

JUDAISM -- THE RELIGION

(THIS IS AN OUTLINE FOR THE STUDY, NOT THE COMPLETE TEXT.)

I..PRE – TEMPLE JUDAISM

A. ARCHAIC ERA: ABRAHAM to MOSES c. 1900–1250 BC

1. YAHWEH INSTITUTES THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM. **Genesis 12: 1-9.**
2. MONOTHEISM, WORSHIP OF YAHWEH
3. NO FORMAL ORGANIZATION, no priesthood
4. NO HOUSE OF WORSHIP, shrines & altars
5. NO LAWS OR SCRIPTURE, Yahweh communicates with Patriarchs personally or through angels
6. MIGRATION TO EGYPT, ENSLAVEMENT

B. TABERNACLE ERA: MOSES to DAVID c. 1250–961 BC

1. EXODUS & WILDERNESS WANDERING (1250–1210 BC)

Tabernacle is portable, in several locations

Shrines are also used, and non-priests offer sacrifices.

[Moses *meses* is an Egyptian name that means “to bear” or “to beget”. It is also the name of the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus, Rameses. Ra was the oldest Egyptian deity, the sun god. Rameses means “begotten of Ra”, which makes pharaoh a deity]

PASSOVER INSTITUTED
CIRCUMCISION FORMALIZED
LAW GIVEN

TABERNACLE BUILT, Portable, formal worship & sacrifice center

PRIESTHOOD ESTABLISHED

Levitical service, from Tribe of Levi. Also called Aaronic priesthood, from 1st high Priest Aaron (brother of Moses)

SABBATH INSTITUTED Lev. 23:1-3

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS 7 INSTITUTED

SPRING

Passover Lev. 23:4-5 *Pesach* in Hebrew “to step over”

14th day of the first month **Nisan**

Exodus 12: 1-27; 40-49; Lev. 23:4-5.

[Lamb to be observed from 10th to 14th to insure it has no blemish—Jesus entered Jerusalem on the 10th and led the Passover supper with His disciples on the 14th – crucified the next morning]

Unleavened Bread Lev. 23: 6-8

First Fruits Lev. 23: 9–14 17th of **Nisan**

[3 days after Passover, during Unleavened Bread. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the **first fruits** of them that slept..." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the **first fruits**, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." [1 Cor. 15:20,23].

Pentecost / Weeks Lev. 23: 15–21

[Acts 2: the Church is established on Pentecost]

AUTUMN

Rosh HaShanah or Feast of Trumpets

Leviticus 23:23-25 [The trumpet is part of Christ's return]

The Day of Atonement / Yom Kippur:

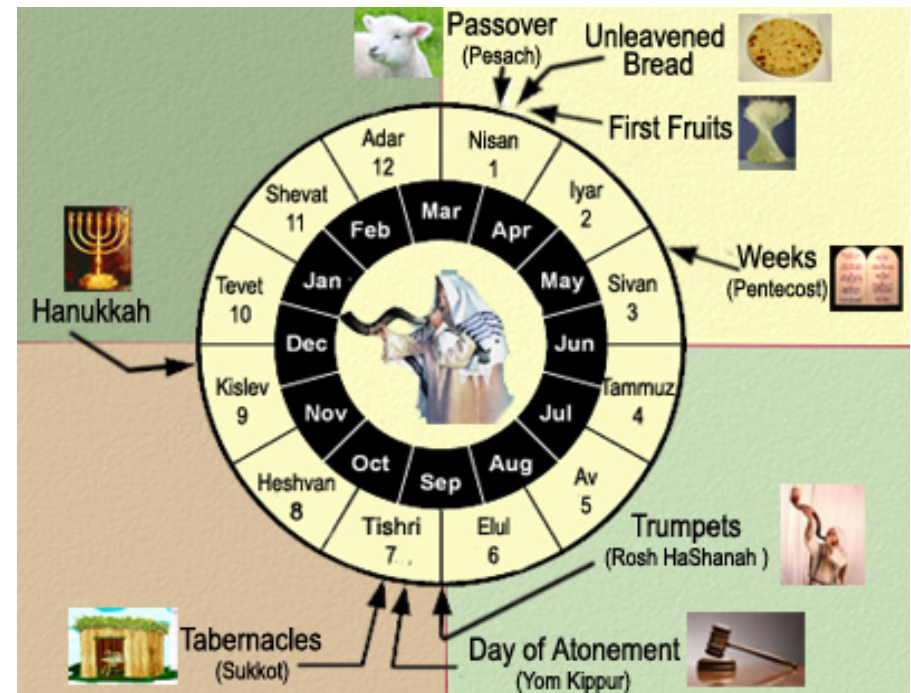
Leviticus 23:26-32]

