

**A Traveler's  
Guide**

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Chapter 01

# INTRODUCTION



On May 14, 1948, Western powers recognized the state of Israel as the official state of the Jewish people. This monumental restoration, achieved in the shadow of WWII and the Holocaust, delivered the Jewish people back into a portion of the land historically known as Israel (known beforehand as the land of Palestine). What led to this incalculably improbable event? What were the religious and theological influences that brought about a state for the Jewish people after thousands of years of exile and living in various continents and empires? How could they have retained their ethnic and religious traditions for so long?



Sometimes called “the mother faith,” Judaism is considered the pre-runner to Christianity and Islam, the other two major monotheistic religions. Though relatively small compared to Christianity and Islam, Judaism has been one of the most influential religions in world history. It is also one of the most unique religions since its teachings are passed down by ethnic lines, not by missionary activity or conquest. Despite incredible hardships, persecution, and exiles throughout history, the Jewish faith and its people have persisted. Since Judaism and Christianity share so much in common, both theologically and historically, it is incumbent upon Christians to understand the Jewish faith and its people while thoughtfully engaging them with the light of the gospel.

## 1.1 What is Judaism?

Central to Jewish belief is the conviction that God chose the Jewish people as His people, forging a covenant to be their only God. This covenant underscores the special relationship between the Jewish people and Yahweh, forming the foundation of their faith and cultural identity and shaping their religious practices and sense of belonging.<sup>1</sup>

This special covenant relationship with Yahweh has always determined the geography, ethnicity, and religious practices of the Jewish people. Geographically, the state of Israel is home to the Jewish people, though not everyone living in Israel is a Jew nor do all Jews reside in Israel. Ethnically, a Jew is a descendant of the biblical patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jewish people have managed to maintain much of their ancestral lines throughout thousands of years scattered around the world. Religiously, a Jew is someone who practices the faith of Judaism, which is a monotheistic faith in Yahweh, the God of the patriarchs, who chose to favor the Jewish people as his representatives on earth and who revealed His Law uniquely to the Jewish people.

### Quick facts:

**Religion:** Judaism

**Adherents:** Jews

**Population:** 15.7 million

**Began:** Circa 2100 BC

**Early Figures:** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses

**Type:** Monotheistic

**God:** Yahweh

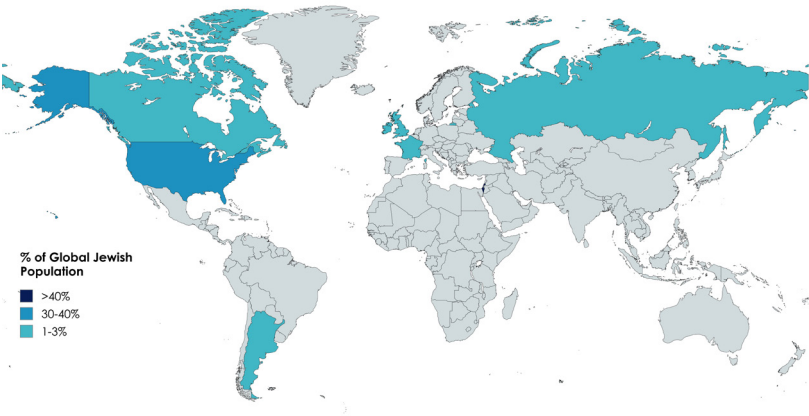
**Scriptures:** The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

**Primary Sects:** Orthodox, Reformed, Hasidic, Conservative, Messianic



## 1.2 Statistics: Regions and Adherents

Jews have a worldwide population of approximately 16 million people. The nation of Israel contains the highest concentration of Jewish people (7.2 million), while the United States contains the second highest concentration (6.3 million). There are pockets of Jewish communities living in Europe as well.<sup>2</sup>



Chapter 02

# THE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

The Jewish people became an organized society and religion around 2100 BC through an Aramean man named Abraham, who is considered the first patriarch and forefather of Judaism and Christianity. After receiving a call from God, Abraham left his homeland in the region of Ur to migrate with his wife and relatives to the land of Canaan, located in modern-day Israel.<sup>3</sup>

