

AN EXAMINATION OF THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF JUDAISM
IN THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

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PREFACE

My excitement concerning the subject of this thesis is somewhat akin to that of a paleontologist discovering a live dinosaur walking about in his back yard. Right down the street from us in most major cities of our country we may discover vestigial traces of Old and New Testament religious and social observances and customs. Particularly the practice of modern Judaism impresses the fact upon me that Messiah has come as was promised and that salvation is an accomplished fact by means of the amazing grace of our God.

This thesis has also allowed me to examine information which was delivered to me in the past as to Jewish belief and ritual and my conclusion has been that my information was not always completely unbiased or even correct. The practical implications of this thesis for my ministry can be summed up by reflecting upon the fact that it is difficult if not impossible to bear witness to the forgiving love of Jesus the Christ to a Jewish neighbor in

St. Louis Park, Minnesota if I bombard him with erroneous and even insulting misinformation concerning what he practices in his religion and why.

Finally, this thesis has served to dispel a false notion that I have held for many years. In the past I have maintained in my own mind that only one form of Judaism has survived the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. On the basis of my study I now feel that several of the sects of Judaism that were present at the time of Christ have survived to this present age including:

an isolationist sect such as the Essenes -
(Chasidic or Orthodox Judaism)

a conservative party - (Conservative Judaism)

a liberal party - (Reform Judaism)

a terrorist zeolot party - (militant Zionists)

Once again, by observing what is extant today I can better understand the rich background of the Old and New Testament.

I gratefully acknowledge the patience and support of my family while I was engaged in these studies. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the professors both past and present of our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for the knowledge that they have imparted to me and all students of God's Word. I am especially grateful for the invaluable assistance and encouragement of Professor Ernst Wendland and Dr. John Lawrenz.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

PART ONE - FOUNDATIONS

By necessity, this first part of the thesis must be blatantly introductory in nature. In order to understand the theology and practice of modern Judaism, we will have to get down to basics. What are the foundations, what are the roots of Judaism? In order to answer these introductory questions, we will want to examine what claims Judaism makes for itself. This data must be compared with what the Bible has to say concerning these subjects.

Especially in recent years, there is a term that is heard more and more often. The term 'Judeo/Christian' has become extremely popular and is bandied about even in Christian circles. The implication of this expression seems to be that except for a few minor doctrinal differences and marginal misunderstandings there is essentially no distinction between Judaism and Christianity. This, of course, is a complete and utter fallacy. The god of Judaism is most certainly not the true and only God of the Holy Scriptures. The kingdom for which Judaism longs is not the new and heavenly Jerusalem. The salvation that Judaism proclaims is not obtained from a loving heavenly Father who sent his only Son into the world to be the eternal solution to Man's perennial dilemma.

One of the living sources that I will quote from time to time is Mr. Yitzhak Grill, who lives in Ramat Gan, Israel. Yitzhak is a scholar. He is a former professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He has fought in every war in which the State of Israel has been involved with the exception of the last Lebanese conflict. His father was a Chasidic rabbi who raised his child, Isaac, in the strictest tenets of Judaism. While not a sabra (native born Israeli), Yitzhak has lived in Eretz Yisrael since he was 'the son of seven years'. At the time of this writing, Yitzhak is seventy-five years old. Yitzhak Grill is a good friend who has visited my family many times here in the United States. My children love him and call him 'saba' (Grandpa) and they cry when he leaves our home and returns to his beloved Israel. My children don't cry only because they will miss a good friend who so readily shows his love for them but because they know that Yitzhak Grill is going to hell. Yitzhak does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. As Yitzhak once told me, "The only difference between you, Reverend Rabbi, and me, Yitzhak Grill, is that you wait for Messiah to come again. I wait for him to come for the first time." In love, I had to tell my friend, "Dear teacher, the difference is too large to gap. There are not two messiahs. You know that and I know that. There is only one Messiah and I believe with all my heart that he has come in accord with the promise of almighty God."

In order to examine that gap which can only be

bridged by the gospel of Jesus Christ, let us together discover what Judaism has to say about its foundations. At the very onset, allow me to say that I do not believe that the god of Judaism and the God of the Bible are one and the same. For the sake of clarity, I will, however, continue to capitalize names referring to deity except when a pointed contrast must to be made.

The foundations of Judaism appear to be four-fold.

They are:

JUDAISM'S GOD

JUDAISM'S TORAH

JUDAISM'S PEOPLE

JUDAISM'S LAND

CHAPTER 1: JUDAISM'S GOD

It is the first passage from the Book that a Jewish mother teaches to her son and it is the final word that a dying Jew utters: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד. "HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE." (Dt 6:4) Recited as a confession of the faith of Judaism, the verse of the SHEMA YISRAEL sums up the first and second commandments of the decalog. The last letters of שמע and אחד form the word עד (witness) and are written large in the Hebrew Bible. The meaning of this practice is that a Jew who recites the Shema bears witness to the oneness of God before the entire world.

Judaism claims to be monotheistic and this claim cannot be disputed. But the fact also remains that the one god of Judaism is not the God who has revealed himself in the Bible. Before we examine Judaism's god, let us once again view the Lord in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. The true, the one and the only God is the Triune God - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

There are many, both Jewish and liberal Christian exegetes, who raise the protest that the doctrine of the

Trinity is an evolutionary projection of God found only in the New Testament. And yet, the Triune God is revealed in the Old Testament for all those who have eyes to see. From the first pages of the first book to the last prophetic book written by divine inspiration, the plurality of Persons of the God who is One is clearly indicated. Dr. Luther speaks on this very subject when he says, "At the very beginning of the world the fact that there are three Persons in the Godhead was indicated. Later this was recognized by the prophets and finally fully revealed through the gospel."
(SL 1,274)

The third word of the first sentence of the Bible bears witness to this plurality of Persons of which Luther speaks. The very first designation of God is a plural word **אֱלֹהִים** (Elohim). I fully recognize that the caveat pronounced by such respected exegetes as Gesenius, Leupold and Franzmann is not only in order but commendable. We dare not read a complete revelation of the Triune God into the plural "Elohim". This word is not used exclusively of the true God in the Scripture. In Genesis 1:1, however, it is perfectly clear that "Elohim" is the only God, the genuine God. For this reason, we also dare not become apologetic to the point that we minimize the simple fact that we often have a plural subject followed by a singular verb. The Lord God is not the author of bad Hebrew grammar. For me, the proclamation of this plural noun as either a potential plural or a 'pluralitas majestatis or excellentiae' is a

case of easy Hebrew made difficult and just does not cut the grammatical mustard. Once again, Dr. Luther, the eminent exegete, is quoted:

The Jews cavil at Moses in various ways. But it is clear to us that he wanted subtly (tecte) to point to the Trinity or to the plurality of Persons in the one divine nature. For since he is speaking of the work of creation, it clearly excludes the angels. Therefore this [apparent] contradiction remains, that God is One and that this most perfect Unity (unissima unitas) is nonetheless also most truly a Plurality (verissima pluralitas). For why should Moses otherwise have used the plural number? "In the beginning God (Elohim) created" (Gn 1:1).

The cold caviling of the Jews, that the plural number is used for the sake of reverence, must be denied. Why reverence at this place? Especially since that which is common usage among us Germans is not common to all languages: that it is a matter of reverence to use the plural number when speaking of one person.

Furthermore, as to their oft repeated claim that this word is applied also to angels and men, note that at this place it is in the plural and can only be applied to the one true God because Moses speaks of the work of creation. There were, moreover, many other words in the singular which Moses might have used had he not purposely wanted to indicate to the spiritually minded that outside the creature there is a plurality of

Persons in the divine nature. He does indeed not say in plain words: There is the Father; there is the Son; there is the Holy Spirit; they are the one and true God. That plain revelation was reserved for the holy gospel. It was enough for him by the use of a plural noun, which was afterward applied also to human beings, to point to the plurality of Persons in God. (SL 1:14f)

All the same things may be said of Genesis 1:26:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...' This cohortative imperfect **נַעֲשֶׂה** is once again striking because it is a plural. The majestic plural used by royalty in making edicts cannot be demonstrated in the Scriptures.

Every single time that a religious Jew substitutes the name **אֲדֹנָי** for the Tetragrammaton **יהוה**, he draws repeated attention to the mystery of the Trinity. Again, we are faced with a plural. In order to distinguish what is clearly a designation for God, the pointing is lengthened from **אֲדֹנָי** to **אֲדֹנָיִם**. Not "my lords" but "my LORD" is addressed with the term 'Adonai'.

There must also be a brief treatment of the "Angel of the Lord" (**מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה**). Divine names and attributes are ascribed to the Angel of the Lord in passages from Genesis 16:7 to Malachi 3:1. None of the Jewish sources mentioned in the bibliography so much as allude to this mysterious angel except for Howard Fast. This modern, irreligious Jew writes:

But to return to the Levites-who was their god and the

god of their leader Moses? On this score the Bible is thoroughly confusing. When first Moses sees the burning bush, we are told that this is a manifestation of an angel of God. But the modern concept of angels did not exist then; they were only other lesser gods. (emphasis mine) Then we are told that the Lord Yahweh is in the burning bush-Yahweh, the thunder god of the high places, the god of vengeance and jealousy. Then when Moses asks the God's name, God replies, 'Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh', Hebrew words meaning, 'I AM THAT I AM, a beautiful, profound, and mystical concept of a universal God. (THE JEWS p 22)

It is not strange at all that one solitary Jew who professes faith in no God should be the only one who deals with this problem. Unlike his religious counterpart, Fast has no problem whatsoever. He simply passes off the Angel of the Lord as a trace of the early polytheism of his People who have ever been known for their monotheistic beliefs.

