

**Multicultural Judaism in a Contemporary Setting**



Jonathan Esterman MDiv

DMin 726: Global Perspectives: Practical Judaism in a Multicultural Setting

Portland Seminary

Advisor: Dr. Douglas Balzer

August 4, 2017

**Contents**

**Introduction..... 2**

**What is Judaism? ..... 5**

**Defining the Subcultures of Judaism and the Jewish People..... 7**

    Culture within Culture ..... 9

    Practical Faith Models ..... 11

**Conclusion ..... 14**

**Bibliography ..... 17**

**Appendix I: Practical Application Addendum..... 19**



## Introduction

Judaism is, by far, a definite minority both in a religious as well as racial/ethnic consideration. Nonetheless, the impacts that the Jewish people, and Judaism as an extension, have had on the world are innumerable, forging even the very foundations of how the collective of humanity would define utopia, bringing a metaphoric heaven on earth scenario.<sup>1</sup> A 2016 estimate of the Jewish population worldwide resulted in an insignificant fourteen million when compared to the entire population of the planet being over seven billion.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the worldwide Jewish population is a feeble .2% (imagine being in a room with five hundred people - only one person in that room, statistically speaking, would be of Jewish ethnicity).<sup>3</sup> If the Jewish people make up less than one-quarter percent of the population of the world, then why does it seem to be that the Jewish people have such a high influence in society? Also, what does it mean to be Jewish? I will address the differences in this paper as I draw attention to the fascinating world of Judaism and the Jews.

As this essay will reveal, there are as many subcultures of Judaism as there are cultures in the world today. Each culture, tradition, and language in the world gives birth to another form of Jewish expression. The people called to be the light to the world

---

<sup>1</sup> Ken Shapiro, "Worldperfect: The Jewish Impact on Civilization," recorded January 29, 2017, January 29, 2017, Portland, OR, Live Q&A.

<sup>2</sup> For the literal-minded, the numerical representation is this: ~14,000,000 compared to ~7,328,430,600.

<sup>3</sup> "Vital Statistics: Jewish Population of the World (1882 - Present)," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed July 13, 2017. <http://s.yonitu.de/2sVphP3>. Calculated the numbers manually.

are truly the only people that are so diverse as actually to be found in each and every culture. The dispersion of the Diaspora (both of them) has consequently led to every culture having its own Jewish subculture to express itself.

What is one to do with this knowledge? From a purely religious viewpoint, in educating evangelicals on how to understand better and befriend the Jewish people, there is much to learn. The Christian church charges itself with being a light to the nations, yet it fails to see how a nationhood of priests is already accomplishing that with greater success than their own missional attempts.<sup>4</sup> Christianity has much to learn from the multicultural diversity found within Judaism: one that embraces the differences yet remains essentially the same. Take Jewish people from the different cultures across the globe and put them together and an amazing thing can be observed: unity within the difference. While they may have different foods to make, they all have a Jewish origin. Each Jew will have a different assortment to bring to oneg,<sup>5</sup> but every family, regardless of location, will have a Seder during the first night (or two nights if outside of Israel) of Pesach.<sup>6</sup> While each speaks its own language, they can all commune together in Hebrew. Yiddish, Ladino, and otherwise form beautiful casual conversation, but

---

<sup>4</sup> Judaism interprets this command to be how one lives and loves, not evangelizes. Within Judaism there is no proselytizing, thus one's own love for Judaism must be reflected in how a Jew lives their life and faith. In comparison, many Christians focus on tracts and missions attempts but do not focus as heavily on personal love.

