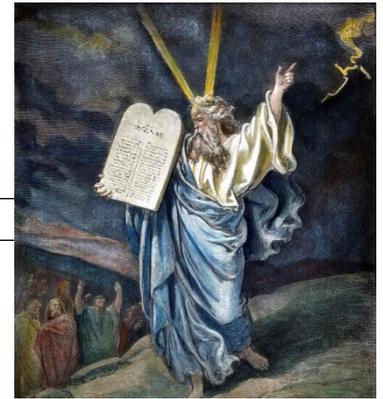


A history of the Jewish faith: Explanatory guide

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Lecture 6: Modern Judaism (2): Mid-19th to 21st centuries



- A. **POSITIVE-HISTORICAL JUDAISM** - Combination of commitment to Jewish Halakha (law) and rational faith. It differed from Orthodoxy in its acceptance of scientific and historical research and in its willingness to make some liturgical changes. It differed from Reform Judaism in that it sought to maintain traditional customs and adhere to the national aspects of Judaism. Predecessor of Conservative Judaism in the USA.

Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875) - Founder, in Germany, of Historical Judaism. Multifaceted career as pulpit rabbi, spokesman for political emancipation, critic of radical religious reform, editor, head of the first modern rabbinical seminary, and historian of Jewish law.

Solomon Shechter (1847 – 1915) - Authority on the Talmud, and a researcher who discovered important ancient documents. Famous also as an early leader of Conservative Judaism in the USA.

Conservative Judaism - A form of Judaism, particularly prevalent in the US which seeks to preserve Jewish tradition and ritual but has a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the law than Orthodox Judaism.

Masorti Judaism - Conservative Judaism is also known (particularly in Israel and the UK) by the Hebrew word 'Masorti', which means 'traditional'.

- B. **AMERICAN REFORM JUDAISM** - Reform Judaism (also known as Liberal Judaism or Progressive Judaism) is a major Jewish denomination that emphasizes the evolving nature of the faith, the superiority of its ethical aspects to the ceremonial ones, and belief in a continuous revelation, closely intertwined with human reason and intellect. Major branch of Judaism in the US.

Isaac Mayer Wise (1819 -1900) – Bohemian born rabbi who emigrated in 1846 to the USA and whose goal of uniting American Jewry made him their greatest organizer of Reform institutions.

Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 In the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, the Reform movement in America articulated its core tenets, radically altering traditional Jewish belief and practice. Many of the principles outlined in it were generally softened by the leaders of the Reform movement some 50 years later. It called for Jews to adopt a modern approach to the practice of their faith.

Stephen Wise (1874 – 1949) – Born in Hungary, and became a Reform rabbi, a leader of the Zionist movement in the USA, and a liberal activist who influenced the development of Reform Judaism in that country. Probably the most influential and well-respected American Jew of his generation.

Statement of Principles of 1999 - Returning to more traditional values, this statement by the Reform movement affirmed the central tenets of Judaism - God, Torah and Israel - even as it acknowledged the diversity of Reform Jewish beliefs and practices.

- C. **RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM** - An American Jewish denomination founded in the last century that seeks to unite Jewish history, tradition, culture and belief with modern scientific knowledge and the way people live today. It has taken the supernatural elements out of religion. It teaches that the Jewish religion was created by the Jewish people and was not a revelation from G-d.

Mordecai Kaplan (1881 – 1983) – An American rabbi (born in Lithuania), essayist and Jewish educator and the co-founder of Reconstructionist Judaism along with his son-in-law, Ira Eisenstein.

- D. **MUSAR JUDAISM** - Mussar (also spelled Mussar) is a Jewish spiritual practice that gives concrete instructions on how to live a meaningful and ethical life. Mussar is virtue-based ethics — based on the idea that by cultivating inner virtues, we improve ourselves. This is in contrast to most Jewish ethical teachings, which are rule-based.

Pale of Settlement - A western region of Imperial Russia with varying borders that existed from 1791 to 1917 in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish residency was mostly forbidden. Contained many shtetls (small towns each with large proportion of Jews).

Israel Salanter (1810 – 1883) - The (Lithuanian) father of the Musar movement in Orthodox Judaism and a famed head of a yeshiva (Vilna) and a Talmudist.

E. **RELIGIOUS ZIONISM** - Based on a fusion of Jewish religion and nationhood, it aims to restore not only Jewish political freedom but also Jewish religion in the light of the Torah and its commandments. Modern political movement began with Mizrahi organisation in 1902.

Abraham Kook (1865 – 1935) - Jewish mystic, fervent Zionist, and first chief rabbi of Palestine under the League of Nations mandate to Great Britain. One of the fathers of Religious Zionism.

F. **HUMANISTIC JUDAISM** - A Jewish movement that offers a nontheistic alternative in contemporary Jewish life. It defines Judaism as the cultural and historical experience of the Jewish people. It encourages humanistic and secular Jews to celebrate their Jewish identity by participating in Jewish holidays and lifecycle events.

Sherwin Wine (1928–2007) - The intellectual framer of Humanistic Judaism, founding rabbi of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, and founder of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, as well as a prolific writer, speaker, and public figure.

G. **OPEN ORTHODOXY** - A controversial religious movement which considers itself part of Modern Orthodox Judaism with increased emphasis on intellectual openness, a spiritual dimension, a broad concern for all Jews, and a more expansive role for women, including ordination. Many believe it should be linked to Conservative Judaism.

Avi Weiss (1944 -) - American Open Orthodox ordained rabbi, author, teacher, lecturer, and activist. Weiss coined the term "Open Orthodoxy" in 1997. He contrasts it with Conservative Judaism, noting that the latter 'is generally not composed of ritually observant Jews'.

H. OTHER 'JUDAISMS'

Traditional (3 times a year) Jew – Usually attend an Orthodox synagogue, but only do so for 'tradition' and not because of deeply held religious beliefs. Many Melbourne Jews are 'traditional'.

Secular Jew – Self-identify as Jews but have no religious beliefs or practices. Some are 'cultural' Jews whereas others are 'lapsed' Jews who do nothing Jewish at all. Other people might refer to them as Jews.

Israeli Jew – Secular Jews might regard themselves as Israelis rather than Jews: members of a nation rather than a religion. Russian immigrants may have 'returned' to Israel claiming to be Jewish, but it is believed that many are not. This has been overlooked for the sake of keeping families together. The recognition of Jews from Ethiopia as Jews has been controversial. In summary, Israelis and others have asked, 'Who is a Jew'?