Only a brief look at some of the passages which refer to the Angel of the Lord will suffice to reveal his true identity.

"The Angel added, 'I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.'...She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me...' (Gn 16:10, 13)

"Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he (the Angel) said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear

God, because you have not withheld from ME your son, your only son.'" (Gn 22:12)

"There the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush...When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush..." (Ex 3:2, 4)

"The Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you'...'Well, I have come to you now,' Balaam replied. 'But can I speak anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.'" (Nu 22:35,38)

"The Angel of the Lord...said, 'I brought you up out of Egypt, etc.'" (Jdg 2:1ff)

"'If the Lord had meant to kill us (speaking of the Angel of the Lord), he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.'" (Jdg 13:23)

"In all their distress he too was distressed, and the ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE SAVED THEM. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." [It is mainly from this passage that Luther identifies the Angel of the Lord with the pre-incarnate Christ] (Is 63: 9)

"'See, I will send my messenger, (מַלְאָכִי) who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire will come,' says the Lord Almighty." (Mal 3:1)

It is clear that this is not just one of the created angels that is described in these passages. If this were the case, the angel would be guilty of blasphemy, of ascribing to himself the words and deeds of God. This is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself whose presence as the Angel of the Lord points to that time when he would take on flesh and appear and dwell among us.

Two striking examples of the Triune God being worshipped are to be found in the three-fold Aaronitic blessing recorded in Numbers 7:22ff and the grand and glorious Trisagion of Isaiah 6:3. Concerning the three-fold repetition of the divine Name, the Lord himself makes this commentary: "So they (the priests) will put my NAME on the Israelites, and I will bless them." (Nu 7:27) Dr. Luther takes the inspired words of the prophet Isaiah and translates them into the beautiful music of his Sanctus:

Isaiah, mighty seer, in days of old
 The Lord of all in spirit did behold
 High on a lofty throne in splendor bright,
 With flowing train that filled the temple quite.
 Above the throne were stately seraphim;
 Six wings had they, these messengers of Him.
 With twain they veiled their faces, as was meet,
 With twain in rev'rent awe they hid their feet,
 And with the other twain aloft they soared,
 One to the other called and praised the Lord:

"HOLY IS GOD THE LORD OF SABAOth!"

"HOLY IS GOD THE LORD OF SABAOth!"

"HOLY IS GOD THE LORD OF SABAOth!"

"BEHOLD, HIS GLORY FILLEth ALL THE EARTH!"

The beams and lintels trembled at the cry.

And clouds of smoke enwrapped the throne on high.

Our attention is finally directed to the exegesis of Psalm 110:1 that Jesus presents in Matthew 22:41ff:

While the pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied. He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him LORD For he says, The LORD said to my LORD (**לְאֲדֹנָי**): Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet. If then David call him LORD, how can he be his son?"

The Hebrew text that Jesus quotes is extremely explicit.

The familiar expression **נְאֻם יְהוָה** (Father) speaks with

אֲדֹנָי (Son) in heavenly council. Incidentally, Jesus

also proclaims the Holy Spirit in his question, "How is it then that David speaking by the Spirit..." (Mt 22:43) If we don't want to become so explicit in our identification of the Father and the Son in "n'um Yahweh" and "Adonai", the inspired words of the psalmist quoted by Jesus are filled with the mystery of the Trinity. First of all, there is

יהוה unique in his Oneness. And then there is also

that designation **אֲדֹנָי** which speaks volumes

concerning the plurality of Persons. Coupled with the

complete revelation of the New Testament, we may say with

Israel of old: "HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD IS GOD, THE LORD IS ONE!"

One closing quotation from Luther is fitting:

In the Old Testament, before the advent and birth of Christ, the article of the Trinity was not so clear and plain as it is in the New Testament after the advent of Christ. For God had patience with the Jewish people and carried them as a mother carries her child. The patriarchs and the prophets understood this article, but the common people simply continued to believe in one God. Likewise, the simple, plain folk among us stay with the truth that there is one eternal, almighty God and cannot grasp the difference of the three Persons in one Godhead as sharply as the learned can. (SL 13b, 2687)

Having heard what the Bible has to say about the true God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, let us now examine the god of Judaism.

A conservative Rabbi Dr. R. Brasch says:

To the Jew, God is not a philosophical abstraction, but an ever present reality. He is all-powerful, spiritual, and eternal. Both mercy and justice belong to his Being. Life and this universe are not just an interplay of blind forces or a product of chance and fate. God gives them meaning and purpose. Though often inscrutable, a divine plan shapes this world. Man has the sacred duty to act as God's partner, who can hinder

or foster the realization of his (God's) purpose. (THE JUDAIC HERITAGE p 2)

The religious Jew looks upon the acceptance of God's existence as a matter of faith (אִמּוּנָה). This God is infinite while Man is finite. This God cannot be reduced to the finite and thus be capable of being altered and transformed by Man, even killed and destroyed. The fact that God exists must be accepted by faith which is tempered by reason. The concept of God to which Jewish people stubbornly cling is one that admits no compromise with the universality, the spirituality and the unity of God. This God is the universal God not only of Jews but of all people of the earth whether or not they realize and accept his existence. Once again, we quote Rabbi Brasch, "Judaism teaches that there is one God, who is universal and yet most personal. He is the Father of ALL (emphasis mine) men, whom (ie God) we must love with all our heart and serve in all our ways." (Judaic Heritage p 2)

According to traditional interpretation, the two common names for God have a special significance. "Elohim" typifies the divine qualities of power and justice and the Tetragrammaton proclaims the Lord who shows mercy.

There would seem to be an eternal intertwining of God's purpose and Man's existence throughout the fabric of the theology and practice of Judaism. This is a portion of what the JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA has to say under its heading

: אֱלֹהִים

The traditional Jewish conception of God has been

described as ethical monotheism. The God-idea demonstrates moral values to be adopted by men - "Even as He is gracious, so be you gracious; even as He is holy, so be you holy" (Shabbath 133b). This is known as the imitation of God. The standard of man's morality is to be reflected in the divine attributes. (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JEWISH CONCEPTS p 35)

The implications of this God/Man partnership [with the emphasis upon Man's efforts] is also spoken of by Jewish scholar, Nathan Ausubel. He writes:

It is axiomatic that the moral ideas and ideal values of the Jewish religion [notice that above these ideas and values are attributed to God] were not created in a vacuum but in a CULTURAL CONTINUUM (emphasis mine). It took more than a thousand years of dedicated striving - of retrogression as well as advance, since progress never moves in a straight line toward its goals - until the high peak of religious Rabbinic Judaism was reached just before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. (THE BOOK OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE p 302)

With all its claims of reverence for God, Judaism has almost ever been afflicted with a preponderance of emphasis upon Man and his efforts to better himself morally and ethically. At the same time, it should be admitted that the religious Jew still speaks of patterning his life after the example of

שְׁלֹש עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת

(Midot, the

Thirteen Attributes of God). The Thirteen Attributes are

spoken of in the Torah according to the traditional interpretation of Exodus 34:6,7: "...The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;" The Midot are interpreted in this way:

- I. and II -the repetition of the divine Name represents the first two qualities of God, ie, that he is merciful to the one about to sin but not yet guilty of sinning, and to the sinner who has repented.
- III -"El" means that God is powerful to act as his wisdom dictates.
- IV -merciful (rachum) denotes that God acts like a father to his children, preventing them from falling.
- V -gracious (channun) is God to assist those who have fallen and cannot rise.
- VI -slow to anger, patient and hopeful that the sinner will repent.
- VII -abounding in kindness (love) both to the righteous and the wicked.
- VIII -abounding in faithfulness; God is truthful in carrying out all his promises
- IX -God extends his mercy to thousands of generations, PLACING THE MERITS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CREDIT OF THE CHIDREN. (emphasis mine)

- X -God forgives sins committed with premeditation.
- XI -God forgives sins committed in a spirit of rebellion.
- XII -God forgives sins committed inadvertently.
- XIII -the positive of "he does not leave the guilty unpunished" is that God clears those who repent.

Take special note of Attribute IX. Judaism maintains that acceptance to God can be attributed to birth. Being born a Jew makes a person a recipient of the blessings of the covenant. Small wonder that both John the Baptist and Jesus denounce this false security offered by Judaism. "And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham." (Mt 3:9) "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did." (Jn 8:39)

With all sense of ethnic pride stripped away by Jesus, how does Judaism declare the sinner to be acceptable before God? This is clear from Judaism's concept of what it means to be צדיק (righteous).

This quotation declares Judaism's righteousness:

In the Hebrew Bible alone, the root צדק generally translated in the sense of righteousness, occurs over five hundred times, counting all its inflections. In the prophetic writings, righteousness is synonymous with ethical conduct. The man who refrains from wrongdoing and makes an effort to establish what is right is called

righteous. The marks of the righteous man, according to Jewish thinking, are the sincerity of purpose and the strenuous endeavor to accomplish it. The righteous man who has fallen into sin is distinguished by his repentance, as in the case of David. (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JEWISH CONCEPTS p 519)

According to talmudic observation, in each generation there are at least thirty-six righteous men in the world, for whose sake God withholds his destruction of the world. This observation is the result of an interesting little piece of cabbalistic exegesis based upon Isaiah 30:18 (אֲשֶׁרֵי כֵלָּה חוֹבֵי לֵוֹ , blessed are all those who wait for him). The word לֵוֹ has the numerical value of thirty-six. From this comes the popular Jewish belief that there are thirty-six righteous (לֵוֹ צַדִּיקִים) concealed, who sustain the entire world into which they have been dispersed.

It is clear from this evaluation of Judaism's god that this is not the God who loves so much that he sends his Son to be the Savior of the sinner who stands outside the love of God. Judaism's god can be appeased by the meritorious efforts of the one who seeks to justify and redeem himself.

