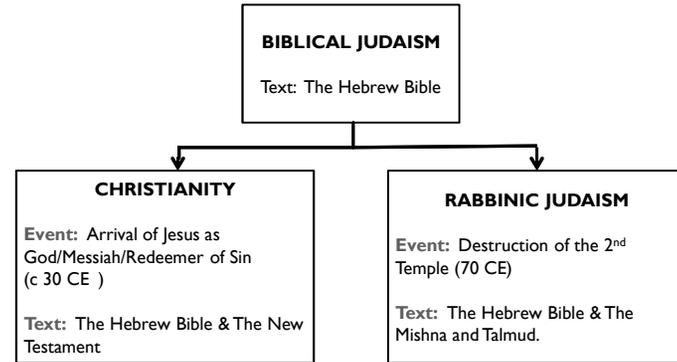


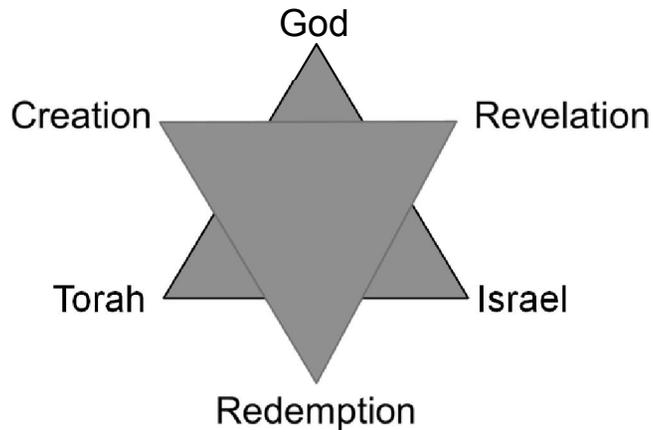
What Every Serious Christian Should Know About Judaism

Rabbi Michael Lotker
Community Rabbi,
The Jewish Federation of
Ventura County
Camarillo, California

Relationship Between Christianity & Modern Judaism



On the Nature of Judaism



Faith & Works

- Emphasis on Judaism is Actions
 - Commandments
 - Jewish Law
 - Faith is Important but Secondary
- Emphasis in Christianity is Faith
 - Acceptance of Jesus
 - But Faith Without Works is Dead

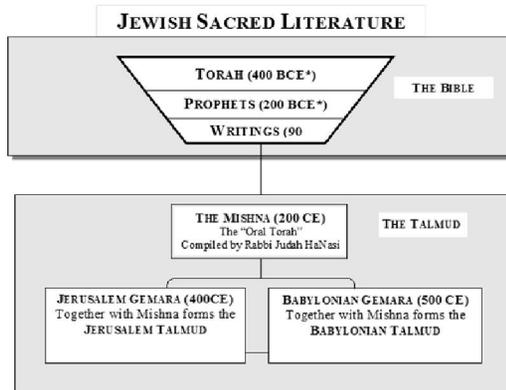
Jewish Peoplehood

- In ancient times, one’s religion and nationality were the same.
 - Romans worshiped Roman gods.
 - Egyptians worshiped Egyptian gods.
 - Greeks worshiped Greek gods.
 - And Israelites worshiped the Israelite God.
- Judaism is the sole survivor of this system.
 - Not every Jew is an Israeli.
 - But every Jew is a member of *Am Yisrael*, the people Israel.

Who Is a Jew?

- Biblical: Goes with Father’s line.
 - Joseph marries daughter of Egyptian priest.
 - His sons become heads of tribes.
- Talmudic (& Current Traditional Law)
 - You are Jewish if your mother is Jewish.
 - Your beliefs don’t matter.
- But anyone can convert to Judaism (although converts are not sought).
- Reform Position: Child of Jewish father or mother is Jewish if raised Jewishly.

Jewish Sacred Texts Beyond the Bible



* Approximate Dates of Canonization

The Sabbath in the Torah: Exodus 20

20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
20:9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:
20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

But how does God define work?

The Sabbath in the Mishna & Talmud

- **MISHNAH (Shabbat 2:2)** The primary labours are forty less one, [viz.:] Sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, selecting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, bleaching, hackling, dyeing, spinning, stretching the threads, the making of two meshes, weaving two threads, dividing two threads, tying [knotting] and untying, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, capturing a deer, slaughtering, or flaying, or salting it, curing its hide, scraping it [of its hair], cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters [over the erasure], building, pulling down, extinguishing, kindling, striking with a hammer, [and] carrying out from one domain to another: these are the forty primary labours less one.
- **GEMARA (Shabbat 73b)** Why state the number? — Said R. Johanan: [To teach] that if one performs them all in one state of unawareness, he is liable on account of each separately.

Judaism and Jesus



Why Don't Jews Accept Jesus as the Messiah?

The Word “Messiah”

English “Messiah” is a translation of the Hebrew “*Mashiach*” [מָשִׁיחַ]

- *Mashiach* means “anointed.”
 - Kings of Israel were anointed by pouring holy oil on their heads.
- When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (about 200 BCE), the Hebrew *Mashiach* became the Greek “*Christos*” [Χριστός].
- The Greek *Christos* gives rise to the English “Christ.”

