

FALL 2018

Israel's Messenger

A Ministry of
Jewish Awareness Ministries

Publishing Salvation to Zion Isaiah 52:7

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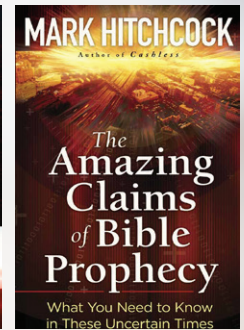
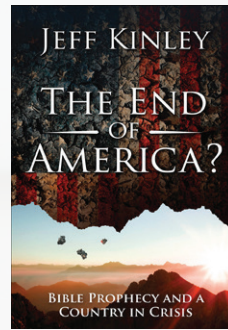
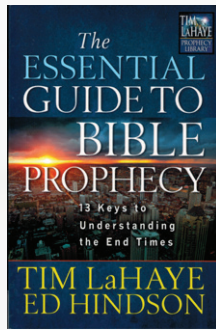
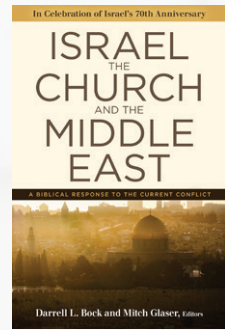
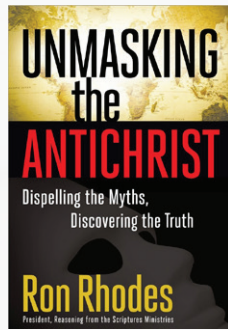
ITS HISTORY,
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ISRAEL'S MESSENGER FALL 2018



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The roots of Judaism, in its many forms, goes back to the Pharisees of the New Testament. Modern day Judaism's embracing of the Oral Law is a continuation of Pharisaical Judaism. This issue looks at the different branches of Judaism, what they believe, and, more importantly, gives suggestions on how to share Messiah Jesus with each branch of Judaism.



FROM THE *Director's Desk*

REV. MARK ROBINSON

Shalom in Messiah,

Judaism is not a monolithic religion. Certainly, there are some broad agreements among the diverse groups – Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox – who teach the need for *mitzvahs*, good deeds, in order to please God or, to at least live a righteous life. The belief or doctrinal views of each group have overlaps, but also differ in many ways.

In the first century, two of the main groups were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees only numbered about 3,000 adherents and the Pharisees numbered about 6,000

followers. The Sadducees were the aristocrats of Jesus' day. They were the Temple custodians and denied basic truths such as resurrection. The common people despised them.

The Pharisees were the champions of the common people. They ministered primarily in the synagogues of the many towns and villages. They believed strongly in the Oral Traditions, known today as the Talmud, the Oral Law. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. the Sadducees quickly passed off the scene. Judaism, in all its forms, would develop its post-Temple practice from the Pharisees and their beliefs.

It is instructive to read the gospel accounts of Jesus interacting with the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Jesus used the beliefs of each group to lead them to the truth of Scripture. In the same way, our understanding of the different sects, or groups, within Judaism can help us fine-tune our presentation of biblical truth and Messiah Jesus with each of these groups.

To help you understand the different groups in Judaism, this issue of *Israel's Messenger* will focus on five different branches of Judaism. The basic three of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox, along with the very liberal Reconstructionist Judaism and the very conservative, Ultra-Orthodox Judaism. In each article there are some suggestions on how to share Messiah Jesus with a practitioner of a particular sect.

I have written about Reform Judaism. This is the largest Judaism group in the United States. They are also liberal in their biblical and secular thinking.

Ken Overby has written the article about Conservative Judaism. This group was established in the U.S. because of

the desire to move from the liberalism of Reform Judaism closer to the more traditional views of Judaism embraced by Orthodox Judaism, but still living out their Judaism in the modern world. Essentially, it is a compromise between the Reform and Orthodox positions.

Dan Bergman has written the article on Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Judaism was the only sect of Judaism up until the 19th century. As the name suggests, they adhere to both the written (Torah) and oral (Talmud) Law.

Two other groups are briefly looked at as well. I have written an article on the Ultra-Orthodox stream of Judaism and Ken Symes has contributed an article on Reconstructionist Judaism, a very liberal, and small, segment in Judaism.

Ken Overby has written the "Messianic Witness to Israel" column and has integrated this column with his article on Conservative Judaism. His article will give you an excellent overview of the world of Judaism and then share how to "answer Judaism's authority."

The authority spoken of is the belief that the Oral Law (Talmud) is inspired as much as the Torah (written Law, 5 books of Moses) is inspired.

The final column in this issue, *Shadows of the Tribulation*, comes from my pen. For the first time since Israel became a nation in 1948 there are more Jewish people residing in Israel than any other nation. The Bible is replete with verses that tell of the Jewish people returning to the land of Israel to a re-born nation of Israel in the last days.

The growth of the Jewish population

since 1948 certainly has prophetic implications.

A couple that I love and respect have retired from their service for the Lord and affiliation with Jewish Awareness Ministries. Moshe and Shoshona Gold have moved back to the U.S. Moshe's health has deteriorated to the extent that he is unable to continue in full time ministry. There is a "Tribute to the Golds" in this issue.

We are getting closer to our online *School of Biblical and Jewish Studies* becoming a reality. Lord willing, in the near future you will be able to access classes. The four courses we are starting with are Jewish Evangelism, Israel in the Bible and History, Jewish Culture and the New Testament, and Issues in the Christian World. Each course will have many classes, and, Lord willing, we will regularly add new classes.

Serving the soon coming King,

Mark Robinson





REFORM JUDAISM

REV. MARK ROBINSON

(ABOVE) RABBI JONAH DOV PESNER serves as the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Rabbi Pesner also serves as Senior Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism, a position to which he was appointed to in 2011.

Up until the 19th century there was only one form of Judaism - Orthodox Judaism. Certainly there were Jewish people who were atheists and those who claimed to be agnostics. But if one wanted to practice the religion of Judaism it came in only one form - Orthodox. Orthodox Judaism, though, has a number of branches - from the very religious ultra-orthodox to what is referred to as "modern" orthodox.

The term "orthodox" Judaism was introduced by the early adherents of Reform Judaism as a derogatory term. Samson Raphael Hirsch, a leading 19th-century German Orthodox rabbi and one of the chief opponents of the emergent Reform movement at that time, wrote in 1854: "It was not 'Orthodox' Jews who introduced the word 'orthodox' into Jewish discussion. It was the modern 'progressive' Jews who first applied the name to 'old,' 'backward' Jews as a derogatory term. This name was ... resented by 'old' Jews. And rightfully so."¹

Reform Judaism was birthed in the 19th century in Germany in reaction to the strictness of the Judaism of the day. In the middle to late 19th century the movement came to the U.S. and took root here and became the center of Reform Judaism. It is also known as liberal Judaism and progressive Judaism.

The Union for Reformed Judaism, the largest Reformed Judaism organization, website² defines Reform Judaism as: "Reform Judaism maintains faith in the Covenant between God and Israel as expressed over the generations in the teachings of an ever-evolving Torah and tradition. Stirred by the mandate of *tikkun olam*, Reform Judaism seeks to be the living expression of those teachings. It welcomes all who seek Jewish connection to pursue a life of meaning as inspired by the Divine and proclaimed in the truths grasped by Jewish teachers throughout time."

The key phrases in this statement are "an ever-evolving Torah and tradition" and "seeks to be the living expression of those teachings." These two phrases identify what Reform Judaism is all about. First, there is no absolute authority, such as the Bible, because things always evolve. Second, Reform Judaism is characterized by a "good works" emphasis, although without an objective standard such as the Bible for defining good and evil, "good works" is a highly subjective term.

HISTORY

A convention of Reform rabbis and adherents met in Pittsburgh, PA in 1885 and produced the first official document of the movement defining Reform Judaism. The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885³ had eight points describing this new movement in Judaism.