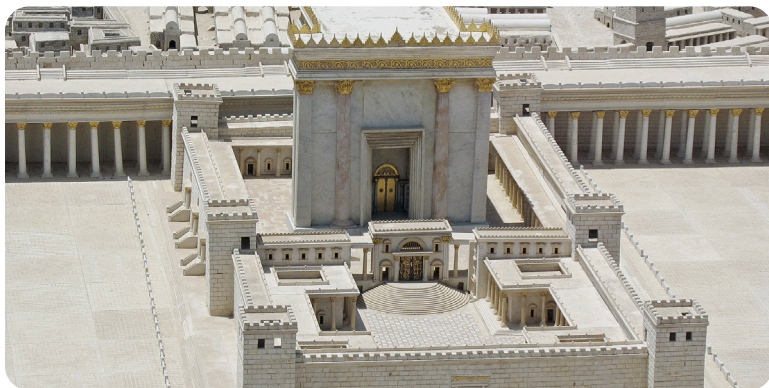
When Abraham arrived in the region of Canaan, the land had different people groups who worshipped different gods and goddesses. The Bible describes Abraham forming a covenant with Yahweh, the Creator, who promised to give Abraham the land of Canaan and to make a great nation from Abraham's descendants. Abraham's grandson Jacob was eventually renamed "Israel" by God, and Jacob's twelve sons became the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of the Israelite nation.

For a time, Jacob and his family lived in Egypt where they were eventually enslaved by the Egyptians for four hundred years. Eventually, God called an Israelite named Moses to deliver Israel from slavery and return them to the land of Canaan.<sup>4</sup> While on their journey, around 1440 BC, God revealed the Law (the Torah) to Moses, which would be the primary scriptures of the Jewish people and the basis of their covenant and worship with God (Yahweh).





The Israelites settled in the land of Canaan (the Promised Land) and eventually established a monarchy under the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. Solomon built the First Temple. Internal divisions led to a two-part divided nation called Israel and Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire in 722 BC, and Judah fell to the Babylonian Empire in 586 BC, resulting in exile and the destruction of the First Temple. In 538 BC, the Persian Emperor, Cyrus, permitted the Jews to return to the land and rebuild the Temple. Temple worship continued for roughly five hundred years until its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD.



In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem in response to a Jewish revolt. Jerusalem's destruction sparked the Jewish diaspora and marked the end of two major Jewish groups: the Sadducees and the Zealots. The Sadducees were the ruling religious leaders whose political power was closely tied to the Temple and the sacrificial system. On the other side were the Zealots, a nationalistic faction who sparked the revolt and lost their power with the Temple's fall and Jerusalem's destruction. Without a Temple, Jews could not perform ritualistic sacrifices, so Jewish life was reshaped around Torah study, community practices, rabbinic traditions, and localized religious practice in synagogues

#### **Herod's Temple**

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the rebuilding of the Temple and the city walls surrounding the capital city of Jerusalem. This Temple was eventually renovated by Herod the Great in the first century BC, shortly before Jesus was born. The period between the Temple's reconstruction and its destruction by the Romans is called the "Second Temple Period." During this time, Jewish rabbis, scribes, and scholars wrote extensively and developed several traditions and groups within Judaism. By the 1st century AD, during the life of Jesus, these groups included the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes (the preservers of the Dead Sea Scrolls).

(instead of a national Temple cult). This shift opened the door for a group of scribes and Torah specialists called the Pharisees (who frequently opposed Jesus in the gospel accounts). They revised many facets of Jewish religious life, such as abolishing the sacrificial system, emphasizing behaviors and obedience to the Law, and establishing Rabbinic Judaism. Consequently, observing the Law became the central focus of Judaism.

Along with the Torah, the Jews collected and developed other important writings such as the Talmud and Mishnah, which are commentaries on the Law and important for Jewish life. These texts are foundational to Rabbinic Judaism and the development of contemporary Jewish thought.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 1800s, through a combined effort of secularists, Christians, and Jews, a movement called Zionism began. Zionism refers to a nationalist movement focused on the creation and preservation of a new state for the Jewish people. The goal was to create a Jewish state in the land of Palestine, which Jews have historically called their home and where they claim to have a historic right to the land over the Arabs. Some Christians supported Zionism because they believed it to be the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Today, Zionism is still an active political ideology focused on defending the right of Israel to possess the land. It has strong influences in Europe and the United States and enjoys widespread support among American evangelicals. However, not all Jews agree with Zionism, and some actively oppose it. It is also a source of tension and difficult diplomatic relations in the Middle East.



Chapter 03

# MAJOR BRANCHES OF JUDAISM

Before Christ, the Jews were divided into three main groups that had different positions regarding the Law and their relationship with the current oppressor, the Roman Empire. However, today there are new divisions that differentiate themselves by their practices and beliefs.