END NOTES

1. Of extreme practical importance in this discussion of Judaism's God is a point that would be well remembered in efforts of evangelizing Jews. The Jew has a horror of the concept of God becoming man. The reception of such a teaching would be much the same as our attitude toward Joseph Smith's man who becomes a god. Conservative Rabbi Hayim Donin says, "The Jewish conception of God also rejected any compromise with the spirituality of God. The notion of man becoming God or God assuming the form of man was equally repugnant to the Jewish religious spirit. THE JEWISH MIND AND FAITH CANNOT ACCEPT THE NOTION OF THE INFINITE DIVINE REDUCING HIMSELF TO A FINITE MORTAL (emphasis mine)." Stay, therefore, with the Word, all the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the Word itself will convict the minds of the People of the Book of the reality of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

2. The reason for so much confusion in our world of today concerning the God of the Bible and the God of Judaism is that so many of the Jewish concepts of God can be understood and accepted as valid since, at first glance, they appear to be taken from the Word. It is, however, the definitive twist and thrust of Judaism stubbornly to reject the clear teaching of the Scripture concerning Who God is and to inject the continual insidious addition of human synergistic attraction of God's love. The emphasis shifts from God to Man.

CHAPTER 2: JUDAISM'S TORAH

In Berakhoth 61b, the Talmud relates that Rabbi Akiva (circa 134 AD) kept spreading the knowledge of the Torah in the Jewish communities despite the Roman decree against Jewish religious study. He was asked, "Akiva, are you afraid? Are you not aware of the mortal danger of being caught and destroyed by the Roman authorities?" Rabbi Akiva replied, "Let me tell you a story. A fox was running on the brink of a stream and saw a fish running to and fro in the clear water. Said the fox to the fish, 'Why do you run so?' They retorted, 'We run because we fear the fishermen's nets.' 'Come up on dry land,' said the fox, 'and live with me in safety, even as my forefathers once lived in safety with yours.' [Was Akiva an evolutionist?] But the fish said, 'Water is our natural home. If we are not safe here, how much less safe should we be on land, where we must surely die.' It is exactly so with us Jews. The Torah is our life and the length of our days. Though we are in great danger while studying the Torah, we would surely disappear and be no more if we were to give up its study."

If there is one word which would seem to be

connected with Judaism more than any other word it is the word "Torah." Philip Birnbaum, however, has this to say, "The inaccurate rendering of Torah by Law has all along been a barrier, preventing non-Jews from understanding the ideal which is summed up in the term "talmud Torah", the study of the Torah, characterized in Jewish tradition as excelling all things." (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JEWISH CONCEPTS p 630)

I don't know if Rabbi Birnbaum is blaming Christians for this misrendering and misunderstanding of the Hebrew term "Torah". From Jewish writings and from my conversations with Jewish scholars, I have come away with the distinct impression that the words "Torah" and "Law" are synonymous as far as most religious Jews are concerned.

Torah (תורה) is derived from the Hebrew יָרָה which means "to cast, to lay foundations, to sprinkle with water; in the Hiphil-to send out the hand, ie, to point, show and, therefore, TO INSTRUCT". For this reason, it is granted that basically the word Torah signifies guidance and instruction. This is why, for the Jew, Torah encompasses every field of Jewish culture-ethics, justice, religion, education.

Technically, Torah refers to the Five Books of Moses. This is the Torah Sh'Biktav (תורה שבכתב), the Written Torah. Torah is the first and foremost part of the Jewish Bible. Religious Jews will not refer to the Old and New Testament since they will not accept the concept of an old and a new covenant. The entire Hebrew Bible is often

called "Tanakh" (תנ"ך), from the initials of תורה
 וביאים and כתובים (Torah, Neviim,
 Ketuvim).

Also included as Torah is the Torah Sh'B'al Peh
 (תורה שבעל פה), the Oral Torah, which "Moses
 received at Sinai, and transmitted to Joshua, and Joshua to
 the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets
 to the Men of the Great Assembly..." (ETHICS OF THE FATHERS
 1:1) Jewish tradition reports that the two forms of Torah,
 written and oral, have existed side by side ever since the
 revelation on Mt. Sinai.

Before continuing with a discussion of oral Torah, a
 few words must be said about tradition (מִסֹּרָה).
 It is a part of the Oral Torah which has to do with מִסַּר
 meaning to transmit. It would appear that as early as the
 second century, Oral tradition had established the
 consonantal text and its pronunciation so firmly that little
 or no change is known to have occurred since. It was at
 that period that Rabbi Akiva declared, "The Masorah is a
 fence to the Torah." The Masorah represents the body of
 countless traditions
 connected with the Biblical text. The Masorites noted
 anything that
 was unusual in the Bible manuscripts. Addressing themselves
 to careful watchfulness over the received text of the Bible
 [Old Testament], the Masorites counted every word and
 letter; they drew up lists of irregular or unusual

spellings, and built up a safeguard for the preservation of the text. The "Masorah", often spoken of by Jews as 'tradition' is not the tradition (παράδοσις) which Jesus denounced in Matthew 15:3ff:

Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to honor his father with it. Thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition."

Also Mark 7:1-13:

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with "unclean"- that is, ceremonially unwashed-hands. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is

written: 'These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commandments of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might have otherwise received from me is 'Corban' (that is a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the Word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

What is being denounced by Jesus is the Oral Torah including both Halakhah (הַלְכָּה), legal tradition, and Aggadah (אַגְדָּה), ethical tradition not involving legality. What Jesus denounces and what Josephus mentions seems to be one and the same:

"The Pharisees have made many ordinances among the people, according to the tradition of their fathers (emphasis mine), whereof there is nothing written in the laws of Moses; for which they are rejected by the sect of the Sadducees, who affirm that they ought to keep the written ordinances, and not to observe those that are grounded upon the tradition of the fathers [more will be said concerning the subject of Pharisees and Sadducees -

who is liberal and who is conservative in chapter 3]."

(ANTIQUITIES XIII, 10:6)

According to Judaism's definition, the Oral Torah includes the finer points of the commandments, the details of the general principles contained in the Scriptures and the ways in which the commandments are to be applied. For example, the Torah forbids "work" on Shabbat. What constitutes "work" How shall "work" be defined for purposes of Shabbat? Except for a few references to such tasks as gathering fire wood, kindling fires, cooking and baking, the Written Torah does not really define "work". Judaism declares that this is why there must be an Oral Torah.

The Written Torah commands that animals needed for food be killed "as I have commanded you". How shall this slaughtering take place? What regulations govern the slaughtering? The Written Torah does not say. There has to be an Oral Torah.

The Written Torah commands Jews to bind God's Law "as a sign upon your hands and as a frontlet between your eyes." This reference leaves Jews in the dark about the 'tefillin', phylacteries. How are they made? Of what do they consist? How are they to be worn? The Written Torah is silent. The Oral Torah had to be invented to answer these questions.

The Written Torah prescribes capital punishment for various crimes. What legal rules and procedures have to be followed before the verdict of death can be handed down?

The Written Torah does not say. There has to be an Oral Torah.

Ultimately, the Oral Torah was also set down to writing. During the second century AD, it was incorporated into the Mishna (traditional law based upon oral repetition), which in turn became the cornerstone for the Gemara (from an Aramaic root meaning "to learn") which consists of the records and minutes of case discussions and legal debates presided over by the sages. The Mishna and the Gemara together make up the Talmud. Once again, Rabbi Hayim Donin is quoted:

The Torah, whether written or oral, is the teaching that directs men how to live. Although it speaks primarily to Israel, it also has directives for all men. It is concerned with every aspect of human life. Ritual laws, generally thought of as 'religious observances' are only a part of the total complex of the commandments. The commandments (מצוות) of the Torah, its statutes and regulations, cover the entire range of human and social behavior. It asserts its jurisdiction in areas of behavior which in other religions are generally thought of as belonging to ethical or moral domains or to the jurisdiction of secular civil and criminal codes of law. Even its non-legal and non-statutory sections stress spiritual truths and convey insight into the still finer extra-legal ethical and moral norms of behavior...Torah is the embodiment of the Jewish faith. It contains the

terms of his (the Jew's) covenant with God. It makes a Jew a Jew. (TO BE A JEW pp 26, 27)

It is almost immediately clear in studying Judaism's concept of Torah that the Mitzvot (מצוות), Commandments, divine precepts, are of primary concern. In talmudic terminology, Mitzvot are computed to be 613. According to tradition, this is also the number of seeds in every pomegranate, one of the promised fruits of the Land. Judaism follows 613 commandments of which 365 are negative precepts and 248 are positive, affirmative precepts. 365 corresponds to the number of days of the solar year and 248 corresponds to the number of the parts of a human body 611 מצוות , numerically equaling תורה are said to have been given through Moses while the first two commandments of the Decalog were given directly by God at Mt. Sinai. Laws classified as being connected with the Land of Israel and concern kings, priests, Levites, nazarites, sacrificial offerings, agricultural regulations and ritual cleanliness are referred to as מצוות התלויות בארץ . The Mitzvot are further divided into duties between man and God and man and his fellow man.

In addition to the Mitzvot designed for Israel alone, the Torah contains seven precepts which all human beings are obligated to obey. They are referred to by Judaism as the Seven Noachian Precepts (since all descendants of Noah are involved) and they include:

establishing of courts of justice
refraining from idolatry

blaspheming

incest

murder

robbery

eating flesh cut from a living animal

Rabbi Donin writes:

According to Jewish tradition, all ethical and moral laws are essentially divine commandments. The first commandment given to Adam, was intended to awaken his moral consciousness. Colloquially, the word Mitzvah has come to express any act of human kindness. (TO BE A JEW p 390)

END NOTES

1. Yitzhak Grill expresses his thoughts concerning Torah in this way. I believe these words are not original with him but are somewhat a 'mashal' among Jews: " אין תורה אין חכמה

No Law -

No bread, No Law - No wisdom!"

