"; ecstatic enthusiasm): The experience of spiritual exultation as the soul is elevated towards God.

Hasidic prayer was known for its disregard for the technical regulations and ritual formalities imposed by Jewish law, especially the fixed times for prayer. It celebrated the sincere devotion of the unlettered--through simple whistling or recitation of the Hebrew alphabet, etc.--over precise but mechanical recitation of the liturgy.

Hasidism also encouraged the participation of all limbs and forms of expression in worship: through gesticulation, dance, song, etc.

- **Messianism and Eschatology:**

Scholars disagree over the importance of Messianic aspirations in the doctrines of the Ba'al Shem Tov. In a surviving letter of his he expresses the belief that the spread of his teachings will serve as a prelude to the final redemption. However G. Scholem has argued that he intentionally tried to neutralize the eschatological themes that had caused so much disappointment to previous generations, reinterpreting them as allegorical expressions of processes that take place internally within the soul of the individual.

- **"Ahavas Yisro'el" (Love of Israel):**

an ideal of indiscriminate solidarity and love for all fellow Jews.

Subsequent Development of Hasidism

The Ba'al Shem Tov himself does not appear to have defined a framework for leadership of his movement following his death. After some disagreement among the circles of his disciples, one leadership model did emerge as the characteristic one of the movement: that of the *Tzaddik* ("righteous one").

Rooted in Kabbalistic doctrines, the *Tzaddik* was a charismatic figure of extraordinary spiritual calibre. Since the common folk who made up the majority of the Hasidic movement did not possess the material or spiritual means to achieve full religious perfection, the *Tzaddik* would provide a vicarious fulfillment. By devoting oneself to a worthy *Tzaddik*, the individual could benefit from the latter's spiritual guidance and achievements.

The first generation of *Tzaddikim* consisted of the actual disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and included individuals of remarkable stature. The cultivation of personal charisma resulted in an immense variety among the individual Hasidic communities, as each was stamped with the imprint of its leaders, emphasizing different aspects of religious piety.

Some of the better known leaders include:

- **Rabbi Dov Baer, the *Maggid* (Preacher) of Meseritz:**

the most prominent of the Besht's original disciples, largely responsible for the organization of the movement after its founder's death.

- **Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoye:**

who formulated the Hasidic doctrine of the *Tzaddik*.

- **Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi:**

founder of the "[Chabad](#)" school in Lithuania that integrated a profound Hasidic theology with the traditional Lithuanian emphasis on Talmudic study.

- **Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav:**

a troubled, controversial and contentious figure with Messianic aspirations, known for his collection of allegorical "fairy tales." His followers, who never acknowledge a successor to Rabbi Nahman, are referred to as "the Dead Hasidim."

- **Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berditshev:**

the renowned "advocate of Israel" who found virtue even among the sinners of Israel, boldly arguing in the Jews' defense even against the Almighty Himself.

- **Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk:**

an "anti-*Tzaddik*" who lost patience with his followers' reliance on him, and withdrew completely from public contact.

Subsequent generations of Hasidic leadership would be handed down to the principal disciples of the reigning *Tzaddik*, which in many cases were their own sons. This situation evolved into a system of dynastic succession, in which the heirs to the title of *Tzaddik* did not necessarily share the qualifications of their predecessors. Abuses of authority became widespread, as *Tzaddikim* established "courts" with trappings of royalty, to which their followers were expected to furnish generous gifts and make pilgrimages.

Nevertheless, the movement continued to produce several remarkable leaders and religious models, as well as inspiring instances of devotion among the followers.

Although they suffered gravely from the devastation of the European Holocaust, many Hasidic groups continue to exist and thrive on the contemporary Jewish scene, especially in the United States and in Israel. Hasidic factions play prominent roles in both the [Naturei Karta](#) anti-Zionist movement, and in the [Agudat Israel](#).

- [The Opposition to Hasidism: Misnagdim](#)

Misnagdim: The Opposition to Hasidism

With the decline of Polish Jewry in the wake of the various [catastrophes](#) that overwhelmed them in the 17th century, the centre of Torah scholarship moved to Lithuania, which had been less affected by the tragedies. The Lithuanian Rabbis continued to uphold the traditional Jewish approach that equated religious leadership with scholarly mastery of the Talmud and the codes of Jewish religious law.

The most distinguished proponent of this position was Rabbi Elijah of Vilna.

Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon, the Ga'on of Vilna (1720-1797)

Note: The Hebrew word *Ga'on* ("pride") was originally a title restricted to the heads of the Talmudic academies, especially in Babylonia, during the immediate post-Talmudic era (until about the 12th century). In later usage it came to be applied more generally to outstanding Talmudic sages.

- Having demonstrated his remarkable intellectual abilities as a child prodigy, Rabbi Elijah was supported by his community and allowed to devote his full energies to study, without the usual communal responsibilities that attach to a Rabbinic office.
- The scope of his learning extended far beyond the normal *yeshivah* curriculum (which was limited to the Babylonian Talmud), encompassing the full range of ancient and medieval Rabbinic literature, including the Palestinian Talmud and midrashic compendia, etc.
- Rabbi Elijah was an ardent student of the Kabbalah, though he was firmly opposed to the popular Hasidic version of Jewish mystical teaching. He particularly objected to the cult of personality implicit in the leadership of the Hasidic [Tzaddik](#)
- He was knowledgeable in many branches of secular learning, including mathematics, astronomy and biology. He composed Hebrew works on several of these subjects.
- His approach to Talmud study was "critical," and he devoted much attention to textual questions. He opposed the casuistic mode of study (*pilpul*) that was common in many of the Polish *yeshivahs*.
- At the *Ga'on's* instigation, the Vilna Rabbinical court issued an order of excommunication against the "sect" (as the Hasidim were disparagingly called) in 1772, which was subsequently intensified in 1781 to prohibit marriage and commercial relations with them. He questioned the purity of their leaders' motives and challenged their scholarly credentials.
- In his legal rulings, as found in his glosses to the authoritative *Shulhan Arukh* law code, Rabbi Elijah often disregarded the established custom of the community in favour of the theoretical positions that emerge from the literary sources.
- Following the *Ga'on's* death there erupted a series of mutual denunciations, which often resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of leaders of the respective factions.

- The opponents of Hasidism came to be known as "**Misnagdim**" (Hebrew for "opponents.")
- Eventually the antagonism lessened as Hasidism became less radical and more conventionally Orthodox (e.g., they began to turn to Talmud study). The two groups came to the realization that they faced formidable common threats from the Jewish secular ideologies and religious Reformers, as well as from the persecutions of the Czarist government and Christian clergy.
 - [Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Neo-Orthodoxy](#)

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Neo-Orthodoxy

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888)

Life

- Born in Hamburg and raised in an "Enlightened" environment, had a full secular education at a German public school. He studied Judaism at home. Was strongly influenced by Schiller and Hegel.
- It is uncertain whether he ever actually received a Rabbinic ordination. His important teachers were Rabbis Jacob Ettlinger and Isaac Bernays (1792-1849).
- 1829--Studied Philology at University of Bonn, where he was a friend of the important Reform scholar and theologian Abraham Geiger (1810-74).
- 1830-41--Served as "Landesrabbiner" in Oldenberg.
- Adopted "Reform" style: Clerical robes, use of choir, shaved beard, delivered sermons in German, encouraged study of the Bible, opposed Talmudic "hairsplitting" dialectics (*pilpul*), abolished *Kol Nidre* (ceremony for annulment of vows on Yom Kippur).
- 1836--Published *The Nineteen Letters* [Hebrew title: *Iggerot Tzafon* ("Northern Letters")], a fictitious exchange of letters between a master (the young Rabbi-philosopher Naphtali) and a young intellectual (Benjamin) upholding the rationality of traditional Judaism.
- 1838--Published *Choreb*, a rational explanation of the 613 commandments of the Torah.
- Exerted great influence on the historian Heinrich Graetz, who declared himself Hirsch's disciple and came to live with him for three years.
- 1841--Moved to Emden as "Landesrabbiner" of the Hanoverian Districts of Aurich and Osnabrück." Here he conducted his campaign against Reform, and first formulated his doctrine of "*Torah im Derekh Eretz*," the combination of Torah and secular cultural.
- 1846--Appointed chief Rabbi of Moravia, Austria. Moves to Nikolsburg. Leads "Yeshivah" according to his principles of integrating traditional learning with general sciences. Accepted by both traditionalists and modernists, though the conservative faction regarded him as a Reformer for some of the innovations he had introduced (holding weddings in the synagogue, rather than outdoors; delivering German sermons; wearing clerical robes).