Jewish Understanding of Messiah

- Fully Human and Only Human
- A Political and/or Military Ruler like King David
- Not God in any sense
- Not the son of God in any sense beyond the idea that we are all children of God
- Not connected with redemption of sin
 - Only we can atone for our sins
 - For sins against God, God forgives
 - For sins against others, God cannot forgive unless the person offended forgives
- Messiah not at the heart of Judaism

Jewish Prophecies Concerning Messiah

- A time of peace on earth
 - Peace among people
 - Peace among animals
- All the world will come to know the one God
- Details unresolved
 - Mystics see the time as supernatural
 - Rationalists believe that we will do the work to make the world perfect
 - Many believe in a Messianic Age rather than an individual Messiah.

My “Has the Messiah Come?” Test

- Read the LA Times cover to cover every day for a month.
- If there’s no story of war, or hatred or hunger or disease, the Messianic Age may be here!



Why Don't Jews Accept Jesus As Messiah?

- No world peace, no Messiah
- The Second Coming not a Jewish idea
- The larger issue is whether Jesus is God
 - The idea of God taking human form, suffering with us and dying for our sins is
 - Beautiful and inspiring
 - But not Jewish!
- This is why I can have great respect for Christianity but less sympathy for “Jews for Jesus” and “Messianic Jews”
- **This issue is not “Who was Jesus” but “Who is God.”**

A Religion of Commandments

- Hebrew for Commandment = *Mitzvah*
 - *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is someone obligated to observe commandments
- Not just the big 10
- 613 commandments in the Torah alone!
 - Love thy neighbor
 - No pork
 - Paying wages to day laborers each day

How Many Commandments?

- 613 in the Torah [1st 5 Books of Bible]
- The Rabbis of the Talmud add 1000s more
 - Against mixing milk and meat
 - Kosher slaughtering
 - Shabbat candles
 - Bar/Bat Mitzvahs
 - Hanukkah candles
 - Detailed rules for Passover Seders
 - Daily prayers

Jewish Movements

- **Orthodox:** All Jewish law unchanging & binding on all Jews.
 - Hasidic & Chabad are well known examples
- **Conservative:** All Jewish law binding on all Jews but laws change with the times.
 - Example: OK to drive to synagogue on Shabbat.
- **Reform:** Ethical Jewish laws binding but ritual laws (head coverings, kosher laws, Sabbath observance) should be studied and each individual decides if s/he hears God's voice.

The Shofar



Shofars
 1. Horn of Mountain of Sodom - 1875. 2. The same shofar as above. 3. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 4. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 5. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 6. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 7. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 8. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 9. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 10. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 11. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 12. Horn of Sodom, 1875. 13. Horn of Sodom, 1875.

Jewish Contributions to the World

- The Bible – First System of Ethics & Monotheism
- Ten Commandments
- Ideas like “Love thy Neighbor as Yourself”
 ואהבת לרעך כמוך
- Judeo Christian Heritage founded on Jewish ideas
- 740 Nobel Prizes Between 1901 and 2004 - 156 are Jews
- Medicine – 29%
- Chemistry – 19%
- Economics – 38%
- Physics – 26%
- Peace – 10%

From Joseph Sonnenblick

Hebrew Calendar: “Lunisolar”

- Twelve “months/moons” (alternating 30 or 29 days)
- Total 353, 354 or 355 days (cf. 365¼ solar days)
 - or 383, 384, or 385 days in “Leap Years”
- Extra month (Adar II) added in Leap Years
 - Years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 & 19 of each 19-year cycle
- So months remain in the same solar seasons:
 - Tishri in Fall (Sept/Oct); Nissan in Spring (Mar/Apr), etc.
- *Rosh Codesh* (1st day each month)
 - Specials Psalms; Women free from work

From: “Religions of the Book” by Felix Just

Major Jewish Feasts (Overview):

1. Rosh Hashanah / Jewish New Year
2. Yom Kippur / Day of Atonement
3. Sukkot / Tabernacles/Booths
4. Pesach / Passover
5. Shavu'ot / Weeks/Pentecost
6. Hanukkah / Feast of Lights
7. Purim / Feast of Lots
8. Simchat Torah / Rejoicing in the Torah
9. Tisha B'Av / 9th of Av: Destruction of Two Temples

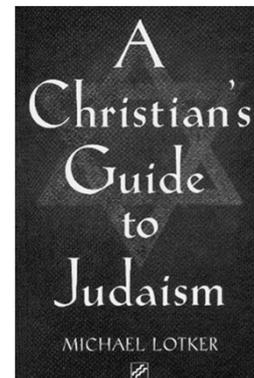
The Miracle of Jewish History

Mark Twain
Harper's Magazine, 1898



“The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then . . . passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed. The Jew saw them all, beat them all... All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”

Want to Learn More?



Paulist Press, 2004

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www.lotker.com**