



# World Religions



Judaism



# Biblical Historical Roots

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- **The Biblical Patriarchs**
  - Abraham c. 1750 – 2000 BC
  - Worshipped God as El (Many others names added in time, i.e., El Shaddai (God Almighty), El Elyon (God most high), and El Olam (God Everlasting.)
- **Exodus**
  - Moses
  - God identifies Himself to Moses as Yahweh (“I Am”)



# Biblical Historical Roots

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- **Sinai & The Law**
  - The Law becomes foundational for the emerging Jews
  - Forms the basis for the writings of the prophets
  - It is both apodictic and case-oriented
- **Post Sinai Religious Institutions**
  - The Tabernacle: the first place of worship for the Jews, and housing place of the Ark of the Covenant.
- **Worship in Shiloh**
  - The first “holy place”



# Biblical Historical Roots

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- **Religion in the Time of the Monarchy**
  - The Temple
  - The prophetic movement
- **Exile & Return**
  - The kingdom split into North and South in 977 BC
  - Northern Kingdom fell in 722 BC
  - Southern Kingdom falls in 587 BC (to Babylonians)
  - Prophets during Babylonian captivity: Ezekiel and Daniel
  - Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted return (Isa 44:28 & Jer 30:18)



# Biblical Historical Roots

- The Jews began to return to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity in 539 BC.
- The temple was rebuilt in 516 BC.
- Temple worship, ritual, and sacrifice was reinstated.
- The new temple lasted for nearly 600 years.

The entire period from the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom to the Babylonian conquest of the South is known to Jews as the *Diaspora*, or dispersion.



# Contributions of The Diaspora

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- The LXX --- Septuagint --- was written during the period to accommodate the large number of Jews in Alexandria, Egypt.
- The synagogue system developed
  - Rules of establishment
  - Copy of Scriptures (Torah)**
  - Ten men (minyan)**
  - The Rabbi (“my master”)**
- Diverse Orders emerged (Pharisees, Saducees, Zelots, etc.)
- Heightened Messianic expectancy
- Well developed missions program



# Roman Persecution and the Fall of Jerusalem

**Persecution came largely as a result of three things**


**(2) Jewish tradition & worship ritual**

**(3) Christian misidentification**

**(3) Jewish revolts**

## **Significant Events**

- **Yohanan ben Zakkai and Jamnia**
- **The Zealots and Jerusalem – AD 66**
- **The Essenes and Masada – AD 66**
- **Abomination of Desolation – AD 70**
- **The final loss of Jerusalem – AD 135**
- **All lost until 1948**



About AD 136 many Jews moved to Babylon (modern Iraq). Life was easier there than in Galilee under Rome. This move, combined with the rise of Christianity in AD 323 and their general dispersion, left the Jews in need of greater self-identity and personal perspective.

## Literary Developments

- **The Mishna (Halakah)**

Commentary on Scripture first developed by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi

- **The Talmud**

A compilation of the Mishna and the Gemara or Haggadah.

- **Two versions: Palestinian and Babylonian**

- **Two sections of material**

Mishnah – legal material (“the proper way”)

Haggadah – history and folklore (“tale”)



# Medieval Judaism

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- Middle East came under Muslim rule c. AD 650, leading to persecution of Jews in Babylon c. AD 900.
- Jews fled across the Mediterranean, largely to Spain (even though they later encountered Muslims there).
- By the early middle ages Jews in Spain led worldwide Judaism.
- Greatest leader: Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides 1135-1204).
- In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Muslims vacated Spain causing Spain to react by becoming antagonistic to all outsiders, especially Jews.
- 1391 massacre of Jews
- 1492 all Jews and remaining Muslims expelled.



# Medieval Judaism

## **The Cabala (Jewish Mystics)**

- A tradition dealing with witches, ghouls, astrology, and magic
- A philosophical system that seeks to answer the problem of evil and find secret knowledge in the Bible and other places.
- Their literature provided hope for oppressed European Jews during the Middle Ages by claiming that behind the evil in the world are secret truths of God that give comfort.

**The Cabalas still exist, for Jewish mysticism is as old as Judaism**



# Modern Judaism

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- Mostly about fleeing persecution and finding ways to cope
- Developed unique language—Yiddish (high German and Hebrew)
- Often forced to live in segregated communities—Ghettos—enduring forced curfews and locked gates
- 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council required wearing yellow ID badges
- Many fled to Poland and Russia in Eastern Europe
- 1648 Cossack and Ukrainian peasants slaughtered 500,000 Jews in a “pogrom” (ethnic cleansing)
- These circumstances led to numerous responses, including a return to Western Europe and new Protestant lands



# Responses to Modernity

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## ◆ Shabbatai Zevi

**Jewish Cabala Mystic in the seventeenth century**

**Led a strong messianic movement in Jewish ghettos**

**His disciples declared him “Messiah”**

**In Egypt, married Sarah who claimed she would give birth to the messiah**

**1665 Zevi and his army entered Constantinople to dethrone the Sultan of Turkey**

**Zevi was captured and imprisoned**

**Faced with the choice of convert to Islam or die, he converted**



# Responses to Modernity

## ◆ Moses Mendelssohn

1743, as small boy, came to the Jewish gate of Berlin and asked for entrance to learn

