

Understanding the Major Branches of Modern Judaism May 10, 2012

Initial terms: 24 or 72 kinds Torah/Talmud (oral/written law). Halacha orthopraxy/orthodoxy, haskalah Babylonian Talmud kabbalah, Sephardic, Ashkenazi (with material gleaned from Wikipedia articles- no access to my books yet)

Modern Judaism is loosely broken into three main branches:

Orthodox Judaism is the approach to Judaism which adheres to the traditional interpretation and application of the laws and ethics of the Torah as legislated in the Talmudic texts by the Sanhedrin ("Oral Torah") and subsequently developed and applied by the later authorities known as the *Gaonim*, *Rishonim*, and *Acharonim*. Orthodox Jews are also called "observant Jews"; Orthodoxy is known also as "Torah Judaism" or "traditional Judaism". Orthodox Judaism generally refers to Modern Orthodox Judaism and Haredi Judaism (Chasidic Chabad) but can actually include a wide range of beliefs. Orthodoxy collectively considers itself the only true heir to the Jewish tradition. The Orthodox Jewish movements generally consider all non-Orthodox Jewish movements to be unacceptable deviations from authentic Judaism; both because of other denominations' doubt concerning the verbal revelation of Written and Oral Torah, and because of their rejection of Halakhic precedent as binding. As such, Orthodox groups characterize non-Orthodox forms of Judaism as heretical

Reform Judaism is a phrase that refers to various beliefs, practices and organizations associated with the Reform Jewish movement in North America, the United Kingdom and elsewhere.^[1] In general, Reform Judaism maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernized and compatible with participation in the surrounding culture. Many branches of Reform Judaism hold that Jewish law should be interpreted as a set of general guidelines rather than as a list of restrictions whose literal observance is required of all Jews.^{[2][3]} Similar movements that are also occasionally called "Reform" include the Israeli Progressive Movement and its worldwide counterpart.

conservative, Masorti Judaism (Hebrew for "Traditional").

Positive-Historical Judaism, the intellectual forerunner to Conservative Judaism, was developed as a school of thought in the 1840s and 1850s in Germany. Its principal founder was Rabbi Zecharias Frankel, who had broken with the German Reform Judaism in 1845 over its rejection of the primacy of the Hebrew language in Jewish prayer and the rejection of the laws of kashrut. In 1854, Frankel became the head of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau (then in Prussia, now Wrocław, Poland). At the seminary, Frankel taught that Jewish law was not static, but rather has always developed in response to changing conditions.

He called his approach towards Judaism "Positive-Historical," which meant that one should have a positive attitude towards accepting Jewish law and tradition as normative, yet one should be open to developing the law in the same fashion that it has always historically developed. Frankel rejected the innovations of Reform Judaism as insufficiently based in Jewish history and communal practice. However, Frankel's use of modern methods of historical scholarship in analyzing Jewish texts and developing Jewish law set him apart from neo-Orthodox Judaism, which was concurrently developing under the leadership of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

reconstructionist :Judaism is the result of natural human development. There is no such thing as divine intervention; Judaism is an evolving religious civilization; Zionism and aliyah (immigration to Israel) are encouraged; Reconstructionist Judaism is based on a democratic community where the laity can make decisions, not just rabbis; The Torah was not inspired by God; it only comes from the social and historical development of Jewish people; The classical view of God is rejected. God is redefined as the sum of natural powers or processes that allows mankind to gain self-fulfillment and moral improvement; The idea that God chose the Jewish people for any purpose, in any way, is "morally untenable", because anyone who has such beliefs "implies the superiority of the elect community and the rejection of others".

humanistic (movement in Judaism that offers a nontheistic alternative in contemporary Jewish life. It defines Judaism as the cultural and historical experience of the Jewish people and encourages humanistic and secular Jews to celebrate their Jewish identity by participating in Jewish holidays and life cycle events (such as weddings and bar and bat mitzvah) with inspirational ceremonies that draw upon but go beyond traditional literature.).

13 Principles of Faith:

1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, has no body, and that He is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the first and the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, Blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both those who preceded him and those who followed him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses our teacher, peace be upon him.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be exchanged, and that there will never be any other Torah from the Creator, Blessed be His Name.
10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, knows all the deeds of human beings and all their thoughts, as it is written, "Who fashioned the hearts of them all, Who comprehends all their actions" (Psalms 33:15).
11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those that transgress them.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may tarry, nonetheless, I wait every day for his coming.
13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, Blessed be His name, and His mention shall be exalted forever and ever.

We need to be as theologically clear as the orthodox with no belief in the oral Law.

We need to be as adaptable as the Reform, with no syncretism, but lots of contextualizing for relevance.

We need to be as careful the Conservative in our efforts to maintain a balance between the traditional and the modern, so that we do not reinvent the wheel or swallow a camel.

Matt. 5:17-20; 22:34-39; 12:1-12 (Rom. 14:1-15:7; Col. 2:16-23; I Cor. 6:12; 8:9; 10:31). Five pillars of Judaism: Circumcision, Sabbath (and festival cycle), Kosher, the Torah, the Messiah (and His Kingdom).