The liberalism of Reform Judaism is seen in some of the statements from this document:

- "We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man."

- "We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age..."

- “We recognize in the Mosaic legislation...as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.”
- “We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.”
- “We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason.”
- “We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.”
- “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.”



The *myjewishlearning.com* website comments, “Many of the principles outlined in it were revised – and generally softened – by the leaders of the Reform movement in later documents such as the Columbus Platform (1937), the Centenary Perspective (1976), and the New Pittsburgh Platform (1999).” The fact remains that Reform Judaism is very liberal in its thinking and practice.

Pew Research Center’s landmark 2013 survey of US Jewry tells us this about Reform Judaism in the U.S.

- Only 4 percent of Reform Jews say they attend religious services at least weekly, compared to 11 percent of American Jews overall.
- About 29 percent of Reform Jews say they believe in God with absolute certainty, compared to 41 percent of Conservatives and 89 percent of Orthodox.
- Every year, at least 800-900 people undergo Reform conversions to Judaism, according to the movement’s records, and some 9 percent of all Reform Jews were raised as non-Jews.

• Half of all married Reform Jews have non-Jewish spouses, and 80 percent of those who married between 2000 and 2013 wed non-Jewish spouses.

• About one in three American Jews identify as Reform, the movement being America’s largest Jewish religious denomination.

• Today, about half of newly ordained rabbis are women.

BELIEFS

Once one understands the history of Reform Judaism it is not difficult to grasp their beliefs in a number of areas. Following are some of the beliefs of Reform Judaism that would be of interest to the Bible believing Christian.

God - They believe in God but not the God revealed in the Scriptures.

“Reform Judaism believes in God. This belief has been demonstrated from the earliest days of the movement; specifically, the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885, which said, ‘We hold that Judaism presents the highest concept of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures.’ It was reaffirmed in 1937 in the Columbus Platform: ‘The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love.’ It was reaffirmed yet again in 1976: ‘The affirmation of God has always been essential to our people’s will to survive.’”⁴

Messiah⁵ - There is No Messiah, Just a Messianic Age

“The 1885 Pittsburgh Platform [stating the principles of Reform Judaism] rejected the traditional Jewish hope for an heir of King David to arise when the world was ready to acknowledge that heir as the one anointed (the original meaning of *mashiach*, anglicized into “Messiah”). In the *Avot*, the first [blessing] of the *Amidah* [a central prayer in Jewish liturgy], Reformers changed the prayerbook’s hope for a *go-el*, a redeemer, to *geulah*, redemption...” –Commentary on the Pittsburgh Platform, *ccarnet.org*

Scripture - The scripture (Bible) is an inspiring book but not inspired by God.

Reform Judaism differs from the other major movements in that it views the Scripture as a product of human hands.⁶ This would include the oral law as well as the Bible. For a practitioner of Reform Judaism the Bible is not the inspired, inerrant word of God, although, theoretically, one could believe the Scripture or the Torah (5 books of Moses) are from God, and be in Reform Judaism.

Heaven and Hell - These eternal destinies are usually denied by Reform Judaism.

“Reform Jews believe in the world to come and a messianic age (but no individual Messiah). Personal beliefs in the details of afterlife are diverse, as there is no official position. Some believe in heaven and hell but only as states of consciousness; some believe

in reincarnation; some believe God is all-forgiving; and some may not believe in an actual afterlife. Regardless, Judaism generally focuses on living a virtuous life, rather than working toward reward after death.”⁷

Salvation - As with all forms of Judaism, salvation is earned by one's good works.

“Some people look at these teachings and deduce that Jews try to ‘earn our way into Heaven’ by performing the mitzvot. This is a gross mischaracterization of our religion. It is important to remember that unlike some religions, Judaism is not focused on the question of how to get into heaven. Judaism is focused on life and how to live it. Non-Jews frequently ask me, ‘do you really think you’re going to go to Hell if you don’t do such-and-such?’ It always catches me a bit off balance, because the question of where I am going after death simply doesn’t enter into the equation when I think about the mitzvot.

We perform the mitzvot because it is our privilege and our sacred obligation to do so. We perform them out of a sense of love and duty, not out of a desire to get something in return.

Nevertheless, we definitely believe that your place in the Olam Ha-Ba is determined by a merit system based on your actions, not by who you are or what religion you profess. In addition, we definitely believe that humanity is capable of being considered righteous in G-d’s eyes, or at least good enough to merit paradise after a suitable period of purification.”⁸

LESSONS TO BE APPLIED FOR EVANGELISM

There are a number of things we can learn from understanding Reform Judaism. Since the vast majority of Jewish people in the U.S. embrace the tenets of Reform Judaism, even if they are not a member of a Reform synagogue, it is vital to understand, at least in a small way, the teaching and beliefs of Reform Judaism.

1. The Jewish emphasis on learning (cf. Deut. 6:4-7) historically has centered on God and His commandments. The birth of Reform Judaism in the early 19th century rejected most of the tenets of Orthodox belief, but still held education as an extremely high virtue. So, over the last couple of hundred years Reform Jews have been “religiously” motivated to have their children get a good education. One older study showed the “ratio of Jewish students to their population... estimated that 62 of every 100 ‘college age’ Jewish persons in North America were matriculating at institutions of higher learning, compared with the non-Jewish ratio of 27 out of 100.” Overwhelmingly colleges and universities have become bastions of liberal thought. As someone has said, “garbage in, garbage out.” The reason most Jewish people hold liberal values is that they have left religious teaching and embraced the secularism of the universities they graduated from.

2. The denial (oftentimes) of a personal God, the inerrancy of scripture, a personal Messiah from the Davidic line, and other basic biblical truths make it imperative that the area of apologetics be used in sharing the gospel with Jewish people. Many Jewish

people have been saved as a result of learning about the prophecies about Israel and then the prophecies about the Messiah.

3. Although half of all reform Jews marry Gentiles today there is often a desire to in some way connect with their Jewish heritage. They desire to identify with being Jewish, though not in religious practice or affiliation to a great extent. So oftentimes the biggest problem initially becomes one that is sociological and not theological. That is, “I was born Jewish and I will die Jewish. I will not convert to being a Gentile.”

4. The desire to relate to their Jewishness in some way requires Bible believers to repeatedly state that believing in Jesus is very “Jewish.” Jesus was born in Israel, had a Jewish mother, and was raised in a Jewish home. Beyond that, the Messiah was promised to come by the God of Israel, prophesied about by the Jewish prophets, and revealed in the Jewish Bible. Accepting Jesus as Messiah is actually a very Jewish thing. The best way to accomplish this is to show the prophecies from the Tenach (Old Testament) that speak of the Messiah - i.e. his birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and his life, death, burial and resurrection (Isaiah 53) are two excellent places to start.

When you understand a little about the people you are sharing the gospel with, it is easier to focus your message to communicate more effectively with them. A study of the gospels shows that Jesus used different approaches with Pharisees, Sadducees and others because they had different beliefs. In our evangelism we should change our focus in the same type of way Jesus did to relate and communicate the gospel with a particular person.