- 1848--Actively and successfully campaigned before Austrian Parliament for Jewish legal emancipation.
- Resigns his prestigious office to accept the leadership of the beleaguered traditionalist community (*Adass Yeshurun*) in Frankfurt a. M. In a controversial move, he brought about the withdrawal of the minority Orthodox community from the general Jewish "Gemeind" that was dominated by the Reform.

Under the prevailing law all Jews were required to belong to a single local community organization. Hirsch was initially opposed to the establishment of separatist communities. He changed his mind after the radical Reform positions adopted at the Brunswick synod (1844). Hirsch saw the Reformers as the ones who were seceding.

- Hirsch's first priority was to establish religious schools. Erects beautiful modern buildings for schools and synagogue. Introduces men's choir, restores *Mikvah* (ritual bath), religious slaughter.
- Hirsch's community becomes model for similar projects in Mainz, Darmstadt, Berlin.
- 1854-70--Founds and edits *Jeschurun*, a monthly in which he published many of his ideas.
- 1867-78--Composed his Commentary on the Pentateuch, developed his symbolic exegetical approach.
- 1871-3--Hirsch fought to have the Orthodox minority recognized by the Prussian government as separate congregations. This was linked to a widespread German demand for religious freedom, which was opposed by the Reform movement.
- 1876--Prussian parliament passes "Law of Secession (*Austritt*)" allowing creation of independent traditionalist communities.
This move was opposed by some Orthodox leaders.
- 1882--Commentary on the Psalms (based on classes taught in his community).
- Commentary on the Prayer Book published posthumously (1906).
- 1885-6--Founded the "Freie Vereinigung für die Interessen des Orthodoxen Judentums" (Free Union for the Interests of Orthodox Judaism), an alliance of traditionalist Jewish communities throughout Europe.
- 1888--Died in Frankfurt a. M.

Main Teachings

- **Torah im Derekh Eretz**

Integration of traditional Judaism with secular education (equated with German literature and culture).

- Believed that "style" and externals could be changed, but did not allow major changes in Jewish religious law or traditional beliefs.
- Ideal of "*Israel-Mensch*": Enlightened religious personality.
- Established schools on modern lines.

- **Divine Origins of Torah**

Emphasis on total Divinity of Torah, even where we cannot completely understand it.

- Jewish religious law is not subject to historical development or change.
- Opposed historical model of religious development as propounded by H. Graetz, etc.
- Humanity requires history in order to evolve towards a recognition of "Truth." However Israel was given the truth from the start.

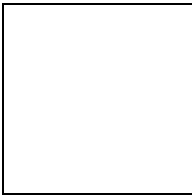
- **Exegetical Method**

- "Speculative etymology" as means to explain the reasons for the Biblical precepts.
- The commandments contain symbolic teachings.

- **Jewish Peoplehood**

- Generally ambivalent attitude towards Jewish nationalism, Zionism: While acknowledging the religious messianic strivings, he remained completely loyal to the German state.
- Regarded Torah as the ultimate purpose of Jewish peoplehood.
- Encouraged retention of Hebrew in order to insure continuity and uniformity of Jews in different lands.
- The ideal of voluntary membership in Jewish communities brought about changes in the role of the Rabbi and the process of legal decisions: The Rabbi only had to speak for those who had chosen to accept his authority, therefore law could be interpreted and applied in a much more demanding and stringent manner.

- [S. R. Hirsch's essay: "Religion Allied to Progress"](#)



Samson Raphael Hirsch

"Religion Allied to Progress"

... "Religion allied to progress": [the leaders of Reform have] with undaunted courage embroidered [this slogan] in scintillating colours on to the banner of our present-day religious struggles, that the educated "progressive" sons and daughters of the new age might rally to this new flag of the prophet and advance with it unhindered. How leaderless was this new congregation of prophets before this new messenger with this new message of salvation appeared among them! Since the beginning of the century the ancient religion had been to them--ancient; it no longer fitted into the society of the sons

and daughters of the new age with their frock coats and evening dresses. In club and fraternity, at the ball and supper party, at concerts and in salons--everywhere the old Judaism was in the way and seemed so completely out of place. And even in the counting-house and in the office, in the courtroom and at the easel, on board ship and in the train--throughout the stream-driven lightning activity of the new age the old Judaism acted as a brake on the hurrying march of progress. Above all it seemed to be the only obstacle in the race for emancipation. No wonder then that without hesitation they shook off the old obstructive religion and hurried into the arms of "progress." And in the political market-place where emancipation was to be purchased, the modern sons of Judah could be seen in every corner offering to exchange the old Judaism for something else, since in any case it had lost all its value for their own use. For many a decade modern Jewry thus soared aloft like dust on the wings of a butterfly and tasted freedom in the unwonted airy heights; and yet they felt a pain in their hearts where the absence of religion had left a void, and at the end they were ashamed while enjoying the brilliance of modern life to be walking the earth without religion; they felt restless and miserable.

But behold! The prophet of the new message came into their midst with the cry of "religion allied to progress"; he filled the blank, pacified their conscience and wiped out their shame. With this magic word he turned irreligion into Godliness, apostasy into priesthood, sin into merit, frivolity into virtue, weakness into strength, thoughtlessness into profundity. By this one magic phrase he distilled the ancient world-ranging spirit of the Torah into a single aromatic drop of perfume so fragrant that in the most elegant party dress they could carry it round with them in their waistcoat pockets without being ashamed. By means of it, he carved out of the ponderous old rock-hewn Tablets of the Law ornamental figures so tiny that people gladly found room for them on smart dressing tables, in drawing-rooms and ballrooms. By means of this one magic phrase he so skilfully loosened the rigid bonds of the old law with its 613 locks and chains that the Divine Word which until then had inflexibly prohibited many a desire and demanded many a sacrifice, henceforth became the heavenly manna which merely reflected everybody's own desires, echoed their own thoughts, sanctified their own aspirations and said to each one: "Be what you are, enjoy what you fancy, aspire to what you will, whatever you may be you are always religious, whatever you may do--all is religion; continue to progress, for the more you progress the further you move from the ancient way, and the more you cast off old Jewish customs the more religious and acceptable to God will you be...."

All this would of itself worry us who are of different mind very little. We allow everyone his own peace and bliss and also his fame, if only he would be fair enough to leave us not indeed our "fame" (to which we lay no claim), nor indeed our "bliss" (which cannot be impaired by human opinion) --but at least our peace and quiet.

But the eulogist of "religion allied to progress" and its prophet has found it necessary to enhance the brightness of his cause by painting its opposite in the blackest colours. He therefore describes us, [we the so-called proponents of Orthodoxy] who do not believe in the mission of the new prophet, as the "black opponents of progress and civilisation." . . .

May one of these "fools and obscurantists" be permitted in the face of such provocation, a few carefully considered and objective remarks, for the purpose of stating fully and placing in their true light the facts which certain people are so glad to call "religious confusions" (because they fear lest they might be cleared up) and so taking the first step towards resolving them? ... [First] a point of fact, it was not "Orthodox" Jews who introduced the word "orthodoxy" into Jewish discussion. It was the modern "progressive" Jews who first applied this name to "old," "backward" Jews as a derogatory term. This name was at first resented by "old" Jews. And rightly so. "Orthodox" Judaism does not know any varieties of Judaism. It conceives Judaism as one and indivisible. It does not know a Mosaic, prophetic and rabbinic Judaism, nor Orthodox and Liberal Judaism. It only knows Judaism and non-Judaism. It does not know Orthodox and Liberal Jews. It does indeed know conscientious and indifferent Jews, good Jews, bad Jews or baptised Jews; all, nevertheless, Jews with a mission which they cannot cast off. They are only distinguished accordingly as they fulfill or reject their mission....

