Introduction to Judaism

Part I

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Shai Cherry (b. 1966) straddles the worlds of higher education and community education. Although it took Dr. Cherry seven years to acquire a B.A. (*magna cum Laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*) in philosophy, politics, and economics from Claremont McKenna College, he managed to attend the Wharton School of Finance, two universities in England, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During that period, he taught junior high school and high school students at various southern California Reform temples and Conservative synagogues, as well as volunteered in Israel for 10 months on Project Otzma.

As Dr. Cherry pursued his doctorate in Jewish thought from Brandeis University (2001), he served as family educator at a Reform temple in the Boston area. He also taught Rabbinics and Modern Jewish Thought for Hebrew College. Having begun his formal Jewish education at an unorthodox *yeshiva* (seminary) in Jerusalem, the Pardes Institute, he returned on completion of his Ph.D. for another year of Talmud study at the Conservative Yeshiva.

Since 2001, Professor Cherry has taught at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, as the Mellon Assistant Professor of Jewish Thought. At the same time, he has served as an instructor in the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School.

Dr. Cherry's research focuses on biblical interpretation and the nexus between science and Judaism. "Three Twentieth-Century Jewish Responses to Evolutionary Theory" appeared in the 2003 volume of *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism*. Slated to appear in 2005 is his essay "Crisis Management via Biblical Interpretation: Fundamentalism, Modern Orthodoxy and Genesis" in *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Evolution*. The following year will see the publication of Dr. Cherry's first book on Jewish interpretations of Torah.

The professor has received numerous awards for his work in community education and continues to teach across the United States and in Israel.

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Introduction to Judaism

Scope:

Judaism is not a book (the Hebrew Bible) or even a set of books (the Hebrew Bible plus the Talmud plus other legal, mystical, and philosophical writings), but a living religious tradition. Even to call Judaism a "religion" is not quite accurate. The Land of Israel and the People of Israel have been essential, intertwined components of Judaism for 3,000 years. Most religions, like Christianity, do not have quite the same relationship to a particular place or national group. Judaism has variously been called a culture, an ethnicity, and a civilization, all terms that struggle to include more than "just" religion. This course, *Introduction to Judaism*, presents the unfolding of the *religious* aspects of the Jewish civilization from the Hebrew Bible to today, while keeping an eye on the historical background against which those changes within Judaism have occurred.

The Hebrew Bible is Judaism's foundation text. Knowing the Hebrew Bible, however, will tell you surprisingly little about Judaism, especially in its contemporary expressions. We begin our course with a discussion of the Bible and its relationship to Judaism. We'll also discuss modern assumptions about the human authorship of the Bible and compare them to traditional assumptions that the Bible is, somehow, the word of God.

We then begin to describe the varieties of early Judaisms. Although Jewish history is not one long tale of travails, there have been several catastrophes that powerfully shaped the Jewish consciousness. Among them was the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem by the Babylonians and Romans, respectively. In the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple, some of the groups competing for power in the Jewish world lost their power bases, while others gained from the changing circumstances. Eventually, it was Rabbinic Judaism that achieved hegemony among the vying ideologies and interest groups.

After discussing what we know about this power struggle to assume leadership in the Jewish world, we will look closely at some of the core values and practices of the Rabbis. Most of their agenda, such as the emphasis on deeds of loving kindness, has roots in the Bible. But the ways in which the Rabbis promoted other practices, such as study, repentance, and prayer, are quite innovative. In our discussion of the afterlife, for example, we will see how a relatively late and marginal idea in the Hebrew Bible became critical in the late Second Temple period.

With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., however, celebrating God's presence in time, rather than space (as in the Jerusalem Temple), became central in Rabbinic Judaism. The next section of the course, therefore, focuses on the Jewish calendar, beginning with the Sabbath. After looking at the Rabbinic development of this biblical institution, we'll pause to focus on the broader question of the relationship between the letter of the law and its spirit. We will then continue with our journey through the Jewish year, always conscious of how the holidays, often relating to harvests in the Land of Israel, were given new dimensions and reinterpreted for a people who no longer lived in the Land.

At this point, we'll introduce the Jewish philosophers and mystics of the Middle Ages. What explains the emergence of these new expressions of Judaism? How do they differ in their understandings of the relationship between God and the world? As we make this bridge between ancient and modern Judaism, we'll focus on the issue of evil. Beginning with biblical understandings of evil and suffering, we will then move to Rabbinic responses. The Jewish philosophers and mystics of the Middle Ages resort to dramatically different styles of language to address their equally different explanations for the persistence of evil. Finally, we'll see how some modern Jewish thinkers have responded to the greatest of all Jewish catastrophes, the Holocaust. How do contemporary theodicies (explanations for evil in a world created by a good and powerful God) relate to the historical ones?

Our next five sessions will be devoted to modern expressions of Judaism. The varied faces of Judaism that we see today are all outgrowths of the historical changes of the Jewish emancipation and enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries. Surprisingly, we'll see that Ultra-Orthodox Judaism is just as much a product of modernity as is Reform Judaism. We'll then explain the ideologies and the reasons for the emergence of the major movements in the "middle": Modern Orthodoxy, Conservative Judaism, and Reconstructionist Judaism. We'll also discuss the modern phenomenon of atheism/secularism among Jews. (Being a Jewish atheist is not a contradiction in terms, while being a Christian atheist is.) Some secular Jews (and a few religious ones, too) chose to express their Jewish commitments through a return to the historic Land of Israel. Thus, modernity has brought with it the possibility of identifying, for the first time in nearly 2,000 years, with any, all, or none of the following: the Land of Israel, the People of Israel, and the Torah of Israel.

Our final three sessions will consider sensitive issues of contemporary interest and trace their developments from the Torah to today's different Jewish denominations. The emphasis in these lectures will be on the process of how Jewish thought and practice develops. What is the role and status of women according to Jewish law? How does Judaism understand Christianity? Is it an expression of idolatry or another path to the one God? Finally, are the Jews the Chosen People? And, if so, for what have they been chosen and by whom? Throughout these lectures, we will highlight the wide range of Jewish expressions, so that an equally legitimate name for this course might be: *Introduction to Judaisms*.

Lecture One
Torah, Old Testament, and Hebrew Bible

Scope: *Torah* means "teaching" or "instruction" in Hebrew and can refer to an individual teaching, the Pentateuch, the entire Bible (including the sections of the Prophets and the Writings), or the entire warehouse of Jewish thought from the Bible to today. But whatever *Torah* refers to, it is Jewish and may be at odds with Christian interpretations of what Christians often call the Old Testament, which they see as a prelude to the New Testament.

Many scholars attempt neutrality by using the name *Hebrew Bible*. But Jewish and Christian interpretations often diverge dramatically from what academics tell us the Hebrew Bible meant in its ancient Near Eastern context. Moreover, assumptions about the authorship of the Bible are also different between the academic community and some faith communities. The creation stories of Genesis and the prohibition of combining milk and meat will be our case studies as we explore the sometimes stark differences among Torah, Old Testament, and Hebrew Bible.

Outline

I. Terminology.

A. How one designates the corpus of books variously known as the TaNaKH, Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible often involves ideological assumptions about how that text is to be understood.

1. *TaNaKH* is the Hebrew acronym for the three sections of this text: Torah (Pentateuch), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings).

2. *Old Testament* is how some early Christians referred to this text, because it had been superceded by the New Testament.

3. Some contemporary scholars, in an effort to maintain religious neutrality, opt to describe this text by its language, *Hebrew Bible*.

B. The word *Torah* also has a variety of meanings depending on the context.

1. Within the Pentateuch itself (the first five books), *torah* means an individual teaching, instruction, or law (see Deut. 30:11).

2. In later sections of the Hebrew Bible, *torah* may refer to the entire Pentateuch, which is often how we use the word today.

3. *Torah* can also be used to refer to the entire Bible, the Oral Torah, and even all subsequent Jewish thought.

II. Assumptions about the text.

A. Up until the 17th century, both Christians and Jews related to the Torah as a divine document somehow transmitted to human beings through Moses. Additional assumptions about the Hebrew Bible, especially in the formative period of Judaism and Christianity, included that the text was cryptic, perfect, and relevant.

B. Beginning in the 17th century, a few Europeans, most notably Baruch Spinoza, begin to take tentative steps toward understanding the Torah as they might any other text.

C. By the mid-19th century, biblical criticism was established in Germany and slowly made its way to England and the United States.

III. The creation stories of Genesis 1–3.

A. Critical readings of Genesis 1–3 suggest two different creation stories generated by two different authors or schools.

1. The seam between the two narratives is in the middle of Genesis 2:4.

2. The names of God are different in the two stories.

3. The sequence of creation is different in the two stories.

4. The creation stories are relatively insignificant, especially the Garden of Eden tale, within the Hebrew Bible itself.

B. Although Judaism and Christianity read the creation narratives differently, their readings are deeply influential for both faith communities.
  1. Rabbinic Judaism understood that the day begins in the evening.
  2. Pauline Christianity understands that human disobedience in the Garden of Eden stains all future generations of human beings.

IV. The prohibition of seething a kid in its mother's milk (Exod. 23:19, Exod. 34:26, and Deut. 14:21).
  A. One contemporary scholar argues that the prohibition is against seething a kid in its mother's fat.
  B. Rabbinic assumptions about the text necessitated a reason for the threefold repetition of the prohibition.
    1. One instance forbade the cooking of milk and meat together.
    2. Another instance forbade the consumption of milk and meat together.
    3. The last instance forbade financially benefiting from the combination of milk and meat (b. Hullin 115b).

Essential Reading:

Friedman*, Who Wrote the Bible?*

Kugel, "Torah," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 995–1005.

Kugel, *The Bible as It Was*, pp. 1–49.

Brettler, "Torah," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 1–7.

Berlin and Brettler, "Modern Study of the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 2084–2096.

Supplementary Reading:

Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*.

Barr, "Adam: Single Man, or All Humanity?" *Hesed va-emet*, pp. 3–12.

Sameth, "The Broad Spectrum of Kashrut," in *Rituals and Practices of a Jewish Life*, pp. 41–60.

Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*.

Sasson. "Ritual Wisdom? On 'Seething a Kid in its Mother's Milk,'" in *Kein Land fur sich allein*, pp. 294–308.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should one's religious beliefs need to be revised in light of modern biblical scholarship? How so?

2. What might the inclusion of different creation narratives (and Gospel accounts, for that matter) indicate about the editors of Scripture?

3. Are there any reasons to privilege either the contextual meanings of Scripture as suggested by academic scholars or traditional readings of Scripture as mediated through religious communities?

Lecture Two
From Israelite to Jew

Scope: This lecture begins with a brief survey of ancient Jewish history from the Israelite conquest of the Land through the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. It is at this moment that the exiled community first contended with being a people without a land. By 515, Persia had defeated Babylon, and King Cyrus allowed the exiles to return and to rebuild the Temple.

The Second Temple period is punctuated by the conquests of Alexander the Great (c. 333) and the introduction of Hellenistic culture, the Maccabeean revolt against the Syrian Greeks (c. 168), the Roman domination of the Land beginning in the 1st century B.C.E., and finally, the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. In addition to outlining this history, this lecture will describe the various sects of Judaism in late antiquity, that is, the Sadducees, Essenes, Christians/Nazarenes, and Pharisees.

Outline

I. Pentateuchal history.

- **A.** The story of the patriarchs is in Genesis.
- **B.** The story of Moses, the Exodus from Egypt (c. 1250 B.C.E.), and the wandering for 40 years in the desert are the subjects of the remaining four books of the Pentateuch.

II. Conquest of Canaan.

- **A.** Joshua leads most of the Israelites across the Jordan River and into Canaan around 1200 B.C.E. (see Joshua).
- **B.** Following the initial conquest, there is a period of approximately 200 years when the 12 tribes are self governing as a loose confederacy (see Judges).

III. United monarchy.

- **A.** Around the year 1020 B.C.E., the Israelites demand a king. The prophet Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel (see I Sam. 8).
- **B.** Around 1000 B.C.E., David (who is not Saul's son) becomes the second king of Israel and the monarchy becomes hereditary (see II Sam. 7:16).
- **C.** Solomon, David's son through Batsheva, assumes the crown around 961, and his reign is marked by internal rebellion. Solomon builds the Temple in Jerusalem (see I Kings 5–8).

IV. Divided monarchy.

- **A.** When King Solomon dies in 922, the kingdom splits into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.
- **B.** The ten northern tribes were ruled by Jeroboam and the southern tribes, by Solomon's son, Rehoboam (see I Kings 11–12).

V. Destructions and exiles.

- **A.** The Kingdom of Israel is destroyed by the Assyrians in 721. Israelites are exiled and scattered, becoming the "Ten Lost Tribes" (see II Kings 17–18).
- **B.** The Kingdom of Judah is conquered by the Babylonians in 597, and its leaders are exiled.
- **C.** The Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed and the Judeans are exiled to Babylonia in 586 (see II Kings 24–25, Lamentations, and Ps. 137).

VI. Restoration and the Second Temple.

- **A.** The Persians, under King Cyrus II, conquer Babylon in 539 and allow the Judeans to return to what is now called Yehud and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, which was dedicated in 516 (see Haggai, Zecharia, and Ezra).
- **B.** Ezra reads and explains the Torah of Moses to the newly reconstituted community in Jerusalem (see Neh. 8–9).

VII. Alexander the Great and Hellenism.

- **A.** Alexander the Great brings Hellenistic culture to the Land of Israel around 333 B.C.E.
- **B.** On Alexander's death, his kingdom is divided into three parts; the Land of Israel is controlled by the Ptolemies of Egypt.
- **C.** In 200, the Seleucids gain control of the Land of Israel, and Hellenism spread more aggressively throughout the region.

VIII. Revolt of the Maccabees.

- **A.** Around 168, the first war for religious freedom was initiated by Judah and his sons, the Hasmoneans.
- **B.** This war should be understood as both a war against the Syrian Greeks/Seleucids *and* a civil war pitting the less Hellenized Jews against the more Hellenized ones (see I and II Maccabees in the Apocrypha).
- **C.** The reign of the Hasmoneans expanded the territory of the kingdom, but the dynasty quickly became corrupt.

IX. Rome enters Yehud.

- **A.** Strife between two of the Hasmonean heirs results in an invitation for Rome to establish its presence in the Land of Israel in 63 B.C.E.
- **B.** Rome appoints a series of native-born rulers, then foreign procurators to administer the territory and collect taxes.
- **C.** Apocalyptic visions of the overthrow of Rome and the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel contribute to a rebellious atmosphere.

X. The Great Revolt, 66–70 C.E.

- **A.** Jewish Zealots initiate the Great Revolt against the Romans when the Roman procurator Gessius Florus expropriates gold from the Temple treasury. Although it takes several years, the Great Revolt is eventually quashed and the Second Temple is destroyed.
- **B.** According to Rabbinic legend, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai is spirited out of Jerusalem during the revolt and establishes what becomes the seed of Rabbinic Judaism at Yavneh.
- **C.** The Zealots escape to King Herod's mountain fortress, Massada, and are able to survive until 74, when the Romans finally succeed in breeching the walls. According to Josephus, the Jews on the mountain committed suicide in order to be spared capture and enslavement by the Romans.

XI. The sects of Second Temple Judaism on the eve of the Great Revolt.

- **A.** Sadducees.
  1. The Sadducees did not have an oral Torah and, therefore, denied resurrection (see Mark 12:18).
  2. They also denied divine omniscience, because free will is a necessary assumption of the Torah.
  3. They tended to be more Hellenized and associated with the priesthood.
- **B.** Essenes.
  1. The Essenes are widely associated with the group living around the Dead Sea and held to be responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls.
  2. They are an ascetic community with an apocalyptic and dualistic theology.
  3. They reject free will and claim that divine providence controls everything.
- **C.** Christians/Nazarenes.
  1. Early followers of Jesus of Nazareth claim that he is Messiah even though Jewish sovereignty had not been restored to Israel. Thus, the Second Coming predicted the fulfillment of those earlier expectations.
  2. St. Paul, the "Apostle to the Gentiles," spreads the "good news" (*Gospel*) throughout the Roman Empire.
- **D.** Pharisees.
  1. The Pharisees claimed an oral tradition that interpreted the Torah. Unlike the Sadducees, they believed in resurrection and the world to come.
  2. The Pharisees maintained that humans have free will and God knows the future.

3. The Pharisees promoted the priestly purity laws as a way for all of Israel to attain holiness.
4. The Rabbis can be viewed as spiritual descendants of the Pharisees.

Essential Reading:

Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, pp. 1–119.

Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp. 13–213.

Jaffee, *Early Judaism,* pp. 25–53.

Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel*.

Geller, "The Religion of the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 2021–2040.

Neusner, "Varieties of Judaism in the Formative Age," in *Jewish Spirituality* I, pp. 232–252.

Kimelman, Reuven. "Leadership and Community in Judaism," in *Tikkun* 2:5.

Supplementary Reading:

Fredriksen and Reinhartz, eds., *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism*.

Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*.

Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age*.

Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is Judaism often considered to be more than a religion? What's the difference between an Israelite and a Jew?
2. If you were to update and stage the Hasmonean Revolt against the Seleucid Greeks, which contemporary groups would you choose to represent the Seleucids, the Hasmoneans, and the Hellenizing Jews?
3. Both Rabbinic Judaism and Pauline Christianity are products of Second Temple Judaism. What are the continuities and discontinuities between these sister religions and the Scriptures that both communities call holy?

Lecture Three
Repentance

Scope: The primary vehicle for atonement throughout the Torah is animal sacrifice offered to God through a priestly intermediary. Already in the books of the Hebrew prophets and the Holiness Code of Leviticus, there is discomfort with the possibility that an individual may ignore what seems to be taken for granted by the earlier, priestly authors of the Pentateuch, namely, that sincere repentance (*teshuvah*) accompany sacrifice in order to achieve atonement.

With the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E., the possibility of animal sacrifice was eliminated. All that was left to effect atonement was teshuvah, and it became the central religious concept of Rabbinic Judaism. In addition to examining the promotion of teshuvah in the hands of the Rabbis, we'll look at aspects of its codification by Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) and its reconceptualization by the 20th-century mystic, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865–1935).

Outline

I. The senses of teshuvah.

- **A.** Teshuvah can mean "return," as in returning to being in a right relationship with God.
- **B.** Teshuvah also means "respond," as in responding to God's call.
- **C.** The presupposition of teshuvah is that God wants us to return and that we are able to return.

II. Biblical paradigms.

- **A.** When Nathan challenges King David's despicable behavior with Batsheva, he immediately confesses, "I stand guilty before the LORD" (II Sam. 12:13). Because King David is the ancestor of the Messiah, there is a biblical connection between teshuvah and redemption.
- **B.** Although the word *teshuvah* is nowhere in the TaNaKH, the root of the word is. In I Kings 8:48, the one who transgresses returns to God.
- **C.** While the Temples stood, atonement was partially effected through animal sacrifice (see Lev. 4 and 5).
- **D.** The prophetic critique of the priesthood involved emphasizing that just behavior was a required element to be in right relationship to God (see Mic. 6:6–8).

III. Rabbinic developments.

- **A.** Moses Maimonides summarizes the importance of teshuvah for Rabbinic Judaism: "At the present time, when the Temple no longer exists, and we have no altar for atonement, nothing is left but teshuvah. Teshuvah atones for all transgressions" (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah 1:3).
- **B.** The Mishnah (m.)makes the distinction between transgressions against God and transgressions against other people. Teshuvah requires appeasing those whom you have wronged.
- **C.** For Rabbinic Judaism, teshuvah concerns returning to God's will as expressed through the commandments, rather than returning to God directly.

IV. The power of teshuvah.

- **A.** "Where a *ba'al teshuvah* (one who has engaged in teshuvah) stands, a totally righteous person [who has not transgressed] cannot stand" (Babylonian Talmud [b.] Brachot 34b).
- **B.** "Resh Lakish said that teshuvah is so great that premeditated transgressions are accounted as though they were merits" (b. Yoma 86b).
- **C.** "Teshuvah is an act of creation, of self-creation" (Rav Joseph Baer Soloveitchik, *Halachic Man*, p. 110).

V. Medieval codification by Maimonides (1138–1204).

- **A.** "What is teshuvah? When the straying one leaves his error and removes it from his thoughts, and resolves in his heart never to repeat it…and he regrets it…. He needs to make oral confession and say that these matters are finished from his heart" (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah 2:2).

B. "One knows that one has successfully accomplished teshuvah when he is in the same situation where he had previously transgressed, and there is no fear of being caught or lack of power to commit the transgression, and he refrains from transgression" (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah, 2:1).

VI. Modern developments.

A. A. D. Gordon (1856–1922) used the traditional concept of teshuvah in his promotion of the Jewish return to nature after centuries of Jewish alienation from the soil.

B. Religious Zionists folded the idea of returning to the Land of Israel into teshuvah.

C. "When one forgets the essence of one's soul, when one distracts his mind from attending to the substantive content of his own inner life, everything becomes dark and uncertain. The primary role of teshuvah, which at once sheds light on the darkened zone, is for the person to return to himself, to the root of his soul. Then he will at once return to God, the Soul of all souls…. It is only through the great truth of returning to oneself that the person and the people, the world and all the worlds, the whole of existence will return to their Creator, to be illumined by the light of life. This is the mystical meaning of the light of the Messiah, the manifestation of the soul of the universe, by whose illumination the world will return to the source of its being" (Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, *Lights of Penitence,* 15:10).

1. Rav Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine, wrote this during World War I. His mystical understanding of teshuvah brings together the social and political elements of teshuvah.

2. Rav Kook also retrieves the biblical notion of returning directly to God.

3. This process of teshuvah has a redemptive quality. As King David, our paradigm of teshuvah, is linked to the Messiah in the Bible, Rav Kook connects teshuvah to the messianic return to our source of being.

Essential Reading:

Petuchowski, "The Concept of Teshubah in the Bible and the Talmud," in *Studies in Modern Theology and Prayer*, pp. 13–24.

Petuchowski, "Faith and Works in the Biblical Confrontation of Prophets and Priests," in *Studies in Modern Theology and Prayer*, pp. 3–11.

Schechter, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation with God" and "Repentance," in *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 293–343.

Luz, "Repentance," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 785–793.

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah.

Kook, *Lights of Penitence*.

Supplementary Reading:

Shapiro, Faydra L."Continuity, Context and Change: Towards an Interpretation of Teshuvah," *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 19:4, pp. 295–314.

Blau, Yitzchak. "Creative Repentance: On Rabbi Soloveitchik's Concept of Teshuva," *Tradition* 28:2, pp. 11–18.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why might there have been a shift from the biblical language of returning to God to the Rabbinic language of returning to God's commandments?

2. The Rabbis said that teshuvah preceded the creation of the world (Genesis Rabbah 1:4). What might have motivated them to make such a statement?

3. Can transgressions really be transformative and redemptive?

4. Do contemporary world leaders take King David's teshuvah as a model for their own (mis)behavior?

5. There are some today who support the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstitution of animal sacrifices. What are the pros and cons of such a position?

Lecture Four
Study

Scope: Studying Torah (*Talmud Torah*) is a central commandment for Rabbinic Judaism. It serves the practical purpose of knowing how to live in accordance with the divine will, is an intellectual challenge, and is a social opportunity to study with others.

But the Rabbis maintained that Torah—whether the Torah itself or our study of it is not clear—somehow "upheld the world." The Hebrew Bible is, in places, a radically utopian document, and its Rabbinic interpretations are often equally radical. The Rabbis understand that Talmud Torah prevents the world from returning to primeval chaos and confusion. More than that, for the Rabbis, in a world where God is no longer accessed through priests at the Temple, Talmud Torah potentially allows everyone, including women, constant access to the divine presence. Through Talmud Torah, claim the Rabbis, we come to know the mind of God. We will conclude this lecture with an overview of the different genres of Rabbinic literature.

Outline

I. Night and day.

- **A.** The commandment of Talmud Torah is ritualized through the twice-daily recitation of the Shema (Deut. 6:4–9).
- **B.** Within the TaNaKH itself, Talmud Torah is promoted (see Josh. 1:8 and Ps. 119).

II. The foundation of the world.

- **A.** "Shimon the Righteous used to say: 'The world stands on three things: on Torah, on worship, and on acts of loving kindness'" (m. Avot 1:2).
- **B.** Without Torah, the world would sink back into the watery chaos of the beginning (see RaSHI on Gen. 1:31 and Tanhuma, Bereshit 1).

III. God's exclusive address.

- **A.** In the post-Temple reality, divine access is now available only through the study of God's word.
- **B.** "In the name of Ula, Rabbi Hiya son of Ami said: 'Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One has in this world nothing other than the four cubits [the length from the tip of your middle finger to your elbow] of *halachah*'" (b. Brachot 8a).
- **C.** Talmud Torah is a function of intelligence and discipline rather than pedigree.

IV. For the love of Torah.

- **A.** Talmud Torah is addicting and, for some, all-consuming.
- **B.** Talmud Torah should be combined with worldly concerns (see Avot 2:2).
- **C.** The goal of Talmud Torah is transformative. The 613 *mitzvot* ("commandments") are divided into 365 negative and 248 positive mitzvot. A statement in the Talmud connects 365 to the days of the year and 248 to the parts of our body (b. Makkot 23b). Thus, we should all strive to be walking Torahs (embodiments of God's will) with our entire body, all of the time.

V. Rabbinic literature.

- **A.** Mishnah.
  - **1.** Codex of Jewish Law (*halachah*) compiled by Judah the Prince circa 220 C.E. (*Mishnah* is Hebrew for "learning.")
  - **2.** The laws of the Mishnah are arranged conceptually, unlike the appearance of the laws throughout the Torah. Mishnah is "unjustified" law in that it does not bring biblical verses to justify the laws.
  - **3.** The Mishnah preserves minority opinions and dissenting opinions and includes a few stories to illustrate the points of law.

4. Around 250, *Avot*, a non-legal (*aggadah*) tractate was appended to the Mishnah. The introduction presents the Oral Torah as authoritative because it derives from the same source as the Written Torah.

B. Gemara and Talmud.

1. The Gemara begins by analyzing the Mishnah but then flows in an associative way to additional halachah and aggadah. (*Gemara* means "learning" in Aramaic.) One frequent question that the Gemara asks about the Mishnah is: From where does this law come?
2. The Mishnah plus the Gemara make up the Talmud. (*Talmud* is yet another Hebrew word for "learning.")
3. There are two Gemaras. One was composed and compiled in the Land of Israel around the year 450 and, together with the Mishnah, is called the Jerusalem Talmud (y.). The more authoritative Talmud is from Babylon (b.) and was edited around 550.
4. There is much, much more Gemara than Mishnah.

C. *Midrash*.

1. The word *midrash* means "to seek or inquire." Rebecca *drashed* God (Gen. 25:22), and the Rabbis *drash* God's word.
2. A midrash is an idea linked to a biblical verse.
3. Midrashic compilations are usually categorized as either halachic or aggadic. The earliest halachic compilations come from the Land of Israel in the 3rd century. The aggadic compilations also come from the Land of Israel but are dated to the 5th century.
4. Midrashic compilations are arranged according to the biblical verses on which they comment.

Essential Reading:

Lichtenstein, "Study," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 931–937.

Neusner, "Oral Law," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 673–677.

Steinsaltz, "Talmud," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 953–958.

Stern, "Midrash," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 613–620.

Elon, "The Torah as Love Goddess," in *Essential Papers on Talmud*, pp. 463–476.

Supplementary Reading:

Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara*.

Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*.