END NOTES

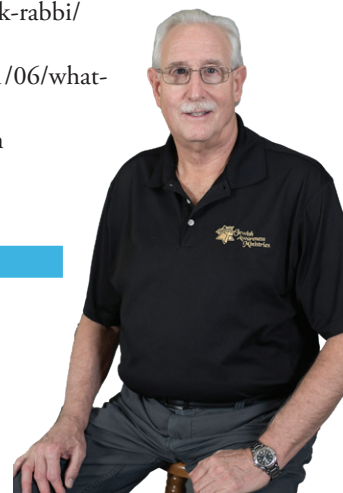
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7. <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/2001/06/what-reform-jews-believe.aspx>
8. <http://www.jewfaq.org/olamhaba.htm>

BY REV. MARK ROBINSON

Executive Director

Jewish Awareness Ministries

Israel's Messenger



MESSIANIC WITNESS

TO ISRAEL



REV. KEN OVERBY

To tailor an evangelistic response to the tenants of Judaism more individually, it is helpful to understand the data on current Jewish identity in the US. Within the religiously affiliated, what denomination of Judaism are you most likely to encounter? “35% are Reform, 18% are Conservative and 10% are Orthodox. Regarding synagogue attendance: 23% of U.S. Jews say they attend

holiday. As you discover a few of these customs via Google and read the biblical origins you will have plenty to discuss. This easily yields opportunities to ask how they view their spiritual standing and then, share your relationship with God with the assurance of scripture. At some point they will recognize and thirst for the reality that you have. Building a pre-evangelistic rapport as a learner before confronting the error of Judaism increases their receptivity. One young Israeli said to me, “You are always telling me things about the Bible I don’t know.” You will be amazed at how little of the Bible most know. Paul says we are to “*provoke*



synagogue at least once or twice a month.”¹ In summary, for every 10 Jewish people you meet, on average only 2-3 attend synagogue regularly. No more than 3 of 10 would say that religion is important in their lives. 2 of 10 would claim to have no religion. At least 5 of 10 will be intermarried or be children thereof.

“American Jews ...have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people... Most U.S. Jews, 62%, say being Jewish is mainly a matter of ancestry and culture, while just 15% say it is mainly a matter of religion.”² Since Jewish identity is a much stronger bond than religious affiliation, it would seem that the common ground for scriptural discussion is minimal. Yes, but fortunately, the strong attachment to Jewish culture, especially around the Biblical festivals, provides many opportunities to interact and ultimately present Jesus as the fulfillment of these types. Connecting these observances to Biblical roots is key. Just start with the information in this issue of *Israel's Messenger* and ask a Jewish friend what, if any, affiliation he or she has. Inquire as to how they keep the next upcoming

them to jealousy,” Romans 11:11. For starters, just show an interest in learning from them.

A comparison of Jesus’ encounters with Pharisees and of Judaism’s tradition today reveals one key common denominator: superseding of the Law of God with the Talmud (Rabbinic Commentary on the Law of Moses and Halacha - laws guiding daily practice). Although the Talmud was not codified until 200 years after Jesus, the oral traditions of rabbis were already on higher footing than the written Law. When

questioned as to why Jesus' disciples did not follow the traditions of the elders, the Gospel of Mark comments that the Pharisees hold *"to the tradition of the elders,"* (7:5). Verse 4 summarizes that, *"many other things there be which they have received to hold."* Jesus rebuked their abrogation of scriptural authority, *"by the commandments of men,"* (7:7). *"For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men,"* (7:8). *"Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition,"* (7:9). He concluded that the result was that it made *"the word of God of none effect through your tradition,"* (7:13). Jesus said this was a "full" rejection of God himself.

How could they have gone so far astray? We see this acted out in the uber-liberal political protests and even violence by millennial undergrads all across our nation. They, like Saul, are zealous to take up the agendas of their professors, and try to silence all opposing ideologies. Man's commandments are "handed down" from sages to zealous ideological youths and "delivered to hold" as "commandments" until they become "tradition." During the Apostle Paul's youth he was trained as a rabbinical student and sat at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He said he was *"taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God,"* Acts 22:3; 26:4. He thought he did God a service by persecuting Jesus' followers. The dogma of man can be dangerous to the spiritual health of people, but they are no match for the doctrines of God fulfilled in Jesus.

So how do you help someone see that their tightly held beliefs are wrong? Condemning their tradition may cause them to hold on more tightly. It seems like an impossible task. Remember what Jesus said to the disciples about reaching difficult, "eye of the needle" types? *"With God all things are possible,"* Mark 10:27. The key is found in the phrase, *"making the word of God of none effect,"* Mark 7:13. Have you ever pulled the trigger on a power tool and nothing happened? If you are more fortunate than I was, no one saw you and offered the words of wisdom, "It'll work better if you plug it in." Remember, *"the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit..."* Hebrews 4:12. Jesus plugged them in to scripture by asking, *"What did Moses command you?"* Mark 10:3. The key is to get them to investigate God's Word as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus. *"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,"* Luke 24:27. We are prone to take the lazy way and just tell them what the scripture says. The most effective way is to show them the scripture. Let the Holy Spirit do the telling.

As to the origin of the "Oral Law," rabbis reach back and read into the Sinai account for retroactive proof. *"So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them. And God spake all these words, saying..."* Exodus 19:25; 20:1. For the next three chapters Moses orally repeats what God had told him. The people agreed to the terms of the covenant before it was recorded. *"Moses wrote all the words of the Lord,"* Exodus 24:4. The argument goes: The Oral Torah had

original authority before the Law was recorded. So as the man-made commandments and traditions began to accumulate, a convenient slot was found to justify the authority of these oral commandments of rabbis. This is how they began *"to teach for doctrines the commandments of men."*

There are three problem passages for the Oral Torah argument. First, during the reign of King Josiah, the high priest Hilkiah said, *"I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord,"* 2 Kings 22:8. If an Oral Torah existed during the time in which they had lost the *"Book of the Law,"* then how is it that they didn't even know what Passover was or how to celebrate it? They only rediscovered it in a dusty copy of the written Law. They renewed the covenant with the Lord and the Passover was observed. Had they forgotten the Oral Torah? No, it simply never existed.

Second, a passage from the Sinai time period establishes that Moses *"wrote all the words of the Lord,"* Exodus 24:3-4a. The Hebrew, Kol Div're Adonai is *"all the words of the Lord."* Moses wrote down every command that God has ever spoken and it was preserved.

The third problem is that Joshua read to the Israelites EVERY word that Moses commanded. *"And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them,"* Joshua 8:34-35. Since Joshua read EVERY word Moses commanded, there was clearly no oral tradition passed down by the rabbis. The Oral Torah/Talmud is merely a rabbinic fabrication of tradition.³

Until the authority of God's Word is established, there can be no recognition of one's sin in light of God's righteousness or expectation of accountability to Him in coming judgment. Paul said, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,"* Romans 10:17. Rather than attacking the Talmud, follow Jesus' pattern. *"Ye have heard it said... but I say unto you,"* (Matthew 5). If the Talmud is brought up, limit your discussion to the written Word.



END NOTES

1. jewishtimes.com/12728/pew-survey-of-u-s-jews/news
2. Pew Research Center. "A Portrait of Jewish Americans." Religion & Public Life. 10/2013 pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/
3. The first two points come from <http://messiahsmantate.org/four-proofs-there-was-no-oral-torah/> Accessed June 22, 2018 and the third point comes from Mark Robinson's teaching on "Answer to Jewish Objections" in his Jewish evangelism course.



CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

REV. KEN OVERBY

“To be conservative means to ‘conserve’ the Jewish traditions in the Torah and Talmud.”

This was the comment of a Conservative rabbi when I asked him to explain his branch of Judaism to me. Only 18% of American Jews follow Conservative Judaism, compared to 35% who are Reform, and 10% who are Orthodox. A review of the history and the denominational distinctives of Conservative Judaism reveals many similarities to the theology of first century Pharisees. Understanding these will better equip our evangelistic approach.

Conservative Judaism began in Germany in the mid nineteenth century as a reaction to Reform Judaism's departure from traditional observances. The removal of the Hebrew language in Reformed synagogues prompted Rabbi Zachariah Frankel from Prague to found the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1854. The movement later flourished in America. Isaac Leeser, Rabbi of Mikveh Israel Synagogue, was the first American leader. (1806-78).¹ Refusing the labels of “Orthodox” or “Reformed,” his adherents self-identified as “traditional Jews,” a phrase I’ve occasionally heard in my interactions. He came to be seen as the prototype of the modern Conservative Rabbi.

