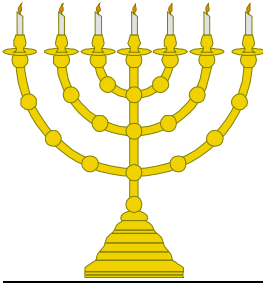


Christian Outreach and World Religions

Judaism



The Modern Jewish Context

1. There is a distinction between the Jewish people and the religion of Judaism. There are about 12.8 million Jewish people in the world today. There are 5.2 million Jews in the USA. Twenty percent of these claim to be secular.
2. The term “Judaism” today refers to the religion of the rabbis that developed from 200 B.C. and crystallized after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. In a sense both Christianity and Judaism are descendants of the religion of Israel.
3. Orthodox Judaism is the only form of Judaism that existed up to the Age of Enlightenment (18th century). It is characterized by strict adherence to the Mosaic Law. Reform Judaism began in Germany during the Enlightenment and emphasizes ethics. Conservative Judaism provides a middle-ground branch.
4. There is no equivalent to evangelical Christianity which emphasizes a personal relationship with God. Judaism in all branches is a religion of deed not creed. What one believes about sin and the afterlife is not as important as living the proper life now.
5. Other kinds of Judaism include: Reconstructionist which is an offshoot of Conservative Judaism. It maintains that Judaism is a “religious civilization.” Hasidic is an ultra-Orthodox movement and is socially separatist. Zionism is concerned with the return of the Jews to the land of Israel.

Beliefs of Judaism

1. Judaism explicitly affirms the *Sh'ma*, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Dt. 6.4).
2. Jews presume a “standing before God.” They do not speak of “salvation,” for there is nothing to be saved from. They deny original sin and think of “sinners” only as extremely wicked people.
3. They respect the Bible although often they are not familiar with it. Orthodox Jews consider the Talmud to have divine authority. It consists of the *Mishnah* (various legal rulings compiled around A.D. 200) and the *Gemara* (elaboration of the *Mishnah* compiled around A.D. 550). Most Jewish people consider the Talmud to be useful for ethics but not as a binding divine authority.

Dos and Don'ts in Witnessing Situations

1. Jargon Check: Don't use terminology like “the blood of Jesus, saved, born again, “ until you've had the opportunity to explain them. Avoid anti-Semitic terminology: “you Jews” or “Jewess.” Use “the Messiah Jesus” instead of “Jesus Christ.”
2. Learn the Jewish holidays. The Passover especially provides an opportunity for discussion.
3. Key Terms: Explain that sin is more than transgression but a condition (a disease). A more familiar term than “salvation” is “redemption.” The same goes for “Savior” and “Redeemer.”
4. Good Biblical starting points: Isaiah 53 (Song of the Suffering Servant), Psalm 51 (David's Song of Confession), 1 Kings 8 (Solomon's prayer at the Dedication of the Temple).
5. Discuss the Jewishness of the NT. Luke 2.21 (Circumcision), Matthew 26/Luke 22 (Passover), John 10.22 (Hanukkah or Dedication).
6. Comparisons between OT and NT: Psalm 51 and Romans 3.23 (Sin); Jeremiah 31.31-34 and John 6.45 (New Covenant); Numbers 21.8-9 and John 3.14 (Bronze Serpent); Genesis 22.1-18 and John 3.16 (The Offering of Isaac).
7. As the New Testament so often does, move the discussion of faith from the covenant God made with Moses to the covenant God made with Abraham. Discuss which of these still stands. We believe that the covenant with Moses was fulfilled in Jesus. He is the last sacrifice. Where does the covenant with Moses stand after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 (as Jesus prophesied). In Abraham's covenant (Genesis 12.1-3) God said that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham. Are not all the families of the earth blessed through Abraham's descendent Jesus?

Handling Objections

1. *You believe in three gods.* Point out that Jesus quoted the great *Sh'ma* (Mark 12.29). Move the discussion from a focus on “one” to “unity.” God is bigger than you or me. The Hebrew word *'echad* “one” also includes the idea of “unity.” It is the same word that is used in Genesis 2.24 to describe the “oneness” of a husband and wife in marriage.
2. *There is no proof that Jesus is the Messiah.* Ask “what proof would it take to convince you?” See chart concerning prophetic fulfillment.

3. *Why isn't there peace on earth?* There must be peace in our hearts before there will be peace on earth. What if God caused all wars to cease but their hearts were not changed. Because God's plan for peace is not complete does not mean that is not underway.
4. *I can't believe in a religion that persecuted the Jews.* People can misuse anything--even the Gospel. Tyrants misuse freedom and justice. Do we then give up on freedom?
5. *The New Testament is anti-Semitic.* The harsh sounding passages such as John 8.44 or 1 Thessalonians 2.14-16 are the same way the prophets spoke to unbelieving Israel (Isaiah 1). Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Matthew 23.37-39).
6. *You shouldn't proselytize.* Isaiah said that Israel would be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42.6; 49.6).
7. *I'm content with the way things are right now.* Is "happiness" or "contentment" the goal of life? See Jeremiah 9.22-23).