<sup>5</sup> Potluck

<sup>6</sup> Passover

everyone recognizes that Hebrew is the holy tongue and thus utilized for prayer.<sup>7</sup> While they all have different methods of labor, they all rest on shabbos<sup>8</sup> together.<sup>9</sup> While they all have different traditions and understandings of the world, they all worship HaShem together in the same fashion, chanting the same prayers with the same tunes in unity, passed down from generation to generation, retaining its essence of Jewish life, much like how the Oral Torah retained its purity to be codified into the Talmud.<sup>10</sup>

Judaism is different from other religions in that Judaism is baked into the very identity of the culture and people group. To be Jewish could be a religious affiliation, citizenship, cultural trend, etc. Outside of religiosity lies another layer of diversity as well: that of the subcultures transferred from one's raising. The most common groups, the "main three," are Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi. Each of these main groups has their own languages, traditions, and observances. Outside of the main three are even more differing varieties of Jewish living from a cultural assimilation. In fact, this was the main goal of this research: how much of Judaism has been affected by assimilation and how has Judaism remained standing when compared to its alternatives, despite the

---

<sup>7</sup> Reform and Conservative synagogues will have their services in the local language. Orthodox synagogues will recite everything in Hebrew (with a small message in the local language). Despite these differences, every Jew has a recognition of how sacred Hebrew is. Hebrew is a language built around prayer and song, and the saying goes, "if you don't have anything nice to say, say it in Yiddish."

<sup>8</sup> Shabbat, Sabbath.

<sup>9</sup> How Shabbat is observed differs per group, and there is always a deviation for every norm, but the general understanding is to avoid the forms of work mentioned in the Torah, the 39 melichot, the best one can. Differences in observances tend to be more prevalent with modern technologies and their application.

<sup>10</sup> The only difference here being Hebrew versus common tongue, etc.

risk of assimilation? I assert that Judaism retains its unique profile and identity, every subculture included, not only sanctifying key traditions that prevent assimilation but also by identifying new traditions and observances in contemporary cultures that are then appropriated into the Jewish way of life. Additionally, while Judaism can be broken down into a nearly infinite number of subcultures, Judaism as a whole is a united front as a result of shared basic traditional components that clearly define a Jewish lifestyle, either Haredi<sup>11</sup> in praxis or completely unengaged.

This essay will first examine what it means to be Jewish in a broad sense, outlining the key highlights of the religious versus ethnic struggle as well as the layers of acceptance and identity confirmation. From there, we must define the subcultures of Judaism and the Jewish people. Within the subculture component, the “big three” cultures (Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi) are briefly discussed, leaving room for elaboration on the concept of a culture within a culture and bringing the content together for a practical faith model. Just as a number dot diagram fills in the outline of the drawing, so too will this essay provide these items to lead to the coloring of the project: looking at the concept of identity, assimilation, and appropriation within a Jewish context. To conclude, a Practical Application Addendum<sup>12</sup> is provided to take the information provided and transform it into how I can personally apply this to my own dissertation process and life.

### **What is Judaism?**

---

<sup>11</sup> Ultra-Orthodox

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix I.

What does it mean to be Jewish? This is a particularly tricky question to answer, since being Jewish can mean many different things: observant ethnic Jew, ethnic non-observant Jew, non-ethnic observant Jew (convert), and non-ethnic non-observant Jew (former convert). Judaism functions as both a racial/ethnic identity as well as a religion. Within halachah,<sup>13</sup> one is only a Jew if they are born of a Jewish mother or are a convert.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, one who converts is granted full status as a Jew and held in high esteem, since not being obligated to be Jewish, they still chose the regimented lifestyle.<sup>15</sup> So how can this question be adequately considered and answered? Judaism as a people group is a debate even within Jewish circles. This is one extreme end of the debate, which can be understood with the notion that a conversion to Judaism grants the convert full status as a Jew by birth.<sup>16</sup> However, despite this practice, one can run a genetic test to determine how much of an ethnic identity an Ashkenazi Jew may have.<sup>17</sup> While this profile can be looked at, there needs to be a clear definition between religious Judaism and ethnic Judaism. As already discussed, one can be an ethnic Jew but not a halakhic Jew. In my personal situation, my father being the first Levite in our lineage to marry a non-Jew, I have a stronger concentration of Ashkenazi genetic makeup than

---

<sup>13</sup> Jewish law in respect to Torah-observance.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald H. Isaacs, *Becoming Jewish: A Handbook for Conversion* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1993), 7-12.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*, Revised ed. (New York: William Morrow, 2008), 601.

<sup>16</sup> Isaacs, 7-12.