### I 3.1 Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Jews are traditionalists who uphold the Mosaic Law and preserve the rituals, traditions, and ceremonies of Judaism as they were developed in 400-500 AD.<sup>6</sup> They believe in strict adherence to the Torah (as the Scriptures) and the Talmud and Mishnah (the commentaries on the Torah).

Orthodox Jews are often called “observant Jews” for their desire for strict observance of the Mosaic Law. Some of them wear distinct dark clothing and head coverings. The men wear tallitot (prayer shaws), tzitzit (fringes), yarmulkes (skull caps), and tefillin (phylacteries) when praying. The men will also wear peyots (side curls) on their heads because of the instructions given in Leviticus 19:27. Most Orthodox homes display the mezuzah in their entrances and doors, a small object that contains Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-2, and the Shema that says “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Another distinct characteristic of this group is their prayer life, as men are expected to pray three times a day and, if possible, face the direction of Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>



## ■ 3.2 Hasidic Judaism

Hasidic Judaism is known as a mystical or kabbalistic Judaism because of its mystical approach to Torah study, its practice of building isolated communities from the modern world, and its tendency to follow charismatic leaders called rebbes. This branch of Judaism is often called “ultra-orthodox” because of clothing and behavioral requirements. They can be easily recognized by their unique dress, which originates from Eastern Europe, where the sect was begun by Baal Shem Tov, a Polish Jew born in 1700. At the beginning of the movement, they followed an approach detached from the Torah teachings, advocating that God was found in dancing and singing instead of studying and obeying.<sup>8</sup>



## ■ 3.3 Reform Judaism

Reformed Judaism is the liberal or secular branch that advocates for the Jewish faith to evolve, believing in human authorship of the Bible instead of divine inspiration. They value the morals taught in the biblical narrative more than the traditions and rituals.<sup>9</sup> Reformed Jews believe that practices and rituals are in constant development. Furthermore, they are not looking for a Messiah, as the people fulfill this role in that they “redeem” the world by making it a better place.



### ■ 3.4 Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism started in the nineteenth century. Its members believe in the divine inspiration of the Torah and Talmud, valuing traditions like prayer, dietary laws, and morality. However, they expect less separation from modern life, as advocated by Orthodox Jews. It is a perfect balance for smaller communities, as it meets the needs of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reformed members.<sup>11</sup>

### ■ 3.5 Messianic Judaism

Messianic Jews are Jewish Christians who believe Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. They retain the traditions and practices of Judaism, such as observing important holidays, festivals, and dietary customs. They meet in congregational settings with other Jewish Christians but also invite Gentile Christians into their midst. Messianic Jews play a unique role in bridging the divide between Jews and Christians.



Chapter 04

# MAJOR BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

Not every Jew holds the same core theological beliefs. Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews differ greatly in their view of the following. While there is greater agreement between Orthodox and Conservative Jews on these topics, Reform Jews are considerably more agnostic and skeptical about supernatural claims and theological matters.

## **I 4.1 Creation**

The story is accounted for in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Torah and the Christian Bible. The story starts when God speaks the world into existence in six days and rests on the seventh day. During that time, God created the universe, including the earth and the first two human beings, Adam and Eve. They lived in perfect harmony with God in the Garden of Eden but were deceived by the Serpent and disobeyed God. As punishment, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and “banished to a life of toil.” This was the introduction of “sin” into the world and resulted in separation from God. Following this event, creation and humankind were doomed to spiritual and physical death.<sup>12</sup>

## **I 4.2 God**

In Judaism, God is represented by the Hebrew letters YHWH, signifying His unique and absolute nature. Unlike the concept of a Triune God advocated in Christianity, where God is represented as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Judaism emphasizes God's oneness. He is omnipresent, omniscient, incorporeal, morally perfect, and eternal, embodying an all-encompassing and singular divine presence.<sup>13</sup>

While Orthodox and Conservative Jews believe in the traditional doctrine of God, many (not all) Reform Jews will be agnostic, naturalistic, or mystical in their view of God.

## 4.3 Scriptures

Jews arrange the Christian Old Testament, known as the Tanakh, into three sections: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Torah includes the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Prophets include the early prophets of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings; the later prophets of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and the minor prophets from Hosea to Malachi. Finally, the Writings include the remaining books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles, and Song of Solomon.<sup>14</sup> Jews highly value the Scriptures, as rabbis teach the texts in synagogues and are considered religious authorities in their community.

