

Judaism

All material taken from Josh McDowell & Don Stewart's Handbook of Today's Religions, Fritz Ridenour's So What's the Difference?, and the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention's Interfaith Evangelism Belief Bulletin

History

- **Call of Abram (Gen. 12:1-3)**
- **Moses**
 - **Exodus**
 - **Law**
- **Promised Land**
 - **Judges**
 - **Kings**
 - **Division into North (Israel) & South (Judah)**

History

- **Captivity**
 - Assyrians conquer Israel in 721 BC
 - Babylonians conquer Judah in 606 BC
 - Changes in worship: synagogues & rabbis introduced; priests lost importance; no sacrifices
- **Restoration**
 - Temple rebuilt; sacrificial system reinstated
 - Greek culture/Hellenism
 - Alexander the Great dies/Ptolemies rule Palestine
 - Biblical Hebrew all but disappears, replaced by Greek & Aramaic
 - Septuagint (LXX; Greek translation of OT)

History

- **Revolt**
 - **Syrians rule: Antiochus Epiphanes & pig sacrifice**
 - **Judas Maccabaeus (167 BC); Hanukkah**
- **Roman Rule**
 - **Israel a vassal state of Rome in 63 BC**
 - **Governors, unrest, & rebellion**
 - **Titus & sack of Jerusalem in 70 AD**
 - **No Temple (or sacrifices) to this day**
- **Later History**
 - **Christianity state religion of Roman Empire in 325 AD**
 - **Center of Jewish life moved to Babylonia**
 - **Independent homeland re-established in 1948 after a long history of persecution, culminating in the Holocaust**
- **The Land & Judaism**

Holy Days: Sacred Round

- **Sabbath**
 - day of rest commemorating God's rest from creation & later deliverance from Egypt
 - sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday
- **Passover**
 - one month after Purim, in spring
 - beginning of harvest
 - ultimately celebrates deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 12; Deut. 16:1-4)
- **Shabuot**
 - feast of weeks, seven weeks after Passover
 - commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments
- **Rosh Hashanah**
 - Jewish New Year, celebrated on first two days of Tishai (September-October)
 - solemn day of reflection & repentance

Holy Days: Sacred Round

- **Yom Kippur**
 - Jewish Day of Atonement
 - holiest day of the year, celebrated 10 days after Rosh Hashanah
 - fasting; repentance; forgiveness; reconciliation
- **Sukkoth**
 - feast of tabernacles, or booths
 - in-gathering of harvest
- **Hanukkah**
 - eight days in midwinter
 - in honor of the Maccabee revolt as recorded in Apocrypha
 - tradition of holy oil lasting for eight days and nights as a sign of God's providence and blessing of the cleansing & rededication of the Temple
 - borrowed gift-giving from Christmas (traditionally one to each child each night)

Branches

- **Orthodox**
 - **Letter of the Law: Observe most of the dietary & ceremonial laws of OT**
 - **Land of Palestine is important**
 - **Adheres to the inspiration of the OT, although within a ranked system: 1) Torah (Law); 2) Prophets; 3) Writings**
 - **Careful study & observance of the Torah (Hebrew Bible/our OT) & teachings of famous rabbis through the centuries**
 - **Mishnah (AD 200)—instructions for daily living (Halakah)**
 - **Talmud (AD 500)—36 vols.; famous stories (Haggadah)**

Branches

- **Conservative**
 - More lenient interpretation of the Torah, though Law is vitally important
 - Share Orthodox desire to keep alive the Hebrew language and traditions of Judaism
 - Land not as important
- **Reform**
 - Most common and most liberal branch
 - Principles of Judaism more important than practices
 - Land not as important
 - Most do not observe dietary or other laws (i.e. Sabbath practices)

God

- The Shema: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deut. 6:4).
- Monotheists, though not Trinitarian (Christian view = one essence of the Godhead in which reside three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, coequally and coeternally God [Matt. 3:13-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14])
- YHWH is the Name God calls Himself in Ex. 3:15
 - Not pronounced by Jews; only the high priest could pronounce it, doing so only on Yom Kippur
- For many, however, “God” is nothing more than an impersonal force, or an ideal.

Original Sin

- No concept of original sin (contrast Rom. 5:12-21)
- Humans commit sinful acts, but they are not totally depraved or unworthy, as in Christian theology.
- Sin is abhorred by God, and humans need to have their sins atoned for.
- Humans are not good or evil. Instead, they are neutral, with the capacity to choose good or evil.
- Emphasis on original virtue or righteousness; more of an emphasis on the image of God rather than the fall into sin.

Salvation

- Atonement for sin is achieved by works of righteousness, which humans are capable of accomplishing.
 - Repentance, prayer, and good deeds (penitence)
 - Repentance on Yom Kippur is highly important
- Jews believe that God's mercy is needed for salvation and the escape of Divine punishment.
- However, they do not believe in the need for substitutionary atonement, let alone that which cleanses from sin once for all time.
- No need for a Savior

Messiah

- History of diverse interpretations concerning “messiah”
- Originally (OT), it was believed that God would send a personal messenger to deliver Israel from oppressors and restore peace and freedom.
- Today, the idea of a personal messiah is virtually non-existent (Orthodox Jews still hold to it).
- Rather, there is the hope of a messianic age of truth & justice.
- From Jesus until 1747 AD, at least 34 prominent Jews have claimed to be the Messiah, with most promising deliverance from political, economic, and cultural oppression.
- Contrast this concept with Jesus’ offer of spiritual deliverance. He alone perfectly fulfilled every OT messianic prophecy, validating His claims by His resurrection (Acts 2:22-26).

Evangelism

- Most Jewish people view Christianity as a Gentile religion that has no relevance to them. When a Jewish person places his trust in Jesus for salvation and is baptized, the Jewish community considers that he has turned his back on his people and has become a Gentile. It is therefore important to communicate that our desire is not that our Jewish friend would become a Gentile, but that, as a Jew, he or she would find atonement for sin and discover a personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Refer them to Jews for Jesus (www.jewsforJesus.com)

Evangelism

- **Humility, prayer, and genuine compassion must characterize Christian witness. Far too often Jewish impressions of Christianity have been characterized by arrogance, superiority, and a disregard for Jewish culture. Paul warns against this kind of Gentile pride in Romans 11:13-32.**

Evangelism

- Use terminology that emphasizes the Jewishness of our faith. For example, instead of “Christ,” which is based on the Greek word for “the Anointed One,” use “Messiah,” which is based on the Hebrew. Instead of the “Old Testament,” refer to the “Hebrew Scriptures.”

Evangelism

- **Use verses from their Bible in discussing topics like:**
 - **sin (see Ps. 14:2-3; 51:5; Eccl. 7:20; and Isa. 59:1-2)**
 - **atonement (see Lev. 17:11 and Isa. 53:5-6)**
 - **Messiah (see Isa. 53; Dan. 9:16; and Mic. 5:1 [v. 2 in our Bible])**
 - **faith (see Gen. 15:6; Num. 21:7-9; and Joel 2:32 [3:5 in our Bible]).**

Evangelism

- Familiarize yourself with Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14-36), asking your Jewish friend to read and discuss it.
- No more important question than Jesus' question to Peter: "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15)
 - So, let Jesus tell His own story through any of the Gospels, but especially Matthew (Jewish terminology).
 - Ask your Jewish friends who they say He is.
- Do not be surprised if persecution comes (Matt. 10:16-25). The Gospel smells one of two ways (2 Cor. 2:15-16).