

Temple
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“The Word *Jew* retains its eternal shock.”

Karl Shapiro

Jew?

All Israel has a share in the
World to Come, as it is said:
“Your people shall all be righteous
They shall possess the land forever...”

Isaiah 60:21

Who or what is a Jew?

Who or what is Israel?

Is it possible for all people to be righteous, as in the prophecy of Isaiah above ?

Before studying each chapter of *Pirkay Avot* (Principle Teachings) we hear from Isaiah that all have a share in “the land”, which, to our Rabbis of blessed memory, means heaven, the “World to Come”, or the coming world of Messianic Peace and Redemption.

Does this mean grasping fundamental teachings guarantees we will be righteous, so each and every one of us may be written into the Book of the Afterlife?

Would rejecting any of the principle teachings exclude you from Paradise?

How do the principle teachings of *Avot* relate to the Ten Principle Teachings on the Tablets received by Moses on the Mountain Sinai? These Ten are sometimes called “Commandments”. The Rabbis, however, count six hundred and thirteen commandments in the Five Books of Moses. Will everyone called “Israel” fulfill the commandments to merit the World to Come? Are those who do not share the opinions and beliefs of the Rabbi’s exclude themselves from the community of Israel, and therefore not inherit? If we evaluate our relationship to the community of Israel according to the 613, how do we keep a tally? Are all commandments of equal weight?

I take issue with my beloved mentor Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maiminodes) who lists 13 Principle Beliefs necessary to be considered a member of Israel. In fact, just about everyone takes issue, and his creed is not authoritative. We do sing a hymn (*Yigdal*) based on his creed, but none fear excommunication if they do not sing it with gusto, in tune and with full acceptance.

In my opinion Judaism has but one dogma.

All Rabbis agree that study excels all the other 612 commandments. The Command is to study and to teach. Become a Master teacher! (Rabbi)

My dogma: Study that questions everything is the essence of Torah.

A corollary:

Wisdom is found in the strength of our questions:

Who is Israel?

Is it possible to tabulate our righteousness?

Isaiah says we all will be righteous. How?

How do we live the Teachings?

Who is a Jew?

What is a Jew?

Are you a good Jew?

Are we a religion?

Who names us?

Are we Nameable (nouns) or verbs?

We are Gerunds.

Spell check draws a bloody line under “Jewing” and demands a replacement. “Jawing.” Try it now.

Jawing about Jewing.

Sermons are monologues.

This discussion is a symposium.

Getting Verbal. Dialogue and triologue.

The Oral Tradition.

Jews talk tradition even while on a walk. In fact, Jewing is a walking, a *Halacha*, following the signposts of Torah. Verbal Jews recite and walk, and hear, every evening and morning, the Oneness of their Creator.

Jewing begins with loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls and might. Jewing is transmission of tradition from parent to child and rabbi to disciple. Jewing begins with a binding of the teachings to arms and hands, to do them, and then an opening of the minds eye in understanding the teachings. Jewing begins with the body, a sanctuary. Jewing transforms the home into a sanctuary and house of study. Jewing happens when our gates open to the divine.

Much of our discussion will be on self definition. We begin by defining the terms of our existence.

Why “Jews”?

“Jew” still has power as a word. The verb still shocks, as a pejorative, as in “I was Jewed...” the kvetch of every one who pays retail. In our discussion we raise up “Jewing” to a term of endearment.

“Jew” from Judah, the forth born of Jacob’s sons.. The firstborn son is not the automatic heir of the promise. One of the main teachings of the Book of Genesis is that the future leader must merit the mantle. The first born is passed over. We are not called Rubes, even when we are from Reuben, the tribe of the firstborn. We are not Simonites or Levites since the originals were too violent to lead. We are Judahites who follow Judahism. The scepter of leadership never leaves Judah until the coming of *Sealah* or Shiloh, the movement, and inspiring leader, who leads us to world Peace and inner tranquility. (Genesis 49:10) This is the essence of Judahism. The people then will be called Israel. Righteous.

What is in a Name?

What is real? What is in a name? Who is, or are, Israel? A Land? A People? A Religion? The Jews?

Rational religion that is scientific is real. A new word is needed. Words like “religion” and “Judaism” are inadequate. I use the term “Jewing” and “realigion.” Departments of Religion at University’s are finally admitting that “Judaism” was a term coined by Professors to compare and contrast world religions. There is no “Judaism”. There may be Judaism’s. The point of our conversation is to create Realigion.

I also believe, but not dogmatically, that Judaism is not a religion. We have no definitive dogma. Even “Articles of Faith” are open to discussion. The soul of Judaism is found in the body of its teachings and they cannot be separated.

Jewing tells how we live by the teachings (Torah). While the nominal fails, the verbal instructs.

I confess this is my personal vision of Jewing, but what else would you expect?

I am a J.U. who practices Jewish Universalism. I am a Jew first, and a Universalist next, as our tradition instructs. The Torah Service on the Sabbath always honors the prophet with the final word in the *Haphtarah*.

My Jewing means I do not have to define God as an object and that my “Judahism” is defined by what I do. However, I do not practice Judaism as a religion, but as a way of life. My Realigion includes teaching Torah to anyone who will listen.

Our Rabbis, as mentioned, count six hundred and thirteen guidelines for Jewing, beginning in Genesis and ending in Deuteronomy.

Jewish Fundamentalists define Torah True Judaism as fulfilling these “Commandments.” Being Jewish scientists we might want to qualify, and not just quantify this list to honestly compute how well we are doing in our Jewing.

Am I a good Jew when I do 307 commandments, pushing the balance in my favor? Is the quality of one commandment greater than another?

This question is answered in the Principle Teachings (*Avot*) by Rabbi Judah the Prince;

“Be careful to perform a minor command just as well as a major one for you do not know the reward for each. (2:1)”

Of course we cannot be sure what is major or minor anyway, as we will discuss.

What about all the commandments concerning animal sacrifice? They are concerned with atonement from sin, so may we assume they are major?

Are they fulfilled by prayer?

What about agricultural laws dependent on the Land of Israel? Do we have an obligation to move to Israel to fulfill those commands? These reasonable questions remind us: fundamentalists often miss fundamentals. What about the Ten Principle Teachings on the Tablets? Are they Commandments? Are the 613 Commandments or guidelines?

Going through the checklist I am happy to say I have been fruitful and multiplied, and perhaps even replenished the earth with offspring.

This Jewing everyone accepts and enjoys.

Next on the list is a prohibition of eating the thigh muscle that is on the hip of an animal. (Genesis 32:33). Jacob becomes Israel in this story and the ritual of not eating a part of the hind quarter of an animal is linked to the spirit and body of Jacobs wrestling with an angel into a “spirit-ritual,” the basic component of Jewing. Since Jewing is real and rational we ask about which animals the rabbis include in the prohibition and wonder why cows and lambs are included, but not chickens and turkeys. Is this reasonable?

Jacob did not struggle with an animal, but with his animal soul, and he limped away with sciatica. I am in favor of any ritual that reminds me of Jacobs triumph. Every time I eat a piece of kosher meat I do my best to focus on the struggle. Should I feel guilty since I like the dark meat which is in the hind quarter of poultry? I do not consider this ritual

Commandment as sanctified as the Commandment to have a family. To me creating a family is ten times more important than a food rule, so my evaluation of my own Jewing becomes rather personal.

We know we have a list of 613 teachings in the Five Books of Moses. Is it orthodoxy in Judaism that they define the essence of Torah observance? An answer is given in the Talmud, quoted below. Note that the reduction in numbers of commandments does not mean minor commandments are becoming major commandments. The answer teaches how we Rabbi's broadened our view of Torah beyond the Five Books, or any lists:

“613 commandments were given to Moses, 365 (one for each day of the solar year, and 248 positive (one for each part of the body)...

David reduced them to 11 (Psalm 15)

Isaiah to 6 (33:25-26)

Micah to 3 (6:8)...

Amos to 1 “Seek Me and Live”

And Habakkuk to 1 “but the righteous shall live by his faith” (2:4)”

Now this is unorthodox. A Psalm gives a summation of the Law?

Isaiah? Micah? Amos? Habakkuk? Prophets define Torah? Yes and Yes. The teachings are a song, a Psalm, and inspired. Micah teaches the essence of Judaism as a given. If you want to know what is good and to be righteous, embody the will of God in action by living the Torah. In other words Torah is not theory or creed or dogma, but a guidebook for Jewing.

Study is essential, and knowing the original, for the Habakkuk passage is given a theological spin in most translations “the righteous shall live by his faith.” The word *emunah* means trust, loyalty and commitment. The new translation by the Jewish Publication Society is careful in translating: “But the righteous is rewarded with life for his fidelity.” In context the prophet Habakkuk demands the truth be written clearly on (the) Tablets. This forum seeks clarity. Fidelity is faith. The righteous live by their Jewing.

(All of this merits close study. Split up into pairs and go to the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Makkot*, page 24 side A.)

With these clarifications we are ready to continue our real, rational, and scientific checklist. As the Rabbis considered the Psalms and prophets teaching the essence of the 613, we shall see that the later monotheisms are also commentary on the Commandments.

The listing of the 613 continues in the Book of Exodus and concerns Passover. I never expect to paint my doorposts with blood as was done in the good old days. I do honor updated Passover rituals as part of my Jewing quest. I challenge Christians who live by the Bible to explain to me why they have no Passover. What would Jesus do?

**Judaize?
Jew ish.?
Jew wish?**

Jesus would be Jewing.

Jews and Christians discussing other items on the Exodus checklist notice that Catholicism honors the Priestly Vestment rules and not Rabbinic Judaism. The Church practices a form of the Passover every Sunday.

We all build Sanctuaries, so the *Shechina* may dwell among us, even as we disagree on all questions of leadership. Theologically Christendom does a wonderful job of replacing the biblical sacrifices of Leviticus with the Passover Sacrifice of Christ. On this Christians are certainly more “Biblical” than Jews.

Deuteronomy contains the majority of the biblical 613 rules on our scientific checklist. One notes the rules defining the Jewish way of living Torah are also followed by non Jews. The Greatest Commandment, the *Shema* is sacred to Christians as well as Jews. All ethical monotheists follow the command to love God. This means Jewing is not just for Jews. This is why the rabbis define ethical monotheism as true religion. The true teachings of the Torah illuminate the path for all seekers. This is why Rambam invites people of all religions to follow the true teachings found in the Torah and to dedicate their lives to God.

Jews, Christians and Muslims have been influenced by Chapter Twenty of Deuteronomy, and define variations of sanctifying conquest and self defense in war. Verse ten inspires the Crusade and Jihad. This is Torah.

All three traditions redefine holy war as against our evil inclination. So Torah in the Original, the “New” and “Newest” versions all struggle with one of the 613 commandments. The Newest does not replace The New or the New the Original. All three struggle with a difficult text and triumph when they define holy war as against the seven deadly sins.

Back to Jewing. Who would have guessed this verbal is something a Christian and Muslim also do? The best guide to Jewing is Rambam’s *Mishnah Torah*. I will now guide you on a tour that will teach you the joy of Jewing, and the necessity of keeping the Oral Law Tradition alive.

Before we begin, a few personal remarks: I am disheartened by the orthodoxy that only those strictly observant of every detail of Jewish Law are good Jews.

***Minhag*, or custom is considered Law by the orthodox, making it possible to mandate black garb as a revelation to Moses on Sinai. Fingers are pointed at more colorful Jews, who the black garbed insist are wicked. Mimicking Woody Allen in Annie Hall we buy into this belief system. If the ideal Jew is ultra-orthodox, we the colorful must be bad Jews. We are not the Wicked Son, or child, or adult. Jewing allows a more rational accounting and makes clear the real importance of the 613 commandments.**

The 14 Books of the Mishnah Torah are based on an outline of the 613 Commandments.

We set sail on the sea of this Mishnah and discover the First 13 of the 613:

- 1.) To know God exists.**
- 2.) To know God is One.**
- 3.) To Love God.**
- 4.) To be in awe of God.**
- 5.) To serve God by prayer.**
- 6.) To cleave to God.**
- 7.) To swear only in Gods Name.**
- 8.) To walk in God's Way. (Jewing)**
- 9.) To Sanctify God's Name.**
- 10.) To proclaim God's Oneness.**
- 11.) To study and teach Torah**
- 12.) To focus your minds eye with *Tefillin*.**
- 13.) To wear ritual fringes (Tzitzit)**

Up to number 11 these basics of Torah are truly universal. These positive commandments are basically held dear by all who seek God's presence. Is Jewing only for Jews? Are we righteous if we master the basics? What about the particulars peculiar to the Jews?

Remember *Tefillin* are Rabbinic Judaism's "black box" solution to what the Greatest Commandment means by the teaching of having *Totafot* (frontlets) between our eyes. Hold on a second I am not sure what frontlets are. Thank you Webster:

A brow band: A Phylactery. Rashi says the word is Coptic (Egyptian) and African. This is as odd as the black boxes we wear. Not for everyone.

On the other hand the greatest of the commandments teaches an obligation to affix a *Mezzuzah* to our doorpost. Christians and Muslims take note. The Mezzuzah is a universal symbol of a house dedicated to God. While the teaching is part of Jewing it is also generic and universal.

Commandment Number 13 is telling. Jews wear fringes. When I pray or lead services I wear fringes on my prayer shawl. The more observant wear four cornered garments so they feel obligated to wear the fringes at all times. Good for them. I am still Jewing when I do the Mitzvah as I understand. I confess to being heartbroken when I stand with Christian clergy who wear a vestment prayer shawl with no *Tzitzit*. Since the Tzitzit represent the 613 teaching I am saddened by those proclaiming no interest in any of them. Christians, we know so far, are at least 10/13.

Christians avoid idolatry, and believe in prophecy, so they may be uplifted by just how "Jewish" Christianity is according to Maiminodes count. Jews take note. You also are doing well on the tally.

The ways part a bit when we study the Commandments concerning the Sabbath and biblical holydays. This is a challenge to Jews who have no Shabbat. Be uplifted that you include yourself in community worship during the high holydays. Read The Book of Holiness and see that the commandments are more universal than particular once again. 37 Commandments forbid illicit intercourse. Included is the prohibition to intermarry. A closer reading in Maimonides Code defines no intermarriage with an idolater. Does this means a Jew and Christian may not intermarry?

This is now open for discussion. I sanctify, as Holy, (by officiating) a marriage between a Jew and Christian. We are both Israelites. The Code, The Mishnah Torah defines the Prohibition as a marriage between an Israelite and idolater. Remember our theological dispute with the Church used to be about whom is the heir of the Promises given to the person Israel. I believe both Jews and Christians are children of Israel, spiritually and genetically. As a later day authority I argue my position despites its unorthodoxy. I also will happily sanctify a marriage between an Israelite and a Muslim, all being Children of Abraham Sarah and Hagar. Since Hindus and Buddhists are not idolaters they are also accepted by this rabbi.

As we sail through the Mishnah Torah food and beverage laws are next. We are commanded not to drink wine with an idolater. This seems reasonable. We all know there are many bars we should avoid. In my opinion Christians are not idolaters so Christian Brothers wine is as kosher as Maneshevitz.

We know we cannot define our righteousness by how many do's we do or don't do's we don't.

Unless you are a Nazarene you do not need to avoid all wine and Welch's grape jelly. This is one of the 613. I find no commandment to be a Nazarene. Tally ho. The 613 are an outline more than a checklist. Perhaps we may all be righteous.

In Laws Concerning Murder Prevention and the Preservation of Life we find 17 Commandments, a mix of the particular and universal. The prohibition of murder is a commandment along with prohibitions against any activity that will harm others. In fact one legal definition of a righteous person is anyone who does no harm to his neighbor. The Torah Commands Good Samaritan laws including helping anyone you meet on the road whose animal is burdened by its load. Application of this law today would mean an obligation to help anyone with a flat tire. Jewing commands we help. This may be a bit much for the averagely ethical person, who might consider this peculiar and particular.

Book 14 of the Mishnah Torah begins with 26/613. They focus on establishing the Jewish Commonwealth, when the Land of Israel contains the People Israel; when the holy land is peopled with the righteous who will inherit it forever. It is understood by a majority of Rabbinic sages that return to the land will also herald the beginning of the era of Messianic Peace and Redemption.

Appointing a leader is a commandment. Eradicating the Seven Nations and Amalek is a Commandment. Sueing for Peace is a Commandment, even with the Amalekites. Looking at the Commandments as an outline gives only a sketch of the teachings of Torah. On does not master a book by knowing the outline. Time to go and learn the teachings of Jewing. This means studying the entire Mishnah Torah, not just the outline.

Finally we get to the end. No Commandment to believe anything about the Messiah is listed among the 613. In fact, the essence of Maiminodes personal views was censored by Jewish and non Jewish authorities. You may want to begin adding to our discussion after you see the censored sections.(Google or Yahoo)

Maiminodes lived at a time of Crusade, Jihad, and holy war. He used his pen as a sword to console his powerless people. He does not get the last word. His text begins our discussion and must be updated.

Jewish Universalism based on Torah includes a world filled with the Peace Judah brings. The Coming of Shiloh (*Sealah*) means a messianic leader who ignites the sparks of messiah in everyone's soul. This is our inheritance.

Next step, then, must be dialogue and triologue. Jawing.

This has been a rational and empirical discussion of a religion called Judaism. Those who follow the path defined by the Torah and Rabbis are best described as Jewing, the noun defined by doing. The Verbal.

We are gerunds.

When we review the outline of Jewing, the 613 Commandments, we see we are doing much better than our dark critics think.

We who question orthodoxy are not wicked. We love God, and exist in every denomination and schism that orthodoxy inspires.

We are wise. We know that to love God we are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, one of the 613.

We honor all who are grounded in this God of being. Let God do the judging.

Judge all humans as being righteous. God will take care of the wicked. This is what it means to be a JU, a Jewish Universalist. This is the essence of Realigion and Jewing.

I look forward to your comments on this essay.

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