In addition to the canonical books of the Tanakh, Jews read supplementary writings about the Torah formed by two large works, Mishnah and Gemara. Respectively, these works discuss Torah interpretations and rabbinical narratives and illustrations. When added to the Torah, these writings together constitute the Talmud, the main source of knowledge for Judaism. A few conservative groups even place the Talmud on par with inspired Scripture.<sup>15</sup>

Orthodox Jews view the Hebrew Bible as inspired by God and revealed both orally and in written form. Conservative Jews also view the Scriptures as inspired, but revelation is continual through the study of the Torah and the life of the Jewish people. Reform Jews view the Scriptures as a human record valuable for moral instruction but not inspired or authoritative.



## ■ 4.4 Ethics

Jewish morality revolves around respect for God and people, prioritizing humility, honesty, and righteous attitudes. The foundation for these beliefs is the Ten Commandments, which command the people not to murder, steal, or lie and explain the well-known practice of the Sabbath. Jews often focus on external ways and behaviors to express their covenant commitment to Yahweh.<sup>16</sup>

## ■ 4.5 Salvation

The Jewish people do not believe in the doctrine that humans are born with original sin as Christians do. Still, they believe humans have the natural tendency to sin after the fall and disobedience of Adam and Eve. The goal of their religion is not personal salvation and afterlife but having a temporal commitment to God as a nation.<sup>17</sup>

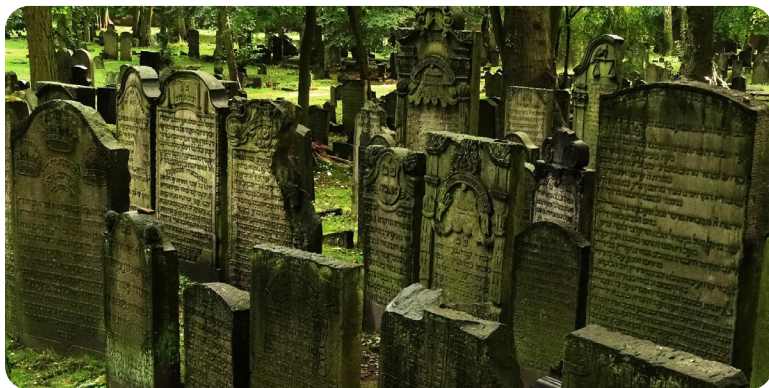
For Orthodox and Conservative Jews, salvation is a process of self-transcendence, inner transformation by performing good works, repentance, and devotion to the study of God's Word. For Reform Jews, salvation consists of improving society while maintaining Jewish identity. Jews must perform good works while helping to improve the world. This concept is called *tikkun olam* or “the repair of the world.”





## ■ 4.6 Afterlife

Jews believe that the soul is eternal, but there is not much information about what happens after death; some believe that the righteous will await the resurrection inaugurated by the future Messiah, and others believe they will go to a heavenly paradise. However, for the wicked, some believe they will only cease to exist, whereas others believe that they will be tormented eternally.<sup>18</sup> Orthodox and Conservative Jews believe in a literal, bodily resurrection of the righteous. In contrast, Reform Jews tend to believe the soul will persist on a spiritual plane but not receive a bodily resurrection.



## ■ 4.7 Judgment

For Orthodox and Conservative Jews, the final judgment involves the redemption of the nation of Israel with the arrival of the Messiah and a restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. This period will bring peace among all nations under God in a spiritual new heaven and earth.<sup>19</sup>

## ■ 4.8 Messiah

In Jewish thought, the Messiah is a human descendant of King David who will be a great political and military leader, providing the Jewish people with an unprecedented era of great peace and prosperity. His coming will coincide with the reconstruction of the Temple and the restoration of Israel as a great global power. Orthodox, Conservative, and most Hasidic Jews hold to a literal view of

the Messiah, but Reform Jews reject it. Instead, Reform Jews see the Messiah as a metaphor for the Jewish people or the process by which Jews make the world a better place.



## 4.9 Moses

There are two monumental figures in Judaism who went by the name of Moses. Of course, the most well-known biblical figure is Moses, the leader of the exodus and the one to whom God gave the Law on Mount Sinia (bottom left). This Moses is considered the most important figure in Judaism, even more important than Abraham, because he received the Law and taught Israel to obey it.