אין תורה אין כוונה

2. Our friend, Yitzhak, has demonstrated the tenets of Judaism concerning kindness. When my family and I are in Israel, we are accorded the highest hospitality by him. He believes that he is keeping the Mitzvah in Leviticus 19:33 concerning hospitality towards aliens.

3. Once again, there are some very practical points to remember which will assist in evangelizing Jews. First of all, Jews do not accept the Bible teaching of original sin. Judaism proclaims that Man has free will and therefore can choose to be obedient to God's Commands. For the Jew, the way to eternal life is by obeying the Mitzvot. Below are quotations bearing out these observations:

The Jewish tradition cherishes life. The Torah was given to Israel so that 'you shall live' by the teachings and 'not die through them.' Death has no virtue since 'The dead cannot praise the Lord...(Ps 115:17)...In itself death is not a tragedy. What we call a 'tragic death' is determined by the untimely nature of the death or the unfortunate circumstances surrounding it. When a peaceful death follows a long life which was blessed with good health and vitality of mind and body, a life rich in good deeds (emphasis mine), then death cannot be regarded as tragic-no matter how great the loss and sorrow. 'Blessed is he that has been reared in the Torah and whose toil is in the Torah, and acts so as to please his Creator, and has grown up with a good name and departed with a good name. Concerning him, Solomon said, A good name is better than precious oil; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. (Ec 7:1)' (Berakhot 17a) The world we live in is viewed as a corridor that leads to still another world. The belief in an afterlife, in a world to come (Olam Haba) where man is judged and where his soul continues to flourish is imbedded in Jewish thought. (TO BE A JEW pp 296, 297)

Judaism believes in the immortality of the soul. Death is not the ending, though it is the limit of human vision. A detailed understanding of immortality exceeds man's power. It certainly is not restricted to special faiths or groups, but belongs to all human beings. It is a spiritual state, and not a matter of Paradise, Heaven, or Hell, with their physical connotations. The final goal, the destiny of man, will be achieved not by supernatural interference or miraculous action. Man's own work alone, here on earth, can attain it. (Emphasis mine) (THE JUDAIC HERITAGE p 4)

4. Reflect upon this fact: Isn't it strange that both Judaism and Roman Catholicism place the same importance upon tradition (oral or transmitted) over the Written Word?

CHAPTER 3: JUDAISM'S PEOPLE

The terms Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew have historically been used almost interchangeably. The Bible in Genesis 14:13 makes the first reference to a name for the Jewish people: "One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew (עִבְרִי)..." Why were Abraham and his descendants called the Hebrews? There are two possibilities. One of the ancestors of the Hebrew race is named Eber according to Genesis 10:24, 25 and 11:14-16. It is, perhaps, from this ancestor that the word Hebrew is derived, in other words, somewhat of a patronymic. Another suggestion is that 'Ivri' designates someone "from the regions beyond, from the other side of the stream". This would point Abraham and his descendants to the fact that they were strangers in the Land that God had promised. The familiar words of Deuteronomy 26:5 come to mind: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous." One more suggestion to explain the origin of the name "Ivri" is offered primarily by unbelieving scholars. They would identify the nomadic

Habiru with the Hebrew nation to nullify any miraculous beginnings of the people chosen by God to carry his promise. According to this theory, there never was a real Abraham but only migrating tribes and groups of tribes who developed their own peculiar folk lore explanation of the source of their nation. This theory, of course, is completely unacceptable to the Bible believing Christian. Upon sober reflection, I personally prefer the second explanation of the designation "Hebrew" which is listed above. In keeping with God's constant reminder to his People that they are in the Land only because of his beneficence is the fact that they would be called 'strangers' in that Land. They would not occupy the Land by right of conquest but their claim would be based upon the fact that their God had promised and given them this Land "flowing with milk and honey".

But the people of God would not always be called Hebrews. The time came when the Lord himself gave them another name. In the early hours before dawn at the ford of the Jabbok River, God told the Patriarch Jacob, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." (Gn 32:28) Down to the death of Saul, the designation **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** (the people, the sons, of Israel) encompassed all the descendants of Jacob, without distinction of tribes. When the people were split into two kingdoms, Israel was frequently used to denote the ten tribes belonging to the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom, the remaining

Kingdom of David was called Judah. As compared with the Kingdom of Judah in the south, the Kingdom of Israel had twice the population and nearly three times the land area than its rival dominion. The Kingdom of Israel ceased to exist in 722 B.C. when it was conquered by the Assyrians.

The third and final designation of ethnic identity is the term "Jew". This word, of course, is the English derivation of the medieval French word 'juieu', which in turn, came from the Latin 'Judaeus', ie, one who was a native of Judea. Judaea was the name that the Romans gave to Judah (Yehuda), the southern Jewish kingdom which they had conquered and ruled.

Today we are dealing with a people who are called Jewish, their faith Judaism, their language Hebrew, and their land Eretz Yisrael. But just exactly who are the Jews? This question is an extremely difficult one to handle. Are the Jews a nation? You will find many Jews today who will agree with this designation. Scholar Nathan Ausubel writes:

With the establishment of modern Israel many Jews have been strengthened in their conviction that the Jews are a nation with Israel as the national Jewish homeland. In fact, the government of Israel gives this view official approval: it holds that every Jew who settles in Israel automatically becomes a citizen of Israel unless he states in writing that he does not wish to relinquish the citizenship he already holds in another country...Nevertheless, today there are a sizable number

of Jews who do not consider themselves at all as 'members of the Jewish nation.' In the United States, for instance, perhaps most Jews claim their nationality as American, although they readily admit, and are even proud of, their Jewish ancestry, culture and religion. The same thing holds true in other countries of the world: they consider themselves to be nationals of those countries as well as Jews. (THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE p 2)

Are the Jews a religious group? There are quite a number of people who say that the only link that unites the scattered communities of Jews throughout the world is their religion. The people who hold this opinion are religious Jews for whom the Torah and the observance of religious rites and ceremonies are the only concreting bond that can serve to command the loyalty of the Jews and assure the Jewish identity in the future. There is, however, a strongly dissenting view held by non-religious Jews. These Jews consider themselves to be genuine Jews even if they only occasionally on the high festivals visit 'temple' and they feel absolutely no guilt in their enjoyment of McDonald's french fries or a Shakey's pepperoni pizza. In another book entitled THE BOOK OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE Nathan Ausubel has this to say, "In the broader definition of today, it is considered sufficient that a Jew be ethnically of Jewish descent; he does not have to be religious in order to be identified as such." (p 215)

Are the Jews a race? Perhaps the most widely held view of all is that the Jews form a distinct race by themselves. One constantly meets Jews who refer to themselves as belonging to "the Jewish race." As Jews, they are members of the Semitic language group. Many, when they consider the Jews as a race of people, immediately think in terms of physical appearance or the trait of business acumen. In the case of the latter, this misconception has led to some of the most heinous examples of racial prejudice. The other misconception which holds that you can recognize a Jew by his physical appearance is simply impossible except with the case of Chasidic Jews. In 1978 during the Seminary Summer Quarter in Israel, I was able to strike up an acquaintance with our Jerusalem guide, Mr. David Blumgard. One of the Sundays that we were staying in Jerusalem, David took me to the Jewish shops so that I could purchase some Jewish religious articles such as tallit, tefillin and shofar. At each shop, David introduced me as his American relative, a poor student with a limited amount of money. "Don't charge him so much," David would say to each shop owner, "He's my relative and he's a poor 'talmid'". Finally, I asked him, "David, how can you introduce me as your relative from America? I have light hair and blue eyes." "My friend" replied David, "Ever since the Crusaders came to this land there have been blue eyed, light haired Jews. 'Haim attah mehveen ohtee? Do you understand me?'"

In discussing Judaism's People, we will once again restrict our study to religious Jews. Speak to a religious Jew and he will tell you that he is one of the People who were chosen by God. In the festival 'Amidah' prayer, the contents of the paragraph שָׁמַרְתָּנוּ (You have chosen us) are based upon many Biblical passages which remind the Jewish people that they have been chosen by God to be his witnesses, his kingdom of priests, his beacon of light and truth to the nations of the earth. "You are the children of the Lord your God..., for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession." (Dt 14:1, 2)

At the same time, a religious Jew will tell you that while God has chosen his race, this does not mean that God is not concerned about the rest of mankind. Judaism looks upon its people as the suffering servants of God and man. This is what another Jewish scholar, Philip Birnbaum has reference to when he says:

The best thinking by various Jewish theologians on the subject of the election of Israel may well be summed up as follows. Only in Israel did the ethical montheism exist; and wherever else it is found later on, it is derived directly or indirectly from Israel [This evidently means that both Islam and Christianity owe their existence to Israel]. The term 'election of Israel' expresses merely a historical fact. Israel feels itself chosen, not as a master but as a servant.

