



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

June 2, 2019

Answering World Religions – Judaism

Shawn Nelson

1. You Already Know A Lot of Jewish History!

- The Old Testament is the **history** of **Jewish** people.
- You're probably familiar with the **big themes** of:
 - **Creation** – Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, Flood and Tower of Babel.
 - **Covenant** – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph in Egypt, redemption from Egypt, plagues, giving of Law at Sinai.
 - **Conquest** – Joshua and Judges.
 - **"C"ingdom** – King Saul, David, Unified Kingdom under Solomon.
 - **Collapse/Restoration** – Divided Kingdom, Assyrian/Babylonian Captivities, return to land under Ezra and Nehemiah.
- Probably familiar with **Jewish customs** in New Testament too
 - Sadducees, Pharisees, washings.
 - Jesus celebrating Passover (Luke 22:15; John 2:13-23; 13:1-3), Unleavened Bread (Matt. 26:17-28; Mk. 14:12-25), Pentecost (Acts 2) and Booths/Tabernacles (John 7:2-3).
 - Hear about Jewish customs like circumcision (Acts 15; 16:3; Rom. 2:25), Jewish weddings (Matt. 25:1-13), etc.
- As a Christian, you are in **good position** to **witness** to Jewish people because:
 - You already know some Jewish history!
 - You can use what you already know to build bridges into their lives.

2. Important Events Since Biblical Times

- Jewish people lost their **temple** (AD 70).
 - There were three main groups: Sadducees, Pharisees and Zealots.
 - **Sadducees** were the priests. But they could no longer do sacrifices without a temple so they lost control.
 - **Zealots** died at Masada, Herod's Fortress, in AD 73 with the mass suicide of 956 people.
 - So after the temple was destroyed, the **Rabbis (Pharisees)** became the leaders. This is why Judaism is called Rabbinic Judaism.
 - Focus became keeping the law, but without sacrifices.
- Jewish people lost their **land**.
 - Simon bar Kokhba led a revolt against the Romans (132–136 AD).
 - Three rabbis declared him to be messiah.
 - In response, Roman Emperor Hadrian **leveled Jerusalem** in AD136.
 - Romans rebuilt the city, changing Jerusalem's name to **Aelia Capitolina**, dedicated to god Jupiter.
- **Very long exile** and history of persecution
 - Big Jewish population went to **Babylon** (under Persians).
 - Remained scattered and persecuted (even by Christians!)
- Emergence of larger Jewish groups in Europe (16th/17th centuries)
 - Sephardic Jews – Spanish roots / Islamic Arab
 - Ashkenazic Jews – German roots; spoke Yiddish (German with Hebrew characters)
- Nazi Persecution (1941-1945)
 - Hitler and the Nazi's killed **six million** Jewish people.
 - After WWII, in response to these atrocities, the Jewish people were allowed to form a Jewish state under support of the United Nations in 1948.
- Today Israel has 9 million people—with 6.7 million Jewish people. (The US has 5.3 million Jewish people).

3. Beliefs

There are **three** main branches today. Not everyone in a branch follows everything in that branch.

QUESTION: What does this chart tell us about witnessing?

	Orthodox – 6% Classical Judaism was only form available before 18th century.	Reform – 38% Modernized Judaism which emerged in 18th century (Enlightenment).	Conservative – 35% Middle ground between Orthodox and Reform.
Scripture	High view of Hebrew Bible and oral law.	Low view of Hebrew Bible. Rejects miracles. Not historically or scientifically accurate. Still valuable for morality.	Hebrew Bible and law are mix of God’s Word and man’s word.
God	Belief in a personal God .	Don’t even have to believe in God.	Non-dogmatic and flexible. God is impersonal and unknowable.
Mankind	People are born morally neutral with both good and evil inclination	People are basically good . Can improve through education and evolution.	Usually like Reform view.
Salvation	Repentance, prayer and obedience to the Law are required.	People should better themselves to advance society.	Usually like Reform view.
Messiah	Coming messiah will restore kingdom and rule over entire earth.	Mankind is progressing toward a Utopian age	Usually like Reform view.
Life after death	Physical resurrection followed by judgment.	No concept of life after death.	Usually like Reform view.