The second Moses in Judaism is Moses Maimonides (bottom right). He was an instrumental theologian and philosopher of Judaism in the Middle Ages who is famous for condensing Jewish teachings into a creedal form that is still followed by Jews today and included in the Authorized Prayer Book used in most Jewish synagogues.



Chapter 05

# COMMON PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS

Many Jews consider themselves Jews because of their bloodline, but only a small percentage practice the faith. The ones who actively practice their faith observe several holidays, rituals, and dietary codes.<sup>20</sup>

## I 5.1 Holy Days

Judaism follows a lunar-based Hebrew calendar. The following are important holidays that a person interacting with Jewish people might encounter.<sup>21</sup>

1. **Pesach (Passover):** Commemorates the Exodus from slavery in Egypt. The date of Passover changes yearly because the Jewish calendar is based on lunar cycles (354 days), not on the Western Gregorian calendar (365 days).
2. **Shavuot (Feast of Weeks):** Commemorates God's revelation of the Torah to Moses. This is also called Pentecost in the New Testament (Acts 2).
3. **Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement):** Day of fasting, repentance, reconciliation, and prayer. It is considered the Sabbath of Sabbaths, the holiest day of the year. During the Temple periods, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies (the innermost chamber of the Temple) and offer a sacrifice for the sins of all the people.
4. **Hanukkah (Festival of Lights):** Often associated with Christmas since it is commemorated in late November or December, this celebration is used to remember the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.



## ■ 5.2 Synagogues and Prayer

Modern Jews worship and pray in synagogues. These buildings vary in structure and size but usually have a platform for Torah readings and a cabinet called the “Holy Ark,” which contains the Torah’s scrolls and is the synagogue’s holiest place. Although many prayers are written and then recited, Jews can also pray using their own words. Devout Jews pray three times every day to give thanks to God and reflect on one’s own heart.<sup>22</sup>



## ■ 5.3 Sabbath

Sabbath is a well-known practice that consists of keeping the seventh day of the week holy. The practice starts on Friday evening, when families gather around a dinner table and eat a meal, blessing the wine and a loaf of braided bread. Families attend their synagogues for a Friday night service and another service on Saturday morning, then spend the rest of the day in a time of rest. The Sabbath ends at sunset with the Havdalah, a ceremony where a spice jar is passed around, and people pray for the coming of Elijah (the Messiah).

When visiting Israel, the observance of the Sabbath is very noticeable. On Friday evening, many restaurants and businesses close, but by Saturday evening, the towns’ restaurants and stores open, bringing life to the cities once again.<sup>23</sup> Visitors should expect to have fewer conveniences during the Sabbath and a return to normal when it has concluded. Jewish people are very welcoming to visitors in their homes for Sabbath meals, and if invited into a home, it is customary to bring a house gift such as a candle, soaps, a set of dishes, or towels.





## ■ 5.4 Dietary Restrictions

The Jewish diet, known as Kosher, is restricted by the rules explained in the book of Leviticus, the third book of the Bible. Kosher regulations divide animals into clean and unclean categories. There are also guidelines for how the animals should be killed, requiring the killing to be quick and the draining of the blood to be done immediately. Both eggs and plants are considered neutral and thus are not restricted.

One odd restriction, found in Exodus 23:19, prohibits boiling a baby goat in its mother's milk. Although it might seem strange, the principle applies to foods like hamburgers since modern meat production usually mixes hot meat and dairy. Kosher meat is prepared according to strict regulations that remove dairy contaminants as well as blood. Some Orthodox households might even separate their utensils into a set of dishes for meat foods and another set for dairy foods because they want to avoid any contamination.

In America, it is easy to follow Kosher guidelines because there are companies that produce specialized products and guarantee that there is no cross-contamination and that the animals were killed according to the procedures described by the Torah. These products are usually marked with a U or a K in stores and may even be healthier since they have fewer additives than other foods.<sup>24</sup>

## KOSHER



**Chews its cud and has split hooves**

*Ex. Cows, Sheep, Goats, Deer*



**Domesticated species**

*Ex. Chicken, Duck, Turkey*



**Has both fins and scales**

*Ex. Trout, Tuna, Salmon*



**Chuck, rib, shoulder, plate**



**Not Kosher**

@TASTE OF HOME

## NOT KOSHER



**Doesn't chew cud and/or doesn't have split hooves**

*Ex. Pigs, Rabbits, Kangaroo*



**All scavenger and predatory birds**

*Ex. Vulture, Eagle, Owl*



**Doesn't have both fins and scales**

*Ex. Crustaceans, Mollusks, Water Mammals*



**Meat and dairy together**



**Loin, sirloin, rump, flank, heel**

*When prepared properly, some of these cuts may be kosher*



## ■ 5.5 Circumcision

This process is commanded in Genesis 17:10 for boys eight days after birth. It consists of a small cut or removal of a baby boy's foreskin and serves as an outward sign of a man's commitment to Jewish people's covenant with God. Some branches of Judaism now question this procedure, but it continues to be a widespread practice among the Jewish community.<sup>25</sup> It is also widely practiced among non-Jews in the United States, South Korea, Australia, and many parts of the Middle East and Africa for health reasons.

## ■ 5.6 Bar Mitzvah

This is a special event celebrating a Jewish boy's thirteenth birthday. The boy is required to read the Torah in Hebrew and recite a prayer three times. This ceremony marks the boy's transition from childhood to adulthood and becoming a full member of the Jewish community.



## ■ 5.7 Purification

After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the practice of sacrificial atonement ceased. Without the Temple, Jews cannot perform the Temple sacrifices, such as the Day of Atonement sacrifice. To address this problem, Rabbinic Judaism replaced animal sacrifices with daily prayers so that atonement for sins would be secured through repentance, acts of charity (tzedakah), and fasting.<sup>26</sup>

Chapter 06

# BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

## I 6.1 Perceived Bias and Prejudice

One significant tension between Christians and Jews arises from the perception held by some Christians that Jews are deficient followers of God, lacking a complete understanding of God's revelation. This view can create a sense of superiority, implying that Judaism is an incomplete precursor to Christianity rather than a distinct faith. Such perspectives can be dismissive of Jewish beliefs and practices, fostering misunderstanding and tension between the two religious communities.

This tension is further exacerbated by the historical experiences of Jews, who have faced extensive persecution and forced conversions over centuries. Attempts at evangelism, especially when accompanied by efforts to prove the falsehood of Judaism, can deeply offend many Jews. Given their historical suffering and the persistent threat of anti-Semitism, these attempts can be perceived not just as religious disagreements but as extensions of historical injustices. Understanding this historical context is crucial for fostering respectful discussions.

Conversely, Jewish people may view Christianity as a perversion of their faith. Since they reject Jesus as the Messiah and reject the doctrine of the Trinity, they can easily perceive Christians as appropriating and twisting the original teachings of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible.



## I 6.2 Tradition and Communities

Many Jews have assimilated into Western culture, keeping their beliefs and practices private. Observant Jews follow dietary laws, such as separating milk and meat meals and avoiding contamination. They also observe the Sabbath by refraining from making phone calls, using electric lights, or driving. Less observant Jews maintain some traditions, especially holidays, making it important for Christians to avoid comparing Christmas to Hanukkah.

Passing down heritage and tradition is a core value for Jews, both religiously and culturally. Since religion is a private matter for most Jews, Christians should not expect them to inquire about Jesus explicitly.<sup>27</sup>



## I 6.3 The Oneness of God and the Son of Man

Because Jews stress God's oneness, they reject the idea that He could have a son. Jesus' claim to be God's Son was a key point of controversy among the Jewish leadership of the 1st century. By claiming to be God's Son, Jesus essentially claimed divinity for Himself and made Himself equal to God in authority (e.g., John 10). However, the idea of divine sonship was not foreign to the Jewish people of his day. The Jews were already familiar with references in the Old Testament to God's "sons," known as angelic figures most of the time but occasionally referring to earthly kings or the Jewish people. In addition, the Jews were also familiar with Old Testament stories of Yahweh assuming bodily form (e.g., Gen. 18-19). These concepts posed serious problems for Jewish scholars in the Second Temple period. How could God have "sons," and how could God be both omnipresent in spirit form and exist in bodily form on earth?

To reconcile these ideas, Jews devised a concept called “the two powers.” This means that although God is One, He exists in at least two “powers” which can be bi-located in spirit form and on earth in bodily form. Yahweh’s bodily form functioned effectively as vice-regent or ruler on earth. There are traces of this thought throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Dan. 7), and it was a prevalent view in Jewish literature before the time of Jesus. By taking the title “Son of Man” from Daniel 7, Jesus essentially utilized this idea to show that he was the incarnation of God “the Son” on earth and equal in divinity to God “the Father” in heaven.