The break with Reformed Judaism, according to a Conservative rabbi I talked with, came when the graduation banquet of the Hebrew Union College in 1883 served shrimp cocktails. Many rabbis walked out en masse. They just couldn’t swallow that - literally. The resulting publication of the “Pittsburgh Platform” became Reform Judaism’s Magna Carta. Dr. Solomon Schechter, Hebrew professor at Cambridge, was asked to head The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York in 1897 which became the Conservative movement’s flagship seminary. The seminary principles stated, “...for the preservation in America of the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism, as contained in the laws of Moses and expounded by the prophets and sages of Israel in Biblical and Talmudic writings.”² From the start, both the Tanakh/Old Testament and the Talmud/Rabbinic commentaries had a position of equal authority.

Twenty congregations in NY established The United Synagogue of America in 1919 to promote Conservative Judaism. They declared their purposes as: “loyalty to the Torah and its historic exposition...to preserve in the service the reference to Israel’s past and the hopes for Israel’s restoration...to maintain the traditional character of the liturgy with Hebrew as the language of

prayer...to foster Jewish religious life in the home and to encourage the establishment of Jewish religious schools.”³

“Two keys to understanding the Conservative movement are the ideas of tradition and change.”⁴ In my interview the rabbi distinguished the main difference between the three branches of Judaism thusly; “On one hand, the Orthodox are saying, ‘Don’t separate from the Torah.’ On the other hand, we are commanded not to separate from the congregation. So, given the two extremes, we conservatives cannot allow any Jew to be separated from the people because they are not Orthodox or Reformed. The big tent is the analogy we often use. It (conservatism) basically became the American branch of Judaism.” The doctrines and practices are briefly summarized in the following:

- **GOD** – There is wide range of views from Creator and Judge, to Rabbi Robert Gordis’ view, “We cannot know what God is; we can only feel God’s workings through our world and the people in it.”⁵

- **TORAH** – The Law of Moses

Some Conservative scholars see Torah as limited to an historic revelation and not to be tampered with. The majority view it as progressive revelation through the reinterpreted lens of the rabbis as recorded in the Talmud. Furthermore, every new generation has new insight into ancient truth that is as authoritative as original Torah.

- **HALACHA** - the practical code of Jewish law

Gordis says, “The living Torah builds on Moses’ creation just as an oak tree grows from an acorn. In this way,” he says, “the rules that were made before our time allow us to make rules for our time.”⁶ It is the sole prerogative of the Law Committee of the Rabbinic Assembly to formalize any updates.

- **WORSHIP** - What would a Conservative congregation have looked like in the early days? The required kippah head covering was required for men. Eyebrows would have raised at the specter of men and women worshiping side by side to organ music. These days women are permitted to approach the Bema/pulpit for Torah readings, sing, serve as ushers, and hold office. Women rabbis and cantors began to be ordained in the mid 1980’s.

- **COMMUNITY** - The emphasis has moved from congregational to a community identity. The often-used phrase is *klal yisreal*, or the community of Israel, is all about world Jewish solidarity in the preservation and advancement of the Jewish people, no matter their religious affiliation or lack thereof.

- **SALVATION** - In essence, national and physical salvation is viewed as an act of God in the Exodus Passover and surviving the Holocaust. A local rabbi’s explanation of this position is that the establishment of Israel as a homeland for Jews is an act of salvation by God. Then he said, “We as his hands and feet should be highly involved in supporting Israel.” He implied that salvation is nationally of God but individually maintained by human efforts and is ultimately to be accomplished by the Messiah. There is no necessity for blood atonement for sin in their view. As to cleansing from sin, repentance - “*tshuvah*”, keeping commandments - “*mitzvot*”, and giving to charity - “*tsedekah*” are seen as sufficient.

- **ISRAEL** - From its origin, the Conservative branch has had a Zionist focus to see Israel established, supported and defended - “42% of Conservative congregations have ‘Israel’ programming.”⁷ This loyalty to Israel is waning in the younger generations as the tide of political and theological liberalism has sided with the pro “Palestinian” movement. The average liberal American Jew identifies with the false narrative of western news. After all, how can the only nation of Jews on earth be a provocative Goliath? The cries of a persecuted people claiming the Israelis stole their land resonates deeply in the Jewish experience of persecution and Jewish social justice. This magnetically aligns

their compass with the propaganda of a Holocaust era Palestinian ghetto in Gaza. Jewish association with a Jewish “bully” nation is intolerable. A young Israeli who was fed up with Jewish American criticism of Israel, said to me, “They only liked us when we were weak.” Yet while questioning Israel’s policies, the Conservative branch annually raises millions in support of Israel’s humanitarian and religious goals.

- **RELIGIOUS PRACTICES**

“Officially, Conservative Judaism expects its members to abide by the *mitzvot* [commandments] and lead a life based on *halachah* [Rabbinical law]. In reality, few Conservative people live up to that ideal, and the gap between theory and practice in the Conservative movement is the greatest among any Judaic group.”⁸ Today, Conservative rules have been further loosened way beyond the basic Sabbath allowance of electricity and driving a car, which are no longer viewed as “kindling a fire.” Intermarriage is a fact and divorce can be initiated by the wife. Like sons who may have a Bar Mitzvah at age 13, daughters too may have a Bat Mitzvah – become a daughter of the covenant, at the age of 12. Although keeping a kosher home is encouraged, a 60% intermarriage rate with non -Jews makes that unlikely. I heard one rabbi on a TV panel say, “We used to fear Christians killing us. Now we are more concerned about them marrying us.”

The pious Jews of Jesus’ day would not have approved of such laxity in practice. Remember, Saul of Tarsus was of the “straightest sect,” Pharisee, Acts 26:5, Philippians 3:5. Yet the ancient theology of the Pharisees thrives in Conservative Synagogues. The Pharisees were the only sect of Judaism that survived after 70 AD because the other bodies were primarily Temple centered. Just as they established the synagogue in the Babylonian exile, and pastored congregations in Jesus’ day, they have been the sole preservers of post Temple Rabbinic Judaism for the last two millennia.

A study of Jesus’ confrontations with them and Conservative Judaism of today reveals the identical equality, even superiority, of the traditions over the Torah. Here is a summary:

1. Superseding the Law of God through the traditions of men/Talmud.

Jesus identified the main issue. “*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye,*” Mark 7:7-9, 13.

Although the Talmud was not codified until 500 years after Jesus, the traditions of rabbis back to the

Babylonian exile, known as the Oral Law, were already on an equal, if not higher footing in practice, than the written Law.


2. Focus on external cleanness instead of internal righteousness.

"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity," Matthew 23:26-28. When I asked a young Jewish entrepreneur how Jews become

are forbidden we must answer the call. *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"* Romans 10:14-15.

4. Refusal to believe in a Messiah who would be God in flesh and suffer and die for sins.

which is shed for many for the remission of sins," Matthew 26:28.

The key issue is not what denomination of which religion one belongs to, but whether they have come into right relationship with God through His once and for all, blood sacrifice of Jesus His Son. It is against this perfect Law that man's traditions must be tested. The laws of man can only conform outward actions - religion. The column Messianic Witness, in this issue, will give a more in-depth response to some of the erroneous positions of Conservative Judaism and show how to lead them to a right relationship with God. 



righteousness, he replied, "When we do right on the outside it makes us better on the inside." This illustrates how Paul summarized his former peers, *"ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,"* Romans 10:3. Exposure to the Jewish scriptures on the righteous judgment of God and His required blood atonement are essential.

3. Refusal to believe the works and words of Jesus.

There was plenty of evidence to demand a verdict. *"If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me,"* John 10:24,25. Since reading the words and works of Jesus

They had declared him guilty of blasphemy for claiming to be one with the Father. *"If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God,"* Matthew 27:42-43. Classic passages like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 clearly predicted a dying Messiah. Many passages like Isaiah 9:6 declare Messiah's deity.