<sup>17</sup> "Ancestry DNA Testing," 23andMe, accessed July 14, 2017. <https://www.23andme.com/dna-ancestry/>.

many in the local Jewish community. With my mother not being Jewish, the only way I can secure a Jewish identity is by either providing documentation that shows she was Jewish but did not realize it or by converting to Judaism. Thus, while I am prone to all of the health conditions that go with Ashkenazi descent,<sup>18</sup> my Jewish blood only serves as an ethnic identity, not a religious one.

With this in consideration, we must recognize the difference between religious Judaism and ethnic Judaism. The two are inexplicably linked, however, with the religion being tied to the people group, so the easiest way to discuss the matter is to recognize that Judaism is an ethnicity. Just as one can marry into another culture, so we can, therefore treat converts in a similar status. While not carrying the genetic makeup that exists from Mt. Sinai, Jews by choice take on the identity of Judaism in a way that, especially given the risk of being identified as Jewish, earns them the right to be considered Jewish in all regards, just not as much at risk of the genetic challenges than many Jews by birth.<sup>19</sup>

### **Defining the Subcultures of Judaism and the Jewish People**

Within the larger umbrella of Judaism and what it means to be a Jew, there are the subcultures that are based out of locale, language, and tradition. The Jewish people are typically divided into three main subcultures: Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi. While the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities have retained a semblance of the

---

<sup>18</sup> "Jews and Genetic Disease: Why Testing for Genetic Disorders Is Important If You Have Jewish Ancestry," accessed July 14, 2017. <https://jscreen.org/reasons-for-genetic-testing/>.

<sup>19</sup> Maimonides takes the lenient position in that if one is willing to identify as Jewish, then they should be considered Jewish solely on the risk of anti-Semitic dangers alone.

Jewish faith and practice in their cultural heritage, the Mizrahi Jewish people abdicated much of their Jewish inheritance in exchange of blending in with the Asian communities.<sup>20</sup> Recent trends and popularity in Judaism and Jewish culture have permitted a resurgence of Asian Jewish people that identify with both Asian and Jewish practice, thus influencing future Jewish living and continued traditions.<sup>21</sup> As a result, a different approach to reach the Jewish people is needed, one that engages all of the Jewish subcultures and through embracing traditions and customs represents a form of Judaism itself.

A prime example that can be used from the field research is that of Pesach: while Sephardic Jewish people will eat rice and beans, only avoiding leavened foods, the Ashkenazi Jewish people avoid all kitniyot<sup>22</sup> as well as chametz.<sup>23</sup> Generally speaking, the main differences between these three groups tie into the level of observance or commitment to the mitzvot. Ashkenazi are more stringent in general,<sup>24</sup> with Sephardi having a more laid-back yet observant approach, and Mizrahi still defining who they want to be. There is a display at the Skirball Museum in L.A. that

---

<sup>20</sup> Helen Kiyong Kim and Noah Samuel Leavitt, *Jewasian: Race, Religion, and Identity for America's Newest Jews, Studies of Jews in Society* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Rice, legumes, etc., that historically could have been cross-contaminated with leavened products.

<sup>23</sup> Leavened items or those containing leavening agents.

<sup>24</sup> Thus the notion that many are “Ashkenazi all year round except during Pesach, when they are Sephardic,” since the level of commitment is easier to bear.

depicts a Jewish synagogue discovered in the Eastern areas a long time ago.<sup>25</sup> Alongside the impressions of traditional Jewish art were the Zodiac symbols and engravings of Zeus, etc. This is an excellent example of the type of assimilation that occurred. Those that keep Shabbos and keep the mitzvot typically retain their Jewish identity, while those that do not lose their identity. The notion that JewAsian is an upcoming trend and expanding serves of crediting the Jewish hopes that the Messiah will return soon.<sup>26</sup> Each of these main subcultures brings forth different tastes, musical styles, and traditions, yet are still essentially “Jewish” in one form or another. To best understand how the community is, one must participate and observe them as well as their surroundings.