Ironically, when Christianity began to spread with the message of Jesus’ resurrection and divinity, Jewish rabbis of the 2nd and 3rd century AD eliminated this concept of the “two powers” from Jewish theology. Later, in the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides developed philosophical arguments against the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that Jews still use to this day when debating with Christians.



Chapter 07

# BRIDGES TO THE GOSPEL

## I 7.1 Affirming Jewish Identity

Jews need the good news of the Gospel just as much as Muslims, Atheists, and Buddhists. It is important not to assume that Jews are familiar with Christ and have deliberately rejected Him. Many Jews are not focused on the coming of the Messiah or the reestablishment of the Temple in Jerusalem. Out of the 6 million Jews in the United States, only 1.4 million are actually connected to the Jewish community.

Since they highly value their traditions, it is crucial to emphasize to them that accepting Jesus does not mean losing their Jewish identity. Asking questions about Jewish holidays, Israel, or even the Old Testament can open the doors to meaningful spiritual conversations. For example, Messianic Jews retain their Jewish traditions and practices and insist on their belonging to the nation of Israel while still believing and teaching that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and that messianic Jews are part of the Body of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Encourage them to read the New Testament, as significant portions were written for a Jewish audience (e.g., Matthew, Hebrews).<sup>30</sup>



## I 7.2 Shared Allegiance to the One True God

In spite of Jewish disagreements with the person and work of Jesus Christ, they do share many core theological beliefs with Christians: (1) faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; (2) the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures; (3) the doctrine of creation; (4) the coming of the Messiah; (5) a final judgment and redemption.<sup>31</sup> These shared beliefs can be leveraged as a springboard to conversations about God's work in the world today.

## 7.3 Fulfilled Messianic Prophecies

While Jews reject the claim that Jesus is the Messiah, many accept Jesus as an authentic Jewish figure whose teachings were corrupted by Paul and later Christians seeking to make Judaism more acceptable to Gentiles. When conversing with Jewish people, it may be helpful to point out that many figures within Judaism claimed to be the Messiah before and after Jesus; yet, only Jesus' name and teachings have endured through the centuries.<sup>32</sup>

Some devout Jews might argue that Jesus did not completely fulfill the prophecies since He did not enact political reign over Israel and other nations, He did not reunite the twelve tribes, and He did not restore Israel's fortunes. Although Jesus did not literally fulfill these prophecies in the first century, Christians believe He either fulfilled them spiritually in the church (replacement theology) or that He will fulfill them literally at the second coming (futurism). Although Jesus did not literally fulfill every messianic prophecy in the first century, it is important to point out all of the messianic prophecies He, and He alone, fulfilled during His life on earth. The following table contains prominent Messianic passages and their fulfillment in the life of Jesus.<sup>33</sup>



Prophecy	Old Testament	New Testament
Messiah to be the seed of the Woman	Genesis 3:15	Galatians 4:4
Messiah to be the seed of Abraham	Genesis 12:3, 18:18	Luke 3:23, 34 Matthew 1:1-2 Acts 3:25 Galatians 3:16
Messiah to be of the tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33 Matthew 1:1-2
Messiah to be of the seed of David	Psalms 132:11 Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15 Isaiah 11:10	Matthew 1:6 Luke 1:32-33 Acts 2:29-30 Romans 1:3
Messiah to be the Son of God	Psalms 2:7 Proverbs 30:4	Luke 1:32 Matthew 3:17
Messiah to be raised from the dead	Psalms 16:10	Acts 13:35-37
Messiah to experience crucifixion	Psalms 22 Psalm 69:21	Matthew 27:34-50 John 19:28-30
Messiah to be betrayed by a friend	Psalms 41:9	John 13:18, 21
Messiah to ascend to heaven	Psalms 68:18	Luke 24:51 Acts 1:9
Messiah to be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 1:26-35
Messiah will be meek and mild	Isaiah 42:2-3 Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 12:18-20 Matthew 26:62-63
Messiah will minister to the Gentiles	Isaiah 42:1 Isaiah 49:1-8	Matthew 12:21
Messiah to suffer, die and rise again	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	The four gospels
Messiah as intercessor	Isaiah 59:16	Hebrews 9:15
Messiah will perform miracles	Isaiah 35:5-6	John 11:47 Matthew 11:3-6
Messiah will enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1-10
The coming of the Holy Spirit in the days of the Messiah	Joel 2:28-29	Acts 2:16-18
Submission of all nations to Messiah's rule	Isaiah 2:4 Micah 4:1-4	Revelation 12:5
The Gentiles shall seek the Messiah of Israel	Isaiah 11:10	Romans 11:25

Appendix

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## I Books and Articles

1. “How to Share the Gospel with a Jew.” Dare to Share Ministries. Accessed: February 16, 2025. <https://www.dare2share.org/worldviews/jews/>.
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- <sup>34</sup> The full table can be found here: David Brickner, "How to Witness to Jews," One for Israel, accessed February 16, 2025, <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/how-to-witness-to-jews/>.