Sukkot or The Feast of Tabernacles: Leviticus 23:33-43

Jesus was in Jerusalem for Tabernacles, John 7: 2-14.

2. CONQUEST OF CANAAN, PERIOD OF THE JUDGES (1210—1020 BC)

3. KINGDOM ESTABLISHED, SAUL and DAVID (1020—961 BC)



II. TEMPLE ERA: SOLOMON to 70 A.D.

A. SOLOMON'S FIRST TEMPLE, Jerusalem is center UNITED KINGDOM ruled by SOLOMON (961-922)

1. TEMPLE ERECTED by SOLOMON
2. JUDAISM FULLY IMPLEMENTED

PRIESTHOOD, LEVITES

WORSHIP ONLY AT TEMPLE

SACRIFICES OFFERED

7 CALENDAR OBSERVANCES

3 PILGRIMAGE FESTIVALS

ALL MALE ISRAELITES TO APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD AT THE TEMPLE 3 TIMES A YEAR: Each man had to lay his own hands on his sacrifice as observance of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. (Ex. 34:18-23; Acts 2: 1-13) Three times each year, all your males shall thus be seen in the presence of God your Lord in the place that He will choose: on the festival of matzahs, on the festival of Shavuot, and on the festival of Sukkot. **You shall not appear before God empty-handed.** (Deut. 16: 16)

DIVIDED KINGDOM: ISRAEL and JUDAH

ISRAEL – NORTHERN KINGDOM (922-722 BC)

Jeroboam led revolt against Davidic king, established independent kingdom with capital in Samaria. (I Kings 12) Set up worship in Mount Gerazim as alternative to Jerusalem Temple. (I Kings 12: 27-33) ***I Kings 11: 29-37 tells that Yahweh gave the 10 northern tribes to Jeroboam because of Solomon's sin in worshipping false gods of the Canaanites.***

Israel fell to Assyrians in 722 BC; many inhabitants were deported and replaced by foreigners who intermarry with remaining Jews to form the "Samaritans", hated by Jews in Judah. Samaritans and Jews did not interact, though Samaritans did believe in a coming Messiah. (John 4: 8-26)

JUDAH – SOUTHERN KINGDOM ruled by DAVIDIC LINE (922-587 BC)

Legitimate ***Davidic lineage is ancestry of Jesus.***

Legitimate priesthood

Jerusalem is the only legitimate center of worship. Temple worship continued the sacrificial system.

JERUSALEM FELL TO BABYLONIANS IN 587.
SOLOMON'S TEMPLE DESTROYED.

LARGE POPULATION CARRIED TO EXILE IN BABYLON during 3 deportations over 20 years (including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. (Daniel 1:6)

EXILE IN BABYLON 587-538 With no Temple as center of worship, Jews in exile invented a new religious institution: the synagogue. Some believe parts of the Torah were written during this period.

B. SECOND TEMPLE

PERSIAN ERA

1. RETURN FROM EXILE 538 BC (Ezra 1: 1-4). Persians had conquered Babylonians. King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Judah and gave them the vessels taken from the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587.
2. 2nd TEMPLE BUILT on Temple Mount DEDICATED 515 B.C. (Ezra 3-6, prophets Haggai and Zechariah)
3. PRIESTHOOD and OBSERVANCES RESTORED (Ezra 6:16-19)
4. PURIM INTRODUCED – ESTHER

GREEK ERA

5. ALEXANDER THE GREAT conquered Palestine 333 B.C. Introduced Hellenistic culture and Greek gods and made *Koiné* Greek the official language throughout his empire which stretched from Egypt to India. ***(Linguistic unity prepares the way for Christianity.)***

DIASPORA BEGINS DURING GREEK DOMINANCE.