Now what about the principle, the much-vaunted, world-redeeming principle of "religion allied to progress"? If it is to be a principle--something more than an empty phrase meant for show--it must have a definable content and we must be permitted to try to clarify it. In the expression "religion allied to progress," progress is evidently intended to qualify religion. Indeed, this is the very essence of the "idea," not religion by itself, but religion only to the extent and in so far as it can co-exist with progress, in so far as one does not have to sacrifice progress to religion. The claim of religion is therefore not absolute but is valid only by permission of "progress." What, then, is this higher authority to which religion is therefore not absolute but is valid only by permission of "progress"? What, then, is this higher authority to which religion has to appeal in order to gain admission? What is this "progress"? Evidently not progress in the sphere of religion, for then the expression would amount to "religion allied to itself" which is nonsense. It means, then, progress in every sphere other than religion. Speaking frankly, therefore, it means: religion as long as it does not hinder progress, religion as long as it is not onerous or inconvenient.. ..

The subordination of religion to any other factor means the denial of religion: for 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? You must admit it: it is only because "religion" does not mean to you the word of God, because in your heart you deny Divine Revelation, because you believe not in Revelation given to man but in Revelation from man, that you can give man the right to lay down conditions to religion.

"Religion allied to progress"--do you know, dear reader, what that means? Virtue allied to sensual enjoyment, rectitude allied to advancement, uprightness allied to success. It means a religion and a morality which can be preached also in the haunts of vice and iniquity. It means sacrificing religion and morality to every man's momentary whim. It allows every man to fix his own goal and progress in any direction he pleases and to accept from religion only that part which does not hinder his "progress" or even assist it. It is the cardinal sin which Moses of old described as "a casual walking with God."

Civilisation and culture--we all treasure those glorious and inalienable possessions of mankind. We all desire that the good and the true, all that is attainable by human thought and human will-power, should be the common heritage of all men. But to make religion--which is the mother and father of all civilisation and culture--dependent upon the progress of this same civilisation and culture would mean throwing it into the melting-pot of civilisation; it would mean turning the root into the blossom; it would mean crowning the human edifice with that which should be its foundation and cornerstone. . . .

Now what is it that we want? Are the only alternatives either to abandon religion or to renounce all progress with all the glorious and noble gifts which civilisation and education offer mankind? Is the Jewish religion really of such a nature that its faithful adherents must be the enemies of civilisation and progress? . . . We declare before heaven and earth that if our religion demanded that we should renounce what is called civilisation and progress we would obey unquestioningly, because our religion is for us truly religion, the word of God before which every other consideration has to give way. We declare, equally, that we would prefer to be branded as fools and do without all the honour and glory that civilisation and progress might confer on us rather than be guilty of the conceited mock-wisdom which the spokesman of a religion allied to progress here displays.

For behold whither a religion allied to progress leads! Behold how void it is of all piety and humanity and into what blunders the conceited, Torah-criticising spirit leads. Here you have a protagonist of this religion of progress. See how he dances on the graves of your forefathers, how he drags out their corpses from their graves, laughs in their faces and exclaims to you: "Your fathers were crude and uncivilised; they deserved the contempt in which they were held. Follow me, so that you may become civilised and deserve respect!" Such is the craziness which grows on the tree of knowledge of this "religion allied to progress"!

If our choice were only between such craziness and simple ignorance, again we say we would remain ignorant all our life-long rather than be thus godlessly educated even for one moment.

There is, however, no such dilemma. Judaism never remained aloof from true civilisation and progress; in almost every era its adherents were fully abreast of contemporary learning and very often excelled their contemporaries. If in recent centuries German Jews remained more or less aloof from European civilisation the fault lay not in their religion but in the tyranny which confined them by force within the walls of their ghettos and denied them intercourse with the outside world. And, thank goodness, even now our sons and daughters can compare favourably in cultural and moral worth with the children of those families who have forsaken the religion of their forefathers for the sake of imagined progress. They need not shun the light of publicity or the critical eye of their contemporaries. They have lost nothing in culture or refinement, even though they do not smoke their cigars on the Sabbath, even though they do not seek the pleasures of the table in foods forbidden by God, even though they do not desecrate the Sabbath for the sake of profit and enjoyment.

Indeed, we are short-sighted enough to believe that the Jew who remains steadfast amidst the scoffing and the enticements of the easy-going world around him, who remains strong enough to sacrifice to God's will profit, inclination and the respect and applause of his fellows, displays far greater moral strength and thus a higher degree of real culture than the frivolous "modern Jew" whose principles melt away before the first contemptuous glance or at the slightest prospect of profit, and who is unfaithful to the word of God and the teachings of his fathers in order to satisfy the whim of the moment. . . .

Our aims also include the conscientious promotion of education and culture, and we have clearly expressed this in the motto of our Congregation: An excellent thing is the study of the Torah combined with the ways of the world [Yafeh talmud torah im derekh erez]--thereby building on the same foundations as those which were laid by our sages of old--[then] what is it that separates us from the adherents of "religion allied to progress"?

A mere trifle! They aim at religion allied to progress--and we have seen that this principle negates the truth of what they call religion--while we aim at progress allied to religion. To them, progress is the absolute and religion is governed by it; to us, religion is the absolute. For them, religion is valid only to the extent that it does not interfere with progress; for us, progress is valid only to the extent that it does not interfere with religion. That is all the difference. But this difference is abysmal.

Judaism as it has come down to us from our forefathers is for us the gift and the word of God, an untouchable sanctuary which must not be subjected to human judgment nor subordinated to human considerations. It is the ideal given by God to all the generations of the House of Jacob, never yet attained and to be striven for unto the distant future. It is the great edifice for which all Jews and Jewesses are born to live and die, at all times and in every situation. It is the great Divine revelation which should infuse all our sentiments, justify all our resolutions and give all our actions their strength and stability, foundation and direction. Comparisons are futile. Judaism is not a religion, the synagogue is not a church, and the rabbi is not a priest. Judaism is not a mere adjunct to life: it comprises all of life. To be a Jew is not a mere part, it is the sum total of our task in life. To be a Jew in the synagogue and the kitchen, in the field and the warehouse, in the office and the pulpit, as father and mother, as servant and master, as man and as citizen, with one's thoughts, in word and in deed, in enjoyment and privation, with the needle and the graving-tool, with the pen and the chisel--that is what it means to be a Jew. An entire life supported by the Divine Idea and lived and brought to fulfilment according to the Divine Will. It is foolish, therefore, to believe--or to pretend 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 us. It is not the so-called Divine Service which separates us. It is the theory--"the principle" as you call it--which throws Judaism into a corner for use only on Sabbaths and Festivals, and by removing from Jewish souls that have strayed from their Divine Destiny the consciousness of their guilt robs them also of their last hope of penitence.

The more, indeed, Judaism comprises the whole of man and extends its declared mission to the salvation of the whole of mankind, the less it is possible to confine its outlook to the four cubits of a synagogue and the four walls of a study. The more the Jew is a Jew,

the more universalist will his views and aspirations be, the less aloof will he be from anything that is noble and good, true and upright, in art or science, in culture or education; the more joyfully will he applaud whenever he sees truth and justice and peace and the ennoblement of man prevail and become dominant in human society: the more joyfully will he seize every opportunity to give proof of his mission as a Jew, the task of his Judaism, on new and untrodden ground; the more joyfully will he devote himself to all true progress in civilisation and culture--provided, that is, that he will not only not have to sacrifice his Judaism but will also be able to bring it to more perfect fulfilment. He will ever desire progress, but only in alliance with religion. He will not want to accomplish anything that he cannot accomplish as a Jew. Any step which takes him away from Judaism is not for him a step forward, is not progress. He exercises this self-control without a pang, for he does not wish to accomplish his own will on earth but labours in the service of God. He knows that wherever the Ark of his God does not march ahead of him he is not accompanied by the pillar of the fire of His light or the pillar of the cloud of His grace.

In truth, if only most Jews were truly Jews, most of the factors would disappear which today bar many an avenue of activity to them.