Prophetic Fulfillment

Selected Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus

PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
The Messiah will be from the seed of Abraham (Genesis 18:18); Isaac (21:12); Jacob (Numbers 24:17, 19); Judah (Genesis 49:10); Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-2, 10); David (Jeremiah 23:5-6).	"Jesus ... the son of David, the son of Jesse, ... the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham (Luke 3:31-33).
Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; also John 7:42).	"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David" (Luke 2:4).
"He was despised and rejected by men" (Isaiah 53:3).	"Those who passed by [the Cross] hurled insults at him ..." (Matthew 27:39-44).
"A man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3).	"Then [Jesus] said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death' " (Matthew 26:38).
"Familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3).	"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things" (Mark 8:31; also Luke 24:26).
"Be strong, do not fear; your God will come.... Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy" (Isaiah 35:4-6) "the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Isaiah 61:1).	"Go back and report to John what you hear and see? The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor" (Matthew 11:4-5; also Luke 4:18).
"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4).	"[Jesus] drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick" (Matthew 8:16-17).
"They must not...break any of [the Passover lamb's] bones" (Numbers 9:12); "He was pierced" (Isaiah 53:5); "They have pierced my hands and feet" (Psalm 22:16; also Zechariah 12:10).	"But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear" (John 19:33-37).
"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).	"The Son of Man [came] to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); God made him who had no sin to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21; also John 11:49-51; 1

	Corinthians 15:3).
“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth...as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).	“But Jesus remained silent” (Matthew 26:63); “When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer” (Matthew 27:12).
“They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing” (Psalm 22:18).	“[Jesus’] garment was seamless, woven in one piece...’Let’s decide by lot who will get it’ “ (John 19:23-24).
“He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:9).	Judas: “ ‘I have sinned’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood’ “ (Matthew 27:4; also Luke 23:41; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
He “was numbered with the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).	“Two robbers were crucified with him” (Matthew 27:38; also Luke 22:37).
“He was assigned a grave...with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9).	“There came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph....Joseph took the body... and placed it in his own new tomb” (Matthew 27:57-60).
“For he made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).	“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).
“You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Psalm 16:10); “Though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days....” (Isaiah 53:10-11).	“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” (Luke 24:5-6; also Acts 2:31-32).
“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone” (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14)	“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him....’ “ (Matthew 21:28-42).

Pages 137 and 138 of **The Compact Guide to World Religions**, Edited by Dean C. Halverson (See introduction to this Bible study)


Witnessings Steps Outlined by Rev. Kevin Parviz of “Apple of His Eye”

The only Gentiles at the resurrection of Jesus were probably the Roman soldiers. People don’t often associate the resurrection with Jews. Yet it was the Jewish followers of Jesus that first witnessed this great miracle and announced it to the world.

Recently we were privileged to have Rev. Kevin Parviz with us in worship and Bible class. Rev. Parviz grew up in an orthodox Jewish home. As a college student he drifted into atheism. His wife, a Lutheran, continued to practice her faith. One Easter Sunday, when his daughter was two years old, she climbed onto the dinner table, looked her father in the eye, and said, “Daddy, you need Jesus to.” Her father’s displeasure with this caused the little girl to cry. This event became a turning point for Kevin. Eventually he embraced the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and he later attended seminary. Now he serves in a full-time ministry called Apple of His Eye, an LCMS evangelistic ministry to Jewish people.

In Bible class (March 2001), Rev. Parviz led us through a string of Bible passages that help share the Gospel of Christ to Jewish people in a way they can understand. Here are the main points of that presentation.

You can begin by referring to the “Hebrew Scriptures” rather than to the “Old Testament.” The “Old Testament” implies the “New Testament” or covenant in Jesus that the Jewish person cannot be expected to accept yet.

Hebrew Scriptures	Notes
Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.	God wants to save us. But sin separates us from God. This is often why people feel there is no God or at least that God does not listen to them or care about them. Rev. Parviz noted that in a recent survey many Jewish people in the St. Louis area claimed to be atheists.
Ezekiel 18.4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die."	Most Jews think that they do not sin. When they hear the word “sinner” they think we mean very notorious sinners and very wicked people. <i>But there is no clearer proof that we are all sinners than the fact that we all die.</i> Today most Jewish people do not believe in eternal life. Eternal life for them is their good life and works that live on in the memory of their descendents.
Daniel 12.2 (12.1 in Hebrew) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.	But the Hebrew Scriptures do teach that we live after death. The only question is, “will it be eternal life or eternal condemnation?”
Isaiah 64.6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.	Good works are wonderful. But they, by themselves, are actually contemptuous to God when accompanied by our iniquities.
Leviticus 17.11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'	Atonement comes through blood sacrifice. But 40 years after Jesus, the Temple was destroyed as Jesus had predicted. Blood sacrifices ended. Judaism that is practiced today is actually <i>younger</i> than Christianity. It was invented at the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90. At that time Jews replaced blood sacrifices with good works, prayer, and fasting.
Jeremiah 31.31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."	Seven hundred years before Jesus, Jeremiah promised a new covenant. This covenant did not replace the covenant God made with Abraham-- that he would become a great nation and a blessing to all nations. It did replace the covenant that God made at Sinai when he led Israel out of Egypt. That covenant of the law foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah. It was given to lead us to the Messiah, who forgives iniquity. 
Isaiah 53.5-6 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.	It would be wise to read all of Isaiah 52.13-53.12. But these particular verses show that God’s final solution was to lay the guilt of sin upon one particular person. This is God’s “Anointed One” or Messiah. No one fits this description better than Jesus. The fit is so good that sometimes Jewish people think that this chapter comes from the New Testament! And yet, there it is, clearly promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

