

Some important terms:

**Patriarchs:** The “fathers,” especially Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and 12 sons.

- **Covenant:** The agreement originally between Abraham and God that “I shall be your God, and you shall be my people.” Expanded and fulfilled with Moses and the Exodus. Extends to Abraham’s descendants to this day as a special relationship of duty/blessing between God and the Jews.

**Exile:** The “deportation to Babylon” in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, when Jerusalem and the temple of Solomon were destroyed and many Jews (e.g. Daniel) were taken away as captives. Jewish synagogues and rabbinical schools continued in Babylon even after the return of the exiles to Judea.

**Diaspora:** The “dispersion” of the Jews into all the world after the fall of the second temple in 70 AD, and the failed Bar Kochba rebellion of 135 AD. Already spread into Mesopotamia (since the Exile), Jews now spread into Eastern Europe, across Africa, into Arabia and even to China.

**Mitzvot:** The Commandments, not only the basic “10 commandments,” but the full 613 commandments of Rabbinical Judaism. Technically, these apply only to Jews, and some only to Jews in Israel, etc. The “righteous Gentiles” have only 7 commandments to keep.

**Torah:** The Law, most broadly all of the laws of Judaism. But “The Torah” properly refers to the 5 Books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy), Pentateuch

- Foundational scripture, read all the way through every year in standard Jewish liturgy.

**Tanakh:** The collection of the Torah, the “prophets” and the “writings.” These essentially make up what Christians call the Old Testament.

**Talmud:** The broad collection of rabbinical teachings that outline various Rabbis’ interpretations of the law, with commentary by other Rabbis, rebuttals and discussion. Collected mostly in the early centuries of the Common Era; finished 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

- Haggadah (Rabbinic traditions) + Halakhah (juristic traditions) = Gemara (Rabbinical “learning”)
- Mishnah (Teachings of the Rabbis considered handed down since Moses as “oral Torah”).
- Gemara + Mishnah = Talmud
- Midrash (Rabbinical commentary on Tanakh)
- “Oral Torah” – a way to assert the authority of Rabbinical tradition and a claim for its ancient roots

**Rabbinic Judaism:** Pharisees as the survivors of the fall of Jerusalem

- Tannaim: First generation of Rabbis codifying the laws of the Torah. Mishnah ca 200 CE
- Amoraim: Next generations of Rabbis offering explanations, debate, consensus through commentary on Mishnah. Thus the Gemara developed and two Talmuds (Palestinian ca 500; Babylonian ca 600)

**Reform Judaism** – 19<sup>th</sup> century sect arising out of enlightenment Germany, intent on making Judaism compatible with rational modernity, emphasizing ethics, keeping Judaic traditions as identity.

**Orthodox Judaism** – Response to “Reform,” reasserting the detail of Rabbinical laws and seeking still to conform Jews to the Law as given in the Talmud.

- Hasidic, the Hasidim, “the pious ones,” a term through Jewish history for especially devout Jews who resist assimilation

**Reconstructionist Judaism** – Religion as identity, stressing history and ritual not as truly about God, etc., but about maintaining distinction and culture as Jews.

**Messiah:** The anointed one, interpreted since Exilic times as a promised king, like King David, who would be a military and spiritual leader of Israel, renewing the country and inspiring piety.

- Interpreted to this day variously as a zealous spiritual leader or as a righteous prophet of God who comes at the end of time to perfect and even recreate the world.

### Some quotations:

Whereas Paul's good news was accepted by millions of Gentiles who never groaned under the burden of the Law, it remained unaccepted by Jews. The Mitzvoh, though a "yoke," are not a burden. They are a joy. "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace." Evidently Paul's study with the rabbi was not long enough or not deep enough. (What is Judaism, 131ff)

The covenantal relationship between the individual, the community and God is predicated on the performance of the mitzvoh. Whereas Christianity sometimes teaches that salvation is achieved through faith, Judaism believes that everything depends on our actions, the performance of the mitzvoh. (What do Jews Believe, 159)

[Noting that Christians and Jews differently understand Genesis' reference to the tribe of Judah, Isaiah's "suffering servant," and Jeremiah's reference to the "law in our hearts," we ask] why do Jews and Christians read these passages so differently? Jews read them in the historical context in which they were written. Christians take them out of their historical context and read them as predictions. (Ibid., 235-6)

Judaism is a constantly evolving organism. The modern rabbis are entitled to adapt medieval Judaism, as the early rabbis had the right to adapt biblical Judaism. [Thus] the Messiah idea, not only speaking of national restoration, now addresses the whole of humanity. Revelation then turns out to form a progressive, not a static fact. (Signposts on the Way of Torah, 116)

No teacher could base his teaching merely on his own authority; and the fact that Jesus did this, was no doubt one of the grievances against him. (Christianity in Midrash and Talmud (Hereford), 9)

On the day before the Passover, they hanged Jesus. A herald went before him for forty days: "He will be stoned, because he practiced magic and enticed Israel to go astray." (Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a)

The grandson of Rabbi Jehoshua had something stuck in his throat. There came a man and whispered to him in the name of Jeshu Pandera, and he recovered. When the doctor came out, the rabbi said to him, ... "It had been better for him that he had died rather than be healed thus." (Talmudic story in Hereford, 108)

Since none of the events predicted for the messianic era have come true, Jews cannot accept the Christian claim that the world has been redeemed or that the Messiah has come. (What Do Jews Believe, 237)

We observe how deeply personal is the focus of Jesus' teaching: it is on himself, not on his message. We realize full well that anyone may master the Torah and share in the same status; but with Jesus, he is the only model. "Follow me" and "follow the Torah" look alike, but they are not alike. They are, indeed, quite opposite. (A Rabbi Talks with Jesus, 50)

[Concerning the Sermon on the Mount], So much for the substance: much with merit, but the silence proves ominous. We – eternal Israel – need Torah to tell us what God wants of us. But Jesus has spoken only about how I, in particular, can do what God wants of me. In the shift from the "us" of Sinai to the "I" of Torah of the Galilean sage, Jesus takes an important step – in the wrong direction. (Ibid., 29)

True, not all the victims were Jewish, but all the Jews were victims. And the killers were Christian. Was it the Christianity in them that made them killers? I hope not, but that's your problem, not mine. (Elie Wiesel) – "Christianity died at Auschwitz. – Elie Wiesel

For a Jew to become a Christian is to let Hitler win. – Anonymous (or can't remember where I heard this).

The Torah further obligates Jews to teach and encourage all the nations of the earth to accept these commandments. A non-Jew who accepts the seven Noahide commandments recognizes that the ultimate purpose of his life is to serve G-d and establish peace on earth. (7 Principles of Divine Service, 3)