#### Culture within Culture

While these three main subcultures are the most popular, the truth is that for every culture, there is a Jewish companion culture. In order to survive the thousands of years of persecution, the Jewish people have had to learn how to adapt and keep their Judaic tradition and identity alive. As a result, Jewish music in Spain sounds like Spanish flamenco, whereas Middle European (Yiddish) music will be more like Colallia,<sup>27</sup> including the klezmer in a variety of quick to slow paced tunes. In each culture are two extremes: liberal and traditional. The traditionalists maintain their

---

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Esterman, *Dmin 726 Field Research Experience Report* (Portland, OR: Portland Seminary, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> One of the main prophecies the Messiah will fulfill is bringing every Jew back to Israel and revealing their tribal identity (currently, all that is known for tribes is Cohen, Levi, and Davidic line – everyone else is assigned “generic Judah” due to the rest of the tribes being lost, even as far out as Ethiopia).

<sup>27</sup> Jewish klezmer band.

Jewish and local cultural essence, serving as a living time capsule, while the liberals will push boundaries to have a cross-cultural existence that sometimes abandons both the Jewish and local cultures altogether.<sup>28</sup> The best media example of this is *Seinfeld*, a show about nothing that was really about everything, showing the idiosyncrasies of life through a very Jewish lens (*Friends*, as well, has some unique Jewish moments that are easily overlooked).<sup>29</sup> In fact, NBC nearly did not air *Seinfeld* out of concern of it being “too Jewish,” and it ended up being Middle America that enjoyed the program this most.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the American Jewish culture has a blend of assimilation in which certain items are adopted from secular or pagan practices and “made Jewish,” so to say. This practice of appropriation is best known for certain meals and traditions, such as the “lox and bagel”<sup>31</sup> or the fedora that Orthodox men will often wear.<sup>32</sup> Since American Jews typically identify as ethnically or culturally Jewish and not religiously Jews, Jewish practices will be blended with other practices, resulting in gifts given at Chanukah, “Chanukah” trees in the homes of some, etc. What can be historically observed is that the Jewish culture will typically take on observances, a “look and feel,”

---

<sup>28</sup> Telushkin.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, *Seinfeldia: How a Show About Nothing Changed Everything* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> John M. Efron, *The Jews: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Yehuda Shurpin, "Why Do Jews Eat Lox and Bagels?," accessed April 21, 2017. <http://s.yonitu.de/2ods0VN>.

<sup>32</sup> Esterman.

of the parent culture it dwells in.<sup>33</sup> A great example of both extremes are the Jewish Community Centers. JCCs serve as hubs of operation for the entire community and will feature both very observant events and very non-observant events.<sup>34</sup> Modesty is important in Orthodoxy and the JCC will have members that are less than Orthodox in appearance.<sup>35</sup> Thus, within the very central life of American Judaism, there is great diversity in practice and tradition. This diversity creates a challenge when it comes to practice and how to respect the differences found within the great spread of contemporary Jewish life.

### Practical Faith Models

Until this point, our discussion has been focused primarily on the ethnic part of the Jewish people. As addressed, however, both Judaism and the Jews are inseparable, and thus we must look at the religious (Judaism) aspect of the Jewish people as well. Within Judaism, it is said, via tradition, that there are three things that determine legality and religious observance: (i) Torah, (ii) Talmud, and (iii) family tradition. If a tradition is practiced for four generations, it gains the same required observance as rabbinic

---

<sup>33</sup> Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 115.

<sup>34</sup> "About Us," MJCC, accessed July 14, 2017. <http://www.oregonjcc.org/about-us>.

<sup>35</sup> Many Orthodox opinions concur that men should not witness, outside of their spouse and immediate family, women wearing pants, skirts above knees, sleeves above elbows, v-neck or low swoop, hair (married women wear head coverings or wigs), etc. Additionally, women dancing or singing is generally not accepted. While these standards exist, especially in Portland, OR, there is also acceptance of modern times and a relaxed standard at the JCCs to permit all walks of Judaism to engage each other in peace.