If only all Jews who travel or who are engaged in business observed their Jewish duties, the need would--as always--produce its own remedy. The Jew would everywhere find the food demanded by his religion; it would be but little sacrifice for him to refrain from business on the Sabbath; and even in the regulations laid down by state and public bodies enlightened governments would gladly pay respect to a display of conscientiousness which would in itself be a not inconsiderable contribution made by Jewish citizens to the society in which they live. It is only through unfaithfulness of the majority that the loyalty of the minority becomes a duty demanding so much sacrifice, though the crown which it wins is all the more glorious for the thorns which our brethren strew in our path.
...

- [Lithuanian Hasidism: Chabad Lubavitch](#)

Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidism

Note: The name "Chabad" is a Hebrew acronym for the expression "*Chokmah*," "*Binah*" and "*Da'at*"--Wisdom, Intelligence and Knowledge. These Kabbalistic terms are central to the distinctive intellectual theology of the movement.

The name Lubavitch refers to a town in Lithuania that was the centre of the movement for a brief period during the nineteenth century.

Rabbi Shneiur Zalman of Ladi (1746-1812)

- Rabbi Shneiur Zalman had been educated according to the scholarly values of Lithuanian Jewry, distinguishing himself in his mastery of the Talmud and codes of Jewish law.

He was converted to [Hasidism](#) by Rabbi Dov Baer of Meseritz, a principal disciple of the movement's founder Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov.

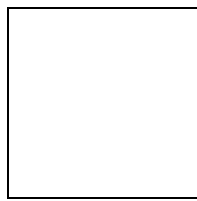
- Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Hasidism brought him into intense conflict with the religious leadership of Lithuanian Jewry, spearheaded by the renowned Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon the "[Ga'on of Vilna](#)". Hasidism was seen as a challenge to the deeply entrenched Jewish reverence for Talmudic scholarship, and was officially banned by the Vilna community in 1772 and 1781, leading to an acrimonious sequence of mutual denunciations.
- Rabbi Shneur Zalman maintained a conciliatory attitude towards his opponents, even though the *Ga'on* of Vilna refused to meet with him.
- 1797--following the death of the *Ga'on* leaders of the Vilna community falsely accused the Hasidim of subversive activities, leading to Rabbi Shneur Zalman's imprisonment for several months in St. Petersburg--a move which led to similar accusations on behalf of the Hasidim themselves.
- 1800--A further round of denunciations led to Rabbi Shneur Zalman's arrest, though he was ultimately exonerated. The date of his release from imprisonment (the 19th of the Hebrew month of Kislev) is still celebrated by the Chabad movement as a festival.
- 1804--The Russian government proclaimed the right of the Hasidim to carry on their activities without hindrance.
- Rabbi Shneur Zalman's most influential publication was his *Likkutei Amarim* ("collected writings") popularly designated by its opening word, as the *Tanya*. It presents a dualistic ethical picture of the "average" individual poised between the alternatives of Good and Evil. Religious and moral perfection are achieved through the observance of the Torah and its precepts, understood according to their deepest mystical and intellectual significance. Judaism is depicted as both a rational and emotional experience.

• **Chabad in Recent Generations**

Chabad Hasidism continued to be a major force among Russian and Lithuanian Jews from its inception. Under Soviet rule, the dedication of the movement provided a powerful underground force active in keeping alive traditional Judaism in spite of government persecutions. With the collapse of Russian Communism, Chabad was one of the important participants in educating a generation of Jews that had been forcibly deprived of their religious heritage for generations.

In 1940 the head of the movement Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson moved to America from Russia. From the outset he expressed his determination to make the Lubavitch movement into an American religious movement (e.g., by abandoning the traditional European long frocks in favour of American-style dress).

The aggressive posture was especially encouraged by his successor Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson.



Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch

Under his leadership the movement established a complex of religious and educational institutions (including publishing houses, billboards, telethons, as well as children's clubs and summer camps) whose principal objective was to reach out to the vast numbers of American Jews who had grown up

without any real exposure to "authentic" religious Judaism.

In pursuing its objectives the Lubavitch movement made efficient use of the full range of American advertising and public relations media. Chabad was particularly influential during the 1960's and early 1970's when the youth culture of the day was rebelling against the materialistic institutions of the large religious movements in favour of spiritual alternatives. Through its campus "Chabad Houses," the Lubavitch movement was able to present itself as a credible alternative to Eastern religions, drug culture, radical politics and other foreign paths that were attracting Jewish youth.

Towards the end of his life Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson suffered from a series of strokes and became unable to communicate directly with his followers. During this time various factions of the movements began to make statements in the name of their "*Rebbe*" that moved Chabad into new directions.

For example, the movement, which had previously refrained from active involvement in questions of Israeli politics, began to take outspoken positions against the Israeli government's readiness to withdraw from occupied territories as part of a peace settlement.

More significantly, Rabbi Schneerson's exhortations to prepare for the coming of the Messiah were perceived as predictions that the redemption was imminent. This developed into a conviction that their *Rebbe* was himself the designated Messiah. This latter perception was fueled by a combination of factors: The Hasidim's reverence for their extraordinary leader; the remarkable historical events surrounding the victorious expansion of Israel and the collapse of the Eastern bloc; and the fact that Rabbi had left no heir or designated successor.

So great was their faith in Rabbi Schneerson that, following his death in 1993, the Chabad movement did not appoint a new leader. Many of the Hasidim still await his return as the Messiah.

- [The Lithuanian Yeshivahs](#)

The Lithuanian *Yeshivot*

The influence of the Vilna "*Ga'on*" in emphasizing Talmudic learning as the key component of Judaism was transmitted to future generations through the influence of his students.

Rabbi Hayyim and the Great Yeshivah of Volozhin

In 1803, Rabbi Hayyim ben Isaac of Volozhin (1749-1821) established what was to become the classic model of Lithuanian *yeshiva*, a central institution that was designed not merely to educate local youths, but primarily to serve as a focus for the finest students throughout the Jewish world. At the "*Etz Hayyim*" ("Tree of Life") *yeshivah* the students would be exposed to a demanding schedule, extending for six days a week. Studies often continued from 3:00 a.m. to midnight, with brief interruptions for prayer and meals. The content of the curriculum emphasized a rigorously logical analysis of the Talmud.

The graduates were not usually expected to become professional Rabbis (students who were suspected of studying the Rabbinic curriculum were frequently looked down upon), but to return to their communities and apply their strong grounding in Judaism to daily pursuits.

Rabbi Hayyim's approach exerted a decisive influence on the curriculum of the Lithuanian *Yeshivot*.

After 1879 the *yeshivah* was in a constant struggle with the Czarist government, who closed the institution several times on account of its refusal to include secular subjects in its curriculum. The institution that was refounded in 1899 did not retain its earlier preeminence.

Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Judah Berlin (1817-1893)



Rabbi Naphtali was known by his acronym as the "Netziv" of Volozhin. He was the son-in-law of Rabbi Isaac, son and successor to [Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin](#), and he became the head of the *yeshivah* in 1854. He remained at the head of that institution for some forty years, strengthening it and expanding its student body.

While sharing the *yeshivah's* tradition of precise logical analysis, he made a special contribution in his broadening of the curriculum to include the entire Babylonian Talmud, and in his commentaries to early Rabbinic texts like the *Sifré* and the *She'iltot*.

Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk (1853-1918)

Rabbi Hayyim "Brisker" was born in Volozhin and spent much of his life studying there. Developed an analytical approach to Talmud study, emphasizing its logical and conceptual features, and demonstrating how disputes in the Talmud and its commentators derive from these conceptual distinctions. The "Brisker" mode of study rejected the extreme logical hairsplitting that was cultivated in many *yeshivahs*.

In 1892, following the closing of the Volozhin *yeshivah*, Rabbi Hayyim moved to Brisk (Brest-Litovsk) where he soon succeeded his father as the community Rabbi, devoting his energies unselfishly to communal concerns.

Subsequent Developments

Following the outbreak of World War I and the German invasion of Lithuania in 1915, most of the important *yeshivot* were forced into exiles to the eastern domains of Russia and the Ukraine, a fact which resulted in the expansion of their influence to areas previously remote from intensive Jewish learning.

Rabbi Shach and Lithuanian Anti-Zionism

The Nazi Holocaust destroyed most of the traditionally religious Jewish population of Eastern Europe, and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel appeared to make the Orthodox opposition to Zionism an anachronistic relic.