*Synagogues established throughout the Greco-Roman world. To satisfy demand of Jews who had adopted Greek, Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek by a team of 70 scholars in Alexandria, Egypt – the *Septuagint*.*

6. PALESTINE RULED BY THE PTOLEMIES, 323-198 B.C.
7. PALESTINE RULED BY THE SELEUCIDS, 198-164 B.C.
8. DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE, 167 B.C.

JEWISH INDEPENDENCE

9. MACCABEAN REVOLT -- Miracle of the Oil & cleansing / rededication of the Temple are basis for Hanukkah: Festival of Dedication / Lights. **Jesus attended the Festival of Dedication, John 10:22.**
10. MACCABEAN & HASMONEAN DOMINANCE – independent Palestine

ROMAN ERA

11. ROMANS GAIN CONTROL OF PALESTINE 63 B.C.
Herod the Great refurbished the Temple which is sometimes called Herod's Temple.
12. JEWISH REVOLT IN 70 A.D. 2ND TEMPLE DESTROYED.
Vessels and furnishings carried to Rome by Titus, who became emperor shortly after.

III. POST-TEMPLE ERA: RABBINIC JUDAISM

A. ROMAN ERA 63 B.C.–c. 500 A.D.

63 B.C. ROMANS GAIN CONTROL OF PALESTINE

70 A.D. JEWISH REVOLT 2ND TEMPLE DESTROYED

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE IS THE END:

OF JEWISH SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

OF ANY DESCENDANT OF DAVID ON THE THRONE

JUDAISM FROM THIS POINT IS BASED ON:

SYNAGOGUES AS CENTER OF WORSHIP

RABBIS AS THE LEADERSHIP

TANACH (*Law/Torah + Writings + Prophets*) + RABBINICAL WRITINGS

(*much of it produced in Greek instead of Hebrew*) AS SOURCE OF

AUTHORITY

125 A.D. 2nd Jewish Revolt

JUDAISM WAS A PROTECTED RELIGION

313 A.D. Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity

315 A.D. Constantine decreed that Jews were not allowed to proselytize.

Fearing persecution, Jews forbade Christians to continue to use synagogues as meeting places.

395 Christianity was made the legal religion in the Roman Empire. The Church initiated a campaign to convert Jews or demonize them as “Christ-killers.” Jews were deprived of civil rights; Church Fathers, including St. Augustine, declared Jews were “outcasts” for failing to accept redemption by Christ; Jews’ dispersion was regarded as punishment for their unbelief.

ROMAN ERA in the East lasted until 1453 A.D. in the successor BYZANTINE EMPIRE with some persecution and limitations on Jews from early 500s.

B. MIDDLE AGES c. 500–1500

622 A.D. ISLAM EMERGED IN ARABIA. Jews enjoyed toleration as “People of the Book”.

800 A.D. Christians’ campaign to reconquer Spain from Moorish control becomes a campaign to also rid Spain of Jews, viewed “infidels” along with Muslims.

1095 A.D. POPE URBAN II CALLED FOR CRUSADE TO “LIBERATE” THE HOLY LAND FROM MUSLIM CONTROL Crusaders marching through Europe attacked Jewish communities, killing and robbing in the name of Christ.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES Some nations in western Europe expelled Jews from their territory or restricted their activities. They couldn’t bring legal charges against a Christian, **even to collect debts.**

1205 Pope Innocent III officially defined Jews as “Christ-killers” and in 1215 required them to wear badges so Christians could avoid coming near a Jew. Jews were later required to wear a pointed hat, resembling a horn said to represent the

devil. They could not employ Christians as servants or serve as doctors to Christians; they couldn’t sell wine, flour, bread, oil, or any type of clothing to Christians; they couldn’t join guilds or work as weavers, metal-workers, tailors, bakers, carpenters, goldsmiths, and other skilled crafts. New synagogues could not be built.