It separates itself from others only for the purpose of uniting them. The people of Israel affirm, not that they are better than others, but that they ought to be better. (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JEWISH CONCEPTS p 70)

A little later on this same page, Birnbaum continues with the thought that a united mankind depends upon the exclusiveness of Israel:

A Biblical expression similar in thought to the idea of a chosen Israel is to be found in I Chronicles 17:21, where King David declares: "There is none like thee, O Lord, and there is no God beside thee...what other nation on earth is like thy people..." In the passage

אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶחָד (Thou art One), which forms part of the 'Amidah' for Sabbath afternoon, David's utterance is quoted along with a reference to the prophecy: "On that day the Lord shall be the only One, and his name the only One" (Zechariah 14:9) This implies that mankind will at a certain future time understand the significance of universal brotherhood and be free from past errors concerning the essence of God. The election of Israel and the Oneness of God are closely related concepts which blend into one aspiration and ideal for a united mankind. (Ibid)

It is rather sadly obvious that these grand and glorious expressions of hope for future unity of all mankind have no basis of reality in the present modern State of Israel. In order to be a member of the chosen people in

Israel, it's all a matter of birth or conversion. To be a first rate citizen of the state of Israel, you must have a Jewish mother. Rabbi Donin addresses this subject in this way:

On the basis of their origin, Jews everywhere have regarded themselves as members of a family, an expanded family to be sure, and oftentimes a far-flung family, but a family nevertheless. Membership in this family derives from the mother. The child of a Jewish woman is thus considered to be a member of the family. But membership in the family has never been limited by birth. It has always been open to all, and those who share the faith of this family may be 'adopted' into it. Thus, the convert to Judaism not only becomes a partner in faith with the children of Israel, but through faith, the proselyte himself becomes one of the children of Israel, sharing fully in its heritage and its privileges and assuming its burdens and tribulations. In accepting the Jewish faith, the proselyte thus joins the Jewish people or nation. In accepting the religious duties of the present, and in assuming the spiritual mission of the future, he also ties himself to the collective past.

(TO BE A JEW p 8)

It may seem strange that in a culture which places so much importance upon the male, the child traces his heritage through his mother. As one Jewish friend of mine once pointed out, however, "It is always obvious who the mother of a child is. The same cannot always be

said with the same certainty about the identity of the father."

Judaism's people feel that they have an eternal purpose which they have yet to fulfill. They quote Genesis 28:14 in which God declares to Jacob, "...All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring." If we were to go one step further and trace this promise back to Abraham, we see that this promise of God has its fulfillment in the Messiah: "...and through your OFFSPRING (Seed) all nations on earth will be blessed..." (Gn 22:18) Much more will be said about the subject of Messiah in the chapter which deals with Judaism's Land.

It is clear that there is a wide diversity of Judaism's People. The range of beliefs and attitudes run the gamut from one end of the spectrum to the other. There is no more of a unifying bond that unites today's varied people of Judaism than there was in the first century A.D. Rabbi R. Brasch would seek to downplay this multiplicity of dividing doctrines with his rather weak statement, "Judaism does not have any sects. It only knows different sections: Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements." (THE JUDAIC HERITAGE p 6) Regardless of the semantic employed, the fact remains that there are deep divisions in Judaism. About the only time in history that these several and divided groups were able to join together in a unified effort was when they united in their attack against the Christ of God, the Lord's Anointed.

Christian scholar, H. Wayne House in his book, CHRONOLOGICAL AND BACKGROUND CHARTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, lists the Jewish sects of the first century. It is his contention that only the Pharisees have survived the aborted revolt which ended in irrevocable disaster in 73 A.D. Up until a short while ago, I agreed with that assumption. It is, however, my contention now that almost all the sects mentioned by the New Testament and the Jewish historian, Josephus, have in one form or another survived into the modern age and are alive and well today.

Before this subject is examined, a few words have to be said concerning the designations "conservative" and "liberal". Obviously, these words are going to come into play in the discussion of the sects of Judaism that existed at the time of Christ and the sects of Judaism today. There is no real agreement as to which sect was liberal and which sect was conservative during New Testament times since different people exercise different criteria in their identification of Pharisee and Sadducee beliefs and practice. The negative Bible critic who believes that a doctrine such as the resurrection is a later evolutionary embellishment would look upon the Sadducee who rejected the teaching of a resurrection of the dead as being a conservative and the Pharisee who believed the dead will be raised as a liberal. There is one further difficulty and that is that the various threads of the theology and practice of the sects that existed at the time of Christ

have become woven into the entire fabric of modern Judaism to the point that it is not always possible to separate them back into their ancient components. In spite of the difficulty, this attempt is made.

Concerning the Essenes, Josephus writes:

The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls and esteem that the rewards of the righteous are to be earnestly striven for: for when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but they offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to agricultural labor. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue...This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer anything to hinder them from having all things in common...there are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep slaves; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another... (ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS XVIII, i, 5)

More references to the Essenes can be found in ANTIQUITIES OF

THE JEWS XIII, v, 9 and WARS OF THE JEWS II, viii, 2-14.

Much of our additional knowledge of the Essenes is derived from the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran. It should be noted that there is still quite a controversy that rages as to whether the inhabitants of the desert buildings were Essenes or a group of revolutionary 'sicarii' but for our purposes we will grant that they were probably Essenes (even though there is the presence of the graves of females outside the compound which are difficult to explain in the light of Essene practice).

The name Essenes may mean "the pious ones," which suggests that they may have as their forefathers the Hasidaeans, strict Jews who remained loyal to the Jewish faith when the attempt was made to force hellenization upon the Jewish nation in the second century B.C. Following the Maccabean revolt (165-64 B.C), the Essenes emerged as an identified group along with other sects.

Essenes may have had ties with the group of priests who opposed the Maccabean combination of priest and king. The Maccabees were supported in their efforts by the Sadducees. For this reason, the Essenes separated themselves from the stream of religious Jewish life and became not only separatistic but also monastic. They considered the temple authorities to be usurpers and the sacrificial code to be illegitimate. Even the Pharisees were not stringent enough in their observance of the Law to please the Essenes for they considered themselves to be set apart for holiness and purity.

The Essenes established their own social institutions, living in separate communes throughout the countryside. They practiced communism and celibacy. So that they would not die off, they adopted children and raised them in the Essene communities.

Their doctrine centered upon pure living, the keeping of Torah and particularly messianic eschatological expectancy. They could certainly be described as mystics who felt that the body is evil and the soul immortal. Their trust was placed exclusively in God and they firmly believed that the Day would come when the Lord would intervene and ultimately judge the unrighteous.

To a large extent, what has been said about the Essenes of almost two thousand years ago can also be said about the modern day Orthodox division of Judaism. Orthodox for the Jew means 'traditional' Judaism. At least half of all observing Jews today are either Orthodox or Orthodox-oriented. Of all the sects of Judaism, Orthodoxy has the most clear cut and least involved ideology and program. All of its adherents accept all its dogmas, doctrines, statutes and commandments (the 613 mitzvot) as being fixed and unalterable. The Orthodox Jew believes that both the Oral and the Written Torah were given by God and therefore no one dare add to or subtract from it. They follow each mitzvah to the letter. Men and women are separated during the synagogue service; the men all wear tallit (prayer shawl) and cover their heads with the 'kipah'

(yarmulka, skull cap) or hat; from age thirteen, all males wear the teffilin (phylacteries) at prayer on weekday mornings, whether in the synagogue or in private. They observe the Sabbath and holy days with scrupulous care and exercise the same care in following the dietary laws (Kashrut). Many of the attitudes displayed by Orthodox Judaism toward women are the result of Levitical laws concerning purity. An Orthodox Jewish male will not sit on a bus seat because a woman may have been sitting there before he got on the bus and she might have her period. This would make her Levitically unclean and he must have no contact with anything she touched. Orthodox Jews in the main look forward to that time when Messiah will come and the New Age will be a reality. Most of the Orthodox are extremely messianic in their theology.

The Orthodox are subdivided into three groups: the Ultra-Orthodox, the uncompromising fundamentalists who for all intensive purposes may as well still be living in the Middle Ages; the modern or Neo-Orthodox, who have a more liberal attitude, and, finally, the Chasidim, who live in a mystical otherworldly microcosm all of their own.

Particularly in Chasidic Judaism the morose and ethereal quality of the Essenes can be seen. The Chasidic women must shave their heads and wear wigs lest they distract their husbands from the reading of Torah. The young boys are easily recognizable by their 'payot' (prayer locks) that they wear from the earliest age. Both children

and adults look unkempt and undernourished. Their pale and pasty countenances bear testimony to their indoor study and meditation. Many Chasidic Jews feel that the State of Israel is in defiance of God's Will. Only when Messiah comes, can there be a Jewish kingdom once again. There have been accounts of Chasidic Jews making alliances with the PLO to overthrow the state. It is small wonder that this branch of Judaism is not extremely popular in Israel as far as most loyal Israelis are concerned. While not monastic and celibate, there are many qualities of Chasidic Orthodoxy which are similar to the Essenes, particularly Orthodoxy's separatistic tendencies.

Concerning the Pharisees, Josephus writes:

...the pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and hold the position of first sect. These ascribe all to fate and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does cooperate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible; but the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies-but the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.

(WARS OF THE JEWS II, viii, 14)

The name 'Pharisee' probably comes from a word meaning "to distinguish, to separate" (פָּרַשׁ). Pharisees saw themselves as a people set apart. There is no doubt about the fact that they were deeply religious. They are described by Josephus as being "most skillful in the exact explication (interpretation) of their laws." This is the main part of the essence of Pharisaism - their entire life was to be under the control of Law. They were among the first to add restrictions and regulations to the Law; to place, as it were, a fence around the Law to protect its sanctity. For example, what was demanded of the priests as far as their ritual purification was concerned, the Pharisees applied to all Jews. By their additions to God's Law, they made the Law an odious burden. This is something

that we discussed earlier in our examination of the observance of Torah.

Because the Pharisees expanded the Written Law by means of the Oral traditions in order to apply them to changing conditions, they were accused by their enemies of being 'liberals' who were changing God's Law. At the same time, their understanding of the Bible was much more advanced than the bulk of their contemporaries. Pharisees knew that there would be a resurrection from the dead. Pharisees knew that the righteous would possess new and glorified bodies. Like the Essenes, Pharisees held the belief that God would intervene dramatically in the history of the world by sending the Messiah who would regain all that God's People had lost. Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees were relatively free from political concerns. They could care less who ruled as long as they were free to follow their study and observance of God's Law. And yet, Josephus seems to hint with his words "they hold the position of leading sect" that the Pharisees were in fact politically active and even though their arch rivals seemed to be in control in the person of the high priest, it was in reality the Pharisees who were in control.

It would seem that the Pharisees for all their aloofness as far as their attitude toward the common Jew was concerned were still the plebeian religious society. To

be sure, there were those of their party who were rich and influential but the greatest number were of humble origin. The social make up of the Pharisees just did not follow rigid class-lines. Poor Pharisees of low birth earned their daily bread not from teaching but from work at ordinary trades, eg, the Apostle Paul. Their group was fashioned somewhat on the order of a fraternity. The initiates were organized into separate companies, each called in Hebrew a 'charburah' (fellowship or brotherhood). For this reason they addressed each other as 'chever' which means loosely "a friend, a brother, a comrade".

It was this Pharisee fraternity which paved the way for much of modern Judaism in its codification and application of Torah. They formed the bedrock for Talmudic and Rabbinical Judaism which filled the theological void following the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

A great hero of the Pharisees was the scholar Hillel. He was a liberalizing force in Pharisaism during the time of Herod the Great. Hillel (circa 30 B.C-9 A.D.) brought innovation and challenge into Torah study. In addition to the traditional method of citing oral traditions of former sages, Hillel also employed logical arguments as a basis for the interpretation of a Bible text. He was bitterly opposed by his contemporary, Shammai, a fellow Pharisee, who was rigid in his strict application of Torah.

The conflict between these two schools existed for many years until finally decided in favor of Hillel. His grandson was none other than the eminent Pharisee and doctor of the law, Gamaliel. This Gamaliel was the mentor of the Apostle Paul. Gamaliel was the first of only seven rabbis to be given the title of Rabban. You see the influence of Hillel upon his grandson in the New Testament account recorded in Acts 5:34-39. When the Sanhedrin desired to kill the Apostles because they were proclaiming the Good News, it was Gamaliel who urged caution on the ground that if the new doctrine were of God, they could not overpower it; if it were of human origin, it would perish all by itself. As a Pharisee, Gamaliel believed in God's sovereign control. There is also the premise of pragmatism found in Gamaliel's logic which takes for granted that what is good succeeds and what is evil fails [as in the first century so also now in congregational meetings-this is a dangerous premise to follow]. Truth must ever be tested only by the standard of the unchanging Word of God. Some final thoughts concerning Gamaliel are these: first of all, he followed in the footsteps of his grandfather and maintained that the study of the Bible should be open to all, regardless of station in life, material possessions, or intellectual qualifications. Secondly, the Talmud says of Gamaliel: "Since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law has ceased."

There should also be a concluding thought about Pharisaism in general. Jewish apologetics have ever been on the defensive when they write about the way that the New Testament in general and Jesus in particular speak of the Pharisees. They raise a hue and cry that Pharisees have received a 'bad rap' and that they certainly do not deserve the scathing denunciation accorded them. "These were pious, God-fearing men who possessed great knowledge of the Bible and they lived their beliefs," maintain the defenders of Pharisaism. But this is exactly their judgment. They did know God's Word. They did look for a Messiah. They were concerned about eternal life and how to obtain it. Of all people on earth, it should have been the Pharisees who first welcomed the King of kings and Prince of Peace when he rode into Jerusalem during that week called Holy Week. But the Pharisees denied the testimony of their own study of the Word. They willfully refused to see Jesus as the Christ and all that they succeeded in doing is hardening the hearts of all who follow their teaching to this present day against the love, mercy, forgiveness and grace of the God who keeps his promises and makes good on his threats. The judgement of the Lord Jesus against Pharisees and teachers of the law recorded in the seven woes of Matthew 23 stands: "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must

obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see: they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels of their prayer shawls long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have men call them Rabbi...Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to...You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are...You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law-justice, mercy and faithfulness...You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence...You are like white-washed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." (Mt 23: 1 ff)

Beautiful looking on the outside - a perfect

description of Pharisaism both ancient and modern. It is my firm belief that Pharisaism exists today in the guise of Conservative Judaism. There is the same evidence of a commitment to strict obedience to the Torah without the isolationism and rigidity of Orthodox Judaism. Nathan Ausubel states:

"The implication of labels is ironically implied in the designation "Conservative Jews". Objectively considered, these religious conservatives are actually "liberals", since their deviations from Orthodox Judaism have been just part of the normal process of change or "reform". But they are less "reformed" than the adherents of Reform Judaism. As has been indicated [previously], "reform" is a loose concept; it differs among the several branches of organized Judaism only in degree. Even Orthodox Judaism experienced its own "reform" during the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany, France, Italy, and England as "Neo-" or "Modern" Orthodoxy." (THE BOOK OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE p 235)

Conservative Judaism seeks to make Torah apply to modern life. Instead of utilizing logical debate that the Pharisee fathers employed, the modern tool is the historical/critical method of Bible interpretation. In the final analysis, this is only another case of logic and

reason being placed higher than Scripture. It is a continuous changing and adapting in keeping with changing times. This is only one instance of Conservative Judaism taking the addition of human wisdom into divine truth one step further than their Pharisaic ancestors. Conservative Judaism also disagrees with what it views as the uncritical submission by the Orthodox to the authority of the Oral Law, and its subsequent elaborations by the Talmudic Sages and later Rabbis. The former foremost intellectual exponent of Conservative theological methodology, Professor Louis Guinzberg (1873-1953) has this to say, "...the doctrine of the immutability of the Torah must not be confounded with its immobility." In other words, Judaism must continue to change with changing times if it is to continue to survive. On the other hand, Conservative Judaism still makes mandatory submission to the Biblical precepts and the Rabbinic Law. It is explained, however, that such adherence is made contingent on whether such precepts and laws are responsive to modern requirements of Jewish life. Trying to pin down concrete doctrine in Conservative Judaism is as difficult as trying to find a clear doctrinal statement in the pronouncements of the new proposed (evangelical?) (lutheran?) church.

In order to view some of the changes that Conservative Judaism has made in its practice are mentioned by Ausubel in his book listed above:

It is in the altered circumstance of modern living that Conservative Judaism claims it has found validation for its many revisions of ritual observance and practice. In principle, it has rejected no tradition, no law, no symbol; it has sought only to modify them or to be reasonably selective. For example, Conservative Jews do not feel that they have violated the Sabbath ordinances against making a fire or doing any manner of work merely by pressing a light switch to create illumination, or by using a house elevator, or even eating before going to synagogue for prayer. Applicable to all observance is the Conservative attitude that it is not the 'letter' but the 'spirit' of a rite or law that has the most religious meaning. Ceremonialism and ritualism are considered significant only insofar as they clearly symbolize to the worshipper a religious or ethical value.

The Conservative Jews have also dispensed with such customs as separating the sexes in the synagogue, an arrangement which only the Orthodox still follow. A great measure of equality of the woman with the man in social and religious spheres is accorded recognition by seating them side by side during the prayer service.

(Ibid p 236)

And yet at the very same time, a great deal of

emphasis and importance is placed upon both ceremony and ritual by Conservative Jews. If one has ever attended a Friday night or Saturday morning prayer service in a Conservative synagogue, this is immediately evident. The service is in Hebrew and English; circumcision and Kashrut are mandatory; Bar Mitzvah (and Bat Mitzvah) is an important milestone in a child's life and is the occasion of great celebration (and expense). Like the Orthodox, Conservative Jews must observe all the festival and fast days; to celebrate seder in the home at Passover; to sit among greenery of a tent at Succot; to put on tefillin and talit; to wear hat or kippah in the synagogue; to recite blessings and grace at meals. He hears the shofar blown on Rosh Hashannah and Shabbat is never violated by the omission of prayers, candles and wine. It is because the Gentile is welcome in a Conservative synagogue that so much can be observed by the non-Jew. Even though he is liberal in his additions to Scripture like his Pharisaic forefathers, he is still what the name which is applied to his group implies - Conservative. The Conservative like his Pharisaic counterpart looks for the coming of a messiah of his own design and making.

Concerning the Sadducees, Josephus says this:

...But the Sadducees are those that compose the second [in importance] order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not

doing what is evil; and they say that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at man's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades...The behavior of the Sadducees one toward another is in some degrees wild; and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. (WARS OF THE JEWS II, viii, 14)

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent; but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity; but they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they unwillingly and by force sometimes are obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them. (ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS XVIII, i, 4)

The tradition of the Sadducees declares that they

were the descendants and disciples of the priest Zadok who served during the reign of both David and Solomon. By the time of Christ, the Sadducees found themselves executing a dual role of constituting both the priestly hierarchy and also forming the ruling class.

Sadducees were mainly of the patrician, upper crust society of Jerusalem. Their hostility toward the Pharisees was based upon this class distinction as much as their doctrinal differences. Sadducees were patricians: Pharisees were plebeians.

According to doctrine, at first glance, the Sadducees would seem to be the conservatives. The Sadducees represented themselves as the champions of Mosaic Law. They ridiculed the teachings of the Pharisees as being heretical because they were based upon Oral Torah and not Written Torah.

When the Pharisees finally wrested the power from the hands of the Sadducees, they destroyed much of the Sadducees' written documents. The only information that we have about the Sadducees other than the Scriptural references comes from Josephus. His observations are extremely suspect since he is an avowed Pharisee himself and he wishes to make the Pharisees appear to be the 'good guys' in the eyes of his Roman overlords.