Gais, "Torah Study," in *Rituals and Practices of a Jewish Life*, pp. 105–128.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is promoting the value of study in a culture dangerous in any way? How so?
2. What can we learn about Rabbinic Judaism in that its founding document, the Mishnah, preserves minority and dissenting opinions?
3. By the 4th century, the myth of the Oral Torah revealed at Mount Sinai to Moses is established. One of its claims is that any question a veteran student asks his teacher was already given at Sinai. What might the author of that tradition have meant?
4. When people interpret a biblical law or story today, how is it similar or dissimilar to what the Rabbis did? Can there be midrash today?

Lecture Five
Prayer

Scope: Although the spontaneous prayer of the individual is found throughout the Torah, communal prayer does not become uniformly institutionalized until the post–Second Temple period. According to the Talmud, prayer services were modeled after the daily animal offerings, which ceased with the destruction of the Temple.

We will open the traditional prayer book and look at how the Rabbis re-visioned the act of creation. Next, we'll look at the central daily prayer to understand what animates the Jewish prayer. And, finally, we'll look at a few modern modifications to the traditional prayer book that reflect the ideologies of different streams of contemporary Jewry.

Outline

I. Biblical prayer.

- **A.** Often, prayer involves a request or petition.
  - **1.** Isaac pleaded for God to open Rebecca's womb (Gen. 25:21).
  - **2.** Moses prays for his sister to have a full recovery (Num. 12:13).
- **B.** Other times, prayer is about praising God and God's works.
  - **1.** Psalm 92 begins, "It is good to praise the LORD, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most High."
  - **2.** Some psalms seem to be for individual worship, while others, such as Psalm 105, are communal.
- **C.** There is a series of psalms, 120–134, that begins with the superscription "A Song of Ascents." These may have been sung by the Levites on the steps (ascents) of the Temple.
- **D.** Other psalms, such as 136, may have been written for contrapuntal singing between the Levites and the worshippers in the Temple courtyard—akin to today's responsive readings.

II. Rise of synagogues.

- **A.** The first solid evidence of a synagogue is in Egypt in the 3rd century B.C.E. These buildings seem to have been more prevalent in the Diaspora than in the Land of Israel until the 3rd century C.E.
- **B.** The earliest synagogues were communal meeting houses in addition to prayer houses.
- **C.** The Pharisees do not seem to have been the leaders of this institution. Nor, later, were the Rabbis the earliest leaders, as evidenced by synagogue art.

III. Prayer in Rabbinic times.

- **A.** The sages of Yavneh seem to have fixed a general order for the blessings of the central prayer, the Amidah, but not yet drafted a fixed formula for each of the blessings. The first prayer book is, at the earliest, from the 8th century.
- **B.** *Avodah*, "worship," had generally been performed through the sacrificial system during Temple times. But "worship of the heart" (Deut. 11:13) was interpreted by the Rabbis to mean prayer.
- **C.** The Talmud contains a dispute whether the prayer services were instituted by the Patriarchs or as a replacement to the now-defunct sacrificial offerings (b. Brachot 28b). This seemingly historical argument may be the Rabbinic way of exploring whether prayer is individual and spontaneous or communal and institutionalized. Their answer is "both."

IV. Creation.

- **A.** "God daily renews creation."
  - **1.** Genesis 1 presents creation as a *fait accompli*.
  - **2.** The liturgist emphasizes that creation, and thereby, evidence of God's providential concern, is ongoing. (There are a few psalms, such as 104 and 136, that also emphasize God's ongoing providence.)
- **B.** God is the author of everything.

1. Genesis 1 suggests that there are primordial elements on the stage of creation when God begins to create.
2. Alluding to Isaiah 45:7, the liturgist emphasizes that God is solely responsible for everything in the world, including (especially?) evil.
3. As a polemic against the Babylonians who believed in astral determinism, that is, astrology, the liturgist for the evening prayer emphasizes that it is God who "arranges the stars in their heavenly rotations according to His will."

V. The Amidah (the standing prayer).

A. The prayer begins by praising God and invoking the notion of the "merit of our ancestors." The second blessing praises God's power and includes the power to resurrect the dead. The third blessing has Israel imitating the angelic choir and coronating God as King (see Is. 6).

B. The middle section of the daily Amidah contains the petitions that some scholars understand to be a roadmap to redemption.

1. Redemption begins with a request for the wisdom to know God's will. Changing our ways to reflect God's will prompts God to forgive our past transgressions; redemption will naturally ensue.
2. What redemption will look like is outlined in the remaining blessings: Pain and suffering will cease, economic prosperity will prevail, and there will be an ingathering of the exiles to the Land of Israel. Justice will flow, with punishment meted out to heretics and reward for the righteous. Jerusalem and the Temple will be rebuilt and, *finally*, the Messiah will come. The concluding blessing of this section serves as the exclamation point asking God to hear our prayers.
3. Redemption involves Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. The role of the Messiah is relegated to the end of the process. The work has been done prior to his appearance.

C. The final three blessings of the Amidah serve as a conclusion asking God to accept our prayer, thanking God for the miracles that are daily with us, and finally, beseeching God to bless us with peace. Peace is the hallmark of redemption.

VI. Modern reformulations.

A. The Reform movement rejected the idea of resurrection in its 1885 Pittsburgh Platform. Hence, references to resurrecting the dead have generally been replaced by *quickening all life*.

B. Reform prayer books also reject the notion of an individual Messiah. They speak of a messianic age.

C. Reform and Conservative prayer books have generally been uncomfortable with praying for the reestablishment of animal sacrifices and tend to modify that language.

D. Among the many reforms that the Reconstructionsts have made, and in this case, Reform and Conservative as well, is to make the liturgy more gender inclusive. For instance, when the patriarchs are mentioned, the matriarchs are also invoked.

Essential Reading:

Sarna, *Songs of the Heart*.

Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, pp. 164–166.

Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp. 111–115.

Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, pp. 176–200.

Petuchowski, "The Creation in Jewish Liturgy," *Judaism* 28:3, pp. 308–315.

Hoffman, "How the Amidah Began," in *My People's Prayer Book*, Vol. II, pp. 17–36.

Caplan, *From Ideology to Liturgy*.

Heschel, *Man's Quest for God*.

Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*.

Supplementary Reading:

Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*.

Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics*.

Kligman, "Daily Prayer," in *Rituals and Practices of a Jewish Life*, pp. 87–104.

Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book*, Vol. II (the entire seven-volume series is wonderful).

Soloveitchik, *Worship of the Heart*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the function of prayer? Is it dialogue with the Divine, personal meditation, or something else?
2. By the end of the Rabbinic period (7^{th} c.–8^{th} c.), the words of the liturgy were basically fixed. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a fixed liturgy?
3. Although the second blessing of the Amidah features the resurrection of the dead, the thrust of the Amidah is this-worldly. How does that compare to other religious systems?
4. Some Reconstructionist liturgical reformulations refer to God in the feminine. Is that better, worse, or the same as referring to God in the masculine?

Lecture Six
Deeds of Loving Kindness

Scope: Rabbi Akiva, one of the most important figures of Rabbinic Judaism, singled out the following verse from Leviticus as the greatest principle of the Torah: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD." Nice sentiment, but how does one apply it in the midst of the tumult of everyday life? This session brings together texts, movements, and communal institutions that reflect Judaism's struggle to live up to this duty of the heart through concrete deeds of loving kindness (*g'milut chasadim*).

Outline

I. Biblical roots.

- **A.** The mitzvot of Leviticus 19, part of the Holiness Code, bring together legislation that is both ethical and ritual.
  - **1.** "You shall not insult the deaf nor place a stumbling block before the blind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
  - **2.** 'Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves" and "You shall not round off the side growth on your head, or destroy the side-growth of your beard."
  - **3.** For the author of this code, holiness included both ethical and ritual components.
- **B.** The prophetic critique of the priesthood.
  - **1.** The Book of Amos suggests that there were priests who neglected justice and moral purity while promoting the importance of the cult, that is, animal sacrifice.
  - **2.** Micah sums up the prophetic motto: "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice, and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God" (Micah 6:8).
  - **3.** One of the last texts to be written within the TaNaKH is Esther. The story commemorates the triumph of the Jews against those who plotted to destroy them. In outlining how the day should be celebrated in the future, the text enjoins giving "presents to the poor," although such giving is not within the story itself (see Esther 9:22).

II. Rabbinic promotion of g'milut chasadim.

- **A.** Atonement comes through g'milut chasadim.
- **B.** The messiah comes through g'milut chasadim.
- **C.** The Torah is about g'milut chasadim from beginning to end.
- **D.** G'milut chasadim is better than giving *tzedakah*, often translated as "charity."

III. The tension between Talmud Torah and g'milut chasadim.

- **A.** "Which is greater—study or deeds? Rabbi Tarfon answered, 'Deeds!' Rabbi Akiva answered, 'Study!' The sages responded, 'Study is greater since studying leads to deeds' (b. Kiddushin 40b).
- **B.** "These are things that a person enjoys the fruits of in this world while the principal remains for the world to come: honoring one's mother and father, g'milut chasadim, and being a peace maker. But Talmud Torah is equal to them all" (m. Peah 1:1).
- **C.** "He who engages exclusively in Talmud Torah is as one who has no God" (b. Avodah Zarah 17b).
- **D.** Within the Rabbinic elite, there was frequent concern with the proper balance between study and participation in family and communal affairs.

IV. Medieval codification by Maimonides.

- **A.** The Rabbis distinguished between mitzvot of the Torah and mitzvot that the Rabbis themselves enacted. Maimonides explains that the following mitzvot were formulated by the Rabbis of the Talmud but derive from the Torah.
- **B.** "It is a positive commandment, from what they [the Rabbis] said, to visit the sick, to comfort mourners, to attend to the deceased [and all the details surrounding the funeral], to tend to the bride, and to escort

guests…. These are *g'milut chasadim*, which are done by the person and have no limits. Even though all of these commandments are spelled out by the Rabbis in the Talmud, they all fall under the general rule of 'loving your neighbor as yourself'" (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Mourning 14:1).

V. G'milut chasadim in America.

A. Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Amsterdam, was instructed by the Dutch West Indies Company in 1654 that the 23 Jews who had arrived from Recife, Brazil, could disembark if they agreed to take care of their poor. Thus, the medieval tradition of community support was imposed as a condition of residency in the New World.

B. As Eastern European Jews immigrated in the final decades of the 19th century, the German Jews who were relative old-timers in America, established clinics, hospitals, old-age homes, orphanages, vocational schools, settlement homes, and free-loan societies.

1. Free loan societies, beginning in the 1880s, were unique to the Jewish community.

2. The biblical prohibition against charging interest in loans to other Jews (Exod. 22:24, Lev: 25:35–7, and Deut. 23:20) developed into the virtue of providing capital, free of interest, for those struggling to start a business. Maimonides codified this type of giving or loaning as the highest level of tzedakah (see *Mishneh Torah*, Gifts to the Poor, 10:7).

C. Reform Judaism embraced the Social Gospel in its own 1885 Pittsburgh Platform: "In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relation 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."

D. Reform Judaism, emphasizing the prophetic tradition, sometimes to the exclusion of the ritual aspects of Judaism, promoted g'milut chasadim and explicitly extended those deeds of loving kindness beyond the Jewish community.

Essential Reading:

Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*.

Hartman and Marx, "Charity," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 47–54.

Spiro, Jack D. "An Exploration of Gemilut Hasadim," *Judaism* 33:4, pp. 448–457.

Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 194–202.

Tennenbaum, "Culture and Context: The Emergence of Hebrew Free Loan Societies in the United States," in *Social Science History* 13:3, pp. 211–236.

Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 286–289.

Supplementary Reading:

Hartman and Marx, *The Dynamics of Tzedakah*.

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Gifts to the Poor.

Loewenberg, *From Charity to Social Justice*.

Borowitz and Schwartz, *Jewish Moral Virtues*.

On Maimonides's eight levels of tzedakah: http://www.mechon-mamre.org/jewfaq/tzedakah.htm

Questions to Consider:

1. Most religions emphasize good deeds. Is there anything distinctive about Judaism's posture toward g'milut chasadim?

2. Does studying always lead to deeds? Where do we see this tension today?

3. Jesus and Akiva seemingly agreed on the importance of loving your neighbor. How is Reform Judaism's treatment of g'milut chasadim comparable to various Christian positions toward works?

Lecture Seven
Messianism

Scope: The claim that this imperfect world in which we live will be redeemed by a divinely appointed human being is plausible, from the perspective of the Torah, because it has already happened on a smaller scale. The Israelites were redeemed from slavery in Egypt. The Exodus thus becomes the paradigm for future redemption.

There are different understandings of messianism in the Hebrew Bible, and the Talmud expresses an even wider range of opinion on the phenomenon, including that the Messiah has already come and he's not returning! Many rabbis were ambivalent about messianic politics, especially after the failed revolt of Bar Kochvah (132–135), and that ambivalence remains a feature of Rabbinic Judaism. But the yearning for the Messiah is often difficult to contain. We'll discuss a false Messiah, Shabbatai Tzvi (1626–1676), and the most recent messianic candidate, Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1902–1994).

Outline

I. Biblical roots.

A. The word *mashiach*, or *messiah* in English, means "anointed." (The Greek word *Christos* means the same thing.)

B. The Torah uses the term to describe human beings who have special roles.

1. The high priest is anointed (see Exod. 29:7).

2. The kings of Israel are anointed (see I Sam. 24:5–8).

3. Cyrus, the Persian king who allows the exiled Judeans to return to Judah, is called *mashiach* (see Is. 45:1).

C. The mashiach of the future will reestablish Jewish political sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

1. All future legitimate kings of Israel will be of Davidic descent (see Is. 11:1).

2. The transparency of justice and the ingathering of the exiles (Is. 11:3–5, 12) are characteristics of the messianic era.

D. There are conflicting visions of the messianic era and the end of days.

1. Isaiah 11 describes an era of universal peace where the wolf shall dwell with the lamb (see also Is. 2:1–4 but compare Is. 2:10–11, 3:1–5).

2. Other biblical texts are apocalyptic and suggest that the eschaton, or end of days, will involve a bloody battle (see Zech. 13–14).

II. Rabbinic developments.

A. The apocalyptic strain, prominent in Christian texts, was generally avoided in the Mishnah. The Mishnah was edited in the wake of the failed Bar Kochva Revolt (132–135 C.E.) when messianic fervor had led to disaster.

1. The placement of the request for mashiach in the blessings of the Amidah suggests a demotion of the role of the mashiach.

2. In the Passover Haggadah, we relate the Exodus from Egypt. Moses's role is downplayed, and his name is not featured.

B. The Gemara offers a wide variety of opinions about the mashiach (b. Sannhedrin 96b–99a).

1. The mashiach has already come and will not be returning.

2. Don't try to figure out when the mashiach will arrive.

3. I'm not interested in being alive when the mashiach arrives (apocalyptic).

4. The birth pangs of the mashiach will cause social and political upheaval (apocalyptic).

5. The mashiach will arrive only in a generation that is entirely wicked or entirely righteous.

6. Only g'milut chasadim and teshuvah will hasten the arrival of the mashiach (utopian).

7. There are two messiahs, one descended from David and another from Joseph (b. Sukkah 52b).

8. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said, "If you are planting a sapling, and someone tells you the mashiach has arrived, finish planting the sapling and then greet the mashiach" (Avot d'Rabbi Natan [B] 31).

III. Medieval debate.

A. Maimonides interprets Isaiah's language metaphorically. Nature will not change. "Wolves" refers to those who threaten Israel (see *Mishneh Torah*, Judg. 12:1).

B. Nachmanides, on the other hand, understands that in the days of the mashiach, nature will change (see his commentary on Lev. 26:6 and Deut. 30:6).

IV. Shabbatai Tzvi (1626–1676).

A. Tzvi was a charismatic leader who proclaimed himself mashiach in 1665 through his "prophet," Nathan of Gaza.

B. His teachings combined elements of Jewish mysticism, the call to penance, and violations of halachah.

C. Some Jews sold their possessions and made their way to the Land of Israel.

D. The sultan of Turkey became alarmed at this messianic fervor. Tzvi was arrested and given the choice of conversion to Islam or death. He converted in 1666.

V. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1904–1994).

A. The latest messianic figure in Judaism, Schneersohn did little to dampen speculation among the Lubavitch Chassidim that he was mashiach.

B. When he died in 1994, Lubavitch essentially split between those who remained convinced that he is the mashiach and those who did not.

Essential Reading:

Saperstein, ed. *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*.

Levine, "Judaism from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Second Jewish Revolt," in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 125–149.

Cohen, "Judaism to the Mishnah," in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 195–223.

Werblowsky, "Messianism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 598–602.

Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*.

Supplementary Reading:

Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* and "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays,* pp. 1–202.

Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Messianism is more central to Rabbinic Judaism than biblical Judaism. Why?

2. Although there is much aggadah about the mashiach in Rabbinic literature, the prayer book does not emphasize his role in the process of redemption. Why not?

3. Does the medieval dispute between Maimonides and Nachmanides have a contemporary parallel?

4. Are the Lubavitch Chassidim who still believe that the Rebbe is mashiach, even though the minimal conditions for the messianic era have not been met, any different than the early Christian Jews who maintained that Jesus was mashiach, although Israel was still under Roman dominion?

Lecture Eight
The Coming World

Scope: Although concepts of the afterlife are central and pervasive in Rabbinic Judaism, the Hebrew Bible says surprisingly little about the world to come. The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, heaven and hell are all concepts that await the Judaisms of the Second Temple for elaboration. As the Rabbis then developed these notions into what became defining elements of Rabbinic Judaism, there was characteristic disagreement among the sages about the nature of the afterlife. We will conclude by looking at the attempt of Maimonides to systematize the conflicting statements of the sages concerning the afterlife in his commentary on the Mishnah.

Outline

I. The TaNaKH is almost exclusively concerned with life in this world.

- **A.** Among the rewards for following the laws of the Torah is that the Israelites will be enabled to continue living in the Land of Israel and not be dispossessed. This is the Torah's version of immortality.
- **B.** Nowhere in the TaNaKH is there a promise of reward in the afterlife.

II. There are a few verses that mention the afterlife.

- **A.** Everyone who dies, good or bad, goes to Sheol.
  - **1.** You can't praise God in Sheol (Ps. 6:6).
  - **2.** Sheol is in the bowels of the earth (see Ezek. 31:14ff).
- **B.** Resurrection of some dead is a late and marginal idea.
  - **1.** There are very few texts that unambiguously refer to the physical resurrection of the dead, including Isaiah 26:18–19 and Daniel 12:1–2.
    - **a.** Only Daniel can be dated with accuracy to the period of the Hasmonean Revolt against the Syrian Greeks.
    - **b.** Here, resurrection comes as a theodicy to explain that God's justice will ultimately be manifest at the end of days, when the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished.
  - **2.** Other biblical texts refer to resurrection, such as the dry bones of Ezekiel 37, but these are understood as a metaphor for the political resurrection of the people of Israel.
  - **3.** Resurrection was part of contemporary Persian religion, and it is possible that the Jews absorbed the idea from the Persians.
- **C.** The immortality of the soul appears nowhere in the TaNaKH.
  - **1.** The words that are translated into English as "soul" or "spirit" mean other things in biblical Hebrew.
    - **a.** The *ruach* of God is hovering over the surface of the water in Genesis 1:2. That *ruach* is sometimes translated as "spirit," as in the King James translation. The New Jewish Publication Society translates it as "wind" from God.
    - **b.** In Genesis 2:7, we have the separate elements of body and breath, but neither element has an independent status on its own.
    - **c.** Ecclesiastes 12:7 refers to the spirit returning to God, but there's no indication that the spirit retains individuality. After all, the next verse repeats Kohelet's refrain: All is futile.
  - **2.** The dichotomy between body and soul is of Greek origin.

III. Late Second Temple Judaism.

- **A.** The Pharisees are the earliest Jews known to support the ideas of resurrection and immortality of the soul.
- **B.** The Sadducees reject both notions because they are not grounded in the Torah.
- **C.** There is irony in the Pharisees accepting the Hellenistic notion of the immortality of the soul and the Sadducees rejecting it, because the Pharisees are usually perceived to be less Hellenistic than the Sadducees.

IV. The "world to come" (*olam haba*) in Rabbinic Judaism.

A. As in all matters, when there was a disagreement between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Rabbis adopted the position of the Pharisees. Both resurrection and the immortality of the soul become central in Rabbinic thought.

B. In the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple and the failure of the Bar Kochva Revolt, the idea of the world to come served as a theodicy without undermining the importance of the halachic commitment to life in this world.

C. There is a wide variety of comments on life in olam haba in Rabbinic literature. It is clear that one's experience in the coming world depends on one's actions in this world.

1. Heaven, sometimes called the Garden of Eden, is described as a physical paradise, as well as a place where there is no eating or drinking but only basking in the radiance of God's presence.

2. For those whose deeds in this world do not merit attaining life in the world to come, some rabbis believe being cut off from that reward is punishment enough. Other rabbis describe temporary torments, while a very few subscribe to eternal torment.

3. A common Rabbinic name for what we call hell is *gehena*. Gei Hinnom is a valley outside the walls of Jerusalem where the Canaanites were described as sacrificing their children to their god, Molech (see II Kings 23:10).

D. The Mishnah is lenient about who gets into olam haba. Among the people that don't make it in are those who deny that the Torah mentions resurrection of the dead. Thus, that concept becomes a self-defining element in the early period of Rabbinic Judaism (m. Sannhedrin 10:1).

V. Maimonides's commentary on the Mishnah.

A. Maimonides presents and explains the range of Rabbinic opinion on what happens when we die.

1. Those Rabbinic statements that characterize the coming world as a place of physical delights and material comforts should not be understood literally. Often when teaching children, we give them sweet rewards and they learn for the sweets until they mature and realize that the reward is in the learning itself.

2. Rav's statement represents a contrasting view and one with which Maimonides agrees: "In the coming world there is no eating, drinking, procreating, business, jealousy, hatred, or competition. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads enjoying the radiance of the divine presence" (b. Brachot 17a).

3. For those who are not righteous, they receive no such reward. Not enjoying the radiance of the divine presence is the ultimate punishment. Righteousness is defined by adherence to the mitzvot and intellectual attainment.

B. Maimonides also explains the sequence of events in this world in the messianic future.

1. The righteous (and only the righteous) will be resurrected, then they'll die again. After all, the ultimate reward for the Aristotelian Maimonides is for the soul to delight in the divine radiance. Resurrection reimposes a physical barrier for the individual.

2. The mashiach will arrive, kingship will return to Israel, and Jews will return to the Land of Israel. The natural order will not change.

3. Everyone living in those peaceful times will have a share in the coming world upon his or her death, Jews and Gentiles alike.

4. The mashiach will die and his son will rule in Davidic, dynastic succession.

VI. Reincarnation in Jewish mysticism.

A. *Gilgul*, "rolling over," is a basic concept in Jewish mysticism. Gilgul, or reincarnation, was sometimes conceived of as an opportunity to do teshuvah for previous transgressions.

B. Gilgul is also an opportunity to complete one's task or mission.

Essential Reading:

Gillman, *The Death of Death*.

Cohen, "Resurrection of the Dead," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 807–813.

Arkush, "Immortality," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 479–482.

Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayer Book*, Vol. II, pp. 72–83.

Scholem, "Gilgul: The Transmigration of Souls," in *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 197–250.

Supplementary Reading:

Maimonides, *Introduction to Perek Chelek*.

Setzer, Claudia. "Resurrection of the Dead as Symbol and Strategy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, March 2001, Vol. 69, pp. 65–101.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the marginality of the afterlife in biblical religion undermine its centrality in Rabbinic Judaism?
2. There is a tension between physical resurrection (body is good) and the immortality of the soul (soul is good). What do we learn about Rabbinic Judaism that it embraces both concepts?
3. What are the dangers of basing a religion on reward and punishment in the afterlife? Is Reform Judaism's rejection of resurrection a logical extension of Maimonides's restriction of the concept?

Lecture Nine
Sabbath

Scope: When God created the heavens and the earth, the best was saved for last. That status of being the pinnacle of creation, however, belongs not to humans, but to the seventh day, the Sabbath (Shabbat). Shabbat is built into the very structure of reality according to the Torah, and the Decalogues connect it to both creation and redemption. By the end of the Second Temple period, Jews were frequently identified as "Shabbat observers," and the Rabbis generated an elaborate system of Shabbat behavior. Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the great Jewish theologians of the 20th century, compared the work of the Rabbis to that of the architects of the great cathedrals of Europe. Shabbat is the Jewish sanctuary in time, and the laws of Shabbat are the blueprints. In this lecture, we'll look at *halachah* ("legal writings") and *aggadah* ("non-legal writings") and use Shabbat as an introduction to the relationship between law and spirit.

Outline

I. Shabbat in the Torah.

A. Although Shabbat is not explicitly mentioned in the first creation story, the Rabbis read the idea of Shabbat into the text.

1. There is tension between the descriptions of day six and seven. Did God finish creating on day six, as Genesis 1:31 suggests? Or did God create something else on day seven, as Genesis 2:2 suggests? The Rabbis say that *menuchah*, that special Shabbat rest, was created on day seven.

2. God sanctifies the seventh day (Gen. 2:3). The root for "sanctify" is also used for the Hebrew word for "marriage." Thus, the Rabbis suggest that Israel is destined to be the spouse of Shabbat (Genesis Rabbah 11:8).

B. Decalogues.

1. The first Decalogue links remembering Shabbat to creation in six days and God resting on the seventh (Exod. 20:8–11).

2. The reiteration of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy (5:12–15) links observing Shabbat to redemption from Egypt. We are no longer enslaved to a tyrant who prohibits rest but to a merciful king who commands rest for all of creation.

3. We work six days a week toward redemption on the seventh.

C. Prohibitions on Shabbat.

1. "You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Sabbath day" (Exod. 35:3). (The Karaites, a heretical sect of Judaism during the Middle Ages, understood from this verse that they weren't to have any lamps burning during Shabbat. They would sit in the dark.)

2. Gathering wood on Shabbat is also a problem, though it's not clear if the gathering, or what will be done with the wood, namely, kindling, is the real problem (Num. 15:32–36).

3. Remaining in your place on Shabbat is a mitzvah (Exod. 16:29–30).

4. Amos (8:5) prohibits business dealings on Shabbat, and Jeremiah (17:21) prohibits carrying burdens.

II. Rabbinic developments.

A. What is work?

1. The Rabbis noticed that the book of Exodus has the instructions of how to build and furnish the Tabernacle and the description of the Israelites following those instructions.

2. In the middle of those sections, we find a verse that reads: "Nevertheless, you must keep My Sabbaths" (Exod. 31:13).

3. The Rabbis concluded that the work involved in building and furnishing the Tabernacle was the same work that was prohibited on Shabbat (b. Shabbat 49b).

4. The 39 prohibited categories of labor on Shabbat describe the work involved in preparing food, clothing, shelter, and writing. These are the fundamental elements of a civilization.

B. Shabbat is a day of delight.

1. Already in Isaiah (58:14), there is a connection between Shabbat and delight. But the Rabbis significantly develop the theme.

a. We receive an additional soul on Shabbat (b. Ta'anit 27b).
b. Shabbat is compared to a delicious spice that must be experienced to be described (b. Shabbat 119a).
c. Shabbat is compared to both a queen and a bride (b. Shabbat 119a).

2. Shabbat is redemptive. It is a taste of the coming world.
a. If Jews were to observe two Shabbatot (the plural of Shabbat), they would be redeemed immediately (b. Shabbat 118b).
b. On Shabbat, we should rest from even the thought of labor (y. Shabbat 15:3).

III. The spiritualization of some Shabbat laws.

A. A Jewish Kabbalist from the 17th century, Rabbi Isaiah Halevi Horowitz, interpreted the prohibition against kindling flame to mean that we also should not speak incendiary words on Shabbat.

B. We are prohibited from carrying burdens in both a physical sense and in a psychological sense. That's why we should refrain from even thinking about what we have to do in the future.