Became a renowned scholar and philosopher of all things Jewish and Germanic

Wrote *Nathan the Wise*

His work and scholarship were accepted by Jews and non-Jews worldwide

He encouraged Jews to come out of the ghettos and engage the modern world—to write and speak German, not Yiddish



# Responses to Modernity

- **Reform Judaism**

Following Mendelssohn, German Jews believed the practices of Judaism were out dated. Three things proposed, becoming the basis for the reform movement:

There is continuation in the development of Judaism  
The Talmud has no authority for modern Jews  
“We seek no Messiah and know no homeland but the land of our birth”

## In Practice, These Three Things Resulted In:

Use of the vernacular

Synagogues called temples

Kosher foods not stressed

Choirs and organs introduced in worship

Biblical criticism practiced

Movement became strong in Germany, Russia, and US



# Zionism

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- In response to the Dreyfus spy case, Austrian journalist Theodore Herzl wrote that injustice would not cease until the Jews had a home state.
- Early 1900s Jews started buying land in Palestine.
- 1909 they established the Jewish city, Tel Aviv.
- By 1920 about 50,000 Jews had emigrated to Tel Aviv.
- End of World War I the Ottoman Empire was dissolved and Palestine came under British rule.
- 1917 British Foreign Minister, Lord Balfour, expressed interest in Palestine becoming a national home for Jews.
- By 1933 220,000 Jews had emigrated to Palestine.

*“God died during in the holocaust,”*

**Richard Rubenstein**

- **1933 Hitler became chancellor of Germany**

  - 1935 His Nuremberg Laws reduced Jews to second-class citizens**

  - 1939 with the invasion of Poland a total of 3.5 million Jews came under his power**

    - Jews were rounded up and put in camps to be worked to death**

    - 1941 Zykon B gas used for mass extermination**

    - By war's end, 3.5 million Jews had been reduced to 500,000**

Some of the reasons suggested for the holocaust include, German racism, Germany's problems after WWI, Nazi madness, and worldwide silence to the atrocity.



# Modern State of Israel

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- 1947 UN votes to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab state.
- 1948 British leave Palestine
- Jews immediately proclaim Palestine a Jewish state and the nation of Israel was reborn
- Today there are approximately 13-30 million Jews worldwide



# Modern Jewish Parties

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## ● Orthodox

Largest group

Kosher food laws stressed

Strict Sabbath observance

Men and women segregated in worship

Hebrew is the language of worship

## ● Reform

Greatest popularity in western Europe and US

Worship usually on Friday evenings

Worship in the vernacular

Kosher laws are not generally important



# Modern Jewish Parties

- **Conservative**

- 19<sup>th</sup> century reaction to counter perceived extremes of the Reform movement**

- Rabbi Frankel seen as leader (President of Jewish Wroclaw, seminary in Breslau, Germany, now in Poland)**

- Currently, the center of this school of thought is Jewish Theological Seminary of New York City.**

- Vernacular and Hebrew are used in worship**

- Most Kosher laws are enforced**

- Men must wear the “yarmulke” (head cover)**



# Modern Jewish Parties

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- **Numerous national/ethnic groups**
  - The Falashas, black Ethiopian Jews**
  - Similar groups exist in India and China**
- **Post Holocaust secular Jews**
- **Groups concerned with assimilation**
- **Groups concerned with a resurgence of anti-Semitism**



# Jewish Holy Days

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- **Sabbath (Shabbat)**

  - Weekly observance

- **Passover (Pesach)**

  - 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (March-April). Last 8 days to commemorate deliverance from Egypt.

- **Feast of Weeks (Shavuot)**

  - 50 days after Pesach. New Testament Pentecost. Celebrates harvest and the giving of the Law to Moses.

- **New Year (Rosh Hashanah)**

  - 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> days of Tshre (September-October). Period of penitence that culminates in the next holiday. Celebrated by special prayers of confession.



# Jewish Holy Days

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## • **Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)**

Holiest of all holy days. Celebrated on 10th of Tishre.

Abstain from work, food, and drink. Synagogue attendance is required with prayers and acts of charity.

## • **Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Sukkot)**

5 days after Yom Kippur on 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishre Celebrates the Exodus experience. Often crude booths are built.

## • **Feast of Dedication (Chanukah)**

25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev (November-December). One of few non-Exodus events. It celebrates the Maccabean revolt, the re-taking of the temple, and the miraculous oil.



# Jewish Holy Days

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- **Feast of Lots**

14<sup>th</sup> of Adar (February-March). A remembrance of Jewish victory over Gentiles under Esther.

- **Son of Commandment (Bar Mitzvah)**

Celebrated on a boys 13<sup>th</sup> birthday to signify his passage from childhood to manhood. In reformed congregations, Bat Mitzvah is celebrated for girls