

# MODERN JUDAISM

# Christianity Nov 20, 22, 25

- William Arnal will be teaching
- Please read the textbook as per the syllabus
- Half of the quiz questions will be from Bill's lectures on Christianity
- No office hours Friday Nov 22 or Monday Nov 25

# Extra Office Hours

- Tuesday Nov 19, 11am-3pm

# Last Class

- History of Judaism
- Christian Anti-Judaism

# Today

- Developments in Jewish thought
- Anti-Semitism, Holocaust, Israel/Palestine
- Jewish religious practices

# Developments in Jewish Thought

- Maimonides part of rediscovery of Aristotle and application of Aristotelian philosophy to Judaism
- Applied rationalistic philosophy to Jewish texts
- Also developed mystical approach to Judaism known as **Kabbalah**
- Kabbalah questioned the Rabbinic assumption that God was omnipotent or all-powerful

# Kabbalah

- Focuses on the problem of Jewish suffering
- Moses de Leon and Isaac Luria questioned the goodness and omnipotence of God
- Their commentaries on Torah do not ignore dark and demonic forces of existence
- Kabbalah generally acknowledges the reality of evil in the world

# Evil in Judaism

- Evil challenges assumptions about God
- Importantly provided a persuasive explanation for the exile and suffering of the Jews
- Suffering and evil exist because God is cut off from humanity

# Anti-Semitism

- Anti-Semitism focused less on Judaism's religious identity or position vis a vie Christianity (though this was still there)
- Anti-Semitism was a racist position that attacked Jews as an inferior race
- Targeted religious and non-religious Jews

# Not just German

- Often associated with the Nazis, Germany by extension
- Jews throughout Europe suffered
- Pogroms in Russia
- General mistrust/hatred of Jews in Europe

# Zionism

- Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)
- Rise of anti-Semitism made emancipation and assimilation of Jews seem untenable
- Herzl advocated for an independent Jewish state where Jews could exercise sovereignty
- Preferably Palestine, but not Palestine exclusively
- Herzl supported a British proposition to found a Jewish nation in Uganda (now Kenya)

# The Holocaust

- Anti-Semitism and Nazi hatred of Jews led to the murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis
- This was 2/3 of the Jews of Europe

# Aftermath

- After realizing the full horrors of the Holocaust, and the many ways in which Christian Europe was responsible (not just Germany), efforts were made to relocate Holocaust survivors to Israel/Palestine

# Practices

- Judaism has many distinct religious practices and festivals
- Two most significant markers of Jewish religion
  1. Keeping Kosher
  2. Keeping the Sabbath

# Kosher (or Kashrut)

- System of what Jews can and cannot consume
- Food laws presented in Torah, esp. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14
- Creates classification of animals that can and cannot be consumed

# Kosher (or Kashrut)

- For land animals:
- Must have cloven hooves
- AND
- Must chew cud

# Kosher?



- cloven hooves?  
■ YES
- chews cud?  
■ YES



# Kosher?

- cloven hooves?
- YES
- chews cud?
- NO

# Rabbits?

- The hare, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you.  
(Leviticus 11:6)
- But rabbits don't actually chew their cud!
- The Torah is not a scientific manual

# Kosher Con't

- Animals must be properly slaughtered and drained of blood, so wild animals are not kosher
- Domesticated birds are
- Most fish are, but they must have fins AND scales
- So no shellfish!

# Kosher Con't

- Exodus 23:19, “You shall not boil a kid [goat] in its mother’s milk.”
- Interpreted by rabbis to mean a restriction on mixing meat and dairy

# Sabbath (Shabbat)

- Begins every Friday at sundown
- Ends when 3 stars are visible Saturday night
- Based on one of the 10 Commandments
- Exodus 20:10, “The seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; you shall not do any work”

# Sabbath (Shabbat)

- Originally provided rest for work related to the Temple sanctuary
- Reinterpreted to mean rest from work more generally
- Does not prevent actions that will help humans and animals

# Gender Issues in Judaism

- Producing children is the first commandment in the Torah: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28)
- Has been reinterpreted as unofficial 614<sup>th</sup> commandment after the Holocaust: the Jewish people must survive at all costs
- Leads to conservative responses to family planning

# Marriage

- Sex is a positive expression, not related to evils
- Sex in marriage has two purposes:
  - Procreation
  - Family harmony
- If pregnancy poses a threat to a woman's health, sexual relations should continue, but contraception should be used

# Divorce

- Husband must grant divorce to wife
- If husband refuses to grant divorce, the wife becomes a "chained woman"
- The man who refuses to grant his wife a divorce can enter a relationship with another woman, but that will not be considered adultery
- The woman alone bears the responsibility of adultery

# Life and Death

- The birth of a child is a blessing
- Boys are circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth
- At coming of age (13), boys go through rite of passage called Bar Mitzvah
- Not necessarily a sign of adulthood, but does place the boy under the law
- In Conservative and Reform Judaism, the Bat Mitzvah was introduced to celebrate the coming of age of girls

# Life and Death

- Bury a person's body is highly valued
- Deceased buried within 24 hours of death
- Relatives tear garments as mark of grief
- Family observes 7 day mourning period

# Festivals

- Many important festivals in Judaism
- Most solemn period in the fall
- Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
- Celebrates birth of the world, begins Days of Awe
- Jews attempt to become aware of how they have failed themselves, others, and God

# Festivals

- After 10 days Yom Kippur closes repentance related to Days of Awe, and is a day of atonement
- Yom Kippur is spent fasting and praying

# Pilgrimage Festivals

- They revolve around both the harvest and the story of the Exodus
- Passover
- The Feast of Weeks (Shavuot)
- The Feast of Booths (Sukkot)

# Passover

- Marks the beginning of the harvest period
- Also celebrates Jewish release from slavery in Egypt

# Passover

- Seder
- Meal that takes place the first night
- Begins with retelling of the Exodus story with focus on liberation
- Contemporarily the idea of liberation has been used to think about the environment, or the Palestinians

# Passover

- Seder
- Symbolic foods represent the story of Passover
- A roasted bone of a kosher animal
- Bitter herbs
- Vegetables dipped in salt
- Apples, nuts, wine
- Matza

# Feast of Weeks (Shavuot)

- Celebration of the completion of the harvest that began with Passover
- Commemorates the Israelites wandering in the desert
- Reminded of the commandments, especially the first: Ex. 20:2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

# Feast of Booths/Tabernacles (Sukkot)

- Marked the final gathering of produce before the winter arrived
- Origin of practice probably the temporary huts farmers built, and parallels temporary shelters of the Jews in the desert
- Basic theme: impermanence of life