C. Shabbat is associated with creation and self-creation. It provides us with a moment to stop looking outward in the pursuit of the things of the material world and focus inward on ourselves and our families. The restriction on leaving our place promotes the family being together.

IV. Sociological significance of Shabbat.

A. "More than the Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews" (Ahad Ha'am, 1856–1927).

B. Since the time of the Second Temple, Jews have been widely recognized as Sabbath-keepers. With emancipation in Europe and large-scale immigration to America in the late 19th century, this association begins to break down.

C. In 1958, the Conservative movement permitted driving to synagogue on Shabbat if necessary.

D. Today, how a person observes Shabbat is a strong indicator of his or her denominational affiliation.

Essential Reading:

Heschel, *The Sabbath*.

Goldenberg, "Law and Spirit in Talmudic Religion," in *Jewish Spirituality*, Vol. I, pp. 232–252.

Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, pp. 53–94.

Fromm, "The Sabbath Rituals," in *The Forgotten Language*.

Judson and Olitzky, "Entering Shabbat," in *Rituals and Practices of a Jewish Life*, pp. 61–86.

Supplementary Reading:

Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayer Book*, Vol. VII.

Avram Hein et al.,"Reflections on the Driving *Teshuvah*," in *Conservative Judaism,* 56:3 (Spring 2004), pp. 21-50.

Wolfson, *The Shabbat Seder*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why would the Torah have two different associations (creation and redemption) for Shabbat?

2. What might it mean that we receive an additional soul on Shabbat?

3. The Reform and Reconstructionist movements no longer accept traditional halachah as binding on the individual. Leaders in those movements have been at the forefront of re-imagining what "work" and "delight" might be for us today. How would you apply those terms to Shabbat in contemporary America? Is such an "updating" justified?

Lecture Ten
Law and Spirit

Scope: The Western world has absorbed the Hellenistic separation of body and soul, as well as the distinction between law and spirit. Rabbinic Judaism presents a different understanding whereby the spirit requires a concrete container in order to "materialize" in our world. Just as souls require bodies in this world, laws are vehicles through which the divine will is embodied.

We will examine a few laws and their interpretations by the Rabbis and the medieval biblical commentators. We will also continue our discussion of Judaism in the Middle Ages and see how the mystical tradition promoted the importance of intention.

Outline

I. Mitzvot between humans.

A. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (Exod. 21:24 and Lev. 24:20).

1. What happens if someone with only one eye gouges out one of your two eyes?

2. What happens if someone partially blinds you? How can you be sure to partially blind him to the same degree?

3. The Rabbis didn't read the Torah literally; they read it literarily, as literature.

4. The Rabbis of the Mishnah understood that "eye for an eye" meant monetary compensation.

B. "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countryman" (Lev. 19:18).

1. How can you command someone not to bear a grudge? How can you command any emotion?

2. The Rabbis translate this emotional state into an action: You ask to borrow someone's hatchet and he refuses. But on the next day, he comes to you to borrow a sickle, and you say, "Here it is. I'm not like you who would not lend to me." This is called bearing a grudge because you retain enmity in your heart even though you do not actually avenge yourself (b. Yoma 23a).

3. Although the grudge is being retained internally, it is also expressed verbally.

C. "A dying man who wrote over all his property to others [as a gift] but left himself a piece of land of any size whatsoever, his gift is valid. If he did not leave himself a piece of land of any size whatsoever, his gift is not valid" (M., Baba Batra 9:6).

1. A person who was of sound mind would not gift over all his property but would consider the possibility of an unlikely recovery.

2. Justice is sometimes served by paternalism even at the expense of a written agreement.

II. Mitzvot between humans and their world.

A. "If, along the road, you chance upon a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs, and the mother is sitting over the fledglings or on the eggs, do not take the mother together with her young. Let the mother go…" (Deut. 22:6–7).

1. Maimonides consistently argues that the human is not the center of the universe, and we must take into account the feelings of God's other creatures who have intrinsic rights. *Tza'ar b'alei chayim* is the overarching mitzvah to not cause pain to other creatures (*Guide for the Perplexed*, III:48).

2. Nachmanides, on the other hand, argues that if we show compassion to animals, it will instill in us even greater compassion toward humans. Had God been concerned about the feelings of animals, the Torah would not have allowed for animal slaughter.

B. "When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down" (Deut. 20:19).

1. Although the Torah goes on to qualify the use of trees in wartime, the mitzvah of *bal tashchit*, "do not destroy," is expanded by the Rabbinic tradition.

2. "Whoever breaks vessels, tears garments, destroys a building, clogs up a fountain, or wastes food violates the prohibition of *bal tashchit*" (b. Kiddushin 32a).

III. Mitzvot between humans and God.

A. "You shall love the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:5).

1. "This means that because of you the Name of Heaven will become beloved. When a person studies Torah,…speaks gently with others, engages in fair business dealings, what do people say about him? 'Happy is Ploni who studies Torah…. How beautiful are his manners and how refined his deeds!'" (b. Yoma 86a)

2. Fulfill God's words from love (RaSHI).

3. "What is the way to attain love of God? When one contemplates His great and wondrous deeds and creations, and sees in them His unequaled and infinite wisdom, he immediately loves and praises and exalts Him" (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Foundations 2:2).

B. "If one was reading [the Shema] in the Torah and the time of reciting [the Shema] arrived, if he directed [*kiven*] his mind, he fulfilled his obligation" (m., Brachot 2:1).

1. "We learn from this that mitzvot require intention (*kavannah*). What is 'if he directed his mind'? To read. (Not to fulfill the mitzvah.) To read? But the Mishnah says he was reading! He was proofreading" (b. Brachot 13a).

a. Here, we see the Rabbis of the Gemara offering a rereading of the Mishnah similar to the Rabbis of the Mishnah rereading the Torah.

b. Although kavannah is preferable, it is not necessary to fulfill the majority of commandments.

2. The Rabbis believed that behavior molds character. "The heart is drawn after the deeds" (*Book of Education*, Mitzvah 16).

3. The Jewish mystics in the Middle Ages maintained that the mitzvah is incomplete without kavannah because it fails to be maximally transformative.

Essential Reading:

Hartman, "Halakhah," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 309–316.

Leibowitz, "Commandments," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 67–80.

Petuchowski, "Spirituality," in *Open Thou Mine Eyes*, pp. 229–238.

Cherry, *Jewish Interpretations of Torah* (forthcoming).

Supplementary Reading:

Kugel, "Hatred and Revenge," in *In Potiphar's House*, pp. 214–246.

Lamm, *Shema*.

Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, pp. 31–60.

Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism*.

Schwartz, "*Bal Tashchit*," in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Yaffe.

Bleich, "Judaism and Animal Experimentation," in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Yaffe.

Questions to Consider:

1. Edna St. Vincent Millay reportedly said: "I love humanity but I hate people." How does such a sentiment apply to halachah?

2. Can one love God but hate God's creatures?

3. Are all the laws covered in this unit "religious"? If so, how does one define "religion"?

4. Given the mitzvah of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* (prohibiting distress to animals) and the contemporary alternatives to consuming flesh, should vegetarianism be a mitzvah?

Lecture Eleven
Fall Holidays

Scope: How bizarre to celebrate the new year in the seventh month—which is exactly what Jews do! And according to the liturgy for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, God records our names in the Book of Life or the Book of Death. Where does this come from? On the 10th day of this month, Leviticus tells us to practice self-denial. That's why Jews fast on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement—but what about the Rabbinic emphasis on teshuvah?

Just five days later begins the seemingly unrelated holiday of Tabernacles (Sukkot). This holiday, like Passover in the spring, lasts for seven days. Sukkot was the central pilgrimage festival in late antiquity, and all who made the trek to Jerusalem were guaranteed an amazing spectacle. The cycle concludes with Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, days whose personalities were developed by the Rabbis and the medieval sages.

Outline

I. Rosh Hashanah (New Year).

- **A.** The day that Jews celebrate as the new year is the first day of the seventh month. The Torah describes it as a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts (see Lev. 23:23–5).
  - **1.** Jews celebrate this new year festival on the first day of the seventh month probably because this was the time of the Babylonian New Year.
  - **2.** Babylonians believed in astral determinism. The stars control our fate.
  - **3.** The Babylonian holidays involved tablets of destiny.
- **B.** Jews can influence their destiny through teshuvah, prayer, and tzedakah. Rabbinic Judaism thus rejects the fatalism of Babylonian astrology.
  - **1.** The Babylonian tablets of destiny were transformed into the Rabbinic Books of Life and Death. We have the power to influence which of those we are written in.
  - **2.** Rosh Hashanah, for the Rabbis, celebrates the creation and teshuvah of the first people. God should be as merciful toward our transgressions as he was in suspending the punishment of Adam and Chavvah (Eve).
  - **3.** The liturgical readings focus on the births of Isaac and Samuel. It's a day to celebrate the creation of new worlds.

II. Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

- **A.** Leviticus 16 describes the ceremony that purged the Tent of Meeting of impurity. The Torah then calls on the Israelites to practice "self-denial" on the tenth day of the seventh month as a law for all time.
- **B.** Self-denial is associated with fasting in Isaiah 58:5 and Psalm 35:13. The Rabbis added a few more prohibitions and explicitly included the teshuvah for transgressions between human beings.
- **C.** These 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are designed to be the window of opportunity to engage in *cheshbon nefesh* ("soul searching") and right our relationships with others and God.
- **D.** The Rabbis imagine that the second set of tablets was given on Yom Kippur as a reward for the teshuvah and cheshbon nefesh that the Israelites engaged in following the sin of the golden calf. Backing up 40 days, the time Moses spends on the mountaintop (Exod. 34:28), puts us at the beginning of Elul, when the traditional preparatory period begins. (The connection between soul searching, fasting, and 40 days also appears in Christian Scripture. See Matt. 4:2 and Luke 4:2.)
- **E.** The climax of the worship service is to imitate the High Priest in the Temple, prostrate oneself, and repeat the ancient formula beseeching atonement.
- **F.** Readings include the Book of Jonah that highlights God's desire for teshuvah and the gracious bestowal of forgiveness.

III. Sukkot (Tabernacles).

- **A.** On the 15th of the seventh month, there is a pilgrimage festival to Jerusalem to celebrate the harvest.

B. The Torah combines the celebration of a natural event, the harvest, with the historical memory of the Israelites living in huts (*sukkot*) during their sojourn in the desert (Lev. 23:33–44). Thus, Jews are commanded to celebrate the holiday by dwelling in huts for seven days.

C. The Torah also speaks of taking from the four species and rejoicing before the Lord. The Rabbis and Karaites disputed about what those four species were. The Rabbinic list is: an *etrog* (citron), a willow, myrtle, and a palm frond.

D. For the Rabbis, the 70 animal sacrifices during the festival correspond to the 70 nations of the world. Sukkot shifts the emphasis of the holiday sequence from the individual to the universal.

1. The prophet Zecharia associates the holiday with a universal pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the bestowal of rainfall.

2. Sukkot was called "The Holiday" in Rabbinic literature because it had the flavor of a carnival. Among the spectacles was a water libation ceremony designed to stimulate rainfall. (All of the four species are found by or require much water.)

E. In the Middle Ages, it became a tradition to invite poor guests into the Sukkah (*ushpizin*). The mystics associated seven biblical heroes with the lower *sefirot*, or divine emanations, of the mystics, and wrote that by bringing people from this world into our Sukkot, we would also be inviting the divine forces from the upper world.

IV. Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah.

A. Although Sukkot is only a seven-day festival, the following day (*shmini* means "eighth," and *atzeret* means "ceasing") is yet another holiday commanded in the Torah (Lev. 23:36). The Torah leaves the character of that day undefined.

B. The Rabbis understand that because Sukkot is a holiday when the Jews engage in ritual to promote rainfall around the world, Shmini Atzeret is a final day of intimacy just between God and the Jews.

C. In the Diaspora, holidays are kept for two days rather than one. The second day of Sukkot in Israel is a semi-holiday because it falls between two full holidays, Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret. These intermediate days are called *chol hamoed*. Outside of Israel, traditional Jews treat the second day of Sukkot and the day after Shmini Atzeret as full holidays.

D. The Geonim, medieval Babylonian Jewish leaders, decided to give the second day of Shmini Atzeret its own character by having the annual Torah reading conclude, and commence, on this day. Thus, we read about Moses's death, then immediately "return" to the creation of the world on a day that came to be called Simchat Torah, or the "Joy of Torah." In Israel, Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are on the same day.

E. Simchat Torah is a joyous day, and the dancing with the Torah scrolls is reminiscent of the joy of the Sukkot carnival in the Second Temple period.

Essential Reading:

Waskow, *Seasons of Our Joy*, pp. 1–85.

Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*, pp. 94–118 and 182–215.

Agnon, *Days of Awe*.

Steinsaltz, "Soul Searching," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 897–902.

Supplementary Reading:

Goodman, *The Rosh Hashanah Anthology*, *The Yom Kippur Anthology*, *The Sukkot and Simchat Torah Anthology*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How much of the character of these fall holidays is biblical in origin?

2. What do the sequence of the fall holidays, their emphases, and their moods suggest?

3. Why is the Torah finished and started in the same ritual event?

Lecture Twelve
Spring Holidays

Scope: The Exodus from Egypt is the paradigm of Jewish existence. It is rehearsed in the daily liturgy, in the sanctification of Shabbat, and at the Passover meal (Pesach *seder*). But the freedom that Pesach celebrates is incomplete. It is a freedom from, not a freedom to. Thus, Jews count each of the 49 days from Pesach to Pentecost (Shavuot), which commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The liberation of Pesach finds its culmination in the revelation of God's will in the desert.

This period between Pesach and Shavuot is called the Omer. Although there is one traditional day of celebration during this period (LaG b'Omer), contemporary Jews mark four additional days: Holocaust Remembrance Day, Israeli Memorial Day, Israeli Independence Day, and Jerusalem Day.

Outline

I. The Exodus from Egypt as the archetype of redemption.
- **A.** "I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2).
- **B.** The liturgy reinforces the theme of God as the Redeemer of the Israelites.
- **C.** The blessings for Shabbat mention the Exodus from Egypt.
- **D.** The Israelites are no longer servants of Pharaoh; they are servants of God.
- **E.** The precedent of redemption from Egypt becomes the paradigm for future redemption for the people of Israel from their worldly woes, not from their individual transgressions.

II. Pesach (Passover) in the Torah.
- **A.** Exodus 12 describes the instructions given by God to Moses and Aaron.
  - **1.** On the 10th day of the first month, each family should take a lamb.
  - **2.** Guard it until the 14th day of the month, then slaughter it.
  - **3.** Take some of the blood and daub it on the doorposts and lintel of your homes.
  - **4.** Eat the lamb with unleavened bread (*matza*) and bitter herbs.
    - **a.** This becomes the seder meal for the first night of this seven-day holiday.
    - **b.** Outside of Israel, there are two s'darim (pl. of seder), on the first two nights of Pesach. The seventh day of Pesach is a full holiday and is, thus, kept for two days, making Pesach effectively into an eight-day holiday outside of Israel.
- **B.** "Moses … said to them, 'Go, slaughter the Passover offering. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply some … to the two doorposts…. For when the Lord goes through to smite the Egyptians, He will see the blood … and the Lord will *pass over* the door…'" (Exod. 12:21–3).
  - **1.** The blood on the doorposts is not connected to why Jews have *mezuzot* (pl. of mezuzah) on the doorposts of their homes (see Deut. 6:9).
  - **2.** *Pesach*, as in the English word, *Paschal*, can be translated as "pass over." It was also translated by some of the earliest translators of the Torah into Aramaic as "protect." With this reading, *Passover* is not an exemption from divine justice but, rather, an expression of divine protection and mercy for those who have been persecuted and oppressed.

III. The Pesach Haggadah.
- **A.** The word *hagaddah*, related to *aggadah*, means "telling." The Haggadah retells the Rabbinic version of the exodus from Egypt.
- **B.** The Haggadah can also be read as a coded text exploring political rebellion against the Romans who then occupied the Land of Israel.
- **C.** The lack of support for messianic activity against the Romans (that is, reestablishing Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel) may be seen in the bizarre absence in the Haggadah of the human hero of the Exodus, Moses.

IV. Dietary prohibitions and their allegorization.

A. The five grains that are prohibited from consumption and ownership during Pesach are: wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye.

B. In the Middle Ages, Ashkenazi Jews from Europe were also prohibited from eating *kitniot*, small things, such as rice, peas, and beans. Sephardic Jews from North Africa and the Middle East had no such prohibition and continue eating kitniot to this day.

C. The Rabbis make a connection between the yeast that causes the forbidden grains to rise and the inclination to do evil that causes us to be puffed up, haughty, and to rise up against God's will. Six months after Yom Kippur, the Rabbis understand Pesach to be another opportunity to clean out the *chametz* ("leavening") of our own lives. That's why we can't even own chametz during this period.

V. The Omer.

A. *Omer* means a sheaf of barley, but it is used here to describe the 49-day period between Pesach and Shavuot.

1. Jews are commanded to count each of those days in anticipation of Shavuot.

2. The first 33 days of the Omer have a somber tone. The Talmud says that 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students died during this period because of a lack of respect for one another (b. Yevamot 62b). The Hadrianic persecutions surrounding the Bar Kochva Revolt may have also been involved.

3. It is customary to not marry during this period, not to celebrate with music and dancing, and not to get one's hair cut.

B. On the 12th day of the Omer, Jews worldwide commemorate *Yom Hashoah v'Hagvurah*, the Day of Catastrophe and Heroism, otherwise known as Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Israeli Knesset, or Parliament, established this day in 1951.

C. One week later, on the 19th day of the Omer, the mournful mood continues with *Yom Hazikaron*, Israeli Memorial Day.

D. In a terribly difficult transition for some, the 20th day of the Omer celebrates *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, Ben-Gurion's proclamation of the birth of the modern State of Israel on May 14, 1948.

E. The 33rd day of the Omer, LaG b'Omer, was a traditional day of celebration after this period of semi-mourning.

1. Bonfires were traditionally lit and children played with bows and arrows in the forests.

2. Weddings that had been deferred during the Omer take place.

3. People get haircuts.

4. The day is also associated with one of Rabbi Akiva's star pupils, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Today, thousands of people go to Mount Meron near Tzfat in northern Israel to celebrate his *yahrzeit* ("anniversary of death").

F. Yom Yerushalayim, or Jerusalem Day, is the last day of celebration during the Omer (the 43rd). On June 7, 1967, the Old City of Jerusalem fell under Jewish control for the first time in more than 2,000 years.

VI. Shavuot (Pentecost).

A. Unlike Sukkot and Pesach, which combine natural events (harvests) and historical events in the drama of the Israelite experience, the biblical understanding of Sukkot is only as a harvest holiday for barley (Exod. 23:16).

B. Rabbinic tradition assigns historical significance to this holiday by claiming that the Torah was given on this day. In the Rabbinic imagination, Shavuot represents the marriage between God and the Jewish people. (Moses was the best man and Mount Sinai was the *chuppah*, or wedding canopy.) The name *Shavuot*, "weeks," with a slight change of vowels, can be read as *Shevuot*, or "oaths." Indeed, in some Sephardic and Yemenite communities, a poetic *ketubah* ("marriage contract") is read in synagogue on Shavuot. In the Rabbinic parable of Mount Sinai as a wedding ceremony, the Torah itself is the ketubah (see Pirkei d'Rav Kahannah, ch. 41).

C. The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot because it is set during the barley harvest, and Ruth accepts Torah as the Jewish people did at Mount Sinai.

D. A medieval custom, first described in the *Zohar*, is the *Tikkun leyl Shavuot*, which was probably modeled after midnight Easter vigils. Certain groups of Jews would stay awake all night and study in anticipation of the giving of the Torah at sunrise. This custom was long popular only amongst mystically inclined groups but has become more widespread in the last generation.

Essential Reading:

Dishon and Zion, *A Different Night Haggadah*.

Waskow, *Seasons of Our Joy*, pp. 133–206.

Ki Tov, *The Book of Our Heritage*, Vol. I, pp. 192–197.

Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, pp. 34–93 and 305–404.

Supplementary Reading:

Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, pp. 104–153.

Kalechofsky, *Hagaddah for the Liberated Lamb*.

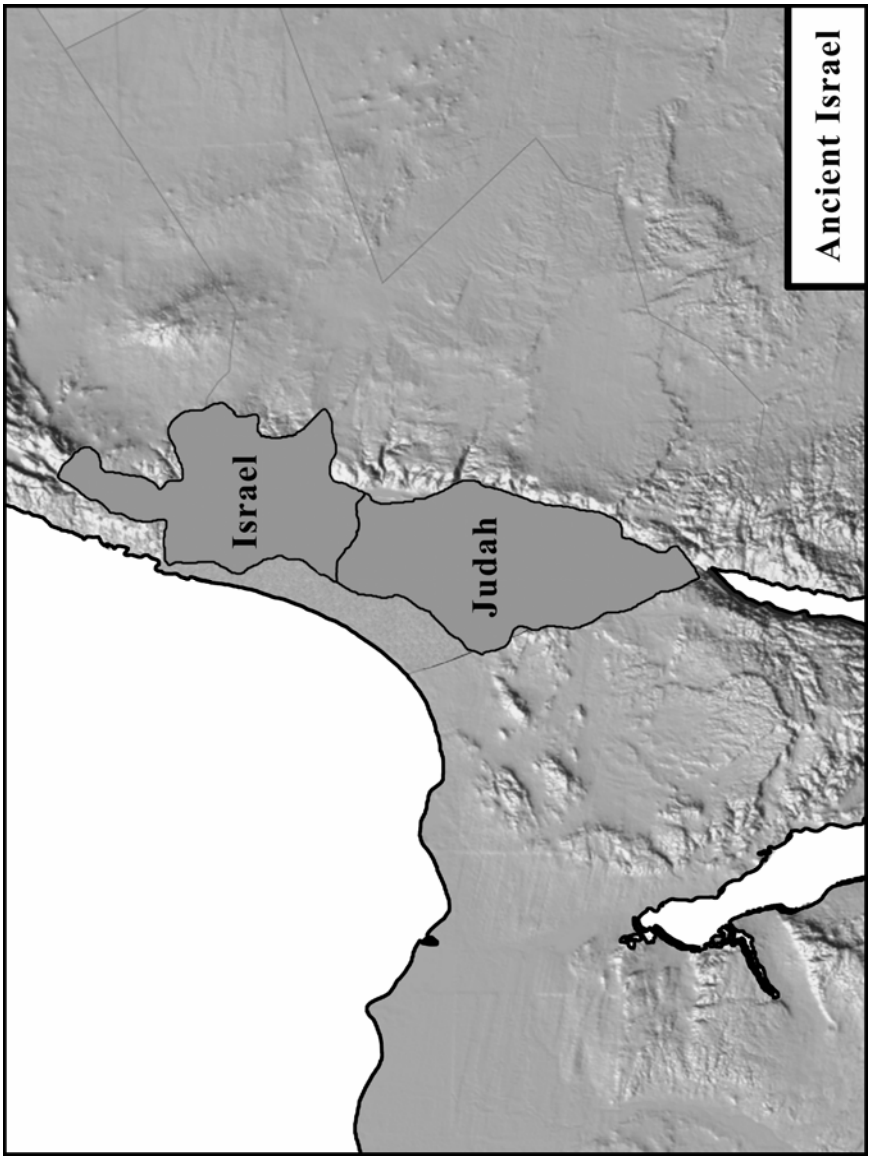
Bokser, *Origins of the Seder*.

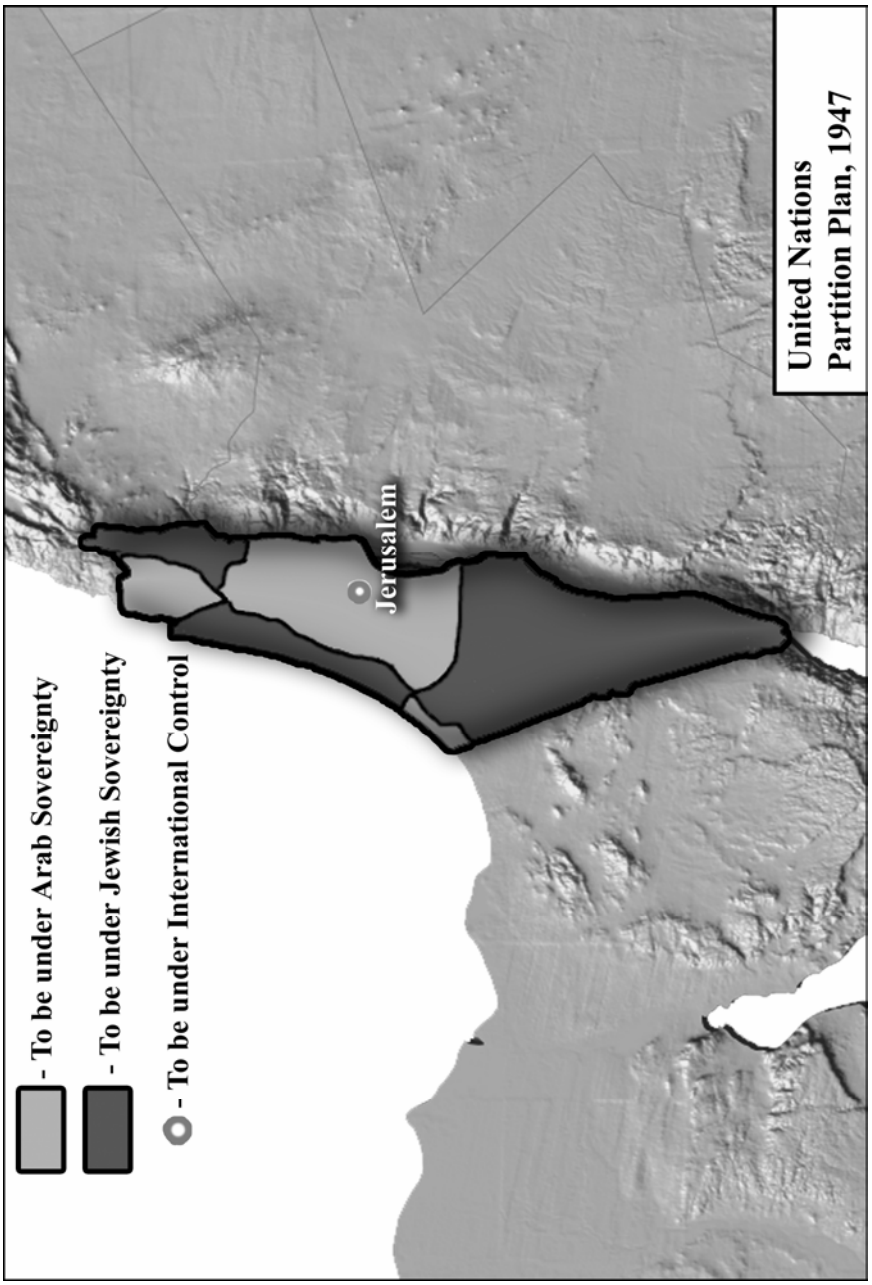
Matt, "Adorning the 'Bride' on the Feast of Weeks," in *Judaism in Practice*, pp. 74–80.