5. Rejection of any need for blood atonement

The requirement blood atonement in Leviticus 17:11 was never rescinded. Jesus pronounced His fulfillment of it. *"This is my blood of the new testament,*

END NOTES

1. Rosenthal, Gilbert S. The Many Faces of Judaism. Berman House, Inc. West Orange, New Jersey, 1978.
2. *ibid.* p. 95
3. *ibid.* p. 97
4. *ibid.* p. 105
5. *ibid.* p. 106
6. *ibid.* p. 108
7. Cohen, Stephen M., Lawrence A. Huffman, and Jonathon Ament. Conservative & Reform Congregations in the United States Today: Findings from the FACT-Synagogue 3000 Survey of 2010. Berman Jewish Policy Archive @ NYU Wagner (BJPA), July 2011 <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/download-File.cfm?FileID=2834>
8. *ibid.* p. 113, The Many Faces of Judaism, Gilbert S Rosenthal, Berman House, Inc. West Orange, New Jersey

BY REV. KEN OVERBY

Missionary Representative
Jewish Awareness Ministries



Moshe and Shoshana Gold

A TRIBUTE TO A LIFE OF SERVICE

Moshe and Shoshona Gold, whom many also know by their English names Mike and Lucille Quasha, began their service with Jewish Awareness Ministries in 1996. For 22 years, with most of that time serving the Lord in Israel, they have been a blessing to thousands of people. Moshe and Shoshona's zealously for the truth, sharing the gospel with Jew and Gentile, his unique writing style as he contributed many articles to Israel's Messenger, and his faithful production and voice of the Israel's Messenger radio program through the years blessed many people.

Moshe had a major stroke in November 2013. He not only survived the stroke, but over the next 3½ years, he was slowly on the road to recovery. In September 2017, the shunt that was placed in Moshe failed resulting in an infection that went through his entire body. His physical condition is now at the point that it was impractical to consider a continuing ministry for the Lord and to the Jewish people he desired to see know the forgiveness of sins that is only found through Messiah Jesus.

Thus, effective July 31, 2018, the Golds have officially retired from their service for their Messiah through Jewish Awareness Ministries. In conjunction with the Gold's, Jewish Awareness Ministries is establishing a "Ministry Center" in Israel to continue the work they started years ago. If you would like to know more about this "Ministry Center" and to help establish this center, please contact me.

Moshe and Shoshona will be greatly missed!

Rev. Mark Robinson
Jewish Awareness Ministries
Executive Director



RECONSTRUCTION JUDAISM

BY REV. KEN SYMES

Reconstructionist Judaism is the smallest branch in Judaism today. It is based on a democratic community where the members can make decisions on all issues, not just the Rabbi. It stresses the Jewish culture while religion and doctrinal beliefs are de-emphasized.

ORIGIN

Reconstructionism began in America in 1922. Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan and his son-in-law Rabbi Ira Eisenstein formed the principles that would guide the movement. Rabbi Kaplan's book, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American Jewish Life*, was published in 1935, putting in writing the basic principles of Reconstructionist Judaism. In 1922, Rabbi Kaplan and his group founded The Society for the Advancement of Judaism. Their purpose was to give rabbis the freedom to form new outlooks on Judaism in a more progressive manner. In a conference in Montreal in 1967, the attendees decided to develop a rabbinical school in which rabbis could be ordained under the Reconstructionist ideology and thus form Reconstructionist congregations. The college

opened in Philadelphia, PA in 1968, at which time the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association was established.

THEOLOGY

Reconstructionism rejects the teaching that the Torah (and the entire Tenach) is divinely inspired. It only came from the Jewish people themselves. Thus, they reject the teaching of the Jews being God's uniquely chosen people with a divine purpose. They reject the belief that God intervenes in the affairs of men. Though Rabbi Kaplan taught a belief in God, he taught that God is not personal nor is He a conscious being. Thus, He cannot and does not have any way to relate to or communicate with humanity. In his theology, Kaplan defined God as the sum of all natural processes that allow people to find fulfillment. Thus, most Reconstructionist Jews reject traditional forms of theism.

Theology is not the cornerstone of the movement. Much more central is the concept that Judaism is a civilization, and that the Jewish people are to take an active role in ensuring its future by participating in its ongoing evolution.

Continued on page 17.



ORTHODOX JUDAISM

REV. DAN BERGMAN

Although the biblical period before the Jewish people returned from Babylonian captivity is linked with “modern Orthodox Judaism,” it differs in many ways from Abraham’s worship of the Creator, Moses’ giving of the Law, and David’s dynamic relationship with the God of Israel. Our journey begins when the Jewish people were allowed to return to Israel and Judah from their captivity in the land of Babylon. The following dates are approximate for sake of simplicity.

PRECURSORS TO MODERN ORTHODOX JUDAISM

400 B.C. - JUDAISM OF THE RETURN

According to Dr. Louis Goldberg, “The development of what we know today as the basic traditional practice of Judaism took place during the period of 400 B.C. to 500 A.D.”¹

Ezra had a large part to play in this transitional period. The Jewish people had just returned to Israel from Babylon. They brought with them many differences in culture and understanding. They now were better versed in Aramaic than Hebrew, and were in need of scholars, teachers and scribes to help them understand the Scriptures and teachings of their ancestors. Because of this need, *Sopherim*, “men of the book,” were trained and commissioned by Ezra to teach the people. They became the religious leaders of this era.

200 B.C. - HASMONITE JUDAISM

In this period, there was great conflict and war in the land of Israel. During this period the events that led to the holiday of Hanukkah occurred. Antiochus

Epiphanies of Syria attempted to overtake Israel and setup his own Hellenistic worship system in Jerusalem. He was eventually defeated in a revolt led by the Maccabee family. The Maccabee family eventually became the ruling dynasty in Israel until Rome invaded in 63 B.C. It was at this time the religious leaders who had descended in function from the *Sopherim* of Ezra’s day were called the *Hasidim* or “the pious ones.”

100 B.C. - PHARISEES AND SADUCEES

By 135 B.C. two primary, but different, different Jewish parties, or religious groups, arose in Judaism: Pharisees and Sadducees. The *Parushim* or “pure ones” (Pharisees) were in opposition to the priestly ruling class party of the *Tzadoksim* or “the descendants of Zadok.” Do you remember Zadok? He was a Levitical priest who descended from Aaron and Eliezer who lived in the time of David. The Sadducees claimed to be descended from him. They were the priestly party and were the Temple custodians. They didn’t accept the oral tradition, or believe in the resurrection of the dead.

The Pharisees, in contrast, were the party of the people. They wanted purity, a biblical foundation, and righteousness. They believed in the supernatural (including the resurrection), but due to their zeal for righteousness, greatly and wrongfully emphasized the traditions and man-made interpretations of Scripture, so as to avoid error and corruption. To use modern terms, they wanted to “build a fence” around God’s commands to help them avoid even the possibility of breaking one. Their intentions were good at the onset, but the fence soon replaced not only the commands themselves, but also the biblical need to have a circumcised heart.²

30 A.D - JUDAISM IN JESUS’ DAY

The Sadducees and Pharisees are prominent in the gospel accounts of the New Testament. They were normally as opposed to each other as Democrats and Republicans are today. They did agree on one thing: neither group accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Although we read primarily of Pharisees accepting Jesus and not Sadducees – Nicodemus, John 3:1-10, who later defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin, John 7:50-51, and was present at Jesus’ crucifixion to help bury Jesus, John 19:39; many of the early Christians were Pharisees, Acts 15:5; and the Apostle Paul, Philippians 3:5. There were other groups at this time as well such as the Essenes.