Nevertheless, following the war the remnants of Lithuanian Jewry made every effort to rebuild their religious institutions and society, especially in Israel and in America, where new communities were established built around traditional *Yeshivot* of the sort that had flourished previously in Lithuania.

Unlike the situation in Europe, where the *yeshivot* had been integrally connected to and supported by their host communities, the post-war institutions were usually insular, cut off from prevailing social trends. This led to imposing more demanding standards of

halakhic interpretation, since the study did not have to respond to a real social context, and membership in the community was restricted to those who had chosen to accept its standards.

The revived communities were able to benefit from the generosity of the modern "welfare state," and a larger proportion of the young men were able to remain in *kolels*, advanced academies for married students. The State of Israel was also tolerant in allowing exemptions from military service to full-time *yeshivah* students, a policy born from a combination of respect for the victims of the Holocaust, and a conviction that religious Judaism was merely a holdover from the past that would probably die out within a generation of two.

The revived Lithuanian Orthodoxy has maintained a surprising vitality, facilitated by the decline of secular ideologies and a much larger birth-rate among its membership.

In Israel the Lithuanian *yeshivah* world remained affiliated with the [Agudat Israel](#) movement, a coalition of Orthodox groups whose attitudes towards the Jewish state ranged from pragmatically supportive to utterly hostile.

In the 1980's the Lithuanian faction, under the spiritual and ideological leadership of the outspoken head of the Ponevich Yeshivah in B'nai Brak, Rabbi Eleazar Shach, split off to become a separate Political Party (*Degel Hattorah*: "The Banner of the Torah"), devoted to the promotion of its own interests (especially its schools) and its traditional hostility to the secular Zionist leadership.

- [Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Musar \(Ethical\) Movement](#)

Rabbi Israel Lipkin (Salanter) and the *Musar* Movement

Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883)

Life

- 1810--Born in Lithuania.
- At an early age he came under the influence of [Rabbi] Zundel, a figure who went around in common dress and placed a strong emphasis on the quality of humility. Zundel instructed Salanter to study "*musar*," the literature of medieval Jewish moralistic and ethical teachings.
- Salanter established his own following, and was appointed the head of a *yeshivah* in Vilna, where he lived in poverty. In 1842 he established the first Musar society.
- 1848--Salanter left Vilna when he refused a Professorship in Talmud at a government-run seminary (Such institutions usually had conversionist objectives).
- He moved to Kovno, a known centre of reformist and "enlightenment" forces. Under Salanter it was transformed into a traditional Orthodox community.

- In Kovno Salanter established a "*musar shtiebel*," a small synagogue where ethical texts were studied. This act aroused some opposition, since it was viewed as separation from the main community.
- Later in his life, Salanter moved to Germany where he was successful in transplanting the Lithuanian "style" of Jewish life and learning.

He attempted to establish an advanced academy for married students ("*kolel p'rushim*") in Berlin.

- He continued to travel through Europe fund-raising and assisting in the organization of local Jewish communities (especially in Paris).

Main Elements of the *Musar* Ideology

Though Salanter was not a systematic or theoretical thinker, there are a number of important points that figure strongly in his teachings:

- Talmudic study is not an end in itself. It must be accompanied by ethical study and conduct.
- It is not proper to withdraw from daily life. Religious Jews should be fully involved in the affairs of their community. (This was in contrast to precedents such as that of the ["Ga'on" of Vilna](#)).
- Salanter strove to create a new spiritual leadership for Jewish communities, which expressed emotional as well as intellectual qualities.
- Moralistic passages from the Bible, Rabbinic literature and medieval literature should be regularly recited in an atmosphere and tone that would affect the student emotionally.
- The student should constantly subject himself to self-examination, recording his personal shortcomings.
- Musar would inject relevance and vitality into traditional Judaism that would provide a more attractive alternative to Reform and secularism.

The Influence of the *Musar* Movement

Following Salanter's death the movement was directed by Rabbi Isaac Blaser (known as "Rabbi Itze'le Peterburger," 1837-1907) With considerable resistance, Musar study became a part of the curriculum of the important [Lithuanian *yeshivot*](#), initially at Slobodka under Rabbi Nathan Zvi Finkel (1849-1927). The influence of Musar teaching was more deeply felt there perhaps than among the businessmen and traders, as Salanter had hoped.

The *yeshivah* would appoint a moral supervisor (*mashgiah ruhani*) who would hold a weekly musar lesson.

Particular strains of Musar developed. The most notable was that of Novaradok, known for its extremes: The young adherents of this school would go out of their way to place

themselves in situations of public humiliation, by wearing rags and acting oddly, in order to overcome any sense of pride, which they viewed as the gravest of sins.

- [The Aguddat Israel Movement](#)

The "*Aguddat Israel*" Movement

Unlike the situation in Central or Western Europe, where challenges to Jewish beliefs and institutions usually led to religious and theological reform, in Eastern Europe (as well as among the Sepharadim, for the most part), Jews tended to choose between traditional religion and a broad spectrum of secular expressions of Judaism. The result was that the influence of non-Orthodox Jewish religious movements was marginal.

In the early 20th century, *Aguddat Israel* ("the Israelite union") was established as the political arm of traditional Orthodoxy, representing a wide range of anti-modern branches who were not ready to accept the cultural openness of [Hirsch's Neo-Orthodoxy](#).

The *Aguddat Israel* had its beginnings at a conference that took place in 1912 at Kattowitz. The Tenth World Zionist Congress had recently defeated a resolution proposed by the [Mizrachi](#) religious Zionist faction requesting equal support for religious schools. As a result several prominent Mizrachi supporters had withdrawn from the Zionist movement and allied themselves with the forces that would constitute the *Aguddat Israel*. During the First World War the centre of the movement shifted from Russia to Frankfurt, Germany.

Active in the *Aguddah* were several [Hasidic](#) groups, alongside advocates of Lithuanian-style [yeshivahs](#), and even a Labour wing that called for the establishment of strictly religious agricultural settlements in Palestine, outside the framework of the Zionist movement.

The *Aguddat Israel* wielded considerable political power, sending representatives to the Polish parliament.

While they were largely hostile to Zionism as a movement, arguing that the Jews constituted a religious community defined by Torah and not a normal nation, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 makes that antagonism largely irrelevant. In Israel they have represented the interests of the "ultra-Orthodox" constituency in the national parliament, the Knesset. Owing to the nature of Israel's proportional representation system, the relatively small numbers of *Aguddat Israel* representatives has often been crucial to the survival of government coalitions, and hence they have very effectively channeled resources towards their *yeshivahs* and other institutions. They have advocated religious legislation; e.g., public observance of Sabbath and dietary laws, the rejection of non-Orthodox conversions in the definition of "Jew" in Israel's "Law of Return".

Policy decisions of *Aguddat Israel* must be ratified by their "Council of Torah Scholars," which consists of leading Rabbis from the main constituent groups. When participating in government coalitions, they have generally refrained from accepting actual cabinet posts.

Aguddat Israel does not have clear positions on issues related to security or foreign policy. Since they do not attach eschatological or religious significance to the State of Israel, they generally approach such questions pragmatically.

The *Aguddat Israel* established a broad assortment of religious institutions in Europe, including the "Beis Yakov" girl's schools and programmes for "adult education." Most of these institutions have been transplanted to Israel and America. In Israel they have maintained their separate school system (*Hinnukh 'Atzma'i*) outside the state-run Religious School System.

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- [Orthodox Zionism](#)

Orthodox Zionism

Early Orthodox Proponents of Zionism

Although most leaders of traditionalist Judaism were hostile to political Zionism, a few significant individuals recognized the authentic religious roots of Jewish messianism, and were among the first to discern the profound social and political difficulties that beset European Jewry.

Among the most prominent precursors of religious Zionism were:

- Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874)
- Rabbi Judah Alkalay (1798-1878)
- Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer (1824-1898)

The Orthodox supporters of Zionism organized as the **Mizrachi** movement (literally: "Eastern", but actually derived from the Hebrew acronym for "Spiritual Centre"). The party was founded in 1901 at a conference of religious Zionists convened in Vilna by Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines (1839-1915), who served as the organizations first president.