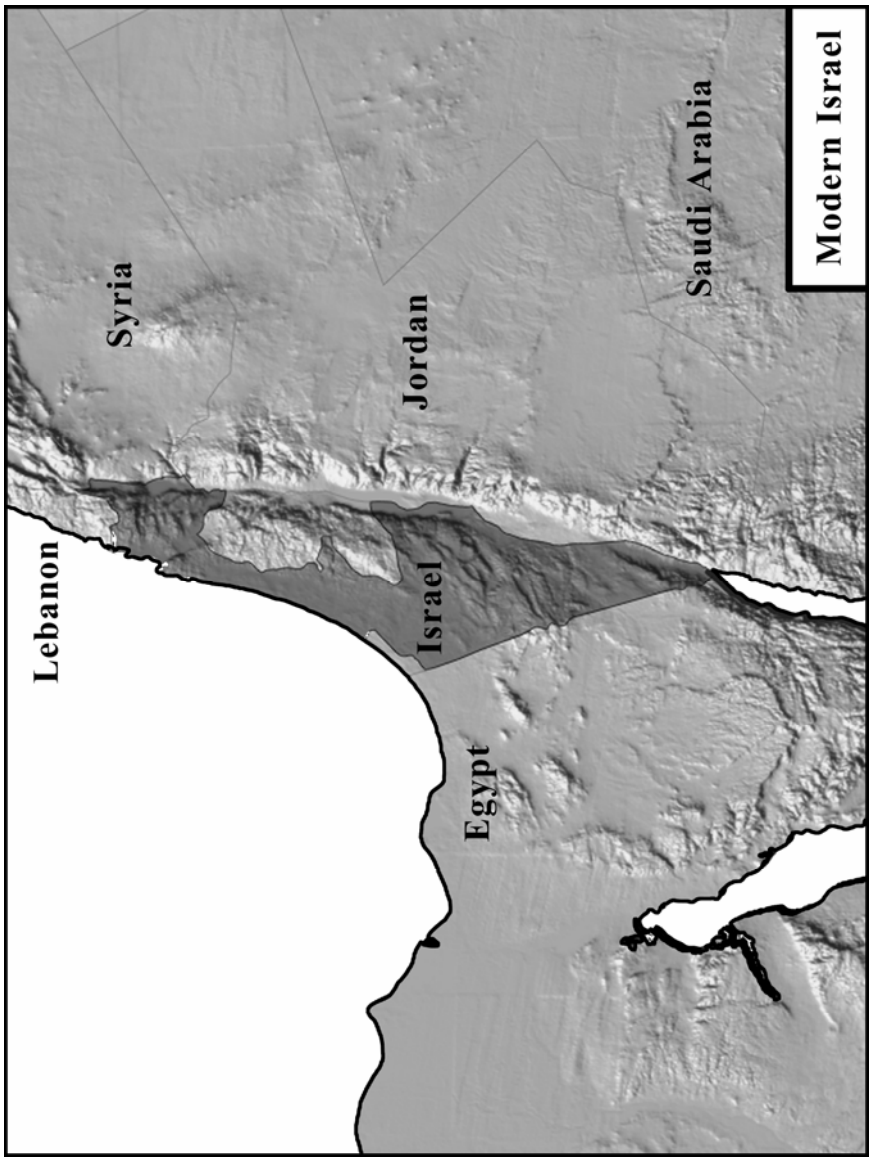
Goodman, *The Passover Anthology*, *The Shavuot Anthology*.

Questions to Consider:

1. There is no corroborating evidence that there was an Israelite people enslaved in ancient Egypt. Why might the authors of the Torah have invented such a myth?
2. How does Pesach involve natural, personal, and political redemption? Why might the death and resurrection of Jesus be associated with this holiday?
3. The Haggadah is the most frequently printed Jewish book. If you were to update the traditional Haggadah, who would represent Pharaoh? To what/whom are we enslaved and in need of liberation?
4. The Haggadah commands each of us to consider ourselves as if we had left Egypt. Is, then, the somber mood of the first 32 days of the Omer appropriate?







Timeline

Biblical Period

c. 2000 B.C.E. ..... Abraham and Sarah migrating from Ur to Canaan.

c. 1250 ..... Moses leads the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

c. 1200 ..... Joshua leads the Israelites in battle against the Canaanites.

1020 ..... Saul is anointed the first king of Israel.

1000 ..... David becomes the second king of Israel. Jerusalem is capital city.

961 ..... Solomon, David's son, builds the Temple in Jerusalem.

922 ..... Solomon dies and the kingdom splits: Israel in the north and Judea in the south.

721 ..... Assyria destroys Israel and exiles population. Ten Lost Tribes.

597 ..... Babylonia conquers Judah.

586 ..... Temple is destroyed and Judeans are exiled, en masse, to Babylonia.

539 ..... King Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon.

516 ..... Second Temple is dedicated in Jerusalem.

458 ..... Ezra leads a group of Jews back to Jerusalem.

Hellenistic Period

333 ..... Alexander the Great conquers Judah and brings in Hellenistic culture.

200 ..... Land of Israel passes from the Egyptians to the Syrians.

168–164 ..... Hasmoneans/Maccabees win war against Syrians and Hellenized Jews.

63 B.C.E. ..... Rome enters Judea.

66 C.E. ..... Great Revolt against Roman rule.

70 ..... Second Temple is destroyed.

74 ..... Massada.

Rabbinic Period

132–135 ..... Hadrianic persecutions and Bar Kochva Revolt.

c. 220 ..... Redaction of Mishnah by Judah the Patriarch.

313 ..... Emperor Constantine legalizes Christianity.

c. 450 ..... Redaction of Jerusalem Talmud.

c. 550 ..... Redaction of Babylonian Talmud.

7th century ..... Rise and spread of Islam.

Medieval Period

10th century ..... Rise of Jewish philosophy.

1180 ..... Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah* (code of law).

1190 ..... Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*.

12th century ..... Crusades.

12th century ..... Rise of Jewish mysticism/Kabbalah.

Late 13th century ..... *Zohar*.

14th century ..... Rabbi Menachem Ha-Me'iri of Provence writes that Christians are not to be classified as pagans or idolaters.

1492 ..... Christians conquer Spain from Muslims and exile the Jews.

16th century ..... Rise of Lurianic Kabbalah in Tzfat.

Early Modern Period

1654 ..... First group of Jews arrives in New Amsterdam.

18th century ..... Rise and spread of Hassidism in Eastern Europe.

1782 ..... Edict of Tolerance in Lower Austria.

1789 ..... French Revolution.

1790 ..... Jews given political rights in France.

19th century ..... Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) begins in Western Europe and slowly spreads to Eastern Europe.

1818 ..... Hamburg Temple begins reforming its services.

1824 ..... A small group petitions for liturgical reforms in Charleston, S.C.

1840 ..... Damascus Blood Libel.

Modern Period

1853 ..... Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch opens up a school in Frankfurt, Germany, that combines Jewish and secular studies.

1873 ..... Hebrew Union College (Reform seminary) founded in Cincinnati.

1876 ..... Felix Adler founds Ethical Culture Society.

1885 ..... Pittsburgh Platform of Reform Judaism.

1886 ..... Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative) founded in New York City.

1894 ..... Dreyfus affair.

1896 ..... Theodor Herzl writes *The Jewish State*.

1897 ..... First Zionist Congress in Switzerland.

1897 ..... Rabbi Isaac Elkhannan Specktor Yeshiva (Orthodox) founded in New York City.

1917 ..... Balfour Declaration.

1922 ..... League of Nations gives Britain a mandate to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

1939 ..... Britain effectively terminates immigration to Palestine on the eve of World War II.

1939–1945 ..... *Shoah*: Six million Jews systematically murdered in Nazi Europe.

1947 ..... United Nations partitions the western portion of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. Jews reluctantly accept. Arabs reject.

1948 ..... Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declares the establishment of the State of Israel.

1962–1965 ..... Second Vatican Council.

1967 ..... Six-Day War. Israel acquires the Old City of Jerusalem.

1968 ..... Reconstructionist Rabbinical College founded.

1969 ..... Society for Humanistic Judaism organized.

1972 ..... Reform ordains first female rabbi.

1975 ..... Reconstructionists begin ordaining women.

1985 ..... Conservative movement begins ordaining women.

1997 ..... A women's *yeshiva* in Jerusalem begins training *halachic* advisors.

Glossary

Aggadah: Non-legal material, lit. "telling."

Aguna/agunot (lit. "anchored"): Straw widows, women who are incapable of marriage because their husbands refuse to give them a *get*, a writ of divorce.

Aliyah (lit. "ascent"): Immigration to Israel.

Amidah: Central prayer in Rabbinic prayer service, lit. "standing."

Apocrypha: Such books as First and Second Maccabees were excluded from the TaNaKH, but included in the Christian Bible.

Ashkenazi: Jews from Germany (Ashkenaz) and surrounding European countries, particularly Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. The vast majority of Jews in the United States are of Ashkenazi descent.

Assyrians: Destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.E.

Avodah: Worship or service.

Ba'al teshuvah: Penitent or one who has returned.

Babylonian Talmud (b.): Edited in Babylon around 550.

Bal tashchit: Prohibition against wastefulness.

Bar Kochva Revolt: Revolt against Rome from 132–135 C.E.

British Mandate: Established by the League of Nations in 1922 to implement the Balfour Declaration's promise of providing a national home for Jews in Palestine.

Chalutzim: Pioneers who settled the Land of Israel.

Chametz: Leaven, forbidden on Pesach.

Channukah: Winter holiday celebrating the military triumph of the Macabbees. Literally, "dedication."

Channukiah: A nine-branched candelabra especially for Channukah.

Cheshbon nefesh: Soul-searching.

Chol hamoed: Intermediate days of the week-long festivals of Sukkot and Passover.

Chuppah: Wedding canopy.

Conservative Judaism: Begun in 19th-century Germany, but finds greater acceptance among Eastern European immigrants to America. Motto is tradition and change. *Halachah* is binding, though subject to modifications.

Ein sof: Without end, infinity. In Kabbalah, the realm of God to which we have no access.

Elul: Babylonian/Hebrew name for the sixth month.

Emancipation: The granting of Jews citizenship and political rights in 19th-century Western Europe.

Essenes: Second Temple sect that was ascetic and apocalyptic. One group lived by the Dead Sea.

Free loan societies: Established in late-19th century to help Eastern European Jews transition to America.

Gehena: The Rabbinic name for Hell.

Gemara: The larger part of the Talmud that analyzes the Mishnah and brings related legal and non-legal material. *Gemara* is Aramaic for "learning."

Gematria (gamma-tria): Letters corresponding to numbers.

Geonim: Medieval Jewish leaders in Babylonia.

Get: A writ of divorce.

Gilgul: Rolling over, reincarnation.

G'milut chasadim: Deeds of loving kindness.

Gnosticism: Dualistic theology with gods of good and evil.

Great Revolt: Jewish revolt against Rome, 66–70 C.E.

Hagaddah: The Rabbinic "script" for retelling the Exodus from Egypt.

Halachah: Jewish law, lit. "the way."

Haredi: Contemporary term meaning "quaking" to describe all Ultra-Orthodox (Mitnagdim and Hassidic) Jews.

Haskalah: Jewish enlightenment, 19th century, beginning in Western Europe.

Hasmoneans (Maccabees): *Maccabee* means a "hammer," and it is also the first letters of the words: *Mi Kmocha B'elim YHWH*, "Who is like YHWH among the gods" (Exod. 15:11).

Hassid: Follower of a *tzaddik*.

Hassidism: Religious renewal movement in 18th-century Eastern Europe emphasizing devotional posture and prayer.

Hebrew Union College: Reform seminary founded in Cincinnati in 1875.

Heichalot: Palaces, a genre of mystical literature in the Rabbinic period.

Holocaust: Wholly burnt offering to God (see Lev. 1). See Shoah.

Jerusalem Talmud (y.): Edited in the Land of Israel around 450.

Karaites: Medieval heretics who rejected Rabbinic tradition.

Kavannah: Intention, consciousness, awareness.

Ketubah: Jewish marriage contract, similar to a prenuptial agreement, protecting the wife's interests in the event of divorce or the death of her husband. Often ornately decorated.

Kiddush l'vana: Blessing of the waxing moon.

Kippa: *Yarmulkah*, skull cap.

Kitniot: "Small stuff," such as rice, beans, and peas; Ashkenazi Jews avoid these on Pesach.

LaG b'Omer: The 33rd day of the Omer. Celebrated with bonfires and outdoor activities.

Letzaref: To purify, to join.

Maccabees: See Hasmoneans.

Mashiach: "Anointed," Gr. "Christos." A divinely appointed human being who will preside over the ingathering of the exiled Jews and the reestablishment of Jewish political sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

Maskilim: Proponents of the Haskalah.

Matzah: Unleavened bread.

Menorah: Seven-branched candelabra (Exod. 25:31–40).

Menuchah: Tranquility, the special rest that God created on day seven.

Merkavah: Chariot, a genre of mystical literature from the Rabbinic period.

Mezuzah (pl. *mezuzot*): Biblical word for doorpost that today refers to the parchment that Jews are commanded to place on their doorposts (see Deut. 6:9).

Midrash: An idea linked to a biblical verse, lit. to "seek," "inquire," or "weave."

Mishnah (m.): Codex of Jewish law and earliest Rabbinic literature, lit. "learning." Compiled by Judah the Prince, circa 220 C.E.

Mitnagdim: Opponents of Hassidism who stressed centrality of Talmud Torah.

Mitzvah (pl. *mitzvot*): Commandment/s.

Nazarenes: Early followers of Jesus of Nazareth who believed he was the messiah.

Noahide laws: Laws that Rabbis say are incumbent upon Gentiles: establishing courts; not committing murder, idolatry, blasphemy, adultery, or thievery; and not tearing a limb from a living animal.

Olam haba: The coming world. Can either refer to existence after death or this world in the messianic era.

Omer: Sheaf of barley; 49-day period between Pesach and Shavuot.

Payot (*payos*): Corners, sidelocks.

Peel Commission, 1937: Partitioned Palestine west of the Jordan into Jewish and Arab states. Zionists accepted the partition; Arabs rejected it.

Pesach: Pass over or protect/have mercy.

Pharisees: Had an oral tradition to interpret the Torah. They are the spiritual ancestors of the Rabbis.

Ploni Almoni: The Hebrew version of Joe Shmoe, any anonymous person.

Purim: Holiday celebrating the survival of the Jews outside of Israel, lit., "lots."

Reconstructionist Judaism: Views Judaism as a civilization with religion as one component. *Halachah* is not binding, though Reconstructionists tend to be more traditional than Reform Jews.

Reform Judaism: Begun in 19th-century Germany, but flourishes in America. Rejects binding nature of *halachah* and emphasizes individual piety.

Rosh chodesh: New moon, lit., "head of the month."

Rosh Hashanah: Jewish New Year (lit., "Head of the Year"), Tishrei 1.

Sadducees: Second Temple sect that denied oral tradition and, hence, resurrection.

Second Vatican Council (1962–1965): Recognized that God's covenant with the Jewish people remains intact.

Seder: "Order," word used to describe the Pesach meal and the retelling of the Exodus. There are two *s'darim* (pl. for *seder*) outside of Israel.

Sefaradim: Jews exiled from Spain (Sefarad) who moved to some European countries, such as Holland and Bulgaria. The term also commonly refers to Jews from North Africa and the Middle East.

Segulah: Royal treasure.

Sfira: A station in the unfolding or emanation of the godhead.

Shames (Yiddish) or ***shamash*** (Hebrew): The "servant" that lights the other candles.

Shavuot (lit. "weeks"): Pentecost.

Shchinah: The 10th *sefirah* and divine presence that is the door between the supernal world and the physical world.

Shefa: Overflow of divine blessings.

Sheol: The biblical term for the place where everyone goes when they die.

Shmini Atzeret: Holiday that ends Sukkot, Tishrei 22.

Shoah: Catastrophe, refers to the Holocaust.

Shofar: Ram's horn that is blown on Rosh Hashanah.

Simchat Torah: Joy of Torah, Tishrei 22 in Israel and Tishrei 23 in the Diaspora.

Sinat hinam: Baseless hatred or gratuitous nastiness, the cause (according to the Rabbis) of the destruction of the Second Temple.

Sitra achra: Other side, evil forces in the Kabbalah.

Sukkot: Tabernacles/huts, Tishrei 15.

Tallit: Prayer shawl.

Talmud (lit. "learning"): Mishnah + Gemara.

Talmud Torah: Studying Torah (in its widest sense).

TaNaKH: Torah, Nevi'im (Prophets), Ketuvim (writings).

Tefillin: Phylacteries.

Ten Lost Tribes: When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.E., they scattered the inhabitants all over the kingdom.

Teshuvah: Return and respond. Often translated as repentance.

Theodicy: Justifying God, that is, reconciling the seeming lack of justice in this world with divine power and providence.

Tikkun: Mystical concept of repairing the broken vessels; now used to describe acts of social justice.

Tikkun leyl Shavuot: All-night study session on Shavuot.

Tisha b'Av: Ninth of Hebrew month of Av, commemorates the destruction of the Temples.

Tishrei: Babylonian/Hebrew name for the seventh month.

Torah: Teaching or instruction, often refers to the Pentateuch.

Treyfa (unkosher) **Banquet**: in 1883 at the first graduating class of Hebrew Union College.

Tsimtsum: Withdrawal, divine self-restraint.

Tu b'Av: The 15th of the Hebrew month of Av, Jewish Valentine's Day.

Tu b'Shvat: The 15th of the Hebrew month of Shvat, New Year for the Trees.

Tza'ar b'alei chayim: Prohibition against causing distress to animals.

Tzaddik: Leader of a Hassidic group.

Tzedakah: Righteousness, often translated as "charity."

Ushpizin: Mystical Sukkot guests: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David.

White Paper (1939): Severely restricted Jewish immigration on the eve of World War II and the Shoah.

Yahrzeit (Yiddish): Anniversary of death.

Yesh m'ayin: Creation out of nothing.

Yom Ha'atzmaut: Israeli Independence Day.

Yom Hashoah v'Hagvurah: The Day of Catastrophe and Heroism, otherwise known as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Yom Hazikaron: Israeli Memorial Day.

Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement, Tishrei 10.

Yom Yerushalayim: Jerusalem Day.

Zionism: Political movement beginning in late-19th century to reestablish a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

Biographical Notes

Adler, Felix (1851–1933). The son of prominent Reform Rabbi Samuel Adler. Growing up in America, the younger Adler finished his rabbinic and secular education in Germany. On his return, he advocated abandoning the particularistic elements of Judaism to focus exclusively on universal ethics. In 1876, Adler founded the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

Akiva son of Joseph (50–135 C.E.). One of the leading figures of Rabbinic Judaism in the decades after the destruction of the Second Temple. In some ways, "Judaism" could just as easily be named "Akivaism." He was largely responsible for the traditions recorded in the Mishnah. He was also believed to engage in mystical practices. He maintained that the most important principle in the Torah was to show love to your neighbor, although he simultaneously held that study was greater than deeds. He promoted the Rabbinic doctrine that the entire Torah was given by God at Mount Sinai. Akiva was flayed to death by the Romans toward the end of the Bar Kochva Revolt.

Ba'al Shem Tov, Israel (1700–1760). The inspiration for Hassidism, a religious renewal movement that swept through Eastern Europe from 1750 through the 19th century. The Ba'al Shem Tov maintained that the study of Talmud was not the exclusive way to serve God. One could serve God through all commandments and all human activities as long as one's awareness was so directed. He had a small group of followers who spread his teachings throughout Eastern Europe. These *tzaddikim*, or righteous ones, lent their own style and personality to the message of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

Bar Kochva, Shimon (d. 135 C.E.). The military leader of the final rebellion against the Romans in the Land of Israel that began in 132. Although Rabbi Akiva believed him to be the messiah, Bar Kochva made no such claim. Bar Kochva based himself in the south of the country, where documents and coins have been unearthed testifying to his reign.

Dreyfus, Alfred (1859–1935). An assimilated Jew and captain in the French Army. He was falsely convicted of treason in 1895. Dreyfus was demoted and sent to Devil's Island off the coast of South America. His brother worked tirelessly to exonerate him. Finally, in 1906, a court of appeals pronounced his innocence. In the interim, his case garnered international attention. One of the reporters covering the initial trial was Theodor Herzl, who was inspired to question whether assimilation was a viable solution for European Jews. Herzl subsequently outlined his vision of a Jewish national independence.

Frankel, Zecharias (1801–1875). The founder of Conservative Judaism in Germany. At the time, it was called "Positive Historical Judaism." The original name reflects the idea that Judaism is a historical religion unfolding over time and that historical unfolding is positive because it allows Jewish law to maintain its relevance in each generation. Frankel accepted certain reforms but was dedicated to the binding nature of Jewish law as a whole. He was also opposed to the linguistic acculturation of Reform and insisted on preserving Hebrew in the prayer services. In 1854, he was named the director of a rabbinical seminary (Juedisch-Theologisches Seminar), which became the model for modern seminaries that combine critical scholarship and traditional Jewish study.

Geiger, Abraham (1810–1874). A founding father of the Reform movement in Germany. Geiger was also one of the outstanding scholars from the second generation of Jewish studies. He applied his scholarly research, which emphasized the human authorship of the Torah and demonstrated the progressive nature of Jewish law, to the reforms he hoped to institute in his own day. He served as a pulpit rabbi for 35 years and was instrumental in the establishment of the first Reform rabbinical seminary in Berlin in 1870.

Herzl, Theodor (1860–1904). Best remembered as the father of political Zionism. He was an assimilated Jew from Budapest who was educated in Vienna. He served as a reporter for the trial of Alfred Dreyfus and became convinced that the only solution for the Jewish problem in Europe was a national home. He wrote *The Jewish State* in 1896 and presided over the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. There, he said that in 50 years, a Jewish state would exist in Palestine. His words proved prophetic.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua (1905–1972). A scion of a Hassidic dynasty and one of the leading Jewish theologians in the United States in the 20th century. He was twice invited to the White House to speak on issues of social justice and was a friend and ally of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His scholarship touched on every facet of Jewish thought. *The Sabbath* and *God in Search of Man* are representative of his style and religious thought.

Hirsch, Emil G. (1851–1923). The son of a prominent Reform ideologue, Rabbi Samuel Hirsch. Upon returning from Germany with ordination and a doctorate, the younger Hirsch served as an editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, professor of Rabbinics at the University of Chicago, and a congregational Rabbi. He was responsible for bringing the Social Gospel into Reform Judaism and featuring it in the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform.

Hirsch, Samson Raphael (1808–1888). Considered to be the father of Modern (or Neo-) Orthodoxy. He was a staunch opponent of Reform and its acceptance of biblical criticism. Hirsch advocated certain "external" reforms dealing with dress, language, and even education, but he was steadfast in his opposition to *halachic* change. Although he could not tolerate changes to the traditional liturgy calling for the reestablishment of a Jewish state, he did believe that one should demonstrate patriotism toward the country of one's citizenship. Hirsch opened the first Jewish day school in 1853 that combined Jewish and secular studies.

Judah the Prince, Rabbi (c. 135 C.E.–c. 219). Redacted the Mishnah, the first literary work of Rabbinic Judaism. He was both an outstanding scholar and the political leader of the community, representing Jewish interests to Rome. In Rabbinic literature, he is often simply referred to as "Rabbi." He led the Sannhedrin, the supreme Jewish legislative and judicial body, from Tzippori and Bet She'arim. He is buried in Bet She'arim in northern Israel in a restored archaeological site.

Kaplan, Mordecai (1881–1983). Taught at the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary for more than half a century. Kaplan is also the founder of the fourth denomination in American Jewish life, Reconstructionism. Kaplan maintained that traditional Judaism gets a vote, not a veto, on how contemporary Jews express their Jewish commitments. Kaplan promoted the idea that Judaism is a civilization and American Jews should strive to live in both the Jewish and American civilizations. Toward that end, Kaplan was an early supporter of the idea of Jewish community centers, where Jews could congregate for purposes other than religion. On matters religious, Kaplan was a forceful advocate of updating traditional rituals and ideas where possible and abandoning those that could not be updated, such as the idea of the chosen people.

Kook, Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen (1865–1935). The first Ashkenazi chief Rabbi of Palestine. Born to a Hassidic mother and a Mitnagdic father, Rav Kook combined Talmudic and *halachic* scholarship with the mysticism of the Kabbalah. Rav Kook's inspirational writings, poetry, and works of *halachah* served as the ideological foundation for many religious Zionists. He is widely perceived to be a bridge between the religious and secular worlds because he expressed admiration for the secular Zionists who were doing God's work, albeit unknowingly. His son, Tzvi Yehudah Kook, has become a central figure in the Israeli settler movement, which sees the State of Israel as the beginning of messianic redemption. A good digest of his writings can be found in *The Lights of Penitence*.

Leibowitz, Yeshayahu (1903–1994). One of the most controversial figures in Israel until his death. Although deeply committed to *halachah*, he nevertheless felt that Jewish law had to adapt to the new reality of a Jewish state. Leibowitz considered himself to be a disciple of Maimonides and the rationalism that the latter represented. On the question of chosenness, Leibowitz denies that the Jews were chosen. He reconceptualizes the traditional notion by arguing that Jews were commanded to be the chosen people, and the Jews may or may not respond to that divine demand. But, for Leibowitz, as for all Jewish rationalists, there is no intrinsic difference between Jews and Gentiles.

Luria, Isaac (1534–1572). Also known as the Holy Lion. He led a group of Kabbalists in Tzfat in the north of the Land of Israel. Luria developed the Kabbalah he inherited into a far more elaborate system involving four different worlds within the supernal realm. He also innovated a creation myth that involves *tsimtsum*, or divine withdrawal to create a space that is not divine in order to create the world. In the subsequent process of creation, there was a shattering of vessels containing divine energy; our task is to repair (*tikkun*) those shattered vessels through the performance of the commandments with the proper intention. Lurianic Kabbalah was influential for centuries.

Maimonides, Moses (1138–1204). Also known as RaMBaM (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon); born in Spain and lived in Egypt. Maimonides was a doctor to the sultan and for the Jewish community of Fostat, Old Cairo. His two greatest works are the *Mishneh Torah* (1180), a comprehensive summation of Rabbinic law, and the *Guide of the Perplexed* (1190), a text that brings together Rabbinic Judaism and Aristotelian philosophy. Maimonides was a controversial writer, and the true meaning of his *Guide* is still hotly debated. Maimonides's influence on both the development of *halachah* and Jewish philosophy cannot be overestimated. Although it is possible to disagree with the RaMBaM, one cannot ignore him.

Nachmanides, Moses (1194–1270). Also known as RaMBaN (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman); lived in Gerona, Spain, north of Barcelona, and died in the Land of Israel. RaMBaN is the earliest biblical commentator to include Kabbalistic hints. Like RaMBaM, with whom he frequently disagreed, RaMBaN was a doctor. He was also a Talmudist and leader of the Jewish community. He represented the Jews in disputations with the Christian community in 1263, his account of which has been dramatized in *The Disputation*, a BBC production. Shortly after his participation in the disputation, he left for the Land of Israel.

RaSHI, Rabbi Shlomo son of Isaac (1040–1105). Born in Troyes, France, and is most well known for his running commentary on the Talmud and TaNaKH. In his commentary on the TaNaKH, he usually selected and condensed earlier Rabbinic understandings of the text. His commentary was the first published Jewish work, even before the TaNaKH itself. His commentary is studied along with the TaNaKH in traditional communities down to today.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman (b. 1924). Born in Poland, educated in Vienna, and escaped the Nazis in 1941 by immigrating to the United States. Although ordained as a rabbi with the Chassidic sect HaBaD, Schachter-Shalomi fell away from the movement and received his Ph.D. from the Reform seminary Hebrew Union College. Schachter-Shalomi, since the 1960s, has been a leader in the Jewish Renewal movement. He combines a thoroughly traditional education with a modern outlook on religion. He emphasizes the importance of ecology, as well as promoting a personal relationship with God through joyous prayer, song, and dance.

Schneersohn, Menachem Mendel (1904–1994). The latest messianic figure in Judaism. Rebbe Schneersohn lead the Lubavitch movement (HaBaD) in America for decades following World War II and oversaw its impressive growth in ranks and Jewish outreach activity. In the early 1990s, there was intense speculation in the Lubavitch community about the messianic status of the Rebbe, which Schneersohn himself did nothing to quiet. When he died, the Lubavitch movement was split between those who maintain that he was/is the messiah and those who do not. Schneersohn, having no sons, left the Lubavitch community without an heir apparent.

Shimon son of Yochai, Rabbi (c. 2nd century C.E.) was one of the leading students of Rabbi Akiva. After Akiva's death, he fled to Babylonia. He is the reputed author of the *Zohar*, the major text of medieval Kabbalah. His *yahrtzeit* ("anniversary of death") is celebrated on LaG b'Omer by thousands making pilgrimage to his reputed gravesite on Mount Meron in northern Israel.

Sofer, Moses (1762–1839). Also known as the Hatam Sofer. He served a community in Hungary and was the most important traditional Jewish scholar in central Europe for the first four decades of the 19th century. Although more flexible in practice, Sofer expressed scorn for the Reform movement and its adherents. He promoted the notion that any innovation was forbidden and that Jews should be particularly careful to retain cultural aspects of their identity, including traditional names, the use of Yiddish, and distinctive garb. Sofer became the figurehead for later generations of Jews who became known as Ultra-Orthodox and are particularly incensed by the acculturation of the Modern Orthodox.

Soloveitchik, Joseph Dov (1903–1993). Born in Lithuania into the Brisk Rabbinic dynasty. A child prodigy, Soloveitchik went to Germany to receive a Ph.D. in religious philosophy. On immigrating to the United States, he taught Talmud for decades at Yeshiva University in New York City and founded the Orthodox day school Maimonides, outside of Boston. He was arguably the leading Torah figure in the United States in the second half of the 20th century. Rav Soloveitchik combined profound Torah knowledge and secular erudition. Thousands of his students refer to him simply as "the Rav" or "the Teacher." *Halachic Man* is a prime example of his dialectical thought.

Tzvi, Shabbatai (1626–1676). A charismatic leader who proclaimed himself messiah in 1665. Although there were other false messiahs in Jewish history, Shabbatai Tzvi was the most popular. Some of his followers remained convinced of his messianic status even after he converted to Islam, under the threat of death by the Turkish sultan, in 1666. Shabbatai Tzvi's teachings combined elements of Jewish mysticism, the call to penance, and violations of *halachah*. The dashed messianic hopes placed on Shabbatai Tzvi precipitated skepticism toward messianism as well as Kabbalah.

Wise, Isaac Mayer (1819–1900). The father of American Reform Judaism. He arrived from Germany in 1846 and went on to found the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (renamed Union of Reform Judaism in 2003), Hebrew Union College, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He was the editor of the Jewish newspaper *The Israelite* (later named *The American Israelite*) and the German-Jewish newspaper *Die Deborah*. Wise was not a

radical reformer, though he did introduce mixed seating and rejected the use of traditional head coverings and prayer shawls for men in the Temple.

Yochanan ben Zakkai was one of the leading sages at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.). According to Rabbinic lore, he was spirited out of Jerusalem in the final stages of the Roman siege. He secured permission from Rome to establish what became the seed of Rabbinic Judaism at Yavneh.

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Introduction to Judaism

Part II

Professor Shai Cherry

THE TEACHING COMPANY ®

Shai Cherry, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Jewish Thought, Vanderbilt University

Shai Cherry (b. 1966) straddles the worlds of higher education and community education. Although it took Dr. Cherry seven years to acquire a B.A. (*magna cum Laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*) in philosophy, politics, and economics from Claremont McKenna College, he managed to attend the Wharton School of Finance, two universities in England, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During that period, he taught junior high school and high school students at various southern California Reform temples and Conservative synagogues, as well as volunteered in Israel for 10 months on Project Otzma.

As Dr. Cherry pursued his doctorate in Jewish thought from Brandeis University (2001), he served as family educator at a Reform temple in the Boston area. He also taught Rabbinics and Modern Jewish Thought for Hebrew College. Having begun his formal Jewish education at an unorthodox *yeshiva* (seminary) in Jerusalem, the Pardes Institute, he returned on completion of his Ph.D. for another year of Talmud study at the Conservative Yeshiva.

Since 2001, Professor Cherry has taught at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, as the Mellon Assistant Professor of Jewish Thought. At the same time, he has served as an instructor in the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School.

Dr. Cherry's research focuses on biblical interpretation and the nexus between science and Judaism. "Three Twentieth-Century Jewish Responses to Evolutionary Theory" appeared in the 2003 volume of *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism*. Slated to appear in 2005 is his essay "Crisis Management via Biblical Interpretation: Fundamentalism, Modern Orthodoxy and Genesis" in *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Evolution*. The following year will see the publication of Dr. Cherry's first book on Jewish interpretations of Torah.

The professor has received numerous awards for his work in community education and continues to teach across the United States and in Israel.

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Part II

Introduction to Judaism

Scope:

Judaism is not a book (the Hebrew Bible) or even a set of books (the Hebrew Bible plus the Talmud plus other legal, mystical, and philosophical writings), but a living religious tradition. Even to call Judaism a "religion" is not quite accurate. The Land of Israel and the People of Israel have been essential, intertwined components of Judaism for 3,000 years. Most religions, like Christianity, do not have quite the same relationship to a particular place or national group. Judaism has variously been called a culture, an ethnicity, and a civilization, all terms that struggle to include more than "just" religion. This course, *Introduction to Judaism*, presents the unfolding of the *religious* aspects of the Jewish civilization from the Hebrew Bible to today, while keeping an eye on the historical background against which those changes within Judaism have occurred.

The Hebrew Bible is Judaism's foundation text. Knowing the Hebrew Bible, however, will tell you surprisingly little about Judaism, especially in its contemporary expressions. We begin our course with a discussion of the Bible and its relationship to Judaism. We'll also discuss modern assumptions about the human authorship of the Bible and compare them to traditional assumptions that the Bible is, somehow, the word of God.

We then begin to describe the varieties of early Judaisms. Although Jewish history is not one long tale of travails, there have been several catastrophes that powerfully shaped the Jewish consciousness. Among them was the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem by the Babylonians and Romans, respectively. In the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple, some of the groups competing for power in the Jewish world lost their power bases, while others gained from the changing circumstances. Eventually, it was Rabbinic Judaism that achieved hegemony among the vying ideologies and interest groups.

After discussing what we know about this power struggle to assume leadership in the Jewish world, we will look closely at some of the core values and practices of the Rabbis. Most of their agenda, such as the emphasis on deeds of loving kindness, has roots in the Bible. But the ways in which the Rabbis promoted other practices, such as study, repentance, and prayer, are quite innovative. In our discussion of the afterlife, for example, we will see how a relatively late and marginal idea in the Hebrew Bible became critical in the late Second Temple period.

With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., however, celebrating God's presence in time, rather than space (as in the Jerusalem Temple), became central in Rabbinic Judaism. The next section of the course, therefore, focuses on the Jewish calendar, beginning with the Sabbath. After looking at the Rabbinic development of this biblical institution, we'll pause to focus on the broader question of the relationship between the letter of the law and its spirit. We will then continue with our journey through the Jewish year, always conscious of how the holidays, often relating to harvests in the Land of Israel, were given new dimensions and reinterpreted for a people who no longer lived in the Land.

At this point, we'll introduce the Jewish philosophers and mystics of the Middle Ages. What explains the emergence of these new expressions of Judaism? How do they differ in their understandings of the relationship between God and the world? As we make this bridge between ancient and modern Judaism, we'll focus on the issue of evil. Beginning with biblical understandings of evil and suffering, we will then move to Rabbinic responses. The Jewish philosophers and mystics of the Middle Ages resort to dramatically different styles of language to address their equally different explanations for the persistence of evil. Finally, we'll see how some modern Jewish thinkers have responded to the greatest of all Jewish catastrophes, the Holocaust. How do contemporary theodicies (explanations for evil in a world created by a good and powerful God) relate to the historical ones?

Our next five sessions will be devoted to modern expressions of Judaism. The varied faces of Judaism that we see today are all outgrowths of the historical changes of the Jewish emancipation and enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries. Surprisingly, we'll see that Ultra-Orthodox Judaism is just as much a product of modernity as is Reform Judaism. We'll then explain the ideologies and the reasons for the emergence of the major movements in the "middle": Modern Orthodoxy, Conservative Judaism, and Reconstructionist Judaism. We'll also discuss the modern phenomenon of atheism/secularism among Jews. (Being a Jewish atheist is not a contradiction in terms, while being a Christian atheist is.) Some secular Jews (and a few religious ones, too) chose to express their Jewish commitments through a return to the historic Land of Israel. Thus, modernity has brought with it the possibility of identifying, for the first time in nearly 2,000 years, with any, all, or none of the following: the Land of Israel, the People of Israel, and the Torah of Israel.

Our final three sessions will consider sensitive issues of contemporary interest and trace their developments from the Torah to today's different Jewish denominations. The emphasis in these lectures will be on the process of how Jewish thought and practice develops. What is the role and status of women according to Jewish law? How does Judaism understand Christianity? Is it an expression of idolatry or another path to the one God? Finally, are the Jews the Chosen People? And, if so, for what have they been chosen and by whom? Throughout these lectures, we will highlight the wide range of Jewish expressions, so that an equally legitimate name for this course might be: *Introduction to Judaisms*.

Lecture Thirteen
Minor Holidays—Then and Now

Scope: With apologies to Cole Porter, how strange the change to major from minor! Chanukah isn't even mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and Purim celebrates the reversal of a near-death experience for the Jewish people. Although the Rabbis were ambivalent about both holidays, they have become two of the most celebrated days in the Jewish year. We'll explain the ambivalence and suggest reasons for their persistent popularity.

Tu b'Shvat is called the New Year for the Tree. Although it has become the major holiday for "Green Judaism," it started off as the fiscal new year for taxing agriculture. We'll chart its growth. Tisha b'Av solemnly commemorates the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem and is followed by the least known of our minor holidays, Tu b'Av, akin to a feminist version of Valentine's Day. Another minor holiday that has been recently reclaimed by women is Rosh Chodesh (New Month).

Outline

I. Chanukah (Dedication).

A. Chanukah is the only Jewish holiday that is mentioned in neither the TaNaKH nor the Mishnah!
1. There are two books recording the deeds of the Maccabees in the Apocrypha.
a. The Maccabean Revolt against the Syrian Greeks, or Seleucids, was from 168 B.C.E.–165 B.C.E.
b. The Hasmonean family, from Modi'in, eventually claimed both religious and political leadership. The family was of a priestly class but not a high-priestly class. Thus, the Hasmoneans should not have claimed the office of high priest. Because they were not of Davidic descent, they should not have claimed political leadership.
2. The Gemara, written about 500 years after the Maccabean Revolt, introduces the story about the cruse of oil lasting for eight days (b. Shabbat 21a).

B. The holiday was extremely popular and could not be suppressed, though it seems the Rabbis tried.
1. It's an eight-day holiday because it is patterned after the dedication of the First Temple, which coincided with the holidays of Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret (I Kings 8 and II Macc. 10).
2. The motif of oil, bread, and fish miraculously multiplying is common in both Jewish and Christian Scriptures (II Kings 4:14, 42 and Matt. 14:16–21).
3. On a literary level, the Maccabees represent the purity of living a lifestyle dedicated to God and God's will in the midst of the impurity of Hellenistic sexual and religious practices.

C. The popularity of the day can be traced to cross-cultural influences.
1. The eighth day of Chanukah, when nine lights are lit in the Chanukiah, is the darkest day of the year because it always falls on the new moon following the winter solstice.
2. In America, the tradition of gift giving for Christmas influenced Jews to emphasize the previously muted aspect of gift giving on Chanukah.
3. In Israel, Chanukah became an important traditional holiday to celebrate the valor of the Israelites in their struggle to survive the evil designs of their neighbors.

II. Purim (Lots).

A. The Book of Esther describes how Haman's plot to kill all the Judeans (not yet Jews) was frustrated by Esther and Mordechai. Haman, a descendant of King Agag of Amalek, is hanged, along with his 10 sons; the anti-Judean riffraff are killed; no plunder is taken; and Mordechai becomes second in command of the kingdom of Persia.

B. The Rabbis debate whether this text should be included in the TaNaKH.
1. The name of God appears nowhere in the text.
2. The book is sexually suggestive.
3. Perhaps the Rabbis decided to include this text precisely because it moves its readers to see God's presence and providence even when God seems to be absent and the world seems to be full of chance.

(The name of the holiday, *Purim*, means "lots." See Esther 3:7.) We must read between the lines of the text because God's name does not appear.

C. The celebration of turning the tables on Haman becomes an annual event. The timing of this holiday in the early spring parallels other carnival festivals that celebrate the "near death" of the winter months.

1. The characteristically Jewish elements of the holiday include gift giving and *tzedakah* (Esther 9:22). Neither activity was mentioned in the story itself.

2. The Talmud also says that we should overindulge so that we can no longer distinguish between cursed Haman and blessed Mordechai (b. Megillah 7b).

3. Contemporary practice is a carnivalesque combination of Halloween costumes, gift giving, tzedakah, and drinking to excess. In Israel, plastic head bobbers and silly string are part of the festivities.

III. Tu b'Shvat.

A. In the Mishnah, this day marks the beginning of the fiscal year for purposes of tithing agriculture.

B. In the 16th century, Jewish mystics imagined God's beneficence flowing down from the heavens like an upside down tree. With roots in heaven, the mystics draw down the divine energy, or sap, so that it "fructifies" on earth. They developed a seder on Tu b'Shvat with different kinds of fruits to facilitate the drawing down of these divine blessings.

C. In the early 20th century, the Zionist movement wanted to plant trees in the Land of Israel. Tu b'Shvat became a Jewish Arbor Day, and the Jewish National Fund collected money to plant trees.

D. Several decades ago, Jewish environmentalists latched on to this day to promote traditional Jewish wisdom on the environment.

IV. Tisha b'Av.

A. This day of mourning commemorates communal destructions in Jewish history, specifically the First and Second Temples.

B. The prohibitions of Yom Kippur are also in effect for Tisha b'Av. In the evening, the Book of Lamentations, describing the destruction of the First Temple, is chanted.

C. From the beginning of Av until the ninth (Tisha), there is a period of semi-mourning similar to the first 32 days of the Omer.

V. Tu b'Av.

A. Six days after Tisha b'Av, there is a Jewish combination of Valentine's and Sadie Hawkins Day, about which the Mishnah describes the young women of Jerusalem going out to the vineyards and joyously dancing with the young men (m. Ta'anit, end).

B. Although Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel describes this day as one of incredible joy, it was not widely celebrated throughout Jewish history. Today, some Jewish couples mark the day with picnics, complete with Israeli wine.

VI. Rosh Chodesh (Head of the Month).

A. In the Bible, the celebration of the new moon involved animal sacrifices, a festive meal, and abstention from work parallel to other holidays (Num. 28:11–15, I Sam. 20:5, and Amos 8:5).

B. After the destruction of the Temple, the holiday was reduced to singing psalms in the synagogue.

C. Already in the Rabbinic period, the holiday was associated with women, most likely because of the parallel between the lunar cycle and a woman's menstrual cycle. Today, there are women's Rosh Chodesh groups in many cities across the world.

D. It is customary on the Saturday night prior to the full moon, which always falls on the 15th of the Hebrew month, to bless the waxing moon. This blessing, *Kiddush L'vana*, is done outside, in sight of the moon, and the prayers are included in all traditional prayer books.

Essential Reading:

Waskow, *Seasons of Our Joy*, pp. 87–132, 207–218, and 228–230.

Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, pp. 225–240 and 255–268.

Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, pp. 217–304 and 411–420.

Agus, "This Month Is for You," in *The Jewish Woman*.

Supplementary Reading:

Goodman, *A Purim Anthology*, *A Hannuka Anthology*.

Bickerman, *The Maccabees*.

Elon, Hyman, and Waskow, eds. *Trees, Earth, and Torah : A Tu b'Shvat Anthology*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is it about Chanukah that allowed the holiday to survive and flourish even without initial endorsement by Rabbinic culture?
2. Tu b'Shvat went from being a fiscal new year to a semi-holiday that promotes environmental activism. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of flexibility? What are the limits and who decides?
3. What do we learn from the parallel sequence of introspection/mourning to joy in the transitions from Yom Kippur to Sukkot and from Tisha b'Av to Tu b'Av?

Lecture Fourteen

Medieval Jewish Philosophy—Maimonides

Scope: Beginning in the 9th century, the Jews living in Arab lands came under the influence of Greek philosophy. The writings of Aristotle and Plato, among others, were translated into Arabic and challenged the traditional religious sensibilities of both Jews and Muslims. Aristotle, in particular, posed a threat because of his prestige as the philosopher par excellence and his depiction of a transcendent, unchanging, and uncaring god. Although medieval Jewish philosophy emerges with Isaac Israeli and Sa'adia Gaon, Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) represents the most significant response to Aristotelian thought. We will look at his *Guide of the Perplexed* (1190) on such issues as the creation of the world, prayer, and the reasons for the commandments.

Outline

I. Beginnings of Jewish philosophy.

- **A.** Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.–40 C.E.) began the process of understanding Judaism allegorically and philosophically. His writings were influential in early Christianity but unknown to the Jewish community until the 19th century.
- **B.** Under the influence of Islam, Jews began incorporating philosophical argumentation in their presentations of Judaism. Sa'adia Gaon (882–942) was among the earliest Jewish philosophers.
  - **1.** Jewish philosophy was, in large part, responding to the intellectual challenge of Aristotle, who held that God is totally transcendent, unchanging, and uncaring.
  - **2.** Biblical verses and traditional religious notions in tension with Aristotelian thought were the focus of attention by Jewish philosophers.

II. Moses Maimonides (1138–1204).

- **A.** Maimonides was born in southern Spain but immigrated to Cairo because of Islamic oppression.
- **B.** He wrote medical works, a commentary on the Mishnah, and the *Mishneh Torah* (1180), a comprehensive law code.
- **C.** Maimonides wrote *Guide of the Perplexed* in 1190 to address the tensions between Judaism and Aristotelian philosophy.

III. Creation of the world.

- **A.** Aristotle assumed that the world was eternal.
- **B.** Genesis 1 and the Rabbis generally offered a more Platonic version of creation, whereby God fashioned the universe as we know it from pre-existing material.
- **C.** By the Middle Ages, the philosophical stakes became clear. If one agrees with Aristotle's version of the eternity of the world and the impossibility of divine intervention in the movement of the cosmos, then miracles become impossible.
- **D.** Maimonides argued that Aristotle did not prove that the universe was eternal; therefore, we are free to disagree with what has not been conclusively proven.
- **E.** Maimonides then argues that creation *ex nihilo* (*yesh m'ayin*) should be accepted, even without conclusive proof, on the strength of prophecy (see *Guide* II:16).

IV. Prayer.

- **A.** The god of Aristotle is both uninterested in human prayer and incapable of responding. A personal relationship with such a god is quite difficult.
- **B.** Although Maimonides maintains that prayer is a mitzvah, he also understands that it is a concession to human psychology.
  - **1.** "A sudden transition from one opposite to another is impossible" (*Guide* III:32). The Israelites in Egypt were steeped in the idolatrous practices of the Egyptians. These practices included animal sacrifices.

2. As a gracious ruse, or noble lie, God allowed the Israelites to continue in those idolatrous practices, but now with the correct address. Maimonides's point is that those practices are of no use to God.
3. Maimonides then draws the comparison to prayer that is of value only for the pray-er to feel connected to God. But, like Aristotle, Maimonides believes that God is totally transcendent and uninterested and unmoved by prayer.

V. Reasons for the commandments.

A. Although there was dispute among the Rabbis about the reasons for the commandments, one school of thought held that the commandments were given to refine or purify humanity.

B. Maimonides agreed with this position (*Guide* III:27).

1. The most important function of the commandments is to promote truth.
   - **a.** This is accomplished through inculcating true beliefs about God and the world.
   - **b.** It is also necessary to distance us from wrong, pagan beliefs about God and the world.
2. Although less important than the attainment of truth, one must first attain physical safety and political security in order to enjoy the conditions to pursue philosophy.
   - **a.** Commandments abolish wrongdoing among people.
   - **b.** Commandments promote noble, moral qualities.

Essential Reading:

Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Book III:25–33.

Fox, "Creation or Eternity" and "Prayer and the Religious Life," in *Interpreting Maimonides*.

Agus, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 573–579.

Supplementary Reading:

Weiss, Roslyn. "From Freedom to Formalism: Maimonides on Prayer," in *CCAR Journal* (Fall 1997).

Samuelson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Back to the Sources*, pp. 261–303.

Tirosh-Samuelson, "The Bible in the Jewish Philosophical Tradition," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 1948–1975.

Questions to Consider:

1. The medieval debate on creation parallels the contemporary debate on evolution. How do you think Maimonides would respond to Darwinism?
2. If one understands prayer as does Maimonides, why continue to pray, as opposed to meditating in silence?
3. Some scholars have linked Jewish laxity in the performance of commandments to the philosophical approach of explaining the function of the commandments. Can you think of any current examples of this phenomenon?

Lecture Fifteen
Medieval Jewish Mysticism—Kabbalah

Scope: The Kabbalah is a vocabulary of dynamic symbols that many Jewish medieval mystics used to describe their understanding of God and God's relationship to the world. The Kabbalah is a literary combination of neo-Platonic philosophy and ancient Near Eastern mythology. It accepts but devalues Aristotelian thought through a poetry that distinguishes between that aspect of God that is transcendent and about which we can know nothing (*Ein sof*) and another aspect of God that is in continuous relation to the world (*s'firot*). This relationship between God and the world is in a state of constant flux depending on human actions. We will explore the same issues that we looked at with Maimonides to see the very different responses offered by the mystics.

Outline

I. Early Jewish mysticism.

- **A.** One characteristic of mysticism is the desire for an unmediated experience of God. Biblical Judaism mediated one's relationship to God through the priest. Rabbinic Judaism mediates that relationship through the *halachah*.
- **B.** But the Bible does contain several episodes of individuals directly experiencing God (see Exod. 24:9–11 and Ez. 1 and 10).
- **C.** Although there is relatively little mysticism in Rabbinic literature, other genres of literature during the Rabbinic period recount voyages through the heavens to meet God. This literature is called *merkavah* ("chariot") and *heichalot* ("palaces").
- **D.** Rabbinic Judaism tended to discourage mystical experimentation.

II. Kabbalah.

- **A.** The word *Kabbalah* designates "that which was received." The medieval claim was that these works were transmitted during the Rabbinic period but were just now being committed to writing.
- **B.** What distinguishes the Kabbalah from other varieties of Jewish mysticism is a specific vocabulary of dynamic symbols to express God's relationship within God's self and to the world.
- **C.** The earliest works of Kabbalah are the *Bahir* (late 12th century) and the *Zohar* (late 13th century). Both texts emerge from the Spanish Jewish community. They combine poetry and mythology.

III. Creation of God and the world.

- **A.** Maimonides held that God was totally transcendent and unknowable in his essence. The Kabbalists agreed that there was an aspect of God beyond all human comprehension. They designated that transcendent aspect of God as *Ein sof*, or infinitude.
- **B.** Unlike Maimonides, however, the Kabbalists held that there is another aspect to God that humans could understand and relate to. It is through this aspect of God that the divine is immanent and acts in the world.
- **C.** Jewish medieval philosophers used the term *yesh m'ayin* ("something from nothing") to designate creation out of nothing. The Kabbalists understood that creation proceeded from the Divine Nothing, where *ayin* refers to that aspect of God about which we can know nothing. In other words, creation is not distinct from God but emanates from God's very self and, therefore, creation pulsates with divine energy.
- **D.** The God that is mentioned in the first verse of *Genesis* was brought into existence through the emanation of the *s'firot* from the *Ein sof*.
  1. Each *s'firah* of the 10 *s'firot* represents a station in the unfolding of divinity in the process of divine self-revelation and the creation of the cosmos. Through meditation, the mystic can climb back up the ladder of the *s'firot*.
  2. This model of emanation is derived from neo-Platonic philosophy.

3. The final *s'firah*, which links the supernal world with our physical world, is called, alternatively, the *Shchinah*, the divine presence, and *Knesset Yisrael*, the community of Israel. Each of the *s'firot* has many names.
4. Conceptually, there are similarities between the *Shchinah* and the role of the Virgin Mary in medieval Christian piety.

E. Because the physical world reflects divine emanation, we can learn something about God's inner life through understanding the relationships in the natural world. We can understand God because we are a part of divine reality.

IV. Prayer.

A. One mystic from 13th-century Spain, Moses Nachmanides, was angered by Maimonides's suggestion that God did not really need sacrifices or prayer.
1. Nachmanides points out that sacrifices, far from being a concession to the Israelites who were steeped in the idolatrous practices of their neighbors, were one of the first acts in the Torah. Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God.
2. Nachmanides argues that sacrifices and, by extension, prayer serve a "supernal need."

B. Unlike the Aristotelian/Maimonidean God, the God of Kabbalists has needs that only human beings (or male Jewish mystics with the proper *kavannah*) can fulfill.
1. As a result of Adam's transgression, evil enters the world and God's powers for good are diminished. Every transgression against God's will weakens God and empowers the forces of the *sitra achra*, the other side, which are parasites that feed off human transgressions.
2. Conversely, when commandments are performed with the proper kavannah, God is strengthened. Sacrifices and prayer strengthen God and the godly forces in the world.

V. Reasons for the commandments.

A. The commandments are not to refine or purify (*letzaref*) humans, as they are for Maimonides, but to join together (also *letzaref*) the male and female *s'firot* to allow divine energy to flow through the *s'firotic* system and, eventually, overflow into this world.
1. Primarily, the commandments are for God's benefit.
2. A felicitous byproduct of the smooth flow of the s'firotic system is that the *shefa*, or divine blessing, overflows into our world through the *Shchinah*.

B. Another mystical understanding of the reasons for the commandments is to join (*letzaref*) us to God. They're not functional as much as relational.

C. The Kabbalistic system is audaciously anthropocentric. The fate of God and the world is in the hands of humans.

Essential Reading:

Idel, "Mysticism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 643–655.

Fine, "Kabbalistic Texts," in *Back to the Sources*, pp. 305–359.

Matt, "The Mystic and the Mizwot," in *Jewish Spirituality*, Vol. I, pp. 367–404.

Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 88–116 and 128–144.

Supplementary Reading:

Dan, *Ancient Jewish Mysticism*.

Green, "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs," in *AJS Review* 26:1, 1–52.

Matt, "Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism," in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, pp. 67–108.

Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 230–246, 269–308, 371–388, 423–430, 549–560, 867–908, 941–974, 1155–1172.

Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What's the difference between God being in creation and God being creation?
2. Why do most organized religions discourage mysticism?
3. Why would the Kabbalists design a myth that places God's fate in our hands?

Lecture Sixteen

Evil and Suffering—Biblical and Rabbinic

Scope: There is no more wrenching question than that of evil. Why do the innocent suffer? And why do those who so richly deserve punishment seem to get away, sometimes literally, with murder? The Hebrew Bible offers a variety of theodicies from Genesis through Job. Although the dominant explanation for suffering in the Torah is that we get what we deserve, Job allows for the possibility that there is no connection between our behavior and our rewards or punishments. The Rabbis developed the biblical material that they inherited, sometimes making explicit certain biblical theodicies, such as *measure for measure*, and sometimes introducing novel (and radical) explanations for the existence of evil. We will focus on individual suffering as well as communal catastrophe.

Outline

I. Individual and communal responsibility on the horizontal plane.

- **A.** There are no rewards for the individual who follows specific laws of the Torah. The collective reward, that the people Israel will live long in their land, redounds to the benefit of each person (see Deut. 11:21).
- **B.** In contrast, there are punishments for individuals who transgress the laws. But the punishment can also extend to the entire community. For instance, when Israel disobeys God's will, drought and famine will be the results (see Deut. 11:13–17).
- **C.** In the Rabbinic period, some Rabbis argued that Jerusalem was destroyed because certain communal leaders acted with *sinat hinam*, gratuitous nastiness (see b. Gittin 55b/56a).

II. Inter-generational reward and punishment.

- **A.** "For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Exod. 20: 5–6).
- **B.** Ezekiel rejected this theology. Each person is held accountable only for his or her own actions (Ezek. 18:2–4).

III. Eschatological explanations.

- **A.** In the Rabbinic period, notions of heaven and hell were used to explain why the righteous suffer in this world and why the wicked prosper. The righteous are punished here for the few misdeeds they commit. The wicked are rewarded here for their few good deeds.
- **B.** Alternatively, there is simply no connection to the happenings in this world and our behavior. We will be rewarded or punished in the coming world for our deeds in this world.

IV. This world makes sense.

- **A.** Good things happen to good people. "God rewards each person according to his deeds" (Ps. 62:13).
- **B.** This theology, on a communal level, is enshrined in the liturgy: "We were exiled from our Land because of our sins." Though harsh, this theology promotes introspection.
- **C.** Often, the specific reward or punishment we receive is identifiably related to the deed. This is called *measure for measure*.
  - **1.** The Egyptians lost their males in the last plague and in the Sea of Reeds because they had sought to kill all the Israelite males by throwing them in the Nile.
  - **2.** Shifra and Puah, the Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh's order to kill the Israelite boys, were rewarded by God with children (Exod. 1:15–22).

V. The world makes no sense.

- **A.** The world really does make sense to God, but our finite intellects can't understand the grand plan (see Job 38–39).

B. Rabbi Yakov said that there are no rewards for the commandments in this world. The next world will make sense, but this world does not.

Essential Reading:

Hartman, "Suffering," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 939–946.

Sherwin, "Theodicy," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 959–970.

Rubinstein, "Evil," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 203–210.

Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 170–198.

Supplementary Reading:

Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 420–523.

Hartman, *A Living Covenant*, chapters 8 and 9.

Questions to Consider:

1. David Hartman writes: "Rabbinic Judaism foreswore systematic theology, not because the rabbis could not think in a coherent, philosophical way, but because systematic theology could not do justice to the vitality and complexity of experience." What does the plurality of theodicies tell you about Judaism?
2. Rabbinic and medieval Jews generally understood the suffering servant of Isaiah (51–53) as Israel suffering for the world's sins. Christians understand the suffering servant as a prophecy of Jesus (Php. 2). How does this notion of vicarious atonement fit into our discussion?
3. How could anyone ever think that this world makes sense and that people receive their just desserts?

Lecture Seventeen
Evil and Suffering—Medieval and Modern

Scope: Is evil real, or is it merely the absence of good? The Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages who followed Aristotle maintained that evil is merely an absence of good, while those who are associated with the mystical movements offer an entirely different explanation for the reality and pervasive power of evil. For the mystics, evil has its roots in divinity itself. We'll track this debate by looking at Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* (1190), the classic work of Jewish mysticism called the *Zohar* (late 13th century), and Lurianic Kabbalah (mid-16th century). The lecture will conclude with a discussion of the *Shoah* (Holocaust) and a review of several responses by contemporary Jewish thinkers.

Outline

I. The philosophical Maimonides—evil as the absence of good.

- **A.** All of God's actions are purely good for the universe as a whole. Our finite intellect is often unable to penetrate divine wisdom (*Guide of the Perplexed*, III:10).
- **B.** Maimonides's *Guide* lists three types of evil that befall humans (*Guide*, III:12).
  - **1.** Evils that befall us because we are flesh and blood are the most infrequent. Maimonides argues that in order for there to be generation and increase, there must be passing away.
  - **2.** More common are those evils that people inflict on one another.
  - **3.** Most common are self-inflicted wounds.

II. The mysticism of the *Zohar*—evil is real but parasitic.

- **A.** There are two problems to understanding evil as real.
  - **1.** If evil is real, does that mean God, the source of all reality, is evil?
  - **2.** If God is not the source of evil, does that mean that there is another power in the world that is the source of evil?
- **B.** For the *Zohar*, evil is real but not autonomous.
  - **1.** Adam's transgression in the Garden threw the finely tuned balance of divine mercy and justice off kilter.
  - **2.** Cosmic evil is activated by human evil, which, in the *Zohar*'s creation myth, originates from justice not being tempered by mercy. Evil emerges as creation unfolds.
  - **3.** Every act of disobedience to God's will empowers the metaphysical forces arrayed against us. We bring on evil ourselves, and a parasitic synergy exists that serves to make our punishments disproportionate to our deeds.

III. Isaac Luria—*tsimtsum* and the breaking of the vessels.

- **A.** *Tsimtsum* is the opening scene in Luria's drama of creation. It is a withdrawal or contraction of the divine in order to "make room" for that which is other than infinite.
- **B.** The process of *tsimtsum* did not create a total vacuum. As when one pours oil from a bottle, there remains a residue. In Luria's myth, this residue contained the roots of the demonic.
- **C.** When God emanates divine light in the form of vessels back into the empty space, these roots of the demonic create instability, and the vessels shatter.
- **D.** The mission of *tikkun*, repair, requires us to be engaged in ethical and ritual acts to repair the shattered vessels.
- **E.** In Luria's myth, the roots of evil are a necessary precondition of creation. Evil is built into the structure of the cosmos.

IV. *Shoah*—not Holocaust.

- **A.** *Holocaust* means a wholly burnt offering to God to atone for sins. This term was coined by Christian theologians to describe the Shoah.
- **B.** *Shoah* is Hebrew for "catastrophe" and is used to refer to the destruction of European Jewry.

1. Approximately six million Jews were systematically murdered from 1939–1945 in Nazi-controlled Europe.
2. That figure represents two-thirds of European Jewry, one-third of world Jewry and roughly 1.5 million children.

V. Religious responses to the Shoah.

A. A few Ultra-Orthodox Jews maintain that the Jews were punished communally for their crimes.
1. Zionism arrogated to itself the creation of the State of Israel before the coming of the Messiah.
2. Reform Judaism, which emerged in Germany, rejected the binding authority of the Torah and halachah.

B. God has hidden his face.
1. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews are in a state of hapless aimlessness as a result of the hiding of God's face (Deut. 31:18).
2. God's hiding is not punitive but fundamental to who God is (Isa. 45:15). This is what allows for free will and human responsibility.

C. God is exercising self-restraint as a parent must to allow the children to mature and assume responsibility.
1. "Who is mighty? One who exercises self-restraint" (m. Avot 4:1).
2. There are conceptual parallels between the Rabbinic notion of divine self-restraint and the Lurianic notion of divine withdrawal. Both insist on God's presence and suffering with his creatures but lean against divine intervention.

D. God lacks omnipotence. The work of God is accomplished, today, through human hands.

Essential Reading:

Rosenberg, *Good and Evil in Jewish Thought*.

Sherwin, "Theodicy," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 959–970.

Rubinstein, "Evil," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 203–210.

Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 122–128, and *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 56–87.

Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*.

Greenberg, *The Jewish Way,* "The Shattered Paradigm."

Friedlander, *Out of the Whirlwind*.

Supplementary Reading:

Roth and Berenbaum, *Holocaust*.

Rosenberg and Heuman, *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does the variety of explanations for evil in traditional Judaism tell you about Judaism?
2. Palaeontologists tell us that the vast majority of species to have ever existed on the planet are now extinct. Do any of the theodicies designed to account for evil in Jewish history accommodate the apparent evils in natural history?
3. Is the Shoah essentially different than other catastrophes that have punctuated Jewish history, such as the destruction of the Temples or the Spanish exile in 1492?
4. Although the traditional theodicy of recompense according to deed might promote introspection, doesn't it also blame the victim? Is this viable after the Shoah?

Lecture Eighteen
Emancipation, Enlightenment, and Reform

Scope: Traditional Jewish life began to break down in Western Europe toward the end of the 18th century. The emancipation of Western European Jewry extended political rights and educational opportunities to members of the Jewish community with the expectation that the Jews would acculturate into their new national settings. Many Jews were eager to accept the invitation to leave their autonomous Jewish communities but were reluctant to abandon all ties to their ancestral faith.

As Jews began receiving secular education, a small group of German Jews began to study Jewish texts and Jewish history using the critical methods of academic scholarship. Some of these "enlightened" Jews used the conclusions of the academic study of Judaism to legitimize the reforms to Judaism that they were espousing. The ideology of Reform Judaism thus emerged in the German context of emancipation and enlightenment, although Reform found its most fertile soil in America.

Outline

I. Emancipation.

- **A.** Throughout the Middle Ages, Jews lived in self-governing corporations as guests of their host countries.
- **B.** Although falling short of political equality, the Edict of Tolerance in 1782 was designed to "make the Jewish nation useful and serviceable to the State, mainly through better education and enlightenment of its youth as well as by directing them to the sciences, the arts and the crafts."
- **C.** In Europe, Jews were first recognized as citizens of the country in which they lived as a result of the French Revolution (1790).
- **D.** There was an expectation amongst the Gentiles that citizenship would lead to "civic amelioration." In other words, without persecution and segregation, the Jews would acculturate and lose their ethnic particularity.
- **E.** As citizens, Jews were no longer expected to yearn to return to the Land of Israel or consider themselves in exile.
- **F.** Being Jewish became optional because Judaism became, for the first time, "just" a religion.

II. Jewish enlightenment (Haskalah).

- **A.** Among a small band of Europeans Jews, at first in France and Germany in the early 19th century, there was an eager embrace of the fruits of emancipation. Chief among those was a secular education.
  - **1.** European languages and literature were studied.
  - **2.** The natural sciences also became slightly more popular as academic subjects.
  - **3.** In the traditional Jewish curriculum, less time was devoted to Talmud and more to Bible and ethics.
- **B.** The *maskilim* (proponents of the Haskalah) encouraged certain reforms throughout the Jewish community.
  - **1.** The Jewish labor pool, concentrated in commerce and finance, should be diversified and include agriculture and crafts.
  - **2.** The language used for synagogue sermons should be the vernacular, rather than Yiddish.
  - **3.** Synagogues should also have greater decorum, similar to Protestant services.
- **C.** By the middle of the 19th century, the Haskalah had moved to Eastern Europe and Russia. In each community, the Haskalah had different characteristics and a different internal dynamic.

III. Reform Judaism.

- **A.** A small number of modest reforms in the first two decades of the 19th century preceded an ideological program of Reform.
  - **1.** Order and decorum should prevail in the synagogue.
  - **2.** Sermons should be edifying, rather than legalistic, and should be delivered in the vernacular.
  - **3.** Some synagogues shortened services and introduced an organ.
- **B.** In 1818, a synagogue in Hamburg put into effect liturgical changes reflecting the presuppositions of emancipation.

1. The traditional blessing for the return to Israel was eliminated. Judaism was now exclusively understood to be a faith without the ethnic or national elements.
2. The traditional blessing for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the reinstitution of animal sacrifices was similarly deleted from the prayer books. Even today, many Reform houses of worship are called "temples" because they no longer look toward rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple.

C. No longer did these Jews consider themselves to be living in exile as a punishment for earlier sins. Now, rehabilitating an image from Isaiah, the Jews were a "light unto the nations," spreading the good works commanded by ethical monotheism (see Isa. 42:6, 49:6, and 51:4).

D. Early scholars in the Reform movement, such as Abraham Geiger, stressed that historical development was a constant characteristic in Judaism and that Reform Judaism was simply being faithful to that tradition of progressive change.

E. By far, the most radical innovation by the early Reform movement in Germany was its claim that the traditional commandments were no longer obligatory.
1. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) charged that Judaism was "heteronomous," denying the individual the freedom to choose his own modes of piety.
2. Reform Judaism responds to this charge by allowing individuals to choose which commandments to observe based on which are most spiritually edifying.
3. Although traditional dress, laws of family purity, and dietary restrictions were often rejected, circumcision was almost always preserved for the newborn boys in the community.

Essential Reading:

Hyman, "Emancipation," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 165–170.

Seltzer, "Enlightenment," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 171–175.

Meyer, "Reform Judaism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 767–772.

Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*.

Supplementary Reading:

Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 3–224.

Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*.

Petuchowski, "History of Reform Judaism," in *Studies in Modern Theology*, pp. 223–282.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why might Jews have been skeptical of the aims of emancipation?
2. Many of the 19th-century maskilim looked at Maimonides as their hero. In what ways were the maskilim similar to and different from Maimonides?
3. Throughout the 19th century, many of the children and grandchildren of the pioneering maskilim and Reformers abandoned Judaism and sometimes converted to Christianity. What may be some of the factors to explain that phenomenon?

Lecture Nineteen
Orthodox Judaisms

Scope: As a response to emancipation, enlightenment, and Reform Judaism, several varieties of Orthodox Judaism emerged in the 19th century. That's right—Orthodoxy is just as much a product of modernity as is Reform! While Modern Orthodoxy struggled to balance traditional Judaism and an open posture toward Western European culture, Ultra-Orthodoxy rejected secular studies, Western dress, and European languages.

The story is different in Eastern Europe, where the reforms that Judaism underwent were not about halachic practice but about devotional posture. The Hassidic movement focused on how one is best able to maintain a relationship with God. Although each Orthodox group responded differently to modernity, what unites the Modern Orthodox, the Ultra-Orthodox, and the Chassidic Jews is their commitment to traditional halachah.

Outline

I. Neo-Orthodoxy/Modern Orthodoxy.

A. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) is widely considered the founder of this branch of Orthodoxy, which strives to combine elements of tradition and modernity.

B. In 1836, Hirsch wrote a book in the form of a series of letters, ostensibly to a young man having difficulty with traditional Judaism, as a way of reaching out to the entire generation of newly emancipated Jews.

1. The Torah, given by God, is a "generator of spiritual life within us…. We must read with a wakeful eye and ear, and with a mind tuned to the deeper sense and to the more profound meaning which lie beneath the surface" (Hirsch, Letter 2).

2. "It is our duty to join ourselves as closely as possible to the state which receives us into its midst, to promote its welfare and not to consider our own well-being as in any way separate from that of the state to which we belong. This close connection with states everywhere is not at all in contradiction to the spirit of Judaism, for the independent national life of Israel was never the essence or purpose of our existence as a nation, but only a means of fulfilling our spiritual mission" (Hirsch, Letter 16).

C. In 1853, Hirsch opened up a Jewish school in Frankfurt, Germany, that combined Jewish and secular studies.

1. He was competing for students with the Reform-leaning day school that had opened earlier.

2. One of the founders of German Reform, Abraham Geiger, was an acquaintance of Hirsch and also held a pulpit in Frankfurt. Hirsch was dedicated to defending Orthodoxy against Reform.

D. Hirsch's motto was "*Torah im derech eretz*," or "Torah with the ways of the world."

1. It was fine to adopt the dress and language of the country.

2. Synagogue behavior should evidence decorum.

3. Sermons could be in the vernacular.

4. Choral singing was acceptable in the prayer service.

5. All these changes were also espoused by Reform Judaism. But Hirsch maintained Hebrew and the traditional prayers.

II. Ultra-Orthodoxy.

A. In Central Europe, particularly in Hungary, there were Jews who rejected any synagogue reforms or acculturation to the non-Jewish environment. The figurehead for such a rejection of modernity was Rabbi Moses Sofer (1762–1839).

B. The trend toward religious conservatism was followed by Rabbi Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (1837–1922). If Reform served as the primary adversary for the Modern Orthodox, it was the Modern Orthodox who were the targets of the Ultra-Orthodox.

1. No synagogue reforms were to be tolerated, be they liturgical, homiletical, or architectural.

2. Stringent rulings, previously applicable for only the most pious, became the community norm.

3. Schlesinger employed *aggadah*, in which exaggerated statements are often found unrestricted by group consensus, to invent a new halachah.

a. He argued that secular studies are prohibited even if they are necessary for one's occupation. (He eventually modified that position.)

b. The role of the non-Jews is to interact with the world, whereas the role of the Jew is to devote himself exclusively to Torah.

c. Acculturation, which the Neo-Orthodox embrace, is a Trojan horse that will turn Judaism into a religious confession and repudiate the centrality of the Jewish people, who must remain *shalem*, "whole."

d. Pronouncements included those concerning *SHemot* ("names"; we must keep traditional names and not become Toms, Dicks and Harrys), *lashon* ("language"; we must preserve Hebrew and Yiddish and not learn the vernacular of the states in which we live), and *malbush* ("clothing"; we must retain our distinctive dress and not conform to the styles and fads of European fashion).

III. Eastern European Orthodoxy.

A. Hassidism was the reform or renewal movement of Eastern Europe that promoted individual piety and devotional posture while maintaining halachic commitment.

1. The figure associated with the founding of Hassidism is Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, the "good master of the name" (1700–1760).

2. One of the essential claims of Hassidism is that religious virtue is not a monopoly of those most learned in the Talmud and traditional Jewish literature. Love for and devotion to God can be expressed beyond Talmud Torah.

3. Hassidism was a popular movement that greatly simplified the Kabbalah, while still preaching divine immanence, and appealed to the masses of Eastern Europe.

4. Although for the first three generations of Hassidism, leadership was in the hands of charismatic individuals called *tzaddikim*, by the 19th century, leadership became largely dynastic.

5. Each *tzaddik* imprinted his own personality on his Hassidim. Some, such as the Ba'al Shem Tov, emphasized divine service through joy, song, and dance. Others, like the Kotsker, demanded soul searching and purity of intention.

B. The Mitnagdim (opponents of Hassidism) were skeptical of this new mystical movement, especially given that it contained a handful of halachic innovations and challenged the supremacy of Talmud.

1. The last popular mystical movement, that of the false Messiah Shabbatei Tsvi, was still an open wound.

2. Initially, there were mutual recriminations between these groups, but they eventually perceived that they were better served as allies against their common foes.

C. Today, we use the term *Haredi* (quakers) to include what we have called the Hungarian Ultra-Orthodox, the Eastern European Hassidim and their opponents, the Mitnagdim.

1. Easily recognizable by their black garb, the Haredim tend to live in a few cities in the United States, the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and Israel.

2. Among the most famous sects in Haredi Judaism are the Lubavitch (also known as Chabad), the Ger, and the Bratslav.

IV. What unites all these groups is their commitment to the divinity of the Torah and the binding quality of halachah.

Essential Reading:

Rosenbloom, *Tradition in an Age of Reform*.

Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy," in *The Uses of Tradition*, pp. 23–84.

Green, "Teachings of the Hasidic Masters," in *Back to the Sources*, pp. 361–401.

Green, "Hasidism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 317–324.

Ben-Amos, "Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov," in *Judaism in Practice*, pp. 488–512.

Supplementary Reading:

Hirsch, *Nineteen Letters*.

Heschel, *Passion for Truth*.

Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man* and *Tales of the Hasidim*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Samson Raphael Hirsch, responding to Reform, argues that we need to reform Jews, not Judaism. Is that possible for any religion, or is it just a rhetorical flourish?
2. Many contemporary Orthodox Jews own television sets but use them only as monitors hooked up to their VCRs and DVDs. What statement does that make about their posture toward acculturation? Is hardware/technology value-free?
3. Hassidism's emphasis on devotional posture, being conscious of God's presence at all times and in all things, was a powerful idea for the masses. How can one promote such a consciousness? Would one necessarily want to?

Lecture Twenty
Israel and Zionism

Scope: The longing to return to the Land of Israel, a yearning that suffuses Jewish prayer and rituals, began to be fulfilled toward the end of the 19th century. The irony is that many of the early pioneers to the Land of Israel were secularists, motivated by politics rather than theology. Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism, believed that a Jewish state would resolve the lingering problem of antisemitism in Europe.

During the 20th century, Zionist pioneers settled the land, drained the swamps, and built an infrastructure appropriate for a modern state. The League of Nations endorsed the establishment of a Jewish state following World War I. Tragically, World War II both decimated the European Jewish population and crystallized the imperative of Jewish statehood.

Outline

I. The initial yearning to remember and return after the Babylonian exile.

- **A.** "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour" (Ps. 137: 5–6).
- **B.** "Thus said the Lord: Again there shall be heard in this place, which you say is ruined, without people or beast—in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without people, without inhabitants, without beast—the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of bridegroom and bride, the voice of those who cry, 'Give thanks to the Lord of Hosts, for the Lord is good, for His kindness is everlasting!' as they bring thanksgiving offerings to the House of the Lord. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as of old—said the Lord" (Jer. 33:10–11).

II. Rabbinic mechanisms to promote the status of Jerusalem.

- **A.** The rebuilding of Jerusalem is featured among the petitionary prayers in the daily prayer service.
- **B.** Returning to Jerusalem is mentioned in the Grace after Meals and in the Torah service on the Sabbath.
- **C.** The Passover seder concludes with singing "next year in Jerusalem."
- **D.** The seven blessings at the center of every Jewish wedding feature those verses from Jeremiah reinforcing the notion that Jerusalem belongs to the Jewish people like a bride belongs to her groom.
- **E.** Even the glass that is broken under the wedding canopy is often associated with the destruction of Jerusalem.

III. Medieval writings on Israel.

- **A.** My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west—
  How can I find savor in food? How shall it be sweet to me?

  How shall I render my vows and my bonds, while yet
  Zion lies beneath the fetter of Edom, and I in Arab chains?

  A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain—
  Seeing how precious in my eyes to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary. (Yehudah HaLevi, c. 1141)
- **B.** Commenting on "You shall take possession of the land and settle in it" (Deut. 33:53), the Spanish mystical commentator Nachmanides says that this mitzvah is still in force. Citing a Talmudic discussion (b. Ketubot 110b), Nachmanides writes that if a husband wants to make *aliyah* (immigrate) to Israel, but the wife does not, she can be compelled. Even more startlingly, the husband can be compelled if the roles are reversed!
- **C.** Both Yehudah HaLevi and Nachmanides agree that prophecy is only possible in the Land of Israel.

IV. Harbingers of political Zionism.

- **A.** In Eastern Europe, a combination of nationalism and antisemitism motivated a small number of Jews to begin considering the possibility of reestablishing a Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

B. As early as 1843, Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai, following the Damascus Blood Libel of 1840, called for collective return (*teshuvah*) for the third redemption.

1. Alkalai raised funds to buy parcels of land from the Turkish sultan, who was then in control of the Land of Israel, and establish the infrastructure for a Jewish society.

2. Alkalai also promoted the rehabilitation of the Hebrew language.

C. By 1890, the call to build and return to the Land had spread from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, particularly in the writings of Moses Hess. It had also been taken up by secularists, such as Leo Pinsker. Common to all these writers was the desire to normalize the Jews by giving back to the Jewish nation a Jewish state.

V. The Dreyfus affair.

A. In 1894, a French Jewish captain, Alfred Dreyfus, was falsely accused of selling military secrets to Germany. He was convicted and sentenced to life on Devil's Island.

B. New evidence later surfaced exculpating Dreyfus, but the military tried to suppress the evidence. Another trial again found Dreyfus guilty of espionage, even though a suicide note by the confessed traitor, Major Esterhazy, had been discovered.

C. In 1899, the French President brought Dreyfus back to Paris from Devil's Island. He was exonerated only in 1906, and the family had to wait until 1995 for the French Army to admit it had been mistaken, though without issuing an apology.

VI. Theodor Herzl (1860–1904).

A. This young man, born in Budapest and attending university in Vienna, was "emancipated," in the sense that he was a secular Jew, with little formal Jewish education, who had accepted the liberal program of emancipation.

B. After studying law and trying his hand as a playwright, Herzl decided to become a full-time writer, and, in 1890, he went to work for the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna. He covered the Dreyfus affair.

C. In France, the home of the French Revolution and Jewish emancipation, Herzl understood that antisemitism could not be cured through granting citizenship and secular education to the Jews. The Jews had to have a state of their own. He believed that it was in the world's best interest to assist the Jews in obtaining sovereignty.

D. In 1895, Herzl began outlining his ides and meeting with Jewish and European statesmen to further his program. He published *The Jewish State* in 1896, outlining his vision of a secular, Jewish state. Herzl was not initially dedicated to returning to the Land of Israel, only to reestablishing Jewish political sovereignty.

E. In 1897, Herzl presided over the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. The mission was to "create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine."

1. This would be attained by promoting Jewish agriculture and industry.

2. Zionist associations and educational initiatives should be implemented.

3. International cooperation should be secured.

VII. International activities.

A. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was issued by the British Foreign Secretary after Palestine was transferred to British control at the end of World War I.

B. "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

C. In 1922, Britain, under pressure from the Arabs, cut away three-fourths of Palestine and created a new Arab entity, Trans-Jordan.

D. The League of Nations, later in 1922, approved the Balfour Declaration and established the British Mandate, whereby Britain assumed responsibility for the implementation of the Balfour Declaration.

E. The British Peel Commission of 1937, prompted by Arab riots against Jews beginning in 1936, concluded that the remaining territory west of the Jordan River should be divided between Jews and Arabs, with the Arabs receiving Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and a corridor to the sea.
  1. The Zionists reluctantly accepted the plan.
  2. The Arab leadership summarily rejected it.

F. Continued Jewish immigration and Arab terrorism triggered the White Paper of 1939, whereby the British severely curtailed Jewish immigration on the eve of World War II and the Shoah.

VIII. Achieving the superstructure for the infrastructure.

A. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international sovereignty.
  1. The partition plan passed by a margin of 33 to 13, with the United States and the Soviet Union voting in favor. Britain abstained and stated it would do nothing to enforce the plan.
  2. Once again, Israel reluctantly accepted the plan.
  3. And again, the Arabs rejected it.

B. David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the Jewish Agency and the first Prime Minister of Israel, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.
  1. The following day, Egypt, Syria, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Iraq sent troops against Israel.
  2. The Arabs succeeded in losing more territory to the Jews than the U.N. Partition Plan had offered them. Nevertheless, the Holy City of Jerusalem was in Jordanian control until the 1967 Six-Day War.
  3. As a result of the Arab rejection of the U.N. Partition Plan, the Arab state in Palestine was stillborn.

C. Despite wars, economic boycotts, and terrorism, Israel continues to serve as a haven for Jews throughout the world and as a democratic beacon amongst a sea of totalitarian regimes.

Essential Reading:

Diament, *Reflections on Jerusalem*.

Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*.

Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*.

Talmon, "Jerusalem," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 495–504.

Halpern, "Zionism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 1069–1076.

Schweid, "Land of Israel," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 535–542.

Rosenak, "State of Israel," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought,* pp. 909–916.

Supplementary Reading:

Diament, *Zionism: The Sequel*.

Bin-Nun, "The Obligation of Aliyah," in *Israel as a Religious Reality*, pp. 75–104.

Questions to Consider:

1. Given the centrality of Jerusalem and Israel over the hundreds of years of exile and dispersion, why didn't more Jews immigrate to Palestine in the early 20th century? Why don't they today?

2. At the heart of the Dreyfus affair is the suspicion of dual loyalty. Is this suspicion any less today? Is it any different with Muslims or Catholics in a predominantly Protestant culture? (How was it different between Japanese-Americans and German-Americans during World War II?)

3. The public and the media in the United States tend to be far more supportive of Israel than in Britain. Why?

4. It is sometimes said that the State of Israel was the world's guilt offering for the Shoah. Why is this not true?

Lecture Twenty-One
American Judaisms

Scope: Reform Judaism's emphasis on personal autonomy complemented the American ideal of the rugged individualist. But as traditional Eastern European Jews immigrated throughout the early 20th century, they found American Reform foreign. The Conservative movement, begun in Germany, was transplanted to America and catered to the traditional sensibilities of Eastern European Jews.

It wasn't too long, however, before elements of Reform ideology married Conservative practice, and a fourth movement began to emerge—Reconstructionism. In the past few decades, Jewish Renewal has attempted to revitalize Judaism by investing traditional rituals with new meanings and by creating new halachah informed by the wisdom of the old. Most recently, Humanistic Judaism has tried to distill the ethical significance of traditional Jewish practice while avoiding any reference to the existence of God. Proper behavior, whether understood as divinely commanded or not, continues to be a hallmark of Judaism.