70 A.D - THE DIASPORA: MODERN ORTHODOX JUDAISM IS BORN

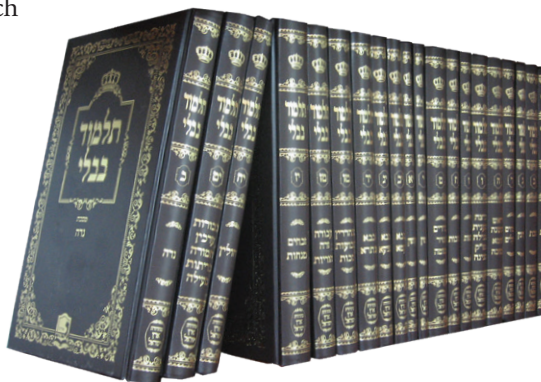
With the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Sadducees died out as a religious party. The *Parushim* however, flourished. Pharisaism was now, for all intents and purposes, Judaism, and Judaism, Pharisaism. All of Judaism today therefore, is descended from the Pharisaism of the first century.

“Orthodox Judaism” as it came to be called, was the *only* Judaism for centuries (although it wasn’t always designated as “Orthodox”). If you practiced “Judaism,” you were “Orthodox.” It wasn’t until the

more liberal segments of Judaism split off of the mainstream, that the original group became known as “Orthodox.” German Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, was one of the leading opponents of liberal Judaism in his day. He wrote in 1854: “It was not ‘Orthodox’ Jews who introduced the word ‘orthodox’ into Jewish discussion. It was the modern ‘progressive’ Jews who first applied the name to ‘old,’ ‘backward’ Jews as a derogatory term. This name was resented by ‘old’ Jews. And rightfully so.”³

The word “orthodox” comes from two Greek words meaning “right opinion.” The term “Orthodox” soon grew on the traditional Jewish crowd, and eventually brought about even a sense of pride that they had the correct set of beliefs and practices, and still held to them even when others have strayed.

A nonprofit organization called *My Jewish Learning* gives us an interesting look at the demographics within Orthodox Judaism. “Though it is by far the smallest grouping within American Judaism, Orthodoxy is demographically strong. According to a 2015 Pew analysis, Orthodox Jews are younger on average than the broader Jewish community...they tend to have more children... and they have low attrition rates. According to Pew, 83 percent of Jews under 30 who were raised Orthodox are still Orthodox.”



BELIEFS

Beliefs within Orthodox Judaism vary, but the main principles are categorized within The Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith as written by the 12th century Rabbi, Moses ben Maimon, better known

as Maimonides:

1. The Creator is the Creator and Guide of all the created beings, and that He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.

2. The Creator is One and Alone; that there is no oneness in any way like Him. He alone is our G-d – was, is and will be.

3. The Creator is incorporeal; that He is free from all anthropomorphic properties. He has no likeness at all.

4. The Creator is the first and the last.

5. The Creator is the only one to whom it is proper to pray, and that it is inappropriate to pray to anyone else.

6. All the words of the Prophets are true.

7. The prophecy of Moses our teacher was true; and that he was the father of the prophets, both of those who preceded and of those who followed him.

8. The whole Torah which we now possess was given to Moses, our teacher.

9. This Torah will not be changed, and that there will be no other Torah given by the Creator.

10. The Creator knows all the deeds and thoughts of human beings.

11. The Creator rewards those who observe His commandments, and punishes those who transgress them.

12. I believe with complete faith in the coming of Moshiach (Messiah), and although he may tarry, nevertheless, I wait every day for him to come.

13. I believe with complete faith that there will be resurrection of the dead at the time when it will be the will of the Creator.

What you see within these statements is the closest thing Judaism has to “Articles of

Faith.” Items not mentioned and/or dealt with here are certainly up for debate and varying interpretations. Even items mentioned here are interpreted in a wide variety of ways.

Orthodox belief in God as the Creator does not necessitate that He created everything in six literal, 24-hour days, nor does it mean He created everything out of nothing.⁴ If we would think, “they’re just like us,” regarding a literal interpretation of Scripture, we would in many cases be incorrect. Many core beliefs that we have as Bible believing Christians are not necessarily hard and fast within Orthodox Judaism. Much of what you and I hold as fundamental doctrinal beliefs are generalized or taken symbolically within Orthodox Judaism. Many spiritual truths are thought of as poetic generalities such as there being none righteous.⁵ Even the idea of hell as we understand it is interpreted in many different ways within Orthodox Judaism.

According to *JewFaq.org*, “It is possible for an Orthodox Jew to believe that the souls of the righteous dead go to a place similar to the Christian heaven, or that they are reincarnated through many lifetimes, or that they simply wait until the coming of the messiah, when they will be resurrected. Likewise, Orthodox Jews can believe that the souls of the wicked are tormented by demons of their own creation, or that wicked souls are simply destroyed at death, ceasing to exist.”

Within Orthodox Judaism a great emphasis is placed upon the Law or Torah. It should be noted, that when speaking of the Torah, both the “written Torah” and the “Oral Torah” are implied. This is in reference to the rabbinic writings such as the *Mishna* and the *Gemara* which make up the Talmud and give the interpretation of the written Torah. Both are thought to be divine. There is a great emphasis on tradition as well as the physical realm. Much of what doesn’t fit into those two categories is secondary in importance. The main difference between the Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox (or Hassidic Jews) is the degree that they separate themselves from the outside world so as to avoid defilement.

PRACTICES

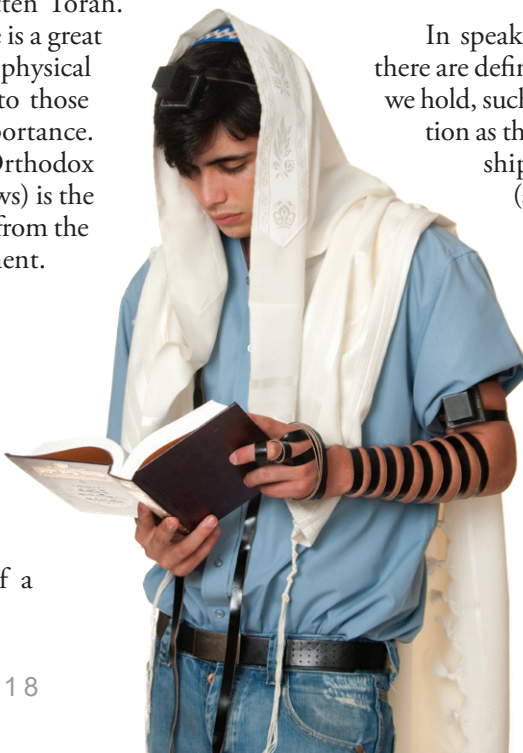
There are many different practices within Orthodox Judaism. The following is not an exhaustive list, and describes the practices of the average Orthodox individual:

- Circumcision: the removal of a male’s foreskin at 8 days of age.
- Keeping kosher: following the Mosaic dietary laws.
- Keeping the Sabbath: refraining from anything understood as “work” from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.
- Wrapping *tefillin*: worn (mostly by men) during weekday morning prayers. They are small boxes containing Scripture and are connected to leather straps. One is placed on the forehead, and the other is placed on the arm (usually left) with the strap wrapped 7 times around the arm, and then a specific way around the hand and fingers⁶ (pictured below).
- Keeping the feasts of Israel, and the various traditions associated with each feast.
- Wearing *tzitzit*: ritual fringes attached to either a prayer shawl, or undergarment.
- Wearing a head covering which is only worn by the men.
- Performing “*mitzvot*”: Mitzvot means commandments. “Doing *mitzvot*” is doing good deeds.
- Attending Synagogue: This predates the destruction of the Temple, and is foundational in Jewish life. Most, but not all will be segregated by gender with the men being separate from the women in the congregation. Ritual sacrifice is replaced with Torah readings, prayer, and teaching. Synagogue is normally attended on the Sabbath and the holy (or feast) days.
- Bar & Bat Mitzvah: a “coming of age” ceremony when a boy of 13 or a girl of 12 is recognized by Rabbinical law as an adult. Orthodox Judaism has historically only had bar (boy) mitzvahs and not bat (girl) mitzvahs. This is starting to change in the Orthodox world.

HOW TO SHARE MESSIAH WITH THEM


In speaking with an Orthodox Jew, there are definitely common beliefs which we hold, such as God’s existence and position as the Creator, the divine authorship of the Hebrew Scriptures (at least the first 5 books), and that those Scriptures teach of a coming Messiah.

It is best in witnessing to any Jewish person, that it be done tactfully and respectfully – using the common beliefs that we hold as “springboards” or points of discussion. As mentioned earlier in this article, even within the Orthodox



movement itself, there are so many varying beliefs. This is why it is very helpful to ask questions! Your Orthodox friend may believe in a personal Messiah, or he may entirely reject the divine authorship of the prophets. You will never know where he stands until you ask! Once you find out where his individual beliefs lie, you will know how to proceed. For instance, if he feels that the prophets don't hold much weight, you can show him prophecies about the coming Messiah from the books of Moses (the Torah).⁷

In general, Orthodox Jews have a very high reverence for God and His Word, and a belief in a coming Messiah. This is very advantageous in sharing with them the truths regarding the Messiah.

When we view Jewish people within the mainstream of traditional rabbinic Judaism, we will be able to see a very real and tangible history of transition, teachings, and tradition that will bridge the gap between Sunday school stories and synagogue. May we in light of this understanding, be better equipped to share Jesus the Messiah with these for whom Jesus died! 

END NOTES

1. Louis Goldberg, *Our Jewish Friends*, (Chicago, IL, Moody 1977) p.10
2. Deuteronomy 10:16 and Jeremiah 4:4 both emphasize a right heart inclined to seek and obey the Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8 that the Pharisees honored God with their lips, but that their heart was far from Him.
3. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/orthodox-judaism/>
4. Angel, Marc. Leon Klenicki and Geoffrey Wigoder, ed. *A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (Paulist Press. 1995) p. 40
5. Psalm 14:3 *"There is none that doeth good, no not one."*
6. This is taught as how to fulfill Deuteronomy 6:8 *"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."*
7. Genesis 3:15; 12:3; Chapter 18 & 19; 22:8-14; and 49:10 are all great passages to discuss the coming of the Messiah, and God taking on flesh.



BY REV. DAN BERGMAN

Campus Ministries Director
Jewish Awareness Ministries

BELIEFS

1. Judaism is the result of human development, not revelation. There is no such thing as divine intervention. Judaism is an evolving religious civilization.
 2. God is defined as the sum of natural powers and processes that can give man self-fulfillment and moral improvement. They deny there is a God who has a plan for His creation that He is working out through history.
 3. The traditional view that God reveals His will to humans is rejected as supernaturalism.
 4. Their goal is to make Judaism as relevant as possible to the present generation. They generally reject traditional Judaism relegating it to the dustbins of archaeology.
 5. Because there is no God who intervenes in the affairs of men, they reject the concept of sin and accountability to a holy God. For most adherents of Reconstructionism, there is no solid concept of a heaven or a hell, so the idea of life after physical death is denied by most of its followers.
- They believe that western secular morality has precedence over Jewish law and theology, teaching that Jewish law (Torah) is only "folkways."

JEWISH IDENTITY

Reconstructionist Judaism allows its rabbis to determine whether, or not, they will officiate in interreligious marriages. Many of their congregations accept any child of a Jewish parent, either father or mother, if the child is being raised as Jewish. Intermarriage couples (Jewish and Gentile) are welcomed by all Reconstructionist congregations.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

Some years ago, I was sharing the Lord in Sebring, FL with one of my co-workers. As we had a Hebrew/Christian Bible study that evening, we went to a restaurant for dinner. While paying the bill, my coworker engaged a man in conversation. As I walked up the man said to my co-worker, "You sound like one of those people that believes the Bible." He answered that he was. At that point, I introduced myself and said to him, "I, too, believe the Bible to be true and I can prove it with just one word that only has three letters." He was skeptical and asked me what the word was. I told him, "It is J E W." I did not know that the man was Jewish. We learned later that he was. He responded, "How so?" I pointed out that what has happened throughout history to the Jewish people was foretold by the prophets of Israel. That led me to say to him that this proves that God is for real and I asked him, "Have you ever wondered why you were born?" Turning to Psalm 16:11 the door was open for me to share with him the gospel. He heard the gospel and accepted our literature. This was a onetime opportunity. We pray we will see him in heaven.

Information from Reconstructionism: Britannica online Encyclopedia; and Reconstructionist Judaism: Wikipedia

Israel's Messenger | Fall 2018

BY REV. MARK ROBINSON

The ultra-orthodox sect of Judaism, also known as *Haredi* (hah-RAY-dee) which means “in awe of” or “fearing” God, is far from being a monolithic entity. The two major groups are the *Mitnagdim*, - “the opposers,” and the *Hasidim* (khah-SID-ee), which means “pious ones.”

Hasidic Judaism was founded in the mid- 18th century in Eastern Europe. *Mitnagdim* was composed of the existing rabbis at the birth of Hasidic Judaism and opposed it. Today the differences between the two are negligible and they co-exist. The term *Mitnagdim* in the modern Jewish world is generally not used and these non-hasidic, ultra-orthodox are referred to as *Yeshivish*.

Each group consists of many different groups. For example, some of the Hasidic sects are Belz, Biala, Bluzev, Bobov, Breslov, Ger, Karliner, Klousenberg, Lubavitch, Munkatch, Sanz, Satmar, Skver, Slonim, Spinka, Toldos Aharon, Viznitz, and Zviller.

One writer commented on these groups as follows:

“There are plenty of ultra-Orthodox non-Hasidic people who don’t fit under the Yeshivish umbrella, but a significant percentage does. And while there are many sub-sects within the Yeshivish community (as the joke goes — two Jews, three opinions), the Yeshivish community is at least as homogenous as the Hasidic community, which manages to stretch wide enough to encompass sub-groups as divergent as Satmar and Lubavitch, Belz and Breslov. One might even say that the Yeshivish community is as homogenous as a single Hasidic sect like the deeply fractured Satmar Hasidim.”¹

Although there are many different sects in ultra-orthodox Judaism, there is more common ground than differences, especially, when it comes to beliefs.

All ultra-orthodox groups will hold strongly to separation from a secular way of life, have a devotion to the written and oral law, with a major emphasis on the oral law, believing in the inspiration of the Torah, acceptance of basic doctrines such as resurrection, after-life, angels, etc.

The largest sect, as many as 200,000 worldwide, among *Hasidic* Judaism, is the Lubavitch, which is the main group that is anti-missionary in opposing witness to Jewish people about Jesus as Messiah. Lubavitch is also commonly referred to as Chabad (חב"ד) which is a Hebrew acronym for *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Da'at* (חכמה, בינה, דעת): “Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge.”

Chabad rejects the title of “ultra-orthodox.” They claim to be “orthodox” as “ultra” can speak of a fringe type of radical group. They see themselves as standard Judaism. The use of “ultra-orthodox” used in this article, and by many when describing groups such as Chabad, is that “ultra” speaks of their devotion to Judaism and its practice. The term, as used here, is not intended to be denigrating in any way.

As with many ultra-orthodox groups, Chabad rabbis are highly revered. Oftentimes there is a slavish devotion



SCHNEERSON PICTURED AS “KING MESSIAH” IN AN ISRAELI POSTER

to the teaching of these rabbinic leaders. For years, the primary Lubavitch leader, “the Rebbe,” Menachem Mendel Schneerson, was, virtually, idolized. Many of his followers claimed Schneerson was the Messiah.

Schneerson died in 1994 at the age of 90. In April 1993, with Schneerson very sick, an article was written titled “*What Happens if the Rebbe Dies?*” Interestingly, Isaiah 53 is quoted to claim Schneerson is the Messiah.

“The Rebbe’s ill-health only accelerated the messianic fervor in the community. ‘The fact that the Rebbe cannot speak is a sign that redemption is near,’ says Rabbi David Nachshon, who heads the *mitzvah*-tank campaign in Israel. He eagerly presents texts, such as Isaiah 53:3-7 to show that the Rebbes inability to speak is a sign that he is God’s chosen who was ‘a man of suffering, familiar with disease.’”

After his death in 1994, other articles followed claiming he was Messiah. There was a belief that as Isaiah 53 spoke of the death and resurrection of Messiah (verses 8-10), these verses will be fulfilled when Schneerson rises from the grave. To this day there are some in Chabad who still wait for Schneerson’s resurrection from the grave based on Isaiah 53. In 2009 an article by Tomer Persico titled “*Chabad’s Lost Messiah: Why the Lubavitcher Rebbe believed he was the Chosen One,*” detailed those who still believed Schneerson is the Messiah. Earlier, in 2004, the Chabad Lubavitch website offered a *halachic* ruling (rabbinic law) titled, “The rabbinical Legislation affirming the Messianic sovereignty of His Mjesty King Moshiach rabbi M. M. Shnaiorson the Lubavitch’er Rebbe may he live forever,” [spelling as in the original ruling]. The ruling ended by declaring:

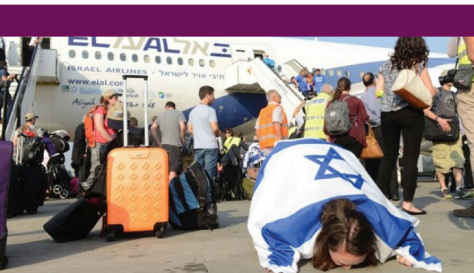
“In light of these statements, and in light of the Rebbe’s encouragement of the proclamation “*Yechi Adoneinu*”, it is incumbent on every single Jew to heed the Rebbe’s words and believe that he is indeed King Moshiach, who will be revealed imminently.”

There are those in Chabad who reject this belief in Schneerson as Messiah after waiting for almost 24 years for his resurrection. Other ultra-orthodox groups reject Schneerson as being Messiah. The sad fact, though, is many still cling to this hope, and, they use passages such as Isaiah 53 to prove their belief.

If you ever have the opportunity to share Messiah Jesus with an a Lubavitch or other ultra-orthodox Jew use Isaiah 53 to show that Jesus did everything that passage prophesied about. Isaiah 53 was written to help us identify the Messiah. Even the Lubavith acknowledge this when they erroneously claim Menachem Mendel Schneerson fulfilled these verses. How amazing that one can be so close to the truth, yet so distant, when they claim Isaiah 53 speaks of the Messiah and his resurrection.

END NOTES

1. forward.com/schmooze/198955/why-i-use-yeshivish/



SHADOWS OF THE TRIBULATION

REV. MARK ROBINSON

The Israeli government recently reported that the majority of Jewish people, 6.6 million, now live in Israel. This is the first time since the founding of Israel in 1948 that this is true. Immigration Minister Sofa Landver reported to the Knesset's Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs that Israel had taken America's place as home to the world's largest Jewish population.¹

The importance of this resonates in the many prophecies about Jewish people returning to the land of Israel and establishing a nation prior to the Tribulation period.

“GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER, YEA, GATHER TOGETHER, O NATION NOT DESIRED; BEFORE THE DECREE BRING FORTH, BEFORE THE DAY PASS AS THE CHAFF, BEFORE THE FIERCE ANGER OF THE LORD COME UPON YOU, BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD'S ANGER COME UPON YOU. ZEPHANIAH 2:1-2

The birth of Israel in 1948, a “nation not desired,” is the one prophecy establishing that we are living in the “last days.” Until the 70th week of Daniel (the Tribulation period) starts, Israel will continue to see more and more of her people return to the land and re-born nation. There are about 170 references in the Bible about God's promise of the land of Israel and the Jews being an eternal relationship and intrinsically united. Ezekiel 37:21 tells of the (still) future day when God will bring all the Jewish people back to the land of Israel.

“And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.”

The religious in Israel recognize the importance of this milestone event. In Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz' article for Breaking Israel News, he writes:

“‘Having a majority of Jews in Israel creates a different halachic (Torah law) reality, requiring Jews to perform certain mitzvot (Torah commandments) they have not had to perform in 2,000 years,’ Rabbi Hillel Weiss, spokesman for the nascent Sanhedrin, said to Breaking

Israel News. Rabbi Weiss explained that this condition of a majority of Jews in Israel was anticipated in prophecy as the final return of the Jews to Israel. It is referred to as the third inheritance of the land, the first being by Joshua, the second after the Babylonian exile.

The third inheritance refers to Jews' prophesied return from the exile that followed the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Jewish tradition holds that this return will usher in the building of the Third Temple, the return of the Davidic Dynasty, and the messianic era.

‘But this is not something that will just happen,’ Rabbi Weiss said. ‘The Jews returned to Israel in order to pave the way for the Meshiach.’”

Rabbi Weiss, in the article, additionally stated, “When a majority of Jews live in Israel, Jews are required to count the 50-year Jubilee cycle, a mitzvah (Torah commandment) the Sanhedrin reinstituted almost two years ago. Having a majority of the Jews in Israel will also require the distribution of land and the return of Jewish tribal identity as described by the Prophet Ezekiel. *‘And it shall come to pass that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you and to the strangers that sojourn among you,’* Ezekiel 47:21-22.”


There will be 144,000 Jewish males, 12,000 from each tribe, who will bring the message of redemption through Messiah Jesus to the entire world in the Tribulation period. Today, the twelve tribes are being brought back to the land of Israel by the God of Israel.

Rabbi David Katz, author of *Laws of Ger Toshav: Pious of the Nations*, commented in the article:

“‘Everyone agrees that Moshiah ben Yosef is here,’ Rabbi Katz said, referring to the first stage in the Messiah that Judaism believes pave the way in practical means for the second, more transcendent stage, referred to as Moshiah ben David. ‘We need to break through this klippah (barrier, literally shell) of exile mentality in order to go to the next level.’”

The next level that Rabbi Katz refers to is the building of the Temple and its central place in the worship of Jehovah in his understanding.

“The statistics will not make these changes,” Rabbi Katz said. “Any change in this approach would have to come from the Temple Mount, not from the exile and not from the political framework which includes the Chief Rabbinate.”

I believe the return of the Lord is very close! 

END NOTES

1. <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/110564/messianic-tipping-point-majority-jews-israel/>

Above: A woman kisses the ground after “making aliyah” (immigrating to Israel)



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Sunday יום ראשון	Monday יום שני	Tuesday יום שלישי	Wednesday יום רביעי	Thursday יום חמישי	Friday יום שישי	Saturday יום שבת
				1 Cheshvan 21	2 Cheshvan 22	3 Cheshvan 23
4 Cheshvan 24	5 Cheshvan 25	6 Cheshvan 26	7 Cheshvan 27	8 Cheshvan 28	9 Cheshvan 29	10 Cheshvan 30
11 Cheshvan 31	12 Cheshvan 1	13 Cheshvan 2	14 Cheshvan 3	15 Cheshvan 4	16 Cheshvan 5	17 Cheshvan 6
18 Cheshvan 7	19 Cheshvan 8	20 Cheshvan 9	21 Cheshvan 10	22 Cheshvan 11	23 Cheshvan 12	24 Cheshvan 13
25 Cheshvan 14	26 Cheshvan 15	27 Cheshvan 16	28 Cheshvan 17	29 Cheshvan 18	30 Cheshvan 19	1 Kislev 20



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