In 1905 Rabbi Reines established the first modern *yeshivah* in Eastern Europe, in Lida, Lithuania. Here the traditional religious curriculum was combined with practical secular subjects. He argued that Orthodoxy would be at a disadvantage as long as religious Jews could not achieve economic affluence.

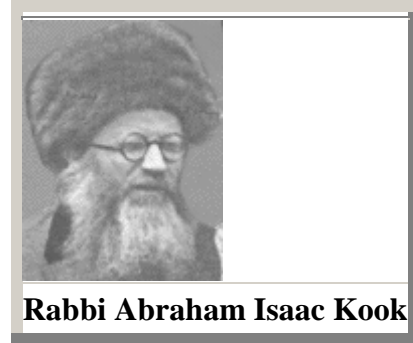
The ideology of the Mizrachi movement saw Jewish nationalism as an instrument for realizing religious objectives, especially of enhancing the opportunities for the observance of the Torah by a Jewish society dwelling on its own soil.

In addition to its important network of modern religious schools (which became the basis for the Israeli State Religious School System), in which spoken Hebrew and Biblical studies were taught (unlike the traditional *yeshivot*), the Mizrahi participated fully in Zionist congresses and other political activities, and trained its members for agricultural labour in Palestine. Largely through its youth movement, *B'nai Akiva*, it established settlements, especially in the Beit She'an valley in the Galilee.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935)

- **Life**

- 1855--Born in Latvia, had traditional Jewish religious *Yeshivah* education.
- 1904--Arrived in Palestine, then under British mandatory rule.



Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

The Jewish community in Palestine was at that time polarized between the "**Old *Yishuv***" (=settlement); i.e., the traditional religious community living a "purely" religious life of study and prayer in the "holy" towns, subsidized by donations from Jews abroad; and the "**New *Yishuv***" consisting of Zionist settlers, largely socialist and anti-religious, who strove for Jewish economic productivity, especially in agricultural settlements.

- 1924--Appointed by British as Chief (Ashkenazic) Rabbi of Palestine.
- Rabbi Kook fought for reconciliation between the Zionists and the religious traditionalists. His legal rulings tried to accommodate the needs of the struggling and economically fragile Zionist settlements; e.g., by permitting agriculture during the Sabbatical year through a farfetched legal fiction.

He also worked for reconciliation between the opposing camps within the Zionist movement, the socialist (Labour) Zionists and the right wing (Revisionist) branch.

- Rabbi Kook was a prolific author. His style was an archaic, flowery kind of Hebrew very different from the spoken vernacular that was being revived at the time.
- He supported the introduction of modernist educational programmes.
- **Central Themes in his Thought**
 - **Jewish Nationalism and Eschatology**
 - Strong belief in the progressive direction of history towards perfection and enlightenment. Clear influence of Hegelian and Marxist ideas, as well as traditional Jewish Messianism.

This led to a conviction that the world would come to recognize and support the Jewish claim to national restoration in their homeland.

- Rabbi Kook believed that the "secularist" Zionists were performing a religious mission, even if they were unaware of it. He was then as fueled by sincere, altruistic motives, and not as heretics.
- The traditionalists, who had abandoned full involvement in day-to-day life in favour of narrowly "religious" pursuits, were products of the anomalous situation of Jewish exile, and hence their model of Judaism was as inauthentic as the secular Zionists who desired a physical, national "redemption."

Rabbi Kook argued that the approaching stage of Jewish history would include both spiritual and material redemption.

- The Jewish people would serve as the vanguard of a universal spiritual revival.
- The religion itself must undergo a spiritual revival. Merely to live according to the commands of Jewish law is insufficient.
- Zionism must have religious content, and cannot be limited to a narrow, parochial nationalism.
- **Jewish Law (*Halakhah*)**
 - A tension exists between creativity and adherence to tradition.
 - Judaism strives to unify of the totality of existence under the Divine influence.
This involves a conflict with unrestrained individualism.
 - The ideal of religious life is universal, unselfish love (*Ahavat hinam*).
- **Mysticism**
 - Integration of Kabbalah, Hasidism and other streams of Jewish mysticism.
 - Emphasis on "light" (appears in titles of many of his books).

Religious Zionism in Israel

In the early decades of Israeli statehood, the mainstream religious Zionist movements (the "Mizrachi" and its affiliates) encouraged full participation with the secular majority.

A prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel was formulated and is recited in most synagogues. It refers to the Jewish state as "the first flowering of our redemption."

The chief Rabbinate (with separate Ashkenazic and Sephardic branches) was appointed by the government and accepted as authoritative by most religious Zionists.

Under Israeli law matters of family law (marriage and divorce) and personal status were placed under the exclusive jurisdiction of religious (i.e., Orthodox) courts.

A new model of *yeshivah*, combining agricultural training with the traditional Talmudic curriculum, was established by Rabbi Kook's student Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neriah.

Special arrangements (*Hesder*) were established in order to allow full participation in military service within a programme of *yeshivah* study.

- [American "Centrist" Orthodoxy](#)

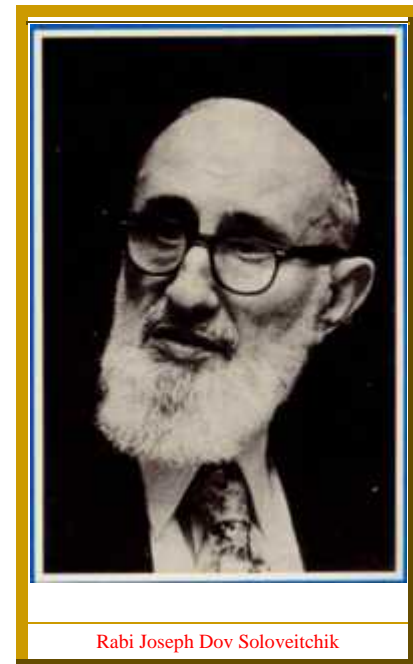
American "Centrist" Orthodoxy

Rabbi Joseph D. Soloveitchik (1903-1992)

Heir to a chain of distinguished Lithuanian Talmudic scholars, Soloveitchik adopted the analytical-conceptual method of study of [Rabbi Hayyim of Brisk](#), combined with a focus on Maimonides' systematic and philosophical presentation of Jewish religious law.

- 1931--Acquired Doctorate in Philosophy at University of Berlin (dissertation on Hermann Cohen).
- 1932--Moved to the United States, settling in Boston.

Rabbi Soloveitchik was active in communal work, set up a Hebrew day school.



- 1941--Began teaching at the Yeshivah University in New York, lecturing in Jewish philosophy at the University' Graduate School. Rabbi Soloveitchik served as head at [Yeshivah University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary \(RIETS\)](#), the main American institute for the ordination of Orthodox Rabbis. In this capacity he was able to exert a decisive influence on the American Rabbinate.
- Rabbi Soloveitchik was active in the [religious Zionist movement \(Mizrachi\)](#), and in the Rabbinic Council of America (the association of "centrist" Orthodox Rabbis).
- He published very little during his lifetime, and most of the books that have been published under his name (many of the posthumously) are transcriptions of classes that he gave.

Among his most important writings are:

- *Halakhic Man*, an analytical-anthropological study of the religious mentality of Lithuanian Judaism, emphasizing the differences between Jewish "legalistic" piety and conventional religiosity. In this work he depicts the system of Talmudic law (*halakhah*) as a means through which the Jewish scholar imposes a divinely founded conceptual order, analogous to a mathematical system, upon all aspects of day-to-day existence.
- *The Lonely Man of Faith*, an exploration of the tension between faith and reason, focusing on the Biblical story of the "Binding of Isaac."
- *The Voice of My Beloved is Knocking*, on the religious significance of Zionism.
- *On Repentance*, discourses on Maimonides' "Laws of Repentance."

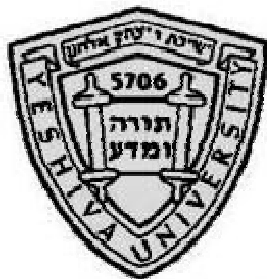
Institutions of American "Centrist" Orthodoxy

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The Yeshiva University, New York City:

This Orthodox institution of higher learning has its roots in the "Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan, which was established in 1896 as the first American Orthodox seminary, for religious education and the training of Rabbis.