Outline

I. Reforms in early19th-century America.

A. The Reform movement began in Germany, but in America, with its tradition of rugged individualism, certain reforms sprang up without ideological underpinnings.

1. In 1824, a small group of young Jews petitioned for minor changes in the liturgy and prayer service in Charleston, South Carolina.

2. Their 1825 constitution argued against "a blind observance of ceremonial law, to the neglect of the essential spirit of revealed religion contained in the Law and the Prophets."

3. This reform-minded group broke away from the main synagogue and founded its own in 1826.

4. Services were conducted partly in English, instrumental music was allowed, and *kippot* (pl. of *kippa*, "yarmulkah") were optional. But there was still separate seating for men and women, and the Rabbi was made to declare belief in the resurrection of the dead. This was not yet a Reform temple.

5. By 1850, only two Reform temples were in existence, Har Sinai in Baltimore and Temple Emanu-El in New York City. They had mixed seating. *Tallitot* (pl. of *tallit*, "prayer shawl") and the second day of holidays were discontinued. But, even in these temples, the changes were more practical than ideological.

B. German immigration and Reform ideology.

1. From 1844 to 1860, the Jewish population in America surged from 50,000 to 200,000. In 1850, there were 14 synagogues in New York City. By 1860, there were 27. The vast majority of this immigrant wave came from Germany.

2. Isaac Mayer Wise (1819–1900) arrived from Germany in 1846 and began to spread reforms and build the institutions of American Reform Judaism, which he hoped would serve all American Jews.

a. In 1873, Wise founded the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Cincinnati (renamed in 2003 the Union of Reform Judaism).

b. In 1875, he founded the first rabbinical seminary in America, Hebrew Union College, also in Cincinnati.

c. In 1899, he founded the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

II. Reform, ethical culture, and Unitarianism.

A. One prominent Rabbi's son, Felix Adler, upon returning from the Reform seminary in Germany in the early 1870s, abdicated his Jewish particularity.

B. He advocated that Reform merge with Unitarianism, because their theology and ethics were basically the same. But the ethnic distinctions proved too difficult to overcome.

C. Adler then founded the Movement for Ethical Culture in 1876.

III. The Reform Pittsburgh Platform of 1885.

- **A.** Judaism recognizes in all religions the attempt to grasp the Infinite One.
- **B.** Reform accepts biblical criticism, the academic position that the Bible was written by men over hundreds of years.
- **C.** "We accept as binding only the moral laws."
- **D.** Laws regarding diet, purity, and dress are "altogether foreign to our present and spiritual state."
- **E.** "We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community."
- **F.** Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, son of Rabbi Samuel Hirsch, a German leader of Reform, endorsed the Social Gospel.

IV. The Reform movement has changed significantly since the Shoah.

- **A.** Although there is still a commitment to individual autonomy, there is also greater respect for the role that ritual mitzvot can serve in a religious life.
- **B.** The curriculum for rabbinical students has recently been overhauled to include significantly more traditional text study.
- **C.** A new prayer book is being developed that is more traditional.
- **D.** All graduate students in the Hebrew Union College spend their first year in Jerusalem as a testimony to the centrality of Israel to the Jewish people.

V. Positive-Historical Judaism/Conservative Judaism.

- **A.** Just as Reform began in Germany, so did Conservative Judaism, but under the name Positive-Historical Judaism.
  - **1.** Zecharias Frankel (1801–1875) tried to modernize Judaism without the excesses he perceived in Reform.
  - **2.** He conceived of Judaism as a historical religion that unfolded progressively over time, as did Reform, but he understood this to be a positive development rather than a claim to undermine the divine authority of Jewish law.
  - **3.** Frankel stressed the importance of Hebrew and the binding authority of Jewish law, even if individual laws were amenable to change, as they always have been throughout Jewish history.
- **B.** Changes on the ground in the United State made many Reform temples too foreign for newly arrived Jews.
  - **1.** From 1880–1920, the Jewish population exploded from 230,000 to 3,600,000. The immigrants were almost entirely from Eastern Europe, where Reform Judaism had not made any inroads.
  - **2.** In 1883, at the banquet for the first graduating class of Hebrew Union College, non-kosher seafood was served. (This episode is referred to as the *Treyfa Banquet*.) This signaled to the attending traditional Rabbis that this seminary was flagrantly disrespectful of Jewish tradition.
  - **3.** The Conservative Movement opened its seminary in 1886 in New York City as the Jewish Theological Seminary to attract that more traditional population.
  - **4.** When Solomon Schechter arrived from England in 1902, the Jewish Theological Seminary acquired significant status.

VI. Orthodoxy as the third movement in America.

- **A.** Although the Etz Chaim Yeshiva opened in 1886, there wasn't a rabbinical academy until the Rabbi Isaac Elkhannan Specktor Yeshiva opened in 1897.
- **B.** The two *yeshivot* (pl. of *yeshiva*, "seminary") later combined to become Yeshiva University under the guidance of Bernard Revel. To this day, Yeshiva University strives to combine Torah study with secular learning.

VII. Reconstructionism.

- **A.** Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881–1983), long a teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary, was persuaded to leave the Conservative movement and found his own fourth denomination, Reconstructionism. The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College was founded in 1968.

B. Kaplan was more aggressive about liturgical and halachic change than the Conservative movement as a whole. But he would advocate a change of tradition only if the tradition itself were problematic. Reform, by contrast, tended to drop those traditions that were no longer spiritually edifying.

C. Like Reform, Kaplan's Reconstructionism understood halachah to be a matter of individual choice and not obligatory. Unlike Reform, Reconstructionism believed that Judaism was an evolving religious civilization and that Jewish peoplehood was the core of that civilization. Ironically, Kaplan is similar to the Ultra-Orthodox with their insistence that peoplehood is logically prior to religion.

D. Among the most radical reforms that Kaplan espoused, and to which we will return in the final lecture, is his rejection of the Chosen People concept.

VIII. Jewish renewal.

A. Beginning in the 1960s, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, reaching back to the prophetic and mystical sources of Judaism, began teaching a post-denominational Judaism that eschewed halachic doctrine.

B. The flagship institution of this movement, Aleph, provides opportunities and training to spread this joyous approach to individual spiritual renewal that can, in turn, have healing effects on society at large.

C. Although the movement is not halachic, its members look toward specific rituals and social activism to further their agenda of spiritual growth and world healing.

IX. Jews without God.

A. The Society for Humanistic Judaism, organized in 1969 by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, promotes Jewish customs in a non-theistic framework.

B. According to the American Jewish Identity Survey of 2001, Jews are the most likely religious group to describe their outlook as secular or somewhat secular, including 14 percent who could be classified as atheists or agnostics.

Essential Reading:

Meyer, "German-Jewish Identity in 19th-Century America," in *The American Jewish Experience*, pp. 45–61.

Kraut, "Reform Judaism and the Unitarian Challenge," in *The American Jewish Experience*, pp. 89–96.

Meyer, "Reform Judaism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 767–772.

Schulwies, "Reconstructionism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 755–760.

Cohen, "Conservative Judaism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 91–99.

Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy*.

Schachter-Shalomi, *Paradigm Shift*.

Supplementary Reading:

Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva*.

Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization*.

Wine, *Judaism beyond God*.

Waskow, *Godwrestling, Round II*.

Sarna, *American Judaism*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is it easier to be an inconsistent Conservative Jew than an inconsistent Reform Jew?
2. Given that Reform Judaism has come to recognize the centrality of the Jewish people and the importance of Israel, why don't Reform and Reconstructionism merge?
3. Given the history of Jewish thought, is it surprising that secular humanistic Jews who are atheistic or agnostic want to continue "doing" Judaism even without a firm belief in a personal God?
4. Can one be a Jewish atheist? If so, why can't one be a Jew who believes in the divinity of Jesus?

Lecture Twenty-Two
Women and Jewish Law

Scope: The underlying theme of this lecture is the development of Jewish law from the Torah to today. Our three case studies highlight issues of particular concern to women, though important to us all. We begin with a selection of laws concerning marriage and divorce, eventually arriving at the plight of the *agunah* ("anchored woman," "grass widow"). We will then look at the case of feticide in the Torah and how the laws of abortion have unfolded over the past 2,000 years in ways that defy categorization as either "pro-life" or "pro-choice." We conclude by looking at the leadership roles held by women in contemporary religious life.

Outline

I. Marriage in the Torah.

- **A.** The groom pays a bride price to the father of the bride.
- **B.** The bride also comes into the marriage with a dowry.
- **C.** Once married, the husband is responsible for "food, clothing, and conjugal rights" (Exod. 21:10).

II. Divorce in the Torah.

- **A.** If the man finds something objectionable about the woman, he has the sole prerogative to issue a writ of divorce (Deut. 24:1).
- **B.** She takes her dowry with her.

III. Marriage in the Rabbinic period.

- **A.** The Rabbis instituted a document called a *ketubah* that greatly enhanced the rights of the woman in a marriage.
  - **1.** No longer are funds given to the father of the bride at the time of the marriage.
  - **2.** The ketubah stipulates that a minimum amount of money will be provided to the woman on divorce or the death of the husband. Thus, we see the move from a purchase to a process of negotiation requiring the woman's consent.
    - **a.** Deferring the financial burden of the bride price allowed poor men to marry who might otherwise not have been able to raise the money.
    - **b.** Deferring the financial transaction until the death of the husband or divorce also has the effect of inhibiting rash divorces. Now, the husband had something to lose by divorcing his wife. This situation differs from both the biblical condition and the Roman law of the time.
- **B.** The Rabbis also instituted an additional series of laws to protect the wife.
  - **1.** Should the woman be taken captive, the husband must redeem her.
  - **2.** Should the woman take ill, the husband must provide her with medical care.
  - **3.** If she dies before her husband, her sons inherit the funds from the ketubah, as well as her dowry.
  - **4.** If she outlives her husband, she can either maintain herself from his estate indefinitely or take her ketubah.

IV. Divorce in the Rabbinic period.

- **A.** Unlike men, women must receive a bill of divorce before remarrying. Although monogamy is the ideal, polygyny is a biblical institution that was "temporarily suspended" for Ashkenazi Jews about 1,000 years ago but is still on the books.
- **B.** Although technically the husband initiated the divorce, the Rabbis found several ways of protecting the woman from a recalcitrant husband to prevent women from becoming *agunot*, "straw widows."
  - **1.** The Rabbis sometimes physically forced men to "voluntarily" issue their wives a *get*, a writ of divorce.
  - **2.** Other times, rabbis annulled the marriage altogether, thus freeing the woman to marry another man even without a get.

V. Contemporary attempts to further fairness toward women.

A. Some rabbis have husbands sign a get at the time of the marriage that they, the rabbis, keep in their possession should the marriage effectively come to an end. Although this works well for soldiers going off to war who might be missing in action, for others, it makes a divorce too easy, given that the paperwork has been completed. (This practice actually began in the Rabbinic period.)

B. The Lieberman Clause, named after a Talmudic scholar who taught for the Conservative Movement, is written into the ketubah itself and authorizes a court to "force," through excessive monetary sanctions, a divorce.

C. The Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America and the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly use a similar strategy but with a separate document outside of the ketubah.

D. Finally, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin has recently suggested that annulment be rehabilitated in order to persuade men to stop blackmailing their wives and, if that does not succeed, to free anchored women from their recalcitrant husbands.

VI. Feticide.

A. "When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage ensues, the one responsible shall be fined according as the woman's husband may exact from him, the payment to be based on reckoning. But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life" (Exod. 21:22–3).

B. "If a woman is having difficulty in labor, one cuts up the fetus within her womb and extracts it limb by limb, because her life takes precedence over that of the fetus. But if the greater part is already born, one may not touch it, for one may not set aside one person's life for another" (M., Oholot 7:6).

C. In the 17th century, several rabbis permitted elective abortions based on "mother's need" and "mother's healing," which included psychological factors.

D. As a result of advances in medical technology, abortion has been permitted for those to whom the knowledge of having a Tay-Sachs baby is traumatic.

E. "Jewish law *requires* abortion when the woman's life or health—physical or mental—is threatened by the pregnancy; Jewish law *permits* abortion when the risk to the woman's life or health (again, physical or mental) is greater than that of a normal pregnancy but not so great as to constitute a clear and present danger to her" (Rabbi Elliot Dorff [Conservative], *Matters of Life and Death*, italics his).

F. "Legal permissibility is not synonymous with moral license" (Fred Rosner, *Biomedical Ethics and Jewish Law*, p. 192).

VII. Women in communal leadership roles.

A. Throughout history, individual women have attained positions of leadership through charisma. The community recognized them as exceptions.

1. The first woman to receive private Rabbinic ordination was Regina Jonas in 1935.

2. Jonas was German and a graduate of the liberal seminary in Berlin. After the Nazis came to power, she was sent to Theresienstadt and, eventually, to her death at Auschwitz.

B. In the modern period, under the influence of feminism, the Reform movement ordained Sally Priesand as a Rabbi in 1972. For the Reform movement, egalitarianism is an issue of fairness.

C. Reconstructionists began ordaining women in 1975.

D. For the Conservative movement, ordaining women as Rabbis was a halachic hurdle.

1. Rabbi Joel Roth argued that, today, women are competent in legal and business issues, which had not been the case in the Rabbinic period.

2. If women take upon themselves the responsibilities of Jewish men, then they are entitled to the rights, including ordination as a Rabbi. (Traditionally, Jewish women have been exempt from most positive, time-bound mitzvot, such as thrice-daily prayer with a quorum.)

E. Women began being ordained in the Conservative movement in 1985.

F. Over the last 20 years, significant strides have been made for women in Orthodoxy.

1. There are now women's yeshivot, where women learn Talmud and halachah on very high levels.

2. There are women's prayer groups, where women conduct services without male support.
3. One women's yeshiva in Jerusalem, Nishmat, began training halachic advisors in 1997 for legal issues specific to women.
4. A handful of women have studied and are studying for Orthodox Rabbinic ordination. There are female Rabbinic Assistants. The issue of female Rabbis is on the Orthodox table.

Essential Reading:

Hauptman, "Marriage" and "Divorce," in *Rereading the Rabbis*, pp. 60–76 and 102–129.

Feldman, *Health and Medicine in the Jewish Tradition*, pp. 55–68 and 79–90.

Dorff, *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 28–33 and 37–42.

Wolowelsky, "Rabbis, Rebbetzins, and Halakhic Advisors," *Tradition* 36:4 (2002), pp. 54–63.

Supplementary Reading:

Washofsky, "Abortion and the Halakhic Conversation," in *The Fetus and Fertility in Jewish Law*.

Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*.

Greenberg, *The Ordination of Women*.

Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*.

Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism*.

Questions to Consider:

1. In what ways is the ketubah similar and dissimilar to the contemporary prenuptial agreement?
2. One contemporary halachic authority, David Feldman, has coined the term "solemn hesitation" to describe Judaism's posture toward abortion. How is solemn hesitation different than the pro-life and pro-choice labels we use in American political discourse? Is it preferable?
3. What does the influence of feminism on the non-Orthodox movements tell us about the relationship between religion and society? Many religions exclude women from leadership positions for a variety of reasons. Are any justified in doing so?

Lecture Twenty-Three
Judaism and the Other

Scope: Like most ancient law codes, the Hebrew Bible distinguishes between insiders and outsiders. Rabbinic legislation maintains that formal distinction, but sometimes, for the sake of social tranquility, erases the distinction in practice. The Rabbis also drafted a series of laws that they maintained were obligatory for all humans to fulfill in order to live righteously. These are called the *seven laws of Noah*, and one of those laws prohibits idolatry.

In the Middle Ages, there was a split between European Ashkenazi Jews and North African Sephardic Jews as to whether the Christian claim of the divinity of Jesus constituted idolatry. The positions and nuances of the medieval debate provide a fascinating case study in inter-religious accommodation. This lecture will conclude with recent developments in Jewish-Christian relations.

Outline

I. The "other" in the Torah.

- **A.** "You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike; for I the Lord am your God" (Lev. 24:22).
- **B.** "You shall not deduct interest from loans to your countrymen, whether in money or food or anything else that can be deducted as interest; but you may deduct interest from loans to foreigners" (Deut. 23:20–1).
- **C.** The distinction is whether the non-Israelite/Jew lives in Israel or not.

II. Ways of peace.

- **A.** Which is the greatest principle in the Torah? Rabbi Akiva answered: You shall love your neighbour as yourself (Lev. 19:18). Ben Azzai responded: God created humanity in the divine image (Gen. 5:1). (Sifra, Kedoshim 2:4.)
- **B.** "Our Rabbis taught: We provide support for the poor of the gentiles along with the poor of Israel, and visit the sick of the gentiles along with the sick of Israel, and bury the dead of the gentiles along with the dead of Israel in accord with the ways of peace" (b. Gittin 61a).
- **C.** "Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths, peaceful" (Pro. 3:17).

III. The seven Noahide laws.

- **A.** God commands Noah and his family about murder and eating animals while their blood is still surging (Gen. 9).
- **B.** But the Rabbis, as lawyers, assumed that God could not have punished humanity with the flood unless they had been previously made aware of the laws.
- **C.** Thus, in the Rabbinic revision of primal history, the very first utterance of God to man in the Garden implicitly contained the following commandments that that Rabbis understood obligated all future humanity:
  1. Establish courts of laws in your communities.
  2. Do not commit blasphemy toward the Lord.
  3. Do not worship false gods or idols.
  4. Do not commit incest or adultery.
  5. Do not murder.
  6. Do not steal.
  7. Do not eat the limb from a live animal. (b. Sann. 56a)

IV. Is the Christian claim that Jesus is God idolatrous?

- **A.** The Jews of the Muslim world, who generally had little contact with Christians, maintained that Christianity was, indeed, idolatrous.
  1. Muslims consider the association of God with anything or anyone else to be the greatest of sins.

2. Maimonides, although living in the Muslim world and agreeing that Christianity was idolatrous, nevertheless recognized the contributions of Christianity for helping to spread the truths and ethics of the Torah.

B. In 12th-century France, where Jews lived with Christians, there was a different response.
1. Rabbi Isaac made the distinction that the Christian association of Jesus with God is not prohibited for Gentiles who follow the Noahide laws (Tosafot to b. Sann. 63b).
2. In the early 14th century, Rabbi Menachem Ha-Me'iri of Provence argued that Christians were a "people restricted by ways of religion," unlike the pagans and idolaters described in the Talmud.
3. For the Ashkenazi Jews of medieval France, Christianity was a moral religion devoted to God. From the Jewish perspective, Christians were mistaken about certain theological issues related to the unity of God. However, because deed is more important than creed in Judaism, that same attitude was extended to Christianity. Intellectual differences, which characterize Jewish literature, can be tolerated as long as they do not translate into immorality.

V. Modern developments in Jewish-Christian relations.

A. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) recognized that God's covenant with the Jewish people remains intact.
1. The church repudiated antisemitism and the charge that Jews were collectively responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.
2. Given that the covenant between God and the Jews is intact, there is no need for Jews to convert to Christianity to achieve salvation.

B. Beyond the Catholic world, there have also been major efforts in promoting Jewish-Christian dialogue. A recent statement (2002) by the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations made the following points:
1. God's covenant with the Jewish people endures forever.
2. Jesus lived and died as a faithful Jew.
3. Ancient rivalries must not define contemporary relations.
4. Judaism is a living faith, enriched by many centuries of development.
5. Christians should not target Jews for conversion.
6. We affirm the importance of the Land of Israel for the life of the Jewish people.
7. Christians should work with Jews for the healing of the world.

C. Since the Shoah, Jews have also struggled to redefine their relationship with Christians.
1. On the level of cooperation with Christian groups concerning social and political issues of social justice, there has been widespread participation throughout the mainstream Jewish community.
2. In terms of religious dialogue, there remain elements within Orthodoxy that are either suspicious of Christian conversionary activity or convinced that nothing positive can come from such dialogue. In the words of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik: "Each religious community is endowed with intrinsic dignity and metaphysical worth."
3. Other Jews, including some Orthodox, are willing to engage in inter-religious dialogue. *Dabru Emet* is a recent statement by Jews on Christians and Christianity.
   a. Jews and Christians worship the same God.
   b. Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah.
   c. The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world, as promised in Scripture.
   d. A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice.

Essential Reading:

Sandmel, *Irreconcilable Differences?*

Ellenson, David. "A Jewish Legal Authority Addresses Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *American Jewish Archives Journal*, pp. 113–128.

Lander, Shira, and Daniel Lehmann, "New Wine for New Wineskins" in *Religious Education* 91:4 (1996), pp. 519–528.

Greenberg, Irving, "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity," in *Quarterly Review* 4:4 (1984), pp. 4–22.

Supplementary Reading:

Borowitz, *Contemporary Christologies: A Jewish Response*.

Signer, "Trinity, Unity, Idolatry?" in *Lesarten des judische-christlichen Dialoges*, pp. 275–284.

Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, chapter 10.

Pallière, *The Unknown Sanctuary*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Since the Noahide laws were written in the Talmud, in a language that non-Jews don't read, what was their purpose?
2. When considering the split of opinion concerning Christianity between the Jews of Christendom and the Jews of Islam, which factors may be responsible?
3. Most agree on the virtue of inter-religious cooperation for the purpose of healing the world. What are the dangers, from both sides, of inter-religious dialogue?

Lecture Twenty-Four
The Chosen People?

Scope: The claim of being chosen by God has been both a source of pride and puzzlement. The Talmud records many Rabbis who expressed discomfort with the idea, although it became canonized in the liturgy. In the mystical streams of medieval Judaism, chosenness takes on something of a racial cast. The philosophical tradition, on the other hand, avoids any such understandings of chosenness by turning the idea on its head—the Jews chose God. In the modern period, Reconstructionism does away with the status altogether. But it is more characteristic of Judaism to reinterpret than to reject; thus, we will look at some modern interpretations of this ancient claim.

Outline

I. Biblical foundations for the relationship.

- **A.** "For you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God: of all the peoples on earth the Lord your God chose you to be his treasured people" (Deut. 7:6).
- **B.** "Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples" (Exod. 19:5).
  - **1.** The word *segulah* designates the special treasure of the king. Jewish commentaries vacillate between emphasizing its aspect as superior versus its aspect as unique.
  - **2.** Is the status conditional upon performance of the commandments or permanent?
- **C.** "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth—That is why I will call you to account for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).
- **D.** "To Me, O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians—declares the Lord. True, I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt, But also the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir" (Amos 9:7).
  - **1.** In the TaNaKH, a man can have multiple wives, but a woman can have only one husband.
  - **2.** There is a parallel with God. Israel, symbolizing the female, can only have a relationship with the Lord. But the Lord can enjoy relationships with many peoples.
  - **3.** The metaphor of marriage to describe the relationship between Israel and God is highlighted in the prophetic book of Hosea. These verses are said by those who wrap *tefillin* (phylacteries) daily, as well as under the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) at the time of marriage: "And I will espouse you forever: I will espouse you with righteousness and justice, and with goodness and mercy, and I will espouse you with faithfulness" (Hosea 2:21–2).

II. Rabbinic discomfort with chosenness despite its canonization in the liturgy.

- **A.** God offered the Torah to many other nations whom, upon inquiring of the contents, decided to forego the relationship with God and not commit themselves to such a restrictive lifestyle. When, finally, God scraped the bottom of the barrel and offered the Torah to the Israelites, they immediately accepted without even asking about the contents (see Sifre Dt. 343).
- **B.** "Every single utterance that went forth from God was split up into 70 languages" (b. Shabbat 88b).
  - **1.** Israel was not God's first choice.
  - **2.** Revelation is universal and all have the potential to translate God's message into their own language or form of expression.

III. Medieval racialism and rationalism.

- **A.** The biblical language of treasure and the Rabbinic endorsement of the idea of God having chosen the Jews led some medievals of a mystical bent to assume that there was something essentially different about Jews than non-Jews (see also Ezra 9:2).
  - **1.** Yehuda HaLevi was the first to articulate this in his 12th-century book *Kuzari*.
    - **a.** For HaLevi, only Jews could be prophets.
    - **b.** Also, there was something essentially superior about the Land of Israel compared to all other lands. Thus, Israel and Israelites were on the top of the holiness hierarchy.

2. The *Zohar*, in the 13th century, develops the idea that Jews and non-Jews have different souls.
3. In the mystical stream of Judaism, there are still sects, such as Lubavitch/HaBaD, which adhere to an essential difference between Jewish and non-Jewish souls.

B. Moses Maimonides inverts election.

1. Maimonides turns Abraham into a philosopher who recognized by himself that the one true God is responsible for the motion of the celestial sphere.
2. When he began spreading the word that idolatry was false, he aroused the ire of the king of the Ur of the Chaldees, who sought to kill him.
3. He fled to Haran. "He then began to proclaim to the whole world with great power and to instruct the people that the entire universe had but one creator and that it was right to worship Him. He went from city to city and from kingdom to kingdom, calling and gathering together the inhabitants of the world until he arrived in the land of Canaan" (Maimonides, *Laws of Idolatry*, 1:3).
   a. In Genesis 12:1, God calls out to Abram and tells him to leave his home.
   b. In Maimonides's account, Abram flees Ur and ends up in Canaan, not because of a divine call, but because Abram exercises his intellect, sees the philosophical errors of his countrymen, and strives to enlighten them.

IV. Modern expressions of chosenness.

A. The Reform Movement, as we have seen, emphasizes the notion of mission found in Isaiah.

B. The Ultra-Orthodox emphasize a division of labor whereby Jews were chosen for a life of mitzvot and Torah study. But the contributions of Gentiles to worldly affairs, science, and technology are no less important.

C. "The people of Israel were not the chosen people but were commanded to be the chosen people…. The Jewish people had no intrinsic uniqueness. Its uniqueness rather consists in the demand laid on it. The people may or may not heed this demand. Therefore its fate is not guaranteed" (Yeshayahu Leibowitz).
1. Leibowitz, like Maimonides and the rationalist school, eschews any hint of racialism.
2. He emphasizes both the idea of duty and the idea that the relationship is contingent upon Israel fulfilling its duty, which Leibowitz understands to be the mitzvot.

V. Mordecai Kaplan and the rejection of chosenness.

A. On the theological level, how can God chose anyone? We moderns no longer believe in a God who acts like a glorified human being.

B. On a psychological level, for Jews to consider themselves chosen might induce a certain smugness and complacency. Moreover, the need to have asserted such a claim in the first place smacks of an inferiority complex that should be overcome in modernity.

C. On a sociological level, such a claim may foster resentment and antisemitism.

D. Finally, the idea of a chosen people is anti-democratic. It's just not fair to the others who were not chosen.

VI. "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?" (Malachi 2:10).

VII. "The Lord spoke those words—those and no more" (Deut. 5:19).

A. "The Lord spoke those words and did not stop" (b. Sann. 17a and RaSHI).

B. Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk (1787–1819) said, "The giving of the Torah took place at Shavuot; but the receiving of the Torah takes place every day. The giving of the Torah was the same for everyone; but the receiving of the Torah is different for everyone according to his capacity."

Essential Reading:

Silber, "Invention of a Tradition," in *The Uses of Tradition*, pp. 62–66.

Atlan, "Chosen People," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, pp. 55–59.

Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, chapter 7 and pp. 120–122.

Kaplan, *Dynamic Judaism*, pp. 189–196.

Supplementary Reading:

Eisen, *The Chosen People in America*.

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Laws of Idolatry*, chapter 1.