commentary and instruction.<sup>36</sup> As a result, Judaism is both quite diverse in its practice and also very restrictive in what can be practiced, careful to ensure that there are no traditions that lead to assimilation and death of what it means to be Jewish. Thus, while there are great differences between the “big three” versions of practiced faith,<sup>37</sup> there are limits in which no Jewish individual will attempt to cross. The limits that none of the main branches of Judaism will cross is summarized in Maimonides *Thirteen Principles of the Faith*. These thirteen principles are the basis of which every form of Judaism must adhere to in order to be Jewish and offer a place in the *olam habba*.<sup>38</sup> The principles are the essence of Judaism, and as a result, make perfect sense. The application, however, is transferred via tradition and practice. One key issue for the Jewish people is Jesus. For them, to accept Jesus as G-d is idolatry,<sup>39</sup> to declare him the



<sup>36</sup> It is good to note that such is not a necessarily an endorsement, but rather a tradition in and of itself. As a result, Judaism can be infinitely complex when trying to determine the difference between legality of halakha compared to tradition. This is one of the many reasons that the Talmud is still in the process of writing today in the category called “Responsa,” in which modern rabbis weigh in on new applications of ancient law.

<sup>37</sup> Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform hold these positions. Orthodox is the oldest in rabbinical Judaism, with Conservative trying to find a middle ground of practice and leniency with the Law, and Reform abdicating most of its Jewishness, only to have to slowly add things back in because of the risk of assimilation.

<sup>38</sup> *World to Come*. This topic is a core part of Jewish Mysticism (Kabbalah) and is best addressed in its own discussion and essay.

<sup>39</sup> The Decalogue (Ten Commandments/Words) says that no earthly image can be made of G-d, and that such is an idol. Additionally, Numbers 23:19 declares that G-d is not a man. Lastly, the notion of a man-god was popular in Greek mythology and it is believed that the Hellenist influence led to the deistic view of Jesus.

Messiah is contrary to prophecy<sup>40</sup> and lineage,<sup>41</sup> and to assert a Trinity is polytheistic.<sup>42</sup> There have been efforts to attempt to say that Christians worship the same G-d, but those efforts are still very much in progress.<sup>43</sup> What is asserted is that a Jew cannot believe in Jesus or they will lose their place in the *World to Come*. On the other end, a Gentile can profess a pagan belief that results in ethical monotheism and is less severely judged, and in some cases even welcomed in the afterlife.<sup>44</sup> It is even acknowledged that a Jewish individual must be careful of the friendships they keep so that one is not led astray from the Jewish faith. For example, some rabbis will not permit their children to make friends with children of other religions until they are well past adult life and firm in their religious foundation so that they are not tempted by other religions.<sup>45</sup>

As a result, there is a clear tolerance for many levels of observance, but it is dependent on which point of view is being considered. For the Orthodox, the Conservative and Reform movements are not Jewish, but rather *Jew-ish*. For the

---

<sup>40</sup> Jews believe that the main prophecies which the Messiah will fulfill were not met: world peace, all the Jews in Israel, and worldwide worship of HaShem. The miracles of Jesus only serve to confirm his role as a false prophet, in reference to Deuteronomy 13:1-3.

<sup>41</sup> The Kingly Messiah is a Talmudic, not biblical, belief. Nonetheless, there are prophecies that allude to this figure. One of the prophecies is that the Messiah will be from the line of David. However, Jeconiah and his descendants were cursed from ever being king again, and both of Jesus' parents are from that particular lineage.

<sup>42</sup> The term "*echad*" is Hebrew for "*one*." Like the English one, it can mean "singular" or "in unity." Within a context, *echad* is in unity if there are multiple pronouns. However, HaShem continually says that "He alone is G-d" and Shema (the definitive identity of Jewish life and practice), Deuteronomy 6:4, uses *echad* in the singular perspective.

<sup>43</sup> Leo Trepp, *Judaism: Development and Life* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000), 201.

<sup>44</sup> Rabbi Gadi Levy, (Portland, OR: 2017).

<sup>45</sup> Rabbi Gadi Levy, *Friends of Other Faiths* (MJCC: 2017).

Reform, they all are Jewish. Regardless of one's level of observance, however, all the different forms of practiced Judaism reject Messianic Judaism as a Jewish denomination and instead contend that it is a Pentecostal movement of Christianity, and the term Hebrew Christian is better utilized. This is an important clarification for the church as a collective whole to recognize: while Jews are willing to work with Gentiles who choose to be Christian, they are not willing to be around efforts of evangelism or any activities that could lead to missionizing or attempting to convert Jews.