4. Witnessing Strategy – Show how Jesus fulfilled OT Prophecies

The Messiah would...	OT Reference	NT Fulfillment
Be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2 (Hebrew Bible verse 1)	Matthew 2:1–6 John 7:40–43
Be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22–23 Luke 1:31–35
Be called a Nazarene	Isaiah 11:1 Isaiah 53:3	Matthew 2:23
Perform signs of healing	Isaiah 35:5–6	Matthew 11:4–6 Luke 7:20–23
Be the rejected cornerstone	Isaiah 61:1–2	Luke 4:17–21
Be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12–13	Matthew 26:14–15 Matthew 27:3 Matthew 27:9–10
Bear our sins and suffer in our place	Isaiah 53:4-6,11	Matthew 8:16–17 Matthew 20:28 Matthew 26:28 Matthew 27:59–60 Mark 10:45 Mark 14:24 Luke 22:20 John 12:37–38 Acts 8:32–35 Romans 10:16 Hebrews 9:28 1 Peter 2:21–25
Be pierced	Malachi 4:5–6 (Hebrew Bible, verses 3:23–24)	Matthew 11:14–15 Matthew 16:14 Matthew 17:9–13 Mark 6:14–16 Mark 9:11–13 Luke 1:16–17 John 1:21
Be resurrected	Psalms 16:8–11	Acts 2:22–32 Acts 13:35–37
Bring in a new covenant	Psalms 22:1–31	Matthew 27:39 Matthew 27:43–44 Matthew 27:46 Mark 15:34 John 19:24 Hebrews 2:12

- There are many free lists online. The above comes from “Top 40 Most Helpful Messianic Prophecies,” Jews for Jesus, accessed May 27, 2019, <https://jewsforjesus.org/answers/top-40-most-helpful-messianic-prophecies/>.
- There’s also a nice chart on page 10 of International Students, Inc. “Judaism and the Jewish People.” Colorado Springs, CO: International Students, Inc., 2004. <https://www.isionline.org/Portals/0/Religion%20Profiles/Judaism%20Profile%202004.pdf>

5. Witnessing Strategy – Show Old Testament Imagery Pointing to Christ

Luke 24:27 – “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He (Jesus) expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

- **Passover lamb** – Blood put on doorframe of every house so the **angel** of death would pass over and spare that house (Ex.12:7). This foreshadows need to be covered by blood of Christ to be spared of God’s wrath (Rom. 5:9).
- **Bronze snake** – People sinned, and God sent **snakes**. When people cried out to Lord, he replied, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” (Num. 21:8). This foreshadows salvation by looking to Jesus lifted up on the cross (John 3:14).
- **Abraham’s sacrifice** – God tested Abraham’s obedience by asking him to sacrifice his only son Isaac whom he greatly loved (Gen. 22:1-18). This foreshadowed God sacrificing his only son (John 3:16).
- **Jonah** – Jonah was swallowed by a large fish (Jonah 1:17) for three days. This points to Jesus being buried for three days (Matt. 12:40; Luke 11:30).
- **Joseph** – He was rejected by own **brothers**, sold into slavery, but then becomes second to Pharaoh. When his brothers encounter famine, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and delivers them from famine.¹ Points to how Jesus would be rejected by his own people, but this would result in their salvation.
- **Yearly feasts** – Elements of Messiah found throughout the feasts that the Jewish people celebrate every **year** (Leviticus 23). Passover points to need for each

¹ Jews for Jesus has a great comparison at Bill MacDonald, “A Comparison between Joseph and Jesus,” Jews for Jesus, July 1, 1985, <https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/newsletter-sep-1985/a-comparison-between-joseph-and-jesus/>.

family to be covered by blood of lamb; Unleavened Bread points to removal of sin; Firstfruits points to Jesus being resurrected first; Pentecost points to Holy Spirit being poured out; Trumpets speaks to Israel's gathering to Messiah in future; Atonement speaks to Israel's acceptance of Messiah in future; Tabernacles points to the future millennial kingdom.²

- **Tabernacle** - Each element **represents** something. For example, there was one door into the camp (John 14:6). The **brazen altar** points to the need for a sacrifice to enter God's presence (John 1:29). The **bronze laver** points to need for being cleansed before going into God's presence (John 13:8). The **table of showbread** and **lampstand** point to the light and bread a person has in the presence of God (Jesus claimed to be both light and bread of world in John 8:12; 6:35). **Veil of curtain** leading into holy of holies was torn at Jesus death. We have an eternal **high priest** who offered a single blood sacrifice (his own perfect blood), and he sat down because there's no more need for sacrifice (Heb. 10:11-14). Therefore, we now have boldness to enter God's presence (Heb. 10:19).
- **Burnt offerings** - Worshipper would bring sacrifice, lay hands on its head, sin transferred to animal. Speaks to substitutionary sacrifice of Christ (John 1:29).

6. Evangelism Tips

- **Jewish people are not as concerned about "going to **heaven**" or being "saved."** Don't be surprised if that type of message does not make sense to them. As Christians we rightly see ourselves as sinners, cut off from God, and who need to believe in Jesus to save us from our sins in order to get to heaven. But most Jewish people feel like they are already in a good relationship with God (as God's chosen people). Most are concerned with "how to live in the here and now."³ They believe they are to demonstrate to the rest of the world how to live righteously on earth.
- **Jewish people are not as concerned about doctrine.** "Judaism, in all its branches, is a religion of deed, not creed."⁴

² Arnold Fruchtenbaum has done very insightful work on the feasts. See "The Feasts of Israel," Ariel, accessed May 28, 2019, <https://www.ariel.org/resources/feasts-of-israel>. He does so from a premillennial, dispensational perspective.

³ Intl. Students, 8.

⁴ Intl. Students, *Judaism*, 2.

- **Jewish people reject that people are born sinners.** Judaism rejects the idea of original sin (that people are born with a sin-nature). They see a “sinner” as somebody who is extremely immoral and evil. Try to show how all people are sinners from the Old Testament. Some examples:
 - 1 Kings 8:46 – (Solomon praying) “If they sin against you—*for there is no one who does not sin*—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy...”
 - Psalm 51 – the great king, David, confesses his own sin.
- **Ask questions that go into conversation.** A suggested opening could be: “As a Christian, I’m discovering that our faith is basically Jewish. I guess you could say that I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why do you suppose it’s mostly Gentiles who believe in Him even though Christianity is basically Jewish?”⁵
- **Avoid Christian jargon** like “the precious blood of Christ,” “saved,” and “born-again.” These do not carry meaning for secular or Jewish people.⁶
- **Try not to offend** with anti-Semitic phrases. Instead of saying “you Jews” or “a Jew” say “the Jewish people” or “a Jewish man.”⁷
- **Be patient.** Realize that as a Christian you likely know the Old Testament better than a Jewish friend. You might be showing them Scriptures they are not familiar with.⁸

Deeper Questions & Answers

Do all Jewish people reject Jesus?

Answer: No! There are about 350,000 Jewish people worldwide today who do believe in Jesus. They are called Messianic Jews.⁹ The Bible says it is fitting that Jewish people should receive Jesus as Messiah (Rom. 11:24). Peter, James, John, Paul, etc., were all Jewish. Christianity started as a Jewish sect. Acts 24:5 says, “For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the **sect of the Nazarenes**.” Some great Messianic Jewish resources are Jews for Jesus (www.jewsforjesus.org) and Arnold Fruchtenbaum (www.ariel.org).

⁵ Robinson, *Compact Guide*, 134.

⁶ Robinson, *Compact Guide*, 132.

⁷ Robinson, *Compact Guide*, 132

⁸ Robinson, *Compact Guide*, 139.

⁹ *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Messianic Judaism,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messianic_Judaism. Figure from 2012.

How do Jewish people think they're forgiven without a temple?

How do Jewish people think they're forgiven today if there's no temple and no animal sacrifices? Answer: they don't think sacrifices required.

God took away the temple, so they think they're not obligated. They also think their repentance is what's important. Even if they had a temple, they still believe repentance is what's most important.¹⁰

What are their authoritative Scriptures?

- **Old Testament**
 - Jewish people believe same Old Testament as Christian Old Testament.
 - Only difference is arrangement of books.
- **Mishnah (Oral Law)**
 - Jewish people believe God also gave an oral law along with written law.
 - Divided into six categories covering: (1) agriculture and prayer, (2) holy days and scroll writing, (3) women, marriage and vows, (4) civil and criminal law and idolatry, (5) holy matters, (6) rituals and purification.
- **Talmud**
 - Talmud = Mishna (oral law) + Gemara (illustrations)
 - There are two versions: Palestinian/Jerusalem and Babylonian.