Ha-Levi, *Kuzari*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should the ambiguities in the biblical verses about chosenness be harmonized or explained as different voices representing different theological visions?
2. Given that the Rabbis incorporated the notion of chosenness into the liturgy for Sabbath and holidays, why would any Rabbis have expressed discomfort with the idea?
3. We have seen examples of selecting, interpreting, and repudiating a central religious idea within Judaism. Are there any religious ideas for which these strategies are inapplicable?
4. What about for other religions? Are there some religious tenets that are so central that they must be preserved precisely as they appear in the original texts? What if there are inconsistencies, as there are with chosenness and as we have with certain details in the four Gospels, which require selection or emphasis?

Timeline

Biblical Period

c. 2000 B.C.E. ..... Abraham and Sarah migrating from Ur to Canaan.

c. 1250 ..... Moses leads the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

c. 1200 ..... Joshua leads the Israelites in battle against the Canaanites.

1020 ..... Saul is anointed the first king of Israel.

1000 ..... David becomes the second king of Israel. Jerusalem is capital city.

961 ..... Solomon, David's son, builds the Temple in Jerusalem.

922 ..... Solomon dies and the kingdom splits: Israel in the north and Judea in the south.

721 ..... Assyria destroys Israel and exiles population. Ten Lost Tribes.

597 ..... Babylonia conquers Judah.

586 ..... Temple is destroyed and Judeans are exiled, en masse, to Babylonia.

539 ..... King Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon.

516 ..... Second Temple is dedicated in Jerusalem.

458 ..... Ezra leads a group of Jews back to Jerusalem.

Hellenistic Period

333 ..... Alexander the Great conquers Judah and brings in Hellenistic culture.

200 ..... Land of Israel passes from the Egyptians to the Syrians.

168–164 ..... Hasmoneans/Maccabees win war against Syrians and Hellenized Jews.

63 B.C.E. ..... Rome enters Judea.

66 C.E. ..... Great Revolt against Roman rule.

70 ..... Second Temple is destroyed.

74 ..... Massada.

Rabbinic Period

132–135 ..... Hadrianic persecutions and Bar Kochva Revolt.

c. 220 ..... Redaction of Mishnah by Judah the Patriarch.

313 ..... Emperor Constantine legalizes Christianity.

c. 450 ..... Redaction of Jerusalem Talmud.

c. 550 ..... Redaction of Babylonian Talmud.

7th century ..... Rise and spread of Islam.

Medieval Period

10th century ..... Rise of Jewish philosophy.

1180 ..... Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah* (code of law).

1190 ..... Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*.

12th century ..... Crusades.

12th century ..... Rise of Jewish mysticism/Kabbalah.

Late 13th century ..... *Zohar*.

14th century ..... Rabbi Menachem Ha-Me'iri of Provence writes that Christians are not to be classified as pagans or idolaters.

1492 ..... Christians conquer Spain from Muslims and exile the Jews.

16th century ..... Rise of Lurianic Kabbalah in Tzfat.

Early Modern Period

1654 ..... First group of Jews arrives in New Amsterdam.

18th century ..... Rise and spread of Hassidism in Eastern Europe.

1782 ..... Edict of Tolerance in Lower Austria.

1789 ..... French Revolution.

1790 ..... Jews given political rights in France.

19th century ..... Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) begins in Western Europe and slowly spreads to Eastern Europe.

1818 ..... Hamburg Temple begins reforming its services.

1824 ..... A small group petitions for liturgical reforms in Charleston, S.C.

1840 ..... Damascus Blood Libel.

Modern Period

1853 ..... Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch opens up a school in Frankfurt, Germany, that combines Jewish and secular studies.

1873 ..... Hebrew Union College (Reform seminary) founded in Cincinnati.

1876 ..... Felix Adler founds Ethical Culture Society.

1885 ..... Pittsburgh Platform of Reform Judaism.

1886 ..... Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative) founded in New York City.

1894 ..... Dreyfus affair.

1896 ..... Theodor Herzl writes *The Jewish State*.

1897 ..... First Zionist Congress in Switzerland.

1897 ..... Rabbi Isaac Elkhannan Specktor Yeshiva (Orthodox) founded in New York City.

1917 ..... Balfour Declaration.

1922 ..... League of Nations gives Britain a mandate to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

1939 ..... Britain effectively terminates immigration to Palestine on the eve of World War II.

1939–1945 ..... *Shoah*: Six million Jews systematically murdered in Nazi Europe.

1947 ..... United Nations partitions the western portion of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. Jews reluctantly accept. Arabs reject.

1948 ..... Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declares the establishment of the State of Israel.

1962–1965 ..... Second Vatican Council.

1967 ..... Six-Day War. Israel acquires the Old City of Jerusalem.

1968 ..... Reconstructionist Rabbinical College founded.

1969 ..... Society for Humanistic Judaism organized.

1972 ..... Reform ordains first female rabbi.

1975 ..... Reconstructionists begin ordaining women.

1985 ..... Conservative movement begins ordaining women.

1997 ..... A women's *yeshiva* in Jerusalem begins training *halachic* advisors.

Glossary

Aggadah: Non-legal material, lit. "telling."

Aguna/agunot (lit. "anchored"): Straw widows, women who are incapable of marriage because their husbands refuse to give them a *get*, a writ of divorce.

Aliyah (lit. "ascent"): Immigration to Israel.

Amidah: Central prayer in Rabbinic prayer service, lit. "standing."

Apocrypha: Such books as First and Second Maccabees were excluded from the TaNaKH, but included in the Christian Bible.

Ashkenazi: Jews from Germany (Ashkenaz) and surrounding European countries, particularly Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. The vast majority of Jews in the United States are of Ashkenazi descent.

Assyrians: Destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.E.

Avodah: Worship or service.

Ba'al teshuvah: Penitent or one who has returned.

Babylonian Talmud (b.): Edited in Babylon around 550.

Bal tashchit: Prohibition against wastefulness.

Bar Kochva Revolt: Revolt against Rome from 132–135 C.E.

British Mandate: Established by the League of Nations in 1922 to implement the Balfour Declaration's promise of providing a national home for Jews in Palestine.

Chalutzim: Pioneers who settled the Land of Israel.

Chametz: Leaven, forbidden on Pesach.

Channukah: Winter holiday celebrating the military triumph of the Macabbees. Literally, "dedication."

Channukiah: A nine-branched candelabra especially for Channukah.

Cheshbon nefesh: Soul-searching.

Chol hamoed: Intermediate days of the week-long festivals of Sukkot and Passover.

Chuppah: Wedding canopy.

Conservative Judaism: Begun in 19th-century Germany, but finds greater acceptance among Eastern European immigrants to America. Motto is tradition and change. *Halachah* is binding, though subject to modifications.

Ein sof: Without end, infinity. In Kabbalah, the realm of God to which we have no access.

Elul: Babylonian/Hebrew name for the sixth month.

Emancipation: The granting of Jews citizenship and political rights in 19th-century Western Europe.

Essenes: Second Temple sect that was ascetic and apocalyptic. One group lived by the Dead Sea.

Free loan societies: Established in late-19th century to help Eastern European Jews transition to America.

Gehena: The Rabbinic name for Hell.

Gemara: The larger part of the Talmud that analyzes the Mishnah and brings related legal and non-legal material. *Gemara* is Aramaic for "learning."

Gematria (gamma-tria): Letters corresponding to numbers.

Geonim: Medieval Jewish leaders in Babylonia.

Get: A writ of divorce.

Gilgul: Rolling over, reincarnation.

G'milut chasadim: Deeds of loving kindness.

Gnosticism: Dualistic theology with gods of good and evil.

Great Revolt: Jewish revolt against Rome, 66–70 C.E.

Hagaddah: The Rabbinic "script" for retelling the Exodus from Egypt.

Halachah: Jewish law, lit. "the way."

Haredi: Contemporary term meaning "quaking" to describe all Ultra-Orthodox (Mitnagdim and Hassidic) Jews.

Haskalah: Jewish enlightenment, 19th century, beginning in Western Europe.

Hasmoneans (Maccabees): *Maccabee* means a "hammer," and it is also the first letters of the words: *Mi Kmocha B'elim YHWH*, "Who is like YHWH among the gods" (Exod. 15:11).

Hassid: Follower of a *tzaddik*.

Hassidism: Religious renewal movement in 18th-century Eastern Europe emphasizing devotional posture and prayer.

Hebrew Union College: Reform seminary founded in Cincinnati in 1875.

Heichalot: Palaces, a genre of mystical literature in the Rabbinic period.

Holocaust: Wholly burnt offering to God (see Lev. 1). See Shoah.

Jerusalem Talmud (y.): Edited in the Land of Israel around 450.

Karaites: Medieval heretics who rejected Rabbinic tradition.

Kavannah: Intention, consciousness, awareness.

Ketubah: Jewish marriage contract, similar to a prenuptial agreement, protecting the wife's interests in the event of divorce or the death of her husband. Often ornately decorated.

Kiddush l'vana: Blessing of the waxing moon.

Kippa: *Yarmulkah*, skull cap.

Kitniot: "Small stuff," such as rice, beans, and peas; Ashkenazi Jews avoid these on Pesach.

LaG b'Omer: The 33rd day of the Omer. Celebrated with bonfires and outdoor activities.

Letzaref: To purify, to join.

Maccabees: See Hasmoneans.

Mashiach: "Anointed," Gr. "Christos." A divinely appointed human being who will preside over the ingathering of the exiled Jews and the reestablishment of Jewish political sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

Maskilim: Proponents of the Haskalah.

Matzah: Unleavened bread.

Menorah: Seven-branched candelabra (Exod. 25:31–40).

Menuchah: Tranquility, the special rest that God created on day seven.

Merkavah: Chariot, a genre of mystical literature from the Rabbinic period.

Mezuzah (pl. *mezuzot*): Biblical word for doorpost that today refers to the parchment that Jews are commanded to place on their doorposts (see Deut. 6:9).

Midrash: An idea linked to a biblical verse, lit. to "seek," "inquire," or "weave."

Mishnah (m.): Codex of Jewish law and earliest Rabbinic literature, lit. "learning." Compiled by Judah the Prince, circa 220 C.E.

Mitnagdim: Opponents of Hassidism who stressed centrality of Talmud Torah.

Mitzvah (pl. *mitzvot*): Commandment/s.

Nazarenes: Early followers of Jesus of Nazareth who believed he was the messiah.

Noahide laws: Laws that Rabbis say are incumbent upon Gentiles: establishing courts; not committing murder, idolatry, blasphemy, adultery, or thievery; and not tearing a limb from a living animal.

Olam haba: The coming world. Can either refer to existence after death or this world in the messianic era.

Omer: Sheaf of barley; 49-day period between Pesach and Shavuot.

Payot (*payos*): Corners, sidelocks.

Peel Commission, 1937: Partitioned Palestine west of the Jordan into Jewish and Arab states. Zionists accepted the partition; Arabs rejected it.

Pesach: Pass over or protect/have mercy.

Pharisees: Had an oral tradition to interpret the Torah. They are the spiritual ancestors of the Rabbis.

Ploni Almoni: The Hebrew version of Joe Shmoe, any anonymous person.

Purim: Holiday celebrating the survival of the Jews outside of Israel, lit., "lots."

Reconstructionist Judaism: Views Judaism as a civilization with religion as one component. *Halachah* is not binding, though Reconstructionists tend to be more traditional than Reform Jews.

Reform Judaism: Begun in 19th-century Germany, but flourishes in America. Rejects binding nature of *halachah* and emphasizes individual piety.

Rosh chodesh: New moon, lit., "head of the month."

Rosh Hashanah: Jewish New Year (lit., "Head of the Year"), Tishrei 1.

Sadducees: Second Temple sect that denied oral tradition and, hence, resurrection.

Second Vatican Council (1962–1965): Recognized that God's covenant with the Jewish people remains intact.

Seder: "Order," word used to describe the Pesach meal and the retelling of the Exodus. There are two *s'darim* (pl. for *seder*) outside of Israel.

Sefaradim: Jews exiled from Spain (Sefarad) who moved to some European countries, such as Holland and Bulgaria. The term also commonly refers to Jews from North Africa and the Middle East.

Segulah: Royal treasure.

Sfira: A station in the unfolding or emanation of the godhead.

Shames (Yiddish) or ***shamash*** (Hebrew): The "servant" that lights the other candles.

Shavuot (lit. "weeks"): Pentecost.

Shchinah: The 10th *sefirah* and divine presence that is the door between the supernal world and the physical world.

Shefa: Overflow of divine blessings.

Sheol: The biblical term for the place where everyone goes when they die.

Shmini Atzeret: Holiday that ends Sukkot, Tishrei 22.

Shoah: Catastrophe, refers to the Holocaust.

Shofar: Ram's horn that is blown on Rosh Hashanah.

Simchat Torah: Joy of Torah, Tishrei 22 in Israel and Tishrei 23 in the Diaspora.

Sinat hinam: Baseless hatred or gratuitous nastiness, the cause (according to the Rabbis) of the destruction of the Second Temple.

Sitra achra: Other side, evil forces in the Kabbalah.

Sukkot: Tabernacles/huts, Tishrei 15.

Tallit: Prayer shawl.

Talmud (lit. "learning"): Mishnah + Gemara.

Talmud Torah: Studying Torah (in its widest sense).

TaNaKH: Torah, Nevi'im (Prophets), Ketuvim (writings).

Tefillin: Phylacteries.

Ten Lost Tribes: When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.E., they scattered the inhabitants all over the kingdom.

Teshuvah: Return and respond. Often translated as repentance.

Theodicy: Justifying God, that is, reconciling the seeming lack of justice in this world with divine power and providence.

Tikkun: Mystical concept of repairing the broken vessels; now used to describe acts of social justice.

Tikkun leyl Shavuot: All-night study session on Shavuot.

Tisha b'Av: Ninth of Hebrew month of Av, commemorates the destruction of the Temples.

Tishrei: Babylonian/Hebrew name for the seventh month.

Torah: Teaching or instruction, often refers to the Pentateuch.

Treyfa **Banquet** (unkosher): in 1883 at the first graduating class of Hebrew Union College.

Tsimtsum: Withdrawal, divine self-restraint.

Tu b'Av: The 15th of the Hebrew month of Av, Jewish Valentine's Day.

Tu b'Shvat: The 15th of the Hebrew month of Shvat, New Year for the Trees.

Tza'ar b'alei chayim: Prohibition against causing distress to animals.

Tzaddik: Leader of a Hassidic group.

Tzedakah: Righteousness, often translated as "charity."

Ushpizin: Mystical Sukkot guests: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David.

White Paper (1939): Severely restricted Jewish immigration on the eve of World War II and the Shoah.

Yahrzeit (Yiddish): Anniversary of death.

Yesh m'ayin: Creation out of nothing.

Yom Ha'atzmaut: Israeli Independence Day.

Yom Hashoah v'Hagvurah: The Day of Catastrophe and Heroism, otherwise known as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Yom Hazikaron: Israeli Memorial Day.

Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement, Tishrei 10.

Yom Yerushalayim: Jerusalem Day.

Zionism: Political movement beginning in late-19th century to reestablish a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

Biographical Notes

Adler, Felix (1851–1933). The son of prominent Reform Rabbi Samuel Adler. Growing up in America, the younger Adler finished his rabbinic and secular education in Germany. On his return, he advocated abandoning the particularistic elements of Judaism to focus exclusively on universal ethics. In 1876, Adler founded the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

Akiva son of Joseph (50–135 C.E.). One of the leading figures of Rabbinic Judaism in the decades after the destruction of the Second Temple. In some ways, "Judaism" could just as easily be named "Akivaism." He was largely responsible for the traditions recorded in the Mishnah. He was also believed to engage in mystical practices. He maintained that the most important principle in the Torah was to show love to your neighbor, although he simultaneously held that study was greater than deeds. He promoted the Rabbinic doctrine that the entire Torah was given by God at Mount Sinai. Akiva was flayed to death by the Romans toward the end of the Bar Kochva Revolt.

Ba'al Shem Tov, Israel (1700–1760). The inspiration for Hassidism, a religious renewal movement that swept through Eastern Europe from 1750 through the 19th century. The Ba'al Shem Tov maintained that the study of Talmud was not the exclusive way to serve God. One could serve God through all commandments and all human activities as long as one's awareness was so directed. He had a small group of followers who spread his teachings throughout Eastern Europe. These *tzaddikim*, or righteous ones, lent their own style and personality to the message of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

Bar Kochva, Shimon (d. 135 C.E.). The military leader of the final rebellion against the Romans in the Land of Israel that began in 132. Although Rabbi Akiva believed him to be the messiah, Bar Kochva made no such claim. Bar Kochva based himself in the south of the country, where documents and coins have been unearthed testifying to his reign.

Dreyfus, Alfred (1859–1935). An assimilated Jew and captain in the French Army. He was falsely convicted of treason in 1895. Dreyfus was demoted and sent to Devil's Island off the coast of South America. His brother worked tirelessly to exonerate him. Finally, in 1906, a court of appeals pronounced his innocence. In the interim, his case garnered international attention. One of the reporters covering the initial trial was Theodor Herzl, who was inspired to question whether assimilation was a viable solution for European Jews. Herzl subsequently outlined his vision of a Jewish national independence.

Frankel, Zecharias (1801–1875). The founder of Conservative Judaism in Germany. At the time, it was called "Positive Historical Judaism." The original name reflects the idea that Judaism is a historical religion unfolding over time and that historical unfolding is positive because it allows Jewish law to maintain its relevance in each generation. Frankel accepted certain reforms but was dedicated to the binding nature of Jewish law as a whole. He was also opposed to the linguistic acculturation of Reform and insisted on preserving Hebrew in the prayer services. In 1854, he was named the director of a rabbinical seminary (Juedisch-Theologisches Seminar), which became the model for modern seminaries that combine critical scholarship and traditional Jewish study.

Geiger, Abraham (1810–1874). A founding father of the Reform movement in Germany. Geiger was also one of the outstanding scholars from the second generation of Jewish studies. He applied his scholarly research, which emphasized the human authorship of the Torah and demonstrated the progressive nature of Jewish law, to the reforms he hoped to institute in his own day. He served as a pulpit rabbi for 35 years and was instrumental in the establishment of the first Reform rabbinical seminary in Berlin in 1870.

Herzl, Theodor (1860–1904). Best remembered as the father of political Zionism. He was an assimilated Jew from Budapest who was educated in Vienna. He served as a reporter for the trial of Alfred Dreyfus and became convinced that the only solution for the Jewish problem in Europe was a national home. He wrote *The Jewish State* in 1896 and presided over the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. There, he said that in 50 years, a Jewish state would exist in Palestine. His words proved prophetic.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua (1905–1972). A scion of a Hassidic dynasty and one of the leading Jewish theologians in the United States in the 20th century. He was twice invited to the White House to speak on issues of social justice and was a friend and ally of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His scholarship touched on every facet of Jewish thought, *The Sabbath* and *God in Search of Man* are representative of his style and religious thought.

Hirsch, Emil G. (1851–1923). The son of a prominent Reform ideologue, Rabbi Samuel Hirsch. Upon returning from Germany with ordination and a doctorate, the younger Hirsch served as an editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, professor of Rabbinics at the University of Chicago, and a congregational Rabbi. He was responsible for bringing the Social Gospel into Reform Judaism and featuring it in the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform.

Hirsch, Samson Raphael (1808–1888). Considered to be the father of Modern (or Neo-) Orthodoxy. He was a staunch opponent of Reform and its acceptance of biblical criticism. Hirsch advocated certain "external" reforms dealing with dress, language, and even education, but he was steadfast in his opposition to *halachic* change. Although he could not tolerate changes to the traditional liturgy calling for the reestablishment of a Jewish state, he did believe that one should demonstrate patriotism toward the country of one's citizenship. Hirsch opened the first Jewish day school in 1853 that combined Jewish and secular studies.

Judah the Prince, Rabbi (c. 135 C.E.–c. 219). Redacted the Mishnah, the first literary work of Rabbinic Judaism. He was both an outstanding scholar and the political leader of the community, representing Jewish interests to Rome. In Rabbinic literature, he is often simply referred to as "Rabbi." He led the Sannhedrin, the supreme Jewish legislative and judicial body, from Tzippori and Bet She'arim. He is buried in Bet She'arim in northern Israel in a restored archaeological site.

Kaplan, Mordecai (1881–1983). Taught at the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary for more than half a century. Kaplan is also the founder of the fourth denomination in American Jewish life, Reconstructionism. Kaplan maintained that traditional Judaism gets a vote, not a veto, on how contemporary Jews express their Jewish commitments. Kaplan promoted the idea that Judaism is a civilization and American Jews should strive to live in both the Jewish and American civilizations Toward that end, Kaplan was an early supporter of the idea of Jewish community centers, where Jews could congregate for purposes other than religion. On matters religious, Kaplan was a forceful advocate of updating traditional rituals and ideas where possible and abandoning those that could not be updated, such as the idea of the chosen people.

Kook, Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen (1865–1935). The first Ashkenazi chief Rabbi of Palestine. Born to a Hassidic mother and a Mitnagdic father, Rav Kook combined Talmudic and *halachic* scholarship with the mysticism of the Kabbalah. Rav Kook's inspirational writings, poetry, and works of *halachah* served as the ideological foundation for many religious Zionists. He is widely perceived to be a bridge between the religious and secular worlds because he expressed admiration for the secular Zionists who were doing God's work, albeit unknowingly. His son, Tzvi Yehudah Kook, has become a central figure in the Israeli settler movement, which sees the State of Israel as the beginning of messianic redemption. A good digest of his writings can be found in *The Lights of Penitence*.

Leibowitz, Yeshayahu (1903–1994). One of the most controversial figures in Israel until his death. Although deeply committed to *halachah*, he nevertheless felt that Jewish law had to adapt to the new reality of a Jewish state. Leibowitz considered himself to be a disciple of Maimonides and the rationalism that the latter represented. On the question of chosen-ness, Leibowitz denies that the Jews were chosen. He reconceptualizes the traditional notion by arguing that Jews were commanded to be the chosen people, and the Jews may or may not respond to that divine demand. But, for Leibowitz, as for all Jewish rationalists, there is no intrinsic difference between Jews and Gentiles.

Luria, Isaac (1534–1572). Also known as the Holy Lion. He led a group of Kabbalists in Tzfat in the north of the Land of Israel. Luria developed the Kabbalah he inherited into a far more elaborate system involving four different worlds within the supernal realm. He also innovated a creation myth that involves *tsimtsum*, or divine withdrawal to create a space that is not divine in order to create the world. In the subsequent process of creation, there was a shattering of vessels containing divine energy; our task is to repair (*tikkun*) those shattered vessels through the performance of the commandments with the proper intention. Lurianic Kabbalah was influential for centuries.

Maimonides, Moses (1138–1204). Also known as RaMBaM (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon); born in Spain and lived in Egypt. Maimonides was a doctor to the sultan and for the Jewish community of Fostat, Old Cairo. His two greatest works are the *Mishneh Torah* (1180), a comprehensive summation of Rabbinic law, and the *Guide of the Perplexed* (1190), a text that brings together Rabbinic Judaism and Aristotelian philosophy. Maimonides was a controversial writer, and the true meaning of his *Guide* is still hotly debated. Maimonides's influence on both the development of *halachah* and Jewish philosophy cannot be overestimated. Although it is possible to disagree with the RaMBaM, one cannot ignore him.

Nachmanides, Moses (1194–1270). Also known as RaMBaN (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman); lived in Gerona, Spain, north of Barcelona, and died in the Land of Israel. RaMBaN is the earliest biblical commentator to include Kabbalistic hints. Like RaMBaM, with whom he frequently disagreed, RaMBaN was a doctor. He was also a Talmudist and leader of the Jewish community. He represented the Jews in disputations with the Christian community in 1263, his account of which has been dramatized in *The Disputation*, a BBC production. Shortly after his participation in the disputation, he left for the Land of Israel.

RaSHI, Rabbi Shlomo son of Isaac (1040–1105). Born in Troyes, France, and is most well known for his running commentary on the Talmud and TaNaKH. In his commentary on the TaNaKH, he usually selected and condensed earlier Rabbinic understandings of the text. His commentary was the first published Jewish work, even before the TaNaKH itself. His commentary is studied along with the TaNaKH in traditional communities down to today.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman (b. 1924). Born in Poland, educated in Vienna, and escaped the Nazis in 1941 by immigrating to the United States. Although ordained as a rabbi with the Chassidic sect HaBaD, Schachter-Shalomi fell away from the movement and received his Ph.D. from the Reform seminary Hebrew Union College. Schachter-Shalomi, since the 1960s, has been a leader in the Jewish Renewal movement. He combines a thoroughly traditional education with a modern outlook on religion. He emphasizes the importance of ecology, as well as promoting a personal relationship with God through joyous prayer, song, and dance.

Schneersohn, Menachem Mendel (1904–1994). The latest messianic figure in Judaism. Rebbe Schneersohn lead the Lubavitch movement (HaBaD) in America for decades following World War II and oversaw its impressive growth in ranks and Jewish outreach activity. In the early 1990s, there was intense speculation in the Lubavitch community about the messianic status of the Rebbe, which Schneersohn himself did nothing to quiet. When he died, the Lubavitch movement was split between those who maintain that he was/is the messiah and those who do not. Schneersohn, having no sons, left the Lubavitch community without an heir apparent.

Shimon son of Yochai, Rabbi (c. 2nd century C.E.) was one of the leading students of Rabbi Akiva. After Akiva's death, he fled to Babylonia. He is the reputed author of the *Zohar*, the major text of medieval Kabbalah. His *yahrtzeit* ("anniversary of death") is celebrated on LaG b'Omer by thousands making pilgrimage to his reputed gravesite on Mount Meron in northern Israel.

Sofer, Moses (1762–1839). Also known as the Hatam Sofer. He served a community in Hungary and was the most important traditional Jewish scholar in central Europe for the first four decades of the 19th century. Although more flexible in practice, Sofer expressed scorn for the Reform movement and its adherents. He promoted the notion that any innovation was forbidden and that Jews should be particularly careful to retain cultural aspects of their identity, including traditional names, the use of Yiddish, and distinctive garb. Sofer became the figurehead for later generations of Jews who became known as Ultra-Orthodox and are particularly incensed by the acculturation of the Modern Orthodox.

Soloveitchik, Joseph Dov (1903–1993). Born in Lithuania into the Brisk Rabbinic dynasty. A child prodigy, Soloveitchik went to Germany to receive a Ph.D. in religious philosophy. On immigrating to the United States, he taught Talmud for decades at Yeshiva University in New York City and founded the Orthodox day school Maimonides, outside of Boston. He was arguably the leading Torah figure in the United States in the second half of the 20th century. Rav Soloveitchik combined profound Torah knowledge and secular erudition. Thousands of his students refer to him simply as "the Rav" or "the Teacher." *Halachic Man* is a prime example of his dialectical thought.

Tzvi, Shabbatai (1626–1676). A charismatic leader who proclaimed himself messiah in 1665. Although there were other false messiahs in Jewish history, Shabbatai Tzvi was the most popular. Some of his followers remained convinced of his messianic status even after he converted to Islam, under the threat of death by the Turkish sultan, in 1666. Shabbatai Tzvi's teachings combined elements of Jewish mysticism, the call to penance, and violations of *halachah*. The dashed messianic hopes placed on Shabbatai Tzvi precipitated skepticism toward messianism as well as Kabbalah.

Wise, Isaac Mayer (1819–1900). The father of American Reform Judaism. He arrived from Germany in 1846 and went on to found the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (renamed Union of Reform Judaism in 2003), Hebrew Union College, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He was the editor of the Jewish newspaper *The Israelite* (later named *The American Israelite*) and the German-Jewish newspaper *Die Deborah*. Wise was not a

radical reformer, though he did introduce mixed seating and rejected the use of traditional head coverings and prayer shawls for men in the Temple.

Yochanan ben Zakkai was one of the leading sages at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.). According to Rabbinic lore, he was spirited out of Jerusalem in the final stages of the Roman siege. He secured permission from Rome to establish what became the seed of Rabbinic Judaism at Yavneh.

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