In the early decades of the 20th century the curriculum was expanded to include secular subjects, a high school, teachers' seminary and more.



By 1928 it was affiliated with the "Yeshiva College," a liberal arts institute. In 1945 it was granted full university status as the "[Yeshiva University](#)."

The "Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary" ("RIETS") remains the soul of the University, and it is the main institution for the training and ordination of Orthodox congregational Rabbis in America.

Unlike some of the more traditionalist *yeshivas*, RIETS graduates are native English speakers (rather than Yiddish), and are expected to hold Academic degrees.

The Union of Jewish Orthodox Congregations (commonly referred to as the "Orthodox Union" or: "OU").

Established in 1898, this is largest union of American Orthodox congregations. Among its important activities are:



- The administration and certification of "kosher" food (i.e., supervising its production to make sure that it conforms to Jewish dietary laws). The "OU" certification found on many commercial products makes it much easier to be a religiously observant Jew in North America.
 - Support for a broad range of religious educational institutions and projects.
 - Lobbying the American government on various issues of importance to religious Jews (and occasionally, on matters related to the welfare of Israel).
 - The Orthodox Union coordinates synagogue organizations for men, women, youth and college students.
- **The Rabbinical Council of America:**

This is the central body of Centrist Rabbis. Its "Halacha Commission," long headed by Rabbi J. D. Soloveitchik, is a respected source of Jewish legal decisions.

- **Young Israel:**

Founded in 1912 by young Jews seeking to Americanize the decorum and aesthetics of the older European-style Orthodox synagogues, this congregational organization has continued to function. It offers some services similar to those of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations.

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- [Orthodox Anti-Zionism: *Naturei Karta*](#)

Orthodox Anti-Zionism



Rabbi Amram Blau

Until the Nazi Holocaust, much of the Orthodoxy was antagonistic to the Zionist aspiration of establishing a national home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. In large measure this opposition was less to Zionism itself than to the Zionists, for most of the Zionist activists were secularists who rejected the traditional authority of the Rabbis in favour of "foreign" ideologies such as socialism and nationalism. Zionism constituted a serious threat to the traditional religious power structure. The issue was felt more urgently in Palestine itself, where the "old *Yishuv*" (settlement)

lived unproductively off

the donations of Diaspora Jews, whereas the Zionist settlers were calling for the Jews to be self-supporting and to involve themselves in economically productive manual labour.

As a theological justification for their position, they cite various Rabbinic traditions that forbid the hastening of the Redemption.

The most intransigent and extreme of the Orthodox anti-Zionist parties is the *Naturei Karta* movement, a small but vocal organization that broke off from [Agudat Israel](#) in 1935 because of their insistence on total separation from the Zionist Jewish community in Jerusalem.

The name *Naturei Karta*, Aramaic for "guardians of the city," was first used in 1938, and alludes to a Talmudic statement that religious scholars, not soldiers, are the true guardians of a city.

Naturei Karta have tried as much as possible to avoid using the facilities of the Israeli government, including courts, identity cards, schools, currency and public utilities. They have been outspoken in propagandizing against the legitimacy of the Jewish state. They have gone so far as to negotiate privately with hostile Arab states and leaders.

The actual *Naturei Karta* movement is a tiny one, though very vocal and adept at capturing media headlines. Rabbi Amram Blau was *Naturei Karta*'s best-known spokesman.

There are in addition to the official *Naturei Karta* membership (whose origins are to be found primarily in the Lithuanian and German [Misnagdic](#) traditions), other Orthodox

A Scene from the "Old *Yishuv*"



streams who oppose Zionism on similar religious grounds. Most visible among these has been the Satmar Hasidic sect led by the Teitelbaum dynasty. In more recent years, statements in a similar spirit have been expressed by some exponents of the Sefaradic "ultra-Orthodox" faction associated with the Israeli ["Shas" party](#).

- [Rabbi Eliezer Shach and Lithuanian Anti-Zionism](#)

Rabbi Shach and Lithuanian Anti-Zionism

The Nazi Holocaust destroyed most of the traditionally religious Jewish population of Eastern Europe, and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel appeared to make the Orthodox opposition to Zionism an anachronistic relic.

Nevertheless, following the war the remnants of Lithuanian Jewry made every effort to rebuild their religious institutions and society, especially in Israel and in America, where new communities were established built around traditional *Yeshivot* of the sort that had flourished previously in Lithuania.

Unlike the situation in Europe, where the *yeshivot* had been integrally connected to and supported by their host communities, the post-war institutions were usually insular, cut off from prevailing social trends. This led to imposing more demanding standards of halakhic interpretation, since the study did not have to respond to a real social context, and membership in the community was restricted to those who had chosen to accept its standards.

The revived communities were able to benefit from the generosity of the modern "welfare state," and a larger proportion of the young men were able to remain in *kolels*, advanced academies for married students. The State of Israel was also tolerant in allowing exemptions from military service to full-time *yeshivah* students, a policy born from a combination of respect for the victims of the Holocaust, and a conviction that religious Judaism was merely a holdover from the past that would probably die out within a generation of two.

The revived Lithuanian Orthodoxy has maintained a surprising vitality, facilitated by the decline of secular ideologies and a much larger birth-rate among its membership.

In Israel the Lithuanian *yeshivah* world remained affiliated with the [Agudat Israel](#) movement, a coalition of Orthodox groups whose attitudes towards the Jewish state ranged from pragmatically supportive to utterly hostile.

In the 1980's the Lithuanian faction, under the spiritual and ideological leadership of the outspoken head of the Ponevich Yeshivah in B'nai Brak, Rabbi Eleazar Shach, split off to become a separate Political Party (*Degel Hatorah*: "The Banner of the Torah"), devoted to the promotion of its own interests (especially its schools) and its traditional hostility to the secular Zionist leadership.

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- [Sepharadic Orthodox Movements](#)

Developments in Israeli Sepharadic Orthodoxy

As in Eastern Europe, the Sepharadic and North African Jewish communities did not experience movements for religious reform like the ones that arose in Central and Western Europe and in America. The main threat to their religious tradition came from the secular influences that they encountered under colonial rule, especially under French rule in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. At any rate, there was no need for a European-style "Orthodoxy."

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the riots and persecutions that resulted against the Jews of Arab countries, massive numbers of Middle-Eastern Jews were brought to Israel. The Israeli leadership, consisting largely of secular Ashkenazic Jews, often viewed the religious lifestyles of their "oriental" cousins as another manifestation of the cultural primitiveness that would have to be shed as part of their integration into a modern Western society. Many of the immigrants were persuaded to abandon the religious traditions of their former homelands.

During the first decades of Israeli statehood, North African Jews did not establish their own political or religious movements or institutions, and most were absorbed into the established Ashkenazic bodies. They were usually educated in the State Religious School System (even when religious Ashkenazim were sending their children to private religious schools and *yeshivahs*). The main religious political movements, the [Agudat Israel](#) and the [Mizrachi](#) (which evolved into the National Religious Party), had few Sepharadim among their leadership.

By the mid-1970's the ethnic divisions between Ashkenazic and Sepharadic Israelis became a major social issue.

In the religious sphere this involved the creation of Sepharadic parallels to the mainstream religious parties

- Although considerable numbers of North African Jews had been educated at *yeshivahs* affiliated with *Agudat Israel*, adopting their typical dress and lifestyles, the movement continued to see itself as an



Eastern European constituency. Yiddish remained the language of discussions for its guiding "Council of Torah Sages," and the great Sepharadic Rabbinic authorities were often held in disdain. (From the early Middle Ages the two communities had evolved different approaches to religious scholarship: The Europeans valued incisive dialectic, whereas the Spanish Rabbis excelled in systematic codification).

The upshot of this was the creation of a Sepharadic equivalent to *Aguddat Israel*, named "Shas," with its own Council of Torah Sages.

The principal spiritual leader of the party is the renowned halakhic authority Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. The Israeli government's refusal to extend Rabbi Yosef's term as Sepharadic Chief Rabbi (*Rishon Letzion*) had been one of the main reasons for the Shas party's establishment.