What we can gather is that the Sadducees enjoyed

being the ruling class. The greater the influence of the Rabbinical Pharisaism over the common people, the more upset the Sadducees became. The greatest reason for this hostility toward the rival Pharisees would most certainly include the fact that as the high priestly hierarchy, they held control over the immensely rich temple treasury. Wealth is power and the Sadducees earnestly desired power. This would also seem to be the source of their fierce animosity which they displayed toward Jesus of Nazareth. It wasn't enough that they had to contend with the hated Pharisees. Now there was also this Galilean Carpenter who threatened both their position of power and their financial empire. Since they considered Jesus to be the more dangerous, they momentarily joined forces with their perennial rivals, the Pharisees. In the light of this brief review of Sadducee attitudes, it is easy to see that it took a man like the High Priest, Joseph Caiaphas, to join and mobilize the forces of both Sadducee and Pharisee during the clandestine meeting of the Sanhedrin. Joseph Caiaphas was a materialistic realist - a Sadducee. For this reason he declares, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." (Jn 11:49, 50)

It is just as interesting to note that without the aid and support of the Pharisees, Joseph Caiaphas would not have had

his way in the case of Jesus of Nazareth. This was a cooperative effort that was sponsored by Satan.

For the reasons stated above, I consider the Sadducees to be the liberal element in Judaism at the time of Christ. It is granted that their doctrine would seem to be the more conservative in that they claimed to follow only the Torah. This, by the way, means the exclusion of the Prophets and the Writings. Did the Sadducee look upon these sacred writings as we look upon the Apocrypha? The answer to this question is difficult and almost impossible to establish. One thing is certain about the Sadducees. It is brought out by both the Holy Scriptures and Josephus. The Sadducees were religious opportunists who used religion for their own ends. They were more than happy to be collaborators with Rome since it is always better to hunt with the hunters than to run with the hares. The liberal counterpart of the Sadducees today would be found in Reform Judaism

There has been a bit of 'reform' in Reform Judaism in modern times with a shift back to more 'oriental' features in music and ritual. It still follows, however, that Reform Judaism constitutes the liberal and conforming portion of modern Judaism. A Reform Jew goes to 'temple' which is an abominable thought for the Orthodox since the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. The Reform Jew sits bare

headed during service with his entire family. The Reform Jew hears a mixed choir of male and female singers accompanied by organ music (an unheard of thing in Orthodox and Conservative synagogues). The oriental intonations and modes of the music are eliminated as are also the uninhibited recitations of prayers with swaying and bobbing (shuckling in Yiddish). The service in a Reform temple desires to preserve proper decorum throughout and so prayer is subdued or even silent.

After attending a Reform prayer service, the early nineteenth century Protestant philosopher/theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher commented that, apparently, an ancient historical pattern reversed itself. Schleiermacher observed that Jesus and the Apostles had borrowed doctrinal, institutional and liturgical elements from the Jewish religion and now Reform Judaism was returning the compliment by borrowing many practices from modern Protestantism. He was supported in his observation by the great poet, Heinrich Heine. Heine, with his customary biting wit, commented that Reform Judaism evidently wants "to give Judaism some new stage scenery..." and to set up "an Evangelical Christianity under a Jewish firm name for they even require that the rabbi like the Lutheran minister wear a white clerical neckband rather instead of a beard...(for) We Jews no longer have the strength of character to wear a beard or to fast."

In 1885, the Pittsburgh Conference of Reform Judaism accepted a Platform which included ten "Acts". Act 5 stated the opposition to the "Mosaic/rabbinical laws on diet, purity and dress," which customs were declared to be obsolete for modern Jews since they "would obstruct rather than enhance moral and spiritual elevation."

It should also be noted that Reform Judaism has traditionally opposed Zionism and the modern State of Israel. Act 6 of the Pittsburgh Platform states: "Israel's messianic hope relates to the establishment of the authority of peace, truth, justice and love among men...No return to Palestine is expected, nor the reinstitution there of a Jewish state."

Reform Judaism like their Sadducee counterpart would seek to maintain their position of power and wealth in that if you have to be a Jew, you shouldn't have to suffer for it.

A fourth party or sect are the Zealots. There is much recorded by Josephus concerning the adherents of this particular religious philosophy. I have not quoted any of Josephus in that it is difficult to distinguish between the Sicarii, the followers of John of Gischala and Simon Bar Giora, the Idumaeans, and the Zealots. According to Josephus, all these groups had one thing in common: they were terrorists who indiscriminately killed Jew and Roman

alike. Some were religious fanatics who felt that they could forget about obedience to any and all mitzvot in their desire to be free and have only God as their master. Others were opportunists who used the guise of patriotism to enrich themselves with plunder and robbery. The Sicarii would appear to be a special commando group of trained assassins whose duty it was to eliminate any and all who stood in the way of the religious or political freedom of the nation of Israel.

True Zealots seemed to have a two-fold mission: They desired at any cost to drive the hated Romans from the Land along with their hated sycophants such as the Publicans. They also wanted to prepare the way for the Messianic Kingdom by sacrificing themselves in the cause of driving out the invader. We quote Nathan Ausubel:

The Zealots well deserved their name. Their zeal was actually a thoroughgoing fanaticism. The very logic of their beliefs led them to a systematic employment of terror. It was directed not only against the hated Romans, but also against the equally execrated Jews who collaborated with them. Zealot guerrilla bands roved in marauding operations through the hills of Galilee. Because they used the sica, a short Roman dagger, in their work of assassination of Romans and of Jewish Romanophiles, they were called 'sicarii', namely, 'sica-wielders', or more plainly, 'assassins'.

(THE BOOK OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE p 524)

It may be noted that neither Josephus or the later Talmudic Sages have anything good to say about the Zealots.

Josephus, of course, vilifies the Zealots in an effort to justify his own defection to the Romans while the Talmudic Sages are made up mainly of quietistic Hillel/Pharisees.

Two mentions of the Zealots in the New Testament are to be found in passages speaking of one of the disciples of Christ, namely, Simon the Zealot, and the fanatical group of forty who plotted to assassinate the Apostle Paul (I would mention the latter with some reservations).

I look upon militant Zionism of our recent past as the direct descendant of the Zealots. This militancy made its appearance in two distinct groups in the 'Yishuv' (Jewish Community) in Palestine. The first group is the Haganah (Defense). At the onset, this military group was organized mainly in defence from Palestinian terrorist activity. Later on, the Haganah was not opposed to employing some terrorist tactics of their own as a last resort. The other group, which was much more inclined to open terrorist acts, was the Irgun (the Organization). A very prominent leader in this terrorist group was a man by the name of Menachem Begin. It is a matter of some concern that the last sole possessor of the office of Prime Minister in Israel was a man who was not above using terrorism to

achieve his ends. Both underground groups, Haganah and Irgun, were involved in terrorist activities. My good friend, Yitzhak Grill, was a member of the Haganah. I am of the firm opinion that the only difference between a patriot and a terrorist is whether you win or lose. If you win, you are a patriot. If you lose, you are a terrorist.

Two remaining sects must be mentioned briefly before concluding the discussion of Judaism's People. They are the Scribes and the Herodians.

The Scribes (Soferim) served a dual purpose in ancient times. They were entrusted with the task of making copies of Scripture and they were also to serve as teachers, interpreters, and, ultimately as lawyers. Today the sofer's sole duty is to reproduce the Old Testament by hand whether it be for scroll or mezzuzah.

The Herodians are mentioned only by the New Testament. (Mt 22:16; Mk 12:13) Not too much can be said of them other than that they supported the Herodian dynasty and evidently accepted the Hellenization made so popular by Herod the Great. Their twentieth century counterpart would seem to be found in the completely secularized Jew who would seek to disguise and disavow his Jewishness.

THESE ARE JUDAISM'S PEOPLE.

END NOTES

1. Both the Roman Catholic Church and Judaism avidly deny the existence of the plurality of beliefs which are held by their adherents. Also denied are the sometimes extremely belligerent and hostile attitudes of the opposing factions toward each other. In the practical application of the evangelizing of Jews one would do well to keep this fact in mind. A very practical example of this principle is delivered by the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 23. Know what kind of Jew you are evangelizing.
2. BOTH PHARISEE AND SADDUCEE RICHLY DESERVE THE TREATMENT ACCORDED THEM BY JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT!
3. During his lectures on the Book of Revelation in the Summer Quarter, Dr. Brug made mention of one of the misconceptions of millennialists. "Millennialism undermines the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith in that your salvation depends upon whether or not you were nice to the Jews." I would hate to date this thesis but I must mention the danger of someone like Pat Robertson being elected president of the United States. The exercising of foreign policy based upon millennialistic misconceptions concerning the importance of the state of Israel is not only fallacious but downright insane.

CHAPTER 4: JUDAISM'S LAND

According to Yohanon Aharoni, there are three characteristics that distinguish Judaism's Land. In his own words: "There are three features which determine the general character of Eretz Yisrael: it is small, greatly fragmented, and poor in natural resources." (THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL p 1)

I have been fortunate in that I have had the opportunity to visit Eretz Yisrael on several occasions. Upon arrival in the Land, one of the first questions that I am asked by one of the Minnesota or Wisconsin farmers who may be traveling with me is, "I thought that this is supposed to be the land which is 'flowing with milk and honey'. The Promised Land certainly doesn't seem to hold much in the way of promise. It all looks so barren and lifeless. No self respecting farmer would want to live here."

At first glance, such an observation would seem to be true. First of all, it must be granted that I always

take groups to Israel during the summer months when about the only green that you will see is the green of tourist money. Secondly, because of a bounty leveled against trees in the form of a tax commanded for so many years by Turkish rulers in Israel, there was nothing to hold the land back from erosion and the wind.