INQUISITION intensified religious intolerance. Jews were accused of ritual murder of Christian victims re-enacting the crucifixion, of kidnapping and torturing Christian children and drinking their blood to profane the Eucharist and perform sorcery (the blood libel is the basis for the tale of the Prioress in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*).

1240 **Louis IX** (Saint Louis) targeted Jews in his campaigns against heresy. In Paris in 1240, the Talmud was condemned as heretical and blasphemous, and 24 cartloads of Talmudic works were confiscated and burned.

1306 Philip IV expelled Jews from France; his son allowed their return, but with severe restrictions. 1322 hundreds of Jews were rounded up and burned in France.

BLACK DEATH Jews were blamed for the Bubonic Plague; thousands were killed. In Savoy in 1348 Jews were arrested and their property confiscated while they were tortured to extract false confessions that they had introduced the disease by carrying packets of poison from Toledo to Italy. Eleven were burned alive and the rest heavily taxed if they chose to remain in Savoy. In January 1349 the whole Jewish community of Basle, Switzerland—several hundred people—was burned. The next month 2,000 Jews in Strasbourg were taken to the burial ground, where all who did not immediately convert were burned. In March 1349, the whole 400-member Jewish community at Worms burned themselves to death in their own houses rather than be killed by their enemies. The entire Jewish populations of Antwerp & Brussels were exterminated in December 1349. Jews fled eastward, where they built new communities in Poland and Russia. Those who eventually returned to western Europe had but a shadow of their formerly rich community life. Synagogues had been destroyed and could not be rebuilt; religious literature had been destroyed; Jews were relegated to the lowest rungs of society.

1389 Pogrom in Prague killed more than 3,000 Jews.

Late 1400s Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal. **GHETTO** developed. Restricted communities of Jews developed in the late Middle Ages as Jews were required to live in specific areas to avoid contact with Christians. (Venice claims that the term “ghetto” originated there, as Jews were allowed to occupy the area of the glass “furnaces” after the glass-makers moved to the nearby island of Murano.)

C. EARLY MODERN PERIOD, c. 1500–c. 1760s.

Some Jewish communities survived by publicly converting to Christianity while maintaining their Jewish life in the privacy of their homes. In Spain and Portugal they were called *Marranos*. On the first day of Passover 1497, thousands of Jews in Lisbon were rounded up, doused with water, and informed that they were now *Cristãos novos* or New Christians. Even though they were officially Christians, over the next two centuries more than 20,000 Portugese *Marranos* were tortured, burned, or banished by the Inquisition. Trying to disguise their secret Judaism, *Marranos* began omitting male circumcision, kosher meat-slaughtering and dietary laws, and abandoned Jewish holidays and customs. The last *Marrano* was burned in Portugal in 1760, and the Inquisition there was officially abolished only in 1821.

Many Portugese Jews migrated to Brazil but fled from there to Rhode Island in

the American Colonial Period because Roger Williams, a Baptist minister who had been expelled from Puritan-controlled Massachusetts, founded Rhode Island with the principle of religious toleration. It was the only English colony where Jews could openly practice their religion.

These examples of anti-Semitism help us understand the dramatic changes that occurred for Jews in northern Europe in the early 19th Century.

D. MID-1700s to the PRESENT

1. ORTHODOX JUDAISM, the longest-existing branch of Judaism

Beliefs Both the Written and Oral Torah are of divine origin, containing the exact words of God without any human influence. This is the basis of all beliefs. The core beliefs of Orthodox Jews are expressed in the **13 Principles of Faith** summarized by **Maimonides** in the late 12th Century. [Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, sometimes called RaMBaM (vowels not used in Hebrew), 1135-1204]

[All statements begin with the phrase, "I believe with perfect faith that . . ."