### **Conclusion**

Judaism has surprisingly survived thousands of years of persecution and attack. In a world where assimilation is a valued decision, the Jewish people have been firm in their observance of tradition in order to remain separate and unique among the nations. It is this approach, exemplified by the cross-cultural observance of the mitzvot and Shabbos, which shows the world what the Jewish people are: the people of a book and a tradition that transcends the commonplace. Despite the history of antisemitism,<sup>46</sup> and despite the staggering numbers of their minority, the Jewish people are some of the most influential thinkers, tinkerers, and leaders in the contemporary (and historical) world.<sup>47</sup> All of Judaism is closely tied, however, to its religious framework, and as a

---

<sup>46</sup> Rabbi Kalman Packouz, "The Reason for Anti-Semitism," Aish, accessed June 20, 2017. <http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/reason-for-anti-semitism/>.

<sup>47</sup> Rabbi Yosef Mizrahi, "What Are All These Strange Customs?," accessed July 13, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mDha44q\\_us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mDha44q_us).

result, one must accept Judaism as a whole, both people, and faith, ethnos and praxis, not piecing it out part by part.<sup>48</sup>

In every generation, in every culture, and in every land are the Jewish people, living as part of the culture yet retaining their own distinctive flavor that is in synchronicity with every other Jew across the globe. There is a place for the Jewish individual, where they are an observant Jew or not. That is a universal faith tradition and the true definition of what it means to be multicultural, finding a great diversity within its own unity. In the context of providing a bridge between Christians and the Jewish people, the following appendix will help with a practical application, but the theoretical framework must be clearly understood: the diversity within Judaism and the Jewish people results in a modicum of tolerance and acceptance of other people and differing faith traditions. This tolerance, however, is best defined in the “coexist” bumper sticker: Jews are willing to engage in discussion with Christians, but only to the degree of getting along. As has been made clear in the field research, the Jewish people can only engage and work with Christians if the mindset of “Jews needing Jesus” is dropped from the theology of Christianity.<sup>49</sup> All recommendations and aimed personal changes reflect this understanding: Judaism must be treated as an equal solution for the Jews as Christianity can be considered a Noachide movement for the Gentiles. Such an

---

<sup>48</sup> As a result of this, Judaism is a religious culture, not simply a religion or a culture. While less observant Jewish people may not follow mitzvot or shabbos as strictly as those who are more observant, or a conservative event may offer shrimp as an appetizer, the Jewish people as a whole have a collective identity with their Torah and dietary laws. This also includes the Oral Torah, found in the Talmud, as part of Torah.

<sup>49</sup> Esterman.

idea is quite possible, at least from a Jewish perspective, as the Jewish people already have such a diverse view of the world to cover every nation, tongue, and tradition, thereby allowing the Jewish people to be distinct and free of assimilation while simultaneously engaging the contemporary cultures in such a fashion that it only enriches the Yiddishkeit<sup>50</sup> that many a Jew remains proud to have.



---

<sup>50</sup> Jewish heritage.