What are some customs and practices?

- **Keeping Kosher**
 - Eating only certain foods; not mixing meat and milk foods, etc.
- **Clothing**
 - Wearing certain clothing as a sign of devotion (e.g., kippah).
- **Sabbath**
 - Saturday prayer service at the synagogue (Fri. for Reform).
 - Not supposed to work: no turning lights on/off, answering phone, driving.
- **Life Events**
 - **Circumcision** – Males are circumcised on 8th day. Based on God commanding Abraham to circumcise male descendants in Gen. 17: 9-14.

¹⁰ See for more info: "Qorbanot: Sacrifices and Offerings," Mechon Mamre, accessed May 27, 2019, <https://www.mechon-mamre.org/jewfaq/qorbanot.htm>.

- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah** – A Rite of passage ceremony at age 13 (considered morally responsible).
- **Weddings** – Ceremony under a canopy (*chuppah*). Smashing of glass symbolizes destruction of temple in AD 70.
- **Holidays**

Virtually all Jewish people observe at least some Jewish holidays.¹¹

 - **Rosh ha-Shanah** (Jewish New Year) – Sep or Oct.
 - **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) – 10 days after previous.
 - **Sukkot** (Booths) – 5 days after previous. Booth constructed in yard; waving branches.
 - **Hanukkah** – Nov/Dec. Remembering Jewish victory over Syrian army (c. 175 BC) by lighting a menorah for 8 days.
 - **Purim** – Feb/Mar. Celebrates God’s deliverance of Jewish people from Persians through Esther.
 - **Passover** – Mar/Apr. Biggest holiday. Families gather to remember events of Exodus. Unleavened bread eaten for a week.
 - **Shavuot** (Weeks or Pentecost) – May/June. Not widely observed. Celebrates harvest, giving of Law.

Evangelism tip: send greeting cards to Jewish friends for *Rosh ha-Shanah*, Hanukkah or Passover.

Definitions

- **Askenazi Jews** – Jewish people settling around German lands.
- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah** – Rite of passage ceremony at age 13 (considered morally responsible).
- **Gemara** – illustrations of the law (aka Haggadah).
- **Kabbalah** - Jewish mysticism that began in the middle ages.
- **Midrashim** – Homiletical commentaries on the Old Testament
- **Mishna** – The oral law. Jewish people believe God also gave an oral law along with written law.
- **Schema** – Refers to Deut. 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” Emphasizes belief in one God.
- **Sedar** – Jewish feast during Passover
- **Sephardic Jews** – Jewish people setting around Spain, Islamic Arab influence.
- **Septuagint (or LXX)** – Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures (3rd to 2nd c. BC).

¹¹ Intl. Students, *Judaism*, 5.

- **Synagogue** – building where Jewish congregation meets.
- **Talmud** – Mishna (oral law) + Gemara (illustrations)
- **Tanakh** – Stands for Torah, Prophets, Writings. Refers to three major sections of Hebrew Bible.
- **Torah** – First five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy); aka, the Pentateuch. Can also refer to entire written and oral law.

Bibliography & Resources

Ariel. "The Feasts of Israel." Accessed May 28, 2019.

<https://www.ariel.org/resources/feasts-of-israel>.

Corduan, Winfried. *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

Jews for Jesus. "Top 40 Most Helpful Messianic Prophecies." Accessed May 27, 2019.

<https://jewsforjesus.org/answers/top-40-most-helpful-messianic-prophecies/>.

International Students, Inc. "Judaism and the Jewish People." Colorado Springs, CO: International Students, Inc., 2004.

<https://www.isionline.org/Portals/0/Religion%20Profiles/Judaism%20Profile%202004.pdf>

MacDonald, Bill. "A Comparison between Joseph and Jesus." Jews for Jesus. July 1, 1985.

<https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/newsletter-sep-1985/a-comparison-between-joseph-and-jesus/>.

Mechon Mamre. "Qorbanot: Sacrifices and Offerings." Accessed May 27, 2019.

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/jewfaq/qorbanot.htm>.

Robinson, Richard. "Judaism and the Jewish People." In *The Compact Guide To World Religions* edited by Dean C. Halverson, 121-143. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996.