1. God is the Creator and Ruler of all things. He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. God is One. There is no unity that is in any way like His. He alone is our God. He was, He is, and He will be.
3. God does not have a body. Physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all.
4. God is first and last.
5. It is only proper to pray to God. One may not pray to anyone or anything else.
6. All the words of the prophets are true.
7. The prophecy of Moses is absolutely true. He was the chief of all prophets, both before and after Him.
8. The entire Torah that we now have is that which was given to Moses.
9. This Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be another given by God.
10. God knows all of man's deeds and thoughts. It is thus written (Psalm 33:15), "He has molded every heart together, He understands what each one does."
11. God rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress Him.
12. In the coming of the Messiah. How long it takes, I will await His coming every day.
13. The dead will be brought back to life when God wills it to happen.

Practice Orthodox Jews strictly follow the Written Torah and the Oral Law as interpreted by Medieval commentators. From the time they get up in the morning until they go to bed at night, they observe God's commandments for prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

OBSERVANCES VARY DEPENDING ON ETHNIC BACKGROUND. Ultra-Orthodox groups, such as Hassidic Jews, are more rigid in their observances and are quite noticeable in their styles of dress.

2. REFORM JUDAISM

ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Enlightenment (late 1700s) promoted religious toleration. Jews benefited enormously from new liberal ideals. They were recognized for the first time as **citizens of the countries where they resided**, some ghettos were abolished, and in many areas they could live where they chose, attend public schools and universities, and enter professions and occupations that had excluded them for centuries. Many assimilated into the general population, living among non-Jews, speaking the language of their new neighbors, and adopting many aspects of the dominant culture. [Those who actually converted to Christianity are not the focus of this study.] **Dispersion and assimilation combined to erode Jewish faith and culture in many places**, especially in Germany. Rabbi Abraham Geiger instigated the Reform movement by urging Jews to modernize their practices to appeal to contemporary Jews. Some Congregations adopted dramatic changes: mixed seating, one-day observances of festivals, use of a cantor and sometimes a choir, abandoned circumcision, liturgy in German, renounced the hope for a Jewish restoration in Israel, and observing *Shabbat* on Sunday.

German Jews who emigrated to the U.S. in the mid-1800s brought reformist ideas with them that soon split traditional synagogues. The first split occurred in Charleston, SC, where "reformers" led a group to break away from Congregation Beth Elohim. **Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise** is the architect of American Reform Judaism. He came from Bohemia in 1846 and moved to **Cincinnati** in April, 1854, when he became rabbi of the Bene Yeshurun congregation of the Lodge Street Synagogue where he officiated for the remaining forty-six years of his life. In 1866 he organized the building of the grand Plum Street Temple which was later renamed the Isaac M. Wise Temple in his honor. Rabbi Wise produced a prayer book for Reform congregations, established a newspaper (*The Israelite*, later renamed *The American Israelite*), and in 1873 in Cincinnati established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In 1875 he founded **Hebrew Union College** in Cincinnati to educate Reform rabbis. He founded the **Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)** in 1889, and led it until his death in 1900.

By 1880 more than 90% of American synagogues were Reform. *Many resembled neighboring Protestant churches with rabbis in robes, mixed seating, choirs, hymnals, and organs.* **1885 Pittsburgh Platform declared that "such Mosaic and rabbinical Laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress" were anachronisms that obstructed the spirituality of modern Jews; Reform Jews could accept laws that they felt would "elevate and sanctify "their lives and reject any customs and laws that were not "adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization."** The CCAR did oppose interfaith marriage and retained circumcision as a central rite. Reform Jews established several enduring Jewish institutions: the Young Men's Hebrew Association, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (a Jewish humanitarian agency--it built the 200-bed Cleveland Jewish Orphan Home in 1865).

KEY BELIEFS [from *The Columbus Platform: The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism* (1937)]

Torah Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique

insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, **both written and oral**, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and of holiness. **Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth.** But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the teachings of the Torah to its basic needs in consonance with the genius of Judaism.

God The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love. In Him all existence has its creative source and mankind its ideal of conduct. Though transcending time and space, He is the indwelling Presence of the world. We worship Him as the Lord of the universe and as our merciful Father.