And yet, Israel produces more food per acre than any other nation on earth - including the United States. It is a good land, a rich land, a land that produces its yield of crops in abundance. To be sure, in Bible times the Land was much more fruitful but a trace of its rich fruitfulness is still visible to the discerning eye. This is the Land promised by God. "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land - a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey [dates?];" (Dt 8:7,8)

The Land is small. From the traditional Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south the distance is 150 miles (since these locations cannot serve as boundaries, I feel that they show the range of precipitation from the lush region of Mt. Hermon to the beginning of the desert in the Negev). From the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean spans the distance of approximately 50 miles. Not a large land by any means but Eretz Yisrael has always

been important because of its location and it still is today. Down through the centuries, Israel has been a land bridge which separated the super powers of the ancient world. Today, Israel still serves as a bridge: the bridge between East and West, between Oriental and Occidental.

In accord with Dr. Aharoni's observation, it must be granted that Israel is also fragmented. The Land is split up and divided by deep valleys, high mountains, twisting rivers, burning deserts and coastal plains. The altitude ascends to the heights of lofty Mt. Hermon and plummets to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth (almost 1300 ft below sea-level). The Land could, perhaps, be divided in this way:

The Coastal Area - including the Philistine, Sharon and Acco Plains

The Shephelah - between the coastal plain and the Judean mountains there is a hilly limestone area called the 'Shephelah' (Lowland). It has received this name in comparison with the higher Judean mountains. It is famous for its olive and sycamore trees. In ancient times this was a highly fortified territory

The Mountains - a high limestone ridge extending from Judea to Lebanon

In Addition - valleys such as the Jezreel, Aijalon, Sorek and Elah; the jungle of the Jordan; the deserts of

Judea and the Negev and Arabah; the beautiful contrasting inland lakes - Kinnereth (Harp Lake) and the Dead Sea (Salt Sea)

Israel possesses two seasons which follow each other almost immediately. There is a rainless, hot summer from May to October and a rainy, cool winter. The coastal areas have mild winters and damp, hot summers.; in the hill country, summer days are warm but it rapidly becomes cool in the afternoon. Winters are wet and marked by severe storms.

Eretz Yisrael - why is it called the Promised Land? "That's very easy to answer," declares Judaism, "because God promised this Land to Israel forever!" Genesis 17:7,8 is quoted: "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you, and I will be their God." Also the words addressed to Moses before his death: "...this is the Land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.'" (Dt 34:4)

Judaism declares, "You see, the modern State of Israel is a reality today, not because of right of conquest,

but by reason of divine right. This is what God promised to us all along." "We totally agree," chime in all self-respecting Christian Chiliasts and the verdict appears to be final and unanimous.

For the religious Jewish exegete, the possession of Eretz Yisrael is an absolute necessity. Unless Jews inhabit and possess the Land of Canaan, there can be no messiah and no messianic age. The prophet Isaiah is quoted: "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The Torah will go out from Zion, the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Is 2:2,3)

In order that the millennialist may continue to spew his misinterpreted balderdash, there must be a new State of Israel and ultimately a new temple built on Mt. Zion. The importance placed upon the modern State of Israel and the claims of prophecy fulfilled are only rivaled by the importance placed upon the Jewish people by the millennialists. As was stated earlier, what your attitude toward the Jews is could be an alternate way of salvation.

Rabbi Donin says:

The prophets of Israel in speaking of a return to the

Land of Israel and of the restoration of Jewish sovereignty speak in terms of Jerusalem or Zion, another name by which Jerusalem is called. Whatever role the entire land of Israel played in Jewish thought and faith was often expressed in terms of Jerusalem, the Holy City of the Holy Land. Jerusalem was the symbol of all of Eretz Yisrael and was synonymous with it. It was as a head to a body...The word 'Messiah' is derived from the Hebrew word 'mashiach' which means 'anointed (with oil)'. The Messiah in Jewish thought was never conceived of as a Divine Being. As God's anointed representative, the Messiah would be a person who would bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the people Israel through the ingathering of the Jews to their ancestral home of Eretz Yisrael and the restoration of Jerusalem to its spritual glory. He would bring about an era marked by the moral perfection of all mankind and the harmonious coexistence of all peoples free of war, fear, hatred, and intolerance. Claimants to the Messianic title arose at various times throughout Jewish history. The criterion by which each was judged was: Did he succeed in accomplishing what Messiah was supposed to accomplish? By this criterion, clearly NONE QUALIFIED (emphasis mine). The Messianic era is still ahead of us. The reestablishment of a Jewish state in our times and the restoration of a

united Jerusalem as the capital of that State has led many devout Jews to hope that these times may be the beginning of the process of redemption that will ultimately lead to the realization of all other ideals inherent in the Messianic belief. (TO BE A JEW pp 14-16)

Hal Lindsey states his version of the millennialist Messianic era: different messiah - same misconception:

The prophets of Israel are unanimous in saying that this Kingdom will only come after man has gotten himself embroiled in the greatest war of all time, Armageddon, and the Messiah comes to deliver those who turn to him and judge those who reject him. Those who embrace him as their savior and deliverer have a radical purification take place in their hearts which enables them to live at peace with themselves, their own families and the world. At the same time that Messiah heals the hearts of men, he'll also restore the earth to the beauty and function he designed it for originally so that men will not only have new hearts, but a new world to enjoy it in. (THE PROMISE pp 195, 196)

Whether it is Jew or Chiliast who is involved in the exegesis, the end result is the same: the immediate future must contain a heaven on earth with Jerusalem as the capital. Messiah is a Bread-King and his kingdom is of this world.

Are we forced to accept this exegesis, particularly of Genesis 17:8? God says, "The whole land of Canaan, where you (Abraham) are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your seed (. זרעך).

I realize that 'zerah' is interpreted as a collective singular by most commentators. Listen to what the Apostle Paul does with an indentical 'collective singular' in Galatians 3:16: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." To both Jew and Gentile alike, we declare that all of the promises, including the promise of perpetual possession of the Land, are fulfilled in Christ, the promised Seed. As the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham through faith, we have part in all the promises made to Abraham and his descendants (this does not mean that I will be staking out a claim in downtown Tel Aviv).

END NOTES

1. It is amusing but sad to view millennialistic Christians making their search for the supposed crack in the HarZetim or asking to see the 'secret plans' for the rebuilding of the third and final temple on Mt. Moriah. An Israeli archaeologist helplessly rolls his eyes heavenward as Jim Baker of PTL fame and a self-styled, self-appointed theological/archaeological 'expert' discuss the Lord's "timetable" for Israel during a television production filmed in Jerusalem. Israelis have learned a long time ago that when your main business is tourism, it pays to 'give the crowd what it wants.' Bemused Israelis will smile and nod enigmatically as they tell the Bible-totin' American tourist with millennium on his mind what he wants to hear and then take his money.
2. I am also a bit saddened by those who make it a matter of pride that they are completely unimpressed by the places and things that they see in Israel. I know that Jesus was born somewhere in a little village about six miles south of Jerusalem. Whether it is exactly at the place located as the church of the Holy Nativity or not I don't know - or care for that matter. Is the Garden Tomb or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the location of Joseph's new tomb? Is it either? I don't know nor do I care. I do know from God's Word that Jesus the Christ suffered in Jerusalem; he died outside the city walls and he was buried in Joseph's garden grave not too far from the place of execution. I know that Jesus the Christ rose from the dead and wherever Joseph's grave is located, it is empty! I can say with the Psalmist: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy." (Ps 137:6) When I visit the earthly Jerusalem which is part of my birthright as a spiritual son of Abraham, I can not help but think with longing of the new and heavenly Jerusalem.
3. My good friend, Yitzhak, tells me this: "I know that in your Christian heaven there is no room for

Yitzhak Grill. But I know that when Mashiach comes down the HarZetim with the one hand he holds the hand of Yitzhak Grill and with the other he holds the hand of the Rev. Rabbi Voss. And not too far behind walk his lovely wife, Kathie, and their three children who have not fallen far from the tree. And we shall together pass through the Shaar Rachamim and enjoy Mashiach's Day forever because you, Rev Rabbi, are 'righteous'." How saddened I am that Yitzhak's messiah is not Jesus Christ.

As a final note to Part One, please allow me to print what could very well be described as Judaism's Creed. It was the Jewish scholar Maimonides who desired that his abbreviated code of Thirteen Articles would serve as a "Guide to the Perplexed," and to those Jews confused by the arguments of Christian and Moslem.

THE THIRTEEN ARTICLES

- I. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, is both Creator and Ruler of all created beings, and that He alone had made, doth make, and ever will make all works of nature.
- II. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, is One, and no Unity is like His in any form, and that he alone is our God who was, is, and ever will be.
- III. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, is not a body, and no corporeal relations apply to Him, and that there exists nothing that has any similarity to Him.
- IV. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, was the first and will also be the last.
- V. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, is alone worthy of being worshipped, and that no other being is worthy of our worship.
- VI. I firmly believe that all the words of the Prophets are true.
- VII. I firmly believe that the prophecy of Moses, our Teacher (peace be upon him!) was true, and that he was chief of the Prophets, both of those that preceeded him and of those that followed him.
- VIII. I firmly believe that the Law which we possess now

is the same which hath been given to Moses our Teacher (peace be upon him!)

- IX. I firmly believe that this Law will not be changed, and that there will be no other Law (or Dispensation) given by the Creator, blessed be His name.
- X. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, knoweth all the actions of men and all their thoughts, as it is said, "He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, that considereth all their works." (Psalm 33:15)
- XI. I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be He, rewardeth those who keep His commandments and punisheth those who transgress His commandments.
- XII. I firmly believe in the coming of the Messiah, and although he may tarry, I daily hope for his coming.
- XIII. I firmly believe that there will take place a revival of the dead at a time which will please the Creator, blessed be His name, and exalted His memorial forever and ever!