## Bibliography

- "About Us." MJCC. Last modified 2017. Accessed July 14, 2017.  
<http://www.oregonjcc.org/about-us>.
- "Ancestry DNA Testing." 23andMe. Last modified 2017. Accessed July 14, 2017.  
<https://www.23andme.com/dna-ancestry/>.
- "Jews and Genetic Disease: Why Testing for Genetic Disorders Is Important If You Have Jewish Ancestry." Last modified 2017. Accessed July 14, 2017.  
<https://jscreen.org/reasons-for-genetic-testing/>.
- "Vital Statistics: Jewish Population of the World (1882 - Present)." Jewish Virtual Library. Last modified 2017. Accessed July 13, 2017.  
<http://s.yonitu.de/2sVphP3>.
- Armstrong, Jennifer Keishin. *Seinfeldia: How a Show About Nothing Changed Everything*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.
- Efron, John M. *The Jews: A History*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Esterman, Jonathan. *Dmin 726 Field Research Experience Report*. Portland, OR: Portland Seminary, 2017.
- Isaacs, Ronald H. *Becoming Jewish: A Handbook for Conversion*. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1993.
- Kim, Helen Kiyong and Noah Samuel Leavitt. *Jewasian: Race, Religion, and Identity for America's Newest Jews*. Studies of Jews in Society. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2016.
- Levy, Rabbi Gadi. Edited by Jonathan Esterman. Portland, OR, 2017.
- Levy, Rabbi Gadi. *Friends of Other Faiths*. Edited by Jonathan Esterman. MJCC, 2017.
- Mizrachi, Rabbi Yosef. "What Are All These Strange Customs?" Last modified 2016. Accessed July 13, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mDha44q\\_us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mDha44q_us).
- Packouz, Rabbi Kalman. "The Reason for Anti-Semitism." Aish. Last modified 2017. Accessed June 20, 2017. <http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/reason-for-anti-semitism/>.
- Shapiro, Ken. "Worldperfect: The Jewish Impact on Civilization." Live Q&A. Portland, OR, January 29, 2017.

Shurpin, Yehuda. "Why Do Jews Eat Lox and Bagels?" Last modified 2017. Accessed April 21, 2017. <http://s.yonitu.de/2ods0VN>.

Tapper, Aaron J. Hahn. *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.

Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*. Revised ed. New York: William Morrow, 2008.

Trepp, Leo. *Judaism: Development and Life*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000.



## Appendix I: Practical Application Addendum

Having gone through this module and participating with the Portland Kollel and different groups, it is clear that while Judaism may be diverse in its practice,<sup>51</sup> it is clearly different when it comes to the foundational elements that comprise religion. It is in that framework that Judaism keeps its essence, which has kept its purity and avoidance of assimilation: retaining a faith tradition that embraces core concepts. The easiest Christian comparison is “unity in essentials, diversity in nonessentials.” As a result, I discovered that the Jewish people really are a foreign culture to me and that I have much more to learn to be among them, including their norms, forms, and language.<sup>52</sup> My hands-on field research has been instrumental and educating me regarding the depth and breadth of the Jewish culture. Reading and attending lectures can only take one so far – an actual engagement is needed. Unfortunately, for many evangelicals, this engagement is not available. In recognition of this, there is a gap that needs to be filled.

What evangelical Christianity needs is not another “Jews for Jesus” or attempt at Messianic Judaism. Instead, it needs Jewish organizations that are willing to educate evangelicals and partner with them as “brothers-in-arms.” There are some groups that do this, but it seems that many evangelicals are unaware of these resources.

---

<sup>51</sup> As this essay covered, there are religious practices and cultural practices that create diversity within Judaism.

<sup>52</sup> How to observe, for example, is essentially different. I had always “said” the prayers, when in fact they are to be chanted in a melody. Additionally, the orthodox community has Hebrew as a primary language for all services.

Additionally, there is much to Christianity that is Jew-*ish*, and it seems to come as a surprise to the Christian populace. If Christianity originated from Judaism, then it should seem Jewish in essence. In order to provide a course-correction to the historical deviation away from Jewish praxis, the collective Christian church needs to evaluate its historical stances and adjust them to allow for greater collaboration and partnership, instead of replacement and antisemitism, with the Jewish people. Instead of creating Christian traditions such as Christmas, Lent, and Easter, the Church needs to abdicate the pagan associations and embrace Jewish Feasts and Festivals.

Even in consideration of all of this, the theology of Jesus and of G-d is a glaring factor that will prevent the two from being truly compatible. In that regard, there will always need to be Jews who are fluent in Christian theology and Christians fluent in Jewish theology to help maintain a bridge between these two great faiths. It is my hope and goal to be an Orthodox Jew that is well-versed in Christian theology and can help the Church better understand its neighbor. It is in this capacity that I have a unique ministry fit. My advanced degrees in Christian theology partnered with my Jewish pull allows for a new type of rabbi: one that works with Christians to protect Jews from assimilation instead of bracing against Church-backed antisemitism.