



Glossary

Ale malei rachamim “O God, full of compassion.” Prayer text included in Jewish funerals, asking divine blessing and eternal caring upon the deceased.

Aliyah Immigration to Israel. Literally, a “going up” to the Land of Israel. (Its opposite is *yeridab*, literally a “going down” from the Land of Israel.)

Al Kuzari (Arabic, “The Khazar”) Written by Yehuda Ha-Levi (Judah the Levite, 1085/86–1140), it is a philosophical discussion divided into five sections why Judaism is superior to philosophy as well as Christianity and Islam regarding the “true path” to the One God.

antisemitism Hatred of the Jewish people and the Jewish religious faith, heritage, and tradition. Throughout history, the forms antisemitism has taken have included expulsion, ghettoization, forced religious conversion, denial of civil rights, and extermination-annihilation. (The preferred spelling here is without the hyphen; to use a hyphen is to imply its opposite, that there is such a thing as “Semitism,” which is nonexistent.)

Aninut The initial period of mourning according to the Jewish religious tradition when the death is first realized and the family gathers prior to the funeral, supported by friends and extended family members.

Apocrypha Additional biblical texts many of which were co-existent with those canonized in the Torah/Hebrew

Bible and largely preserved today in Roman Catholic versions of the Holy Bible.

apostasy Rejection of one’s birth faith—in this case Judaism—and the embracing of another. Such persons are, more likely than not, viewed by the original communities as “enemies,” “traitors,” or worse.

Aron Kodesh (Hebrew, “Holy Ark”) The cabinet or closet on the synagogue sanctuary *bema* or elevated front containing one or more scrolls of the First Five Books of the Hebrew Bible.

Aseret Hadibrot Usually translated as the “Ten Commandments,” as found in the Torah in *Shemot* (Exodus) 20 and *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 5. A more accurate translation would be the “Ten Essential Statements,” without which no society could endure.

Ashkenazim Historically understood as those Jews residing in or coming from so-called Germanic lands.

assimilation Sociologically understood as the process by which immigrant individuals or groups surrender their distinctive identities in exchange for blending into the larger cultural, social, and political environment. Such a process is seen by large numbers of Jews as particularly threatening to the ongoing survival of Jews outside the Land/State of Israel, and, consequently, a strong argument in favor of *aliyah*.

Atzai Hayyim (Hebrew, “Trees of Life”) The two wooden rollers which enable the Torah/Hebrew Bible scrolls to be manipulated for synagogal use as part of the worship liturgy.

Babylonian Talmud The five-hundred-year encyclopedic compendium of Jewish legislative materials whose core is an extended commentary on the Mishnah, and reveals much about Jewish life during the period of its composition (200 C.E.–700 C.E.). It remains today among the primary sources of Jewish religious authority, especially in the more traditionally observant communities, and the central curriculum of study of both students and rabbis.

Bar or Bat Mitzvah Literally, “son” or “daughter of the Commandment.” The “coming of age” in the Jewish religious tradition of a boy at age thirteen and a girl at age twelve years plus one day (girls maturing faster than boys). Usually the ceremony involves the conduct of any or all of a worship service, the reading or chanting of selected portions of Scripture, and a speech, possibly a commentary on that Scripture. Usually celebrated with, at times, too elaborate social parties.

Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677) The Dutch Sephardic Jew whose philosophic views and conclusions ultimately led him to be excommunicated from the Jewish community. Today, he is regarded as one of the major figures foundational to modern philosophy and whose major works were his *Theological-Political Treatise* and *Ethics*.

B.C.E. (Before Common Era) The term used by Jews (and others, especially academics in the secular academy) to identify a particular date according to the Western or Gregorian calendar without referencing the Christ and before the year “0.”

Bedekin The momentary ceremony prior to a Jewish wedding when the bride is “veiled.”

Behirah (Hebrew, “Chosenness”) The biblical understanding of the people of Israel “chosen” by God for a special purpose, to be “a light unto the nations and a banner unto the peoples,” giving evidence by the lives led of a true commitment to and following in the ways of God. Over the course of the centuries, this concept has led to misunderstandings between Jews and Chris-

tians as well as to false claims of arrogance and superiority on the part of Jews, and a desire to supersede them on the part of those who were/are not.