Religious Practice Jewish life . . . calls for faithful participation in the life of the Jewish community as it finds expression in home, synagogue and school and in all other agencies that enrich Jewish life and promote its welfare. The **Home** has been and must continue to be a stronghold of Jewish life, hallowed by the spirit of love and reverence, by moral discipline and religious observance and worship. **Judaism . . . requires . . . the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value, the cultivation of distinctive forms of religious art and music and the use of Hebrew, together with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction.**

Who is a Jew? Birth: [Orthodox Judaism limits it to the child of a **Jewish Mother.**] In 1983 the CCAR declared that children born of a mixed marriage have a **presumption** of Jewish descent whether from the father or mother, but Jewishness is established "through appropriate and timely public and formal acts of identification with the Jewish faith and people." **Conversion:** Reform Judaism welcomes all sincere **converts** without regard to racial or national origin or to their former religious faith. . . . Reform does not require male converts to undergo [circumcision] or *hatafat dam b'rit* (the drawing of blood). . . . there are social, psychological, and religious values associated with these rituals, and it recommends that the rabbi acquaint prospective *gerim* with the **halakhic** background and rationale for *b'rit milah*, *hatafat dam b'rit*, and *tevilah*, and offer them the opportunity, if they so desire, to observe these additional rites.

The Messiah Although Reform does not believe in the concept of a personal **messiah**, it does believe in the concept of a messianic age. There are individual Reform Jews who believe in resurrection "*m'chayey meytim*;" however, the Reform movement does not have any creed which would require such a belief.

Zionism (Jewish homeland in Israel/Palestine) Viewing the *Diaspora* as the way to be a "light to the nations," early Reformers opposed Zionism. Pro-Zionists emerged after World War I and the statement of the Balfour Declaration. The Columbus Platform of 1937 affirmed:

. . . the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. Throughout the ages it has been Israel's mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, Justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal.

Views on Homosexuality CCAR statement: However we may understand homosexuality--whether as an illness, as a genetically based dysfunction or as a sexual preference and lifestyle--**we cannot accommodate the relationship of two homosexuals as a "marriage" within the context of Judaism**, for none of the elements of *kiddushin* (sanctification) normally associated with marriage can be invoked for this relationship. . . .[Reform] in general is supportive of homosexuals (the individuals), even though it may not encourage the lifestyle. . . . homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law. We oppose discrimination against homosexuals in areas of opportunity, including employment and housing. . . . private sexual act between consenting adults are not the proper province of government and law enforcement agencies.

<http://judaism.about.com> One of the guiding principles of Reform Judaism is the autonomy of the individual. A Reform Jew has the right to decide whether to subscribe to a particular belief or practice. Reform Judaism maintains that all Jews have an obligation to study the traditions and to observe those *mitzvot* (sacred acts) that have meaning today and that can ennoble Jewish families and communities. Reform Judaism differs from more ritually observant forms of Judaism in that it recognizes that the sacred heritage has evolved and adapted over the centuries and that it must continue to do so. According to Rabbi Eric. H. Yoffie of the **The Union for Reform Judaism**, Reform Jews are committed to:

- a Judaism that changes and adapts to the needs of the day
- the absolute equality of women in all areas of Jewish life
- social justice
- principle of inclusion, not exclusion
- a true partnership between the rabbinate and the laity

3. CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM (called Masorti Judaism in some areas)

This is the "middle ground" between Orthodox and Reform. The ideas of Conservative Judaism originated in Germany in the 1850s, but the movement was formally organized in the U.S. in 1913, largely due to the work of **Dr. Solomon Schechter**. The name **Conservative** was used because the leaders wanted to *conserve Jewish tradition, rather than reform or abandon it*. It has no political connotations. Like the Reform branch, Schechter and others rejected the idea that the "Torah is from heaven," but they thought the Reformers had gone too far in accommodating to "modern" life and abandoning hallowed Jewish traditions and practices. Two events provoked the split. In 1883 non-kosher food was served at the banquet honoring the first graduates of Hebrew Union College (Reform college), and in 1885 the Reformers adopted the radical Pittsburgh Platform. A group of less radical rabbis withdrew from the Reformist party and in 1886 established their own college to train rabbis-- the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