- A similar development occurred within the Zionist National Religious Party. One of its parliamentary representatives, a member of a revered North African Rabbinic dynasty, was convicted of corruption and removed from his office, his followers split off to create a separate Sepharadic religious party which attracted a considerable following among North African Jews.

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- [Messianic Orthodoxy: Gush Emunim](#)

Radical Messianic Zionism

Until 1967 religious Zionists in Israel were marginalized both by the secular majority, and by the more visibly religious groups that seemed to offer a more authentic, uncompromising brand of religion.

The Six-Day War of June 1967 resulted in the capture of East Jerusalem and other territories of the Biblical Land of Israel.

The long-range fate of these territories, and their Arab inhabitants, became a major controversy of Israeli policy makers. From a purely secular perspective, the choice was between the military security that was offered by the expanded borders and the relative demographic stability that would be achieved by excluding their large Arab population from the domain of a Jewish state.

A religious claim provided strong justification for those who wished to hold on to the occupied territories: If the State of Israel was viewed as the unfolding of a Messianic scenario, then the miraculous victory of the Six-Day War was an essential stage in that process. The territories belong to the Jewish people (i.e., the State of Israel) by Divine decree and they may not be handed over to foreign hands.

The issue of territories, viewed in an eschatological context, became the defining feature for broad segments of religious Zionism in the post-1967 era.

Under the spiritual leadership of [Rabbi Kook](#)'s son Zvi Yehudah Kook, with its centre in the *yeshivah* founded by the elder Kook, Jerusalem's "*Merkaz Harav*," thousands of modern young religious Jews campaigned actively against any territorial compromise, and established numerous settlements throughout Judea and Samaria. Many of these settlements, though originally founded illegally, were subsequently granted official recognition by the Israeli government, especially under right-wing regimes.

The most powerful political voice of the movement against territorial compromise became "*Gush Emunim*" (the Bloc of the Faithful).

However the fundamental policies of *Gush Emunim* filtered down to the mainstream, particularly to religious educational networks, in which a land-centered nationalism was presented as the highest form of religious virtue, and the histories of Zionism and the State of Israel were viewed as irreversible steps in the unfolding Messianic fulfillment.

The aspirations of *Gush Emunim* were widely respected by the Jewish public, especially as long as Arab intransigence made the return of the territories a far-off theoretical possibility.

When peace agreements with Egypt (1977) and the Palestine Liberation Front (1993) put the return of occupied lands onto the actual political agenda, *Gush Emunim* found itself in active opposition to the policies and laws of the State of Israel.

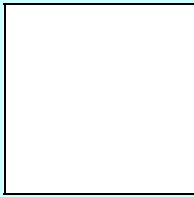
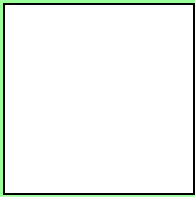
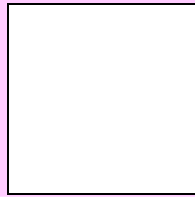
In the '90's mainstream Rabbis were ordering religious Jews to disobey military commands to evacuate occupied lands, and branding Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a "traitor" to the higher Jewish cause. A follower of these views assassinated Rabin in November 1995.

The *Gush Emunim* movement, like the secular right-wing parties, was generally vague or ambivalent about the status of the non-Jewish residents of the occupied territories. A more extreme position was taken by Meir Cahane, whose banned racist party "Kach" scorned democracy as an un-Jewish import, and advocated laws that would prohibit sexual and social contact with Arabs, actively calling for the eviction of Arabs from territories that belonged by rights to the Jews.

- [Organizations Attached to Major American Jewish Movements](#)

Organizations Attached to Major American Jewish Movements

	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Reform</i>	<i>Orthodox</i>
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Rabbinical Seminary	Jewish Theological Seminary of America	Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion	Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Theological Seminary (Yeshivah University)
Rabbinical Organization	Rabbinic Assembly	Central Conference of American Rabbis	Rabbinical Council of America (RCA)
Synagogue Union--National	United Synagogues of America	Union of American Hebrew Congregations	Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America
Synagogue Union--International	World Union of Synagogues	World Union for Progressive Judaism	
Youth Organization	United Synagogue Youth	National [North American] Federation of Temple Youth	National Council of Synagogue Youth (NCSY)
College Organization	KOACH College outreach program	KESHER	NCSY Collegiate program
Women's Organization	Women's League	Women of Reform Judaism (formerly: National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods)	Women's Branch of the Orthodox Union
Men's Organization	Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs	National [North American] Federation of Temple Brotherhoods	
Teachers College	JTS Teachers' College	HUC Teachers' Institute (National Association of Temple Educators)	Azieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration
Cantor School	Cantorial School	HUC School of Sacred Music	The Philip & Sarah Belz School of Jewish Music
Cantor Organization	Cantors' Assembly	American Conference of Cantors	Cantorial Council of America
Museum	Jewish Museum	Skirball Museums	Yeshiva University Museum at the Center for Jewish History
Israeli Campus	JTS Jerusalem	HUC Jerusalem Campus	Caroline and Joseph S.

	Campus		Gruss Institute in Jerusalem.
Summer Camps	Camp USY, Ramah	NFTY Camps	Camp NCSY programs
Day Schools	Solomon Schechter Day Schools	Progressive Association of Reform Day Schools– PARDeS	

- [Status of Women](#)

Women in Judaism

Methodological Issues:

- The *legal* character of Judaism: Issue cannot be dealt with separately from the fundamental question of the authority of religious law.
- Rabbinic sources rarely justify their rules on philosophical, moral or ideological grounds. Laws are open to many interpretations, but are difficult to change.
- Much of Jewish law originated as individual or majority opinions or different authorities: it does not constitute a consistent system.
- "*Status*"--a problematic term. It is the totality of many individual, non-systematic regulations and traditions.
- Does religion *create* a situation, or does it just regulate it?
- Can there be separation of gender roles without discrimination?

Historical perspectives--

- Contemporary situation is materially different from earlier times: e.g., possibility (physical, at least) of birth control, bottle-feeding, change to non-physical forms of employment, etc.

Until recently, the traditional family (father working outside the home, mother as home-maker) was not a matter of choice, but of biological and economic necessity.

- Importance of distinguishing between culturally contingent features and "eternal" religious positions.
- Social changes which involve religious and moral positions: e.g., Nature of the family, legitimacy of birth control, etc.
- Modern Judaism tends to confine the focus of religious life to specifically religious institutions, especially the synagogue; whereas traditional Judaism attached equal religious value to all aspects of life, especially the home.

- Contemporary culture regards public activity as more important than domestic life.

Major issues of controversy:

- **Exclusion from Torah study**
- **Liturgy and rituals:**
 - **"Blessed is God...who has not made me a woman."**

[Variants: Who has created me in his image. Who has created me according to his will. Who has not made me a man.]

Responses:

Reform: Drop

Conservative: Adopt alternative version.

Orthodox: Retain (and interpret).

- **Gender-specific language.** [Limitations of Hebrew]
- **Exclusion from time-bound rituals**
- **Distinctly female rituals** [candle-lighting, *niddah*, etc.]
- **Celebrations of birth and coming-of-age** (cf. circumcision and *bar-mitzvah* for males)
- **Synagogue:**
 - **Separate vs. family seating.**
 - **Counting in *minyan*** (quorum of ten).
 - **Public reading of Torah**
 - **Ability to lead communal prayers**

[Follows from the fact that women are not *obligated* in time-bound rituals].

- **Ordination as Rabbis**
- **Civil and Family law:**
 - **Marriage:** Acquisition by husband?
 - **Divorce:** Must be initiated by husband
 - **Levirate marriage**
 - **Agunah**
 - **Disqualification from being witnesses or judges**
 - **Inheritance and alimony**
 - **Polygyny and monogamy**
 - **Rape**
- **Sexuality and modesty:**
 - *Niddah*--Menstrual prohibitions
 - **Procreation as a *man's* obligation**
 - **Birth control and abortion**
 - **Sexual distraction:** Limitations on public appearances; dress and head-covering, singing, etc.