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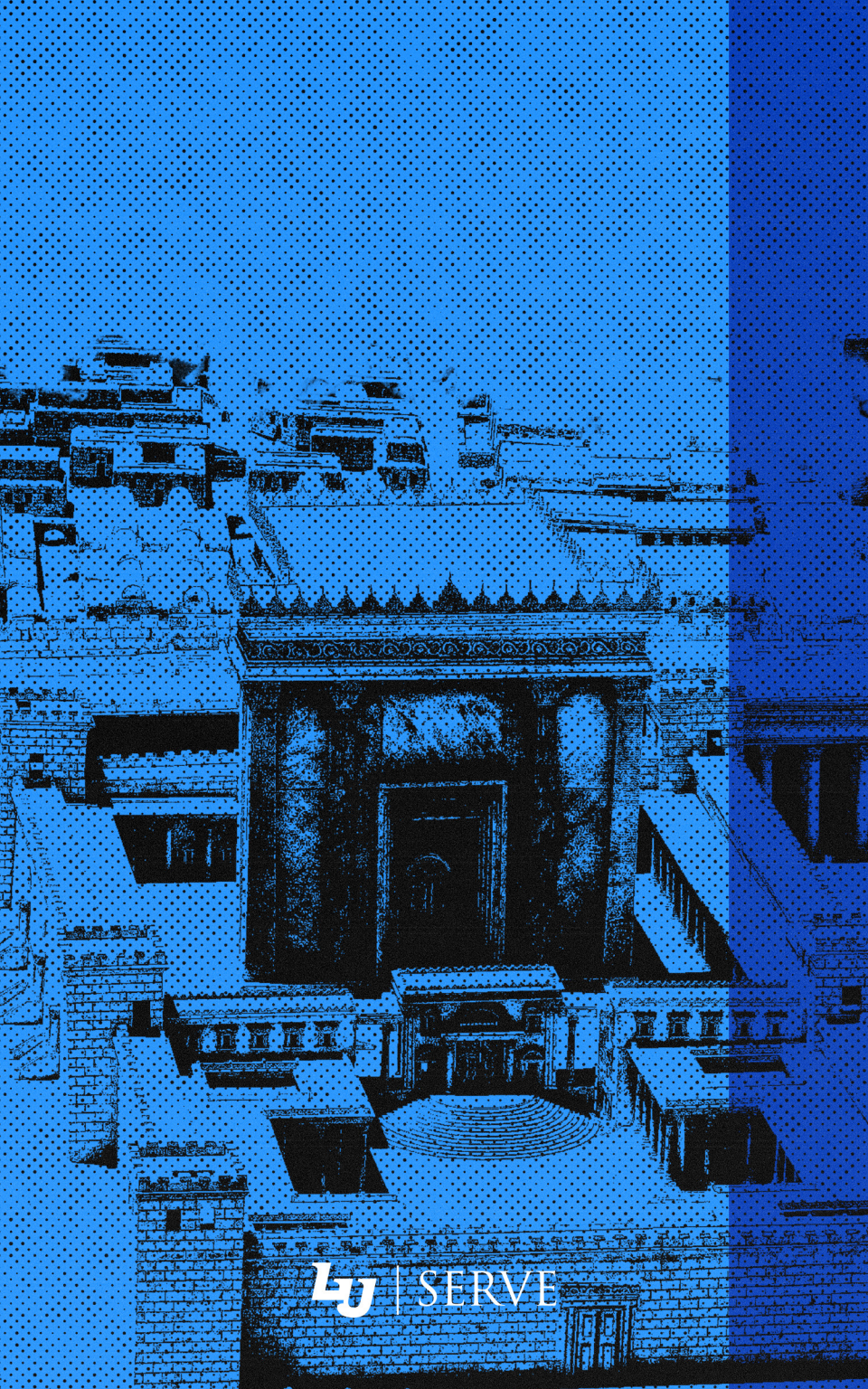
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