BELIEFS/ POSITIONS OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM are stated in *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism* (1988) by the Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism. It maintains that the **truths found in Jewish scriptures and other Jewish writings come from G-d, but were transmitted by humans and contain a human component.**

1. **Halakhah** is binding, but the Law changes to absorb aspects of the predominant culture while remaining true to Judaism's values. The rabbinical body, acting as a whole, has the authority to interpret and apply Jewish Law.
2. **Torah and revelation.** Adherents hold a broad range of views about the nature of revelation. Some reject the belief that God literally dictated the words of the torah to Moses, but they affirm that God inspired the prophets to write their messages. *Oral torah* is inspired but not necessarily of divine origin.
3. Women have greater role and participation than in Orthodox.
4. Jewishness is determined by matrilineal descent as do the Orthodox.
5. “. . . . all peoples are called to build a world of justice and compassion, and we welcome dialogue with persons of good will in all traditions.”

There are a number of differences in religious practices between Orthodox and Conservative Jews, because these denominations have distinct ways of understanding the process of how *halakha* has historically developed, and thus how it can still develop. Nonetheless, both of these groups have similar teachings about how to observe these holidays.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM SPLIT OVER THE ISSUE OF WOMEN IN THE RABBINATE. In the early 1980s the Jewish Theological Seminary decided to train women for the rabbinate and the Rabbinical Assembly accepted women as rabbis. Some rabbis and professors at JTS formed the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism which formally split from Conservatism in 1990.

4. RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM The most recent and most liberal of all branches of Judaism is Reconstructionism. It emerged in the 1920s with the ideas of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan. This branch splintered from Conservative Judaism in 1963 when followers of Rabbi Kaplan formed the distinct **Reconstructionist Judaism**. In 1968 the “Reconstructionists” established the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. In 2000, only 2 per cent of synagogue-affiliated Jews were “Reconstructionist.”

BELIEFS:

Torah not the revealed will of a personal God, but folk customs and pleasant ceremonies created entirely by the Jewish people. “Reconstructionists believe in the human authorship of all religious traditions, including their own, and they realize that no tradition has a monopoly on religious truth.”

Judaism is not a religion but an “evolving religious civilization.” God did not choose the Jewish people. Rather, “it is the **Jewish people who choose to live in a context of covenant**, through which tradition becomes holy.

God is not a personified deity who is active in history. “God is the source of meaning, the power within that urges us toward generosity, responsibility, concern

and self-fulfillment. God is found when we look for meaning in the world and work to realize the goals of morality and justice.”

Halakhah (Jewish Law) is a “valuable cultural remnant”, not a “binding Law from God,” Adherents may choose to observe it but are not required to do so. Reconstruction and Reform branches hold *halakhah* pertaining to Jewish as important, but no longer binding; Orthodox and Conservative branches hold *halakhah* as still normative (i.e. to be accepted as binding).

2000 STATISTICS of Synagogue-affiliated American Jews

Conservative	33 %	Orthodox	22 %
Reform	38 %	Reconstructionist	2 %
Other	5		
Belong to synagogue	46		
Fast on Yom Kippur	59		
Keep kosher at home	21		
Attend Jewish religious service monthly or more	27 %		
Hold/attend Passover seder	67		

RESOURCES USED FOR THIS STUDY

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A DISTANT MIRROR: THE CALAMITOUS 14TH CENTURY, by Barbara Tuchman (New York: Random House, Balantine Books, 1978).

ACTS OF FAITH: A JOURNEY TO THE FRINGES OF JEWISH IDENTITY BY Dan Ross (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org, a great source for literature, history, statistics, the Holocaust, and many other interesting topics along with a glossary of terms related to all aspects of Jewish religion, history, and culture.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Columbus_platform.html Text of The Columbus Platform: The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism (1937)

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/> has free translated texts of the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) and the *Mishneh* (Oral Law)

<http://judaism.about.com/od/orthodoxjudaism/a/orthodox.htm> A very reliable and comprehensive source for history, beliefs, and practices of all branches of Judaism.

www.religionfacts.com

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