Beit Haknesset One of the three primary functions of the synagogue to serve as a site of assembly or gathering of its members.

Beit Hamidrash Another of the primary synagogue functions—to serve as a place of Jewish study and learning.

Beit Hatefila The third—or perhaps—first primary function of the synagogue the serve as the place of prayer and worship.

Bemidbar/Numbers The fourth book of the Torah/Hebrew Bible, and detailing the wilderness experience of the ancient Israelites prior to their arrival in the Holy Land.

Bereshith/Genesis The first book of the Torah/Hebrew Bible telling the story of both the creation of the world and the creation of the Israelite people through the stories of their patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Berith (Hebrew, “Covenant”) The “covenant” entered into between God and the people of Israel at Sinai after their escape from Egypt and their wanderings in the desert, prior to their entrance into the Promised Land of Israel. According to *Devarim* (Deuteronomy), entered into both with those at Sinai as well as with the generations yet to come. If Israel honors God and follows in God’s ways, then God will protect and save Israel from its enemies.

Bible The commonly accepted term by both Jews and Christians for their sacred Scriptures. For Jews, it comprises the books from Genesis to Second Chronicles. For Protestant Christians Genesis through Revelation, and for Roman Catholics the additional texts known as the Apocrypha.

Borei Olam God as “Creator of the world or universe.” The place at which all Jewish theological investigation must begin; the place at which the Torah/Hebrew Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish people, itself begins. (In the aftermath of the Holocaust/Shoah, for me, the only initially logical and honest concept still able to address contemporary reality.)

Brit Milah Literally, the “covenant of circumcision.” The

religious ceremony marking the entrance of an eight-day-old Jewish boy into the “covenant of Abraham” by his parents and welcoming him into the Jewish community. The ceremony consists of two distinct parts: the attendant religious ritual and the actual surgical procedure of the removal of the additional flap of skin covering the head of the penis. (Debate continues as to its medical benefits as well as its religious value.)

c.E. (Common Era) The term used by Jews (and others, especially academics in the secular academy) to identify a particular date according to the Western or Gregorian calendar without referencing the Christ and after the year “0”

Chabad Hasidism A form of Hasidic Orthodox Judaism founded by Rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745–1812) of Liadi, Lithuania. “Chabad” is an acronym standing for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, the three pillars governing their interpretation of Jewish thought and practice.

Cherem The Hebrew term for excommunication.

Chevre Kaddisha The burial society tasked with the responsibility to properly prepare the body for interment in the cemetery by washing the body, combing the hair, cutting the fingernails and toenails, wrapping the body in a linen shroud, and placing it in the plain pine box of Jewish religious tradition. Separate societies exist for males and females.

Christianity The historical movement which began as a dissident sect of Jews (and others) during the period of the Roman oppression of Palestine 2,000 years ago, and flourished to become a worldwide movement today. At its heart is the person of the Christ regarded as the Son of God who was born, died, and was resurrected—the long-sought-for Messiah. The ongoing tension between Judaism and Christianity over accepting or rejecting him as the Jewish messiah remains today.

chosenness See *Behirah*.

Chumash The Hebrew term for the First Five Books of the Hebrew Bible, and taken from the Hebrew word for five, “hamesh.”

Chuppah (Hebrew, “Canopy”) The canopy under which the bride and groom are married. Can be erected in either the congregational sanctuary, the home or the

outdoors. Symbolic of the future home (and, possibly, of the marriage bed) of the new family.

Chutzpah (Hebrew: “Brazenness”) That special quality of stubborn determination associated with the Jewish people that has enabled them to survive—despite all previous attempts at their demise.

cities of refuge Allotted to the Levites in the Book of Leviticus, these cities were understood to be places where those who took the lives of others accidentally and without intention could flee (to be later joined by their families) and could reside in safety and security. Their period of residence remained until the death of the high priest after which they could leave and rejoin their tribal communities.

confirmation The group ceremony important to Reform Judaism usually around tenth grade and celebrated in the spring around the holiday of Shavuot and usually after a year-long intensive study period with the rabbi or rabbis of the congregation.

consecration The group ceremony important to Reform Judaism usually around kindergarten and celebrated in the fall around the holiday of Simchat Torah marking the end of Sukkot and marking the beginning of Jewish religious education. For those children not yet receiving their Hebrew names, they are presented with them at that time.

Conservative Judaism Founded in the middle 1800s in Germany, this “middle-of-the-road” Jewish religious movement was originally known as Positive-Historical Judaism and attempted to form a midpoint between the more liberal Reform Judaism and the stricter Orthodox Judaism. It arose, however, as a response to what it perceived to be the religious excesses of early Reform Judaism, especially its dramatic modifications of traditional Jewish liturgical practices.

conversion The religious ceremony by which an individual comes to embrace a religious faith and tradition different from that of his or her birth. For Jews, the process is of postbiblical or rabbinic origin and consists of study, religious practice, ritual immersion, and the acceptance of a Hebrew name. Each of the Jewish denominational religious communities differs in their specific requirements.

- cosmology** The study of the universe in all of its various manifestations and the place of humanity within it.
- covenant** See *Berith*.
- culture** The sum total of a given human community's endeavors, its music, art, literature, religion, etc.
- Da'at Elohim** A modern Hebrew expression—literally “knowledge of God”—but better understood as “theology.”
- Dar al-Harb (Arabic, “World of War”)** Understood by the followers of Islam as those places outside of Islamic hegemony and thus perceived by many as enemies to be vanquished.
- Dar al-Islam (Arabic, “World of Islam”)** Understood by the followers of Islam as those places governed by Islamic hegemony and thus correctly in harmony with Allah.
- Dati** Hebrew term designating a Jewish religious person usually Orthodox. Literally, the term may best be understood as one who follows the halakha or Jewish legal traditions.
- deicide** The antisemitic charge against the Jewish people as primarily responsible for the death of the Christ and derived from a particular reading of the New Testament texts, resulting in a bad history for the last 2,000 years.
- Der goldiner medina** Yiddish phrase for “the golden land” and understood by Eastern European Jews to designate America as the land of opportunity where the streets were paved with gold.
- Der Judenstaat** The political manifesto of the father of modern political Zionism Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) arguing that the only way to resolve the European scourge of antisemitism was for Jews to have a land of their own and be the equal of all other nation-states.
- Deutero-Isaiah** Second Isaiah as argued by some scholars that chapters 40–66 of the Book of Isaiah indicate a different author with a different religious agenda from that reflected in the first 39 chapters.
- Devarim/Deuteronomy** The fifth book of the Torah/Hebrew Bible telling the story of the approach of the ancient Israelites to the Holy Land and the death of Moses.
- Die Endlösung** The “‘Final Solution’ to the Jewish problem” as understood by Adolf Hitler, *yemach shmo*, “May his name be blotted out!” and his Nazi minions. Put into practice, it ultimately resulted in the deaths of almost 6 million Jewish men, women, and children; one million below the age of twelve and an additional 500,000 between the ages of twelve and eighteen, in ghettos, concentration camps, and environments in ways that continue to stain the conscience of Western civilization, not only Germany and Poland.
- Dialoghi d'amore** Written by Judah Abravanel (1465–1523), this philosophical text was a series of dialogues between Philo (love or appetite) and Sophia (science or wisdom) on the subject of love.
- Edict of Milan** Signed by Emperor Constantine I (272–337) and Emperor Licinius (263–325), it proclaimed religious toleration through the Holy Roman Empire.
- Enlightenment** The eighteenth-century philosophical moment in France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain which effectively ushered in the modern era and sundered the marriage between the church and the nation-state.
- Eretz-Israel** The “Land of Israel.” That place promised by God to the people of Israel according to the Torah/Hebrew Bible, and sacred to the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Interestingly and significantly enough, the Torah/Hebrew Bible itself posits more than one set of geographic boundaries for the land. The Land of Israel continues to be a source of political and religious dissension in the world today, as yet unresolved.
- Erusin** The Hebrew term for the engagement ceremony marking the beginning of the marital agreement according to the Jewish religious tradition.
- Exemplar Humanae Vitae** Written by Uriel da Costa (1585–1640), this autobiographical text, *Example of a Human Life*, relates his own story as a victim of religious intolerance on the part of the Amsterdam Jewish community.
- First Isaiah** The first thirty-nine chapters of this major prophet of the Torah/Hebrew Bible. Some scholars have argued that the focus of the text and its writing style indicate a significantly different author from the remaining twenty-seven chapters.
- First Jewish Commonwealth** The term used to designate the period of ancient Israel's hegemony and sovereignty

over its own land which ended with the Babylonian Exile in the year 586 B.C.E.

First Temple Built by King Solomon in Jerusalem after the death of his father King David, and thus fulfilling his father's dream. In order to do so, he heavily taxed the Israelites and enslaved them into labor corvees which led to increasing dissatisfaction.

G-d (Also L-rd) So holy do very devout Jews regard the Four-Letter Name of God in Hebrew, that they will also use this English-language convention in their writing. Additionally, outside of Scripture/Torah reading in the synagogue itself, rather than say "Adonai" as it appears in the Hebrew, they will substitute either "Ado-shem" or "Ado-kem."

Gemara The extensive commentaries which accompany the Mishnah in both the Babylonian and Palestinian (Jerusalem) Talmuds and reflect the richness of Jewish life in both communities over the several hundred years of their composition.

Get (Hebrew, "Jewish bill of divorcement") Granted by the husband to the wife in Orthodox religious circles and to each other in Conservative religious circles. Historically, Reform Judaism did not make use of this document, accepting, instead, the civil decree of divorce as sufficient. In recent years, however, Reform liturgists and religious thinkers have presented models of such documents, though no "official" one currently exists.

Haftarah The additional scriptural selection associated with the Torah/Hebrew Bible in the worship service on those occasions—Shabbat, festivals, and holy days, as well as Mondays and Thursdays—when Scriptures are read. Usually taken from either prophetic literature or the additional writings found in Scripture, a word, a phrase, a name or an idea contained within it related directly to the primary scriptural selection taken directly from the *Chumash*/First Five Books of Moses.

Hagaddah The special "prayer book" associated with the celebration of Pesach (Passover). Literally, "The Story," its essence, surrounded by both prayers and commentaries, involves the retelling of the liberation by God of the people of Israel from slavery and bondage in Egypt as first recorded in the *Sefer Shemot* (Book of Exodus). (Historically, such an event is not recorded in Egyptian documents, however.)

halakha Literally, "the way." The system of Jewish law as culled by the rabbis from the Torah itself, and elaborated upon in both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds and subsequent and additional Jewish literatures. For the Orthodox Jew, Jewish law governs *all* facets and aspects of daily and religious living, coming as it does directly from God and interpreted authoritatively by rabbinic spokesmen. Conservative Judaism likewise affirms its sanctity, but attempts to give it a more human cast through its Law and Standards Committee of its Rabbinical Assembly. Reform Judaism has long rejected its sovereignty, acknowledging, instead, that "the past shall exercise a vote, not a veto" (attributed to the late Rabbi Dr. Solomon Freehof of Rodef Sholom Temple, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania).

Hanukkah The *minor* Jewish holiday celebrating the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrio-Greeks in the year 162 B.C.E. and the rededication of the ancient Temple by the rekindling of the Eternal Light of God's Presence, as recorded in the books of the Maccabees. Usually occurs in the November–December time frame accompanied by gift giving.

Hanukkat Habayit The ceremony that marks the "dedication of the [new] home" by the affixing of the *mezzuzah* and other attendant rituals.

Har Sinai (Hebrew, "Mount Sinai") In the Negev Desert, the sight at which, supposedly, God entered into covenant with the people of Israel after first liberating them from Egyptian slavery.

Hasidism/Hasidic Judaism A Jewish religious movement originally founded at the end of the seventeenth century by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (1698–1760) as a pietistic movement in responses to a perceived Orthodox joyless rigidity. Known for its distinctive clothing, reminiscent of eighteenth-century Polish nobility.

Haskalah The Russian Jewish secular enlightenment movement of the nineteenth century, which saw the production of many literary texts—novels, short stories, novels, plays, poems, newspapers—in the Hebrew language.

Hasmoneans The ruling dynasty of Jews after the successful defeat of the Syrio-Greeks in 162 B.C.E. and continuing for approximately one hundred years until 37 B.C.E.

Hebrew Bible The religiously neutral term for the texts which comprise the Torah of the Jews, and composed

of three parts: the First Five Books of the Bible, the Books of the Prophets, and the Books of the Writings.

Hebrews Translation of the Hebrew word—*Ivri'im*—for the ancient Israelites.

Holiness Code The rabbinic term for those chapters from the Book of Leviticus, 17 to 26, which spell out the religious-ceremonial and moral-ethical responsibilities of religious Jews still in force today, together with the benefit of additional commentaries throughout the generations.

Holocaust Up until recently, the universally acknowledged English word used to describe the wanton murder of nearly six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Said to have first been used by the noted writer and Nobel Prize-winner Elie Wiesel. Its origin is the Anglicization of the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *'olah*, the totally consumable offering by fire to God as depicted in the Torah. In recent years, the term itself has become increasingly problematic for obvious reasons. Current thinking is to use the Hebrew word Shoah instead. (See below.)

Holy Land One term among many for the Land of Israel according to the Hebrew Bible/Torah. The land where the God of Israel entered into the *Berith*/covenant with the people of Israel.

Holy Roman Empire The term for the union of territories in Central Europe during the Middle Ages, primarily Germany, Italy, and Burgundy.

Hope of Israel Written by Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1607), addressing his own longings for a Messianic Age of relief for Jews, an English translation found its way to England from where Jews had been expelled in 1290. This text and Israel himself were instrumental in the return of the Jews to England under Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) in the seventeenth century.

Ich und Du The actual German title of Martin Buber's (1878–1965) book *I and Thou*, a philosophical work which addresses his central idea of relationship, human to inanimate (I-it), human to human (I-thou), and human to God (I-Thou).

immanent The theological idea of God's presence being relatively near and approachable to humans, primarily through prayer.

interreligious marriage A contemporary Jewish communal concern regarding the question of Jewish survival resulting from marriages between Jews and non-Jews.

Israelites An English term to designate the ancient Mediterranean community of Palestine who later became the Jews. The Hebrew term is *Yisraelim*.

Jews The modern term for those people who trace their ancestry to ancient Palestine, were the recipients of Sacred Scripture at Mount Sinai after enslavement in Egypt, and have maintained their commitment to One God for close to six thousand years.

Judaism The religion of the Jewish people as reflected in its commitment to the Torah/Hebrew Bible, to One God, and its distinctive twin calendars of holidays, holy days, festivals, fast days, and life-cycle events.

Kabbalah The mystical tradition of Jewish religious tradition as reflected in a specific set of texts and rabbinic interpreters. Said to have begun already in the second century, most objective scholars have argued for a stronger Middle Ages construction.

Kaddish Aramaicized prayer usually understood to be the “mourner's prayer” recited by the survivors after the funeral of a loved one, either during the worship service or at home. Reform Judaism, on the other hand, has suggested that, after the Shoah, all Jews are mourners and has the entire congregation stand and recite this prayer.

Karaism A Jewish religious movement which arose in opposition to the Pharisees and took a more literal reading of the Torah/Hebrew Bible. It reached its high point during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Remaining Karaites are no longer viewed as members of the Jewish people.

Ketubah (Hebrew, “Jewish marriage contract”) Given by the husband to the wife and spelling out the terms and conditions of the marital agreement in both Orthodox and Conservative religious communities. Reform Judaism initially rejected its use as unequal and condescending, but, in recent years, has sought to revive it with a more egalitarian text.

Ketuvim/Writings The third section of the Torah/Hebrew Bible and consisting of such books as Psalms, Proverbs, Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, Daniel, and Ecclesiastes.

- Kiddush** Hebrew for “sanctification” and referring specifically to the act of blessings over wine on the Sabbath and all Jewish festivals (except for Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement).
- Kiddushin** “Holiness” or “sanctification.” The term is used to describe Jewish marriage. There is literally no linguistic equivalency in Hebrew for our English word *marriage*.
- Kingdom of Israel** Biblical reference to the northern kingdom of Ten Tribes ultimately conquered by the Assyrians in the year 721 B.C.E.
- Kingdom of Judah** Biblical reference to the southern kingdom of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin ultimately conquered by the Babylonians in the year 586 B.C.E.
- Kohanim (Hebrew, “Priests”)** In ancient Israel, the community was divided into three groups the high priests, the Levitical assistants, and the remainder of the community of Israel. The priests were the first to perform the rituals associated with both the portable Ark and the Temple in Jerusalem, assisted by the Levites, and were understood to be biological descendants (or extended family members) of Aaron, Moses’ brother.
- Korban** The “sacrificial animal” in the ancient cultic system of worship in biblical times, both pre-Temple and Temple; still associated today with the Pesach (Passover) liturgy as the *korban Pesach*, the Passover sacrifice, reminiscent of that system.
- L-rd (Also, G-d)** See G-d.
- Land of Canaan** A geographic term for the land known as Palestine and conquered by the ancient Israelites under Joshua.
- Land of Israel** The term used to describe the Land of Palestine after the conquering of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua.
- Levi'im** The “Levitical priests” whose primary function was to assist the *Kohanim*, the high priests, in the performance of their pre-Temple and Temple cultic rituals and to be responsible for and care for the *clai kodesh*, the “holy vessels” associated with these rituals.
- Levitical cities** According to the biblical Book of Leviticus, specific cities were set aside for the Levites to settle and survive as they were not among the tribes among whom the land was divided.
- Machzor** The special “prayer book” of the Jewish religious tradition used for the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) only.
- Madrega** A term from medieval philosophic Hebrew used to describe a plane or spiritual existence and awareness.
- Mazal tov** The Hebrew term understood to mean “congratulations.” Literally, however, it means “good planet,” and may in fact have referenced ancient Israel’s acceptance of the influence of the planets on human behavior.
- Megillah** Generically any “scroll,” *Megillah* or *Megilat Esther* is that associated with the festival of Purim (Lots) and tells the story found in the Book of Esther in the Torah/Hebrew Bible.
- menorah** Generally, a candelabrum, the most well-known the eight branched one associated with the festival of Hanukkah (Festival of Dedication). A seven-branched one is reminiscent of that found in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, echoing the first story in *Beresih* (Genesis), that of creation and the seven days of the week.
- Mercaz ruchani** “Spiritual center.” A term attributed to Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Ginzburg, 1856–1927), one of the early Zionist intellectual giants of pre-State of Israel, whose vision for the state was that of a place where the cultural and religious essences of Judaism and the Jewish people would continue to flower and develop, spreading to all parts of the world where Jews dwell and enriching the lives of non-Jews as well.
- Medinat Yisrael** Contemporary Hebrew term used to designate the modern State of Israel, founded on May 14, 1948.
- Merkava/chariot mysticism** One of the designated terms for the Jewish mystical tradition and based on the description supplied in the first chapter of the book of the prophet Ezekiel where he spells out his vision of the divine involving a chariot.
- Messiah** The Jewish (and later Christian) belief in a religiously devout Jew who could trace his ancestry to the Davidic household and who would restore Israel to its former glory. Later Christian tradition saw him in the person of the Christ and regarded him as both fully

human and fully divine where as Jewish religious tradition maintained its position that he would be fully and totally human.

mezzuzah The cylindrical container housing two sections of Torah/Hebrew Bible *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 6:4-9 and 11:13-21, in response to the biblical injunction, also in *Devarim*, “You shall write them upon the doorposts of thy house and upon thy gates, that ye may remember and do all My commandments and be holy unto your God.”

Middle East That part of the eastern Mediterranean where the State of Israel finds itself surrounded by hostile neighboring nation-states. Also the birthplace of the world’s three great monotheistic religious traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

midrash Jewish interpretive literature of a nonlegal nature. Commentary on the Torah/Hebrew Bible as well as additional sermonic and story literature “filling in the gaps,” so to speak, in the literary record. Some of it is quite fanciful, allowing the rabbis, the creators of midrashic literature, to give free rein to their imaginations. Others of it are quite insightful, morally, ethically, spiritually, psychologically, as well as intellectually.

midrashic method A way of actually interpreting scriptural materials in a more fanciful manner by “filling in the gaps” in biblical stories and/or imagining events involving the characters which are not part of the actual stories.

Midrash Rabba (Hebrew, “the Great Midrash”) A multi-volume set of fanciful rabbinic commentaries in sermonic form addressing biblical texts primarily from the First Five Books of Moses.

Mishnah (Hebrew, “Second Teaching”) A six-chaptered text comprised of the Jewish laws governing the Jewish community of Palestine in the aftermath of the Roman destruction in the year 70 C.E. The laws themselves were codified by Rabbi Judah the Prince at the end of the second century.

Mishneh Torah The recodification of the laws of the Mishnah and abstracted from the extensive Babylonian Talmud by Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) who, in addition, supplied his own explanations and commentaries.

Misnagdim (Hebrew, “opponents”) A term used for those Orthodox Jews who opposed the rise and development of Hasidic Judaism in the eighteenth century and continuing today.

Mitzvot Literally, “commanded acts” by God to the Jewish people. The continuum as Judaically understood is that of *Mitzaveh-mitzvot-mitzuvm*, Commander-commandments-commanded. According to the rabbis, 613 “commandments” are found throughout the Torah/Hebrew Bible of both a moral-ethical and ritual-ceremonial nature, of equal sanctity. The commandments of a Torah/Hebrew Bible, given by God, ultimately become, in the eyes of the rabbis, the legal system, halakha (see above), of the Jewish religious tradition. The word has also taken on a popular form in describing any “good deed.”

mixed marriage Like the term intermarriage, the term used to designate marriage between Jews and non-Jews and reflective of the ongoing concern of Jews for continuing survival.

mohel Jewish “ritual circumcisor,” usually a rabbi or cantor, well versed in both the ritual traditions and the surgical procedures.

Moreh Nevuchim Hebrew term for Moses Maimonides’s (1135–1204) philosophic text *The Guide for the Perplexed* in which he attempted to reconcile neo-Aristotelianism and biblical Judaism.

Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) (1135–1204) Perhaps the greatest figure in Jewish intellectual history. Born in Spain, Maimonides and his family ultimately settled in Egypt where his medical training enabled him to become both rabbi of the Jewish community and physician to the Sultan as well as continue to own philosophic writings.

neo-Orthodoxy A modern descriptive term for Orthodox Jews comfortable in the larger society while maintaining their commitment to a strict interpretation and practice of the Jewish religious tradition.

Nevi'im/Prophets The second part of the Torah/Hebrew Bible and comprised of the major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets.

Nissu'in The Hebrew term for the Jewish wedding ceremony.

- Old Testament** The Christian term for the books of the Torah/Hebrew Bible. Both Protestant Christianity and Roman Catholic Christianity differ on the order of the books after the First Five Books from that of the Jews.
- oral tradition** Hebrew, “Torah sheb’al peh,” (literally, “Torah which is upon the mouth”). The Jewish religious tradition, attributed to the biblical Moses, whereby he returned from Mount Sinai, with the fullness not only of the commentary tradition but the interpretative tools as well.
- Orthodox Judaism** The denominational branch of the Jewish religious tradition which sees itself as lineally descended from ancient Israelites and who interpret Torah/Hebrew Bible in a literal way and whose practices adhere to more of past practices than other denominational communities.
- Pale of Settlement** The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century term used to describe the proscribed and ghettoized area of restricted residence for the Jews of Russia under the Czars.
- Palestinian Talmud** The joining of the commentaries (Hebrew, Gemara) to that of the Mishnah organized by Rabbi Judah the Prince at the end of the second century. Upon its completion, due to the exigencies of history, the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud is a far smaller text addressing fewer of the laws of the Mishnah by perhaps as much as 75 percent. Also called the Jerusalem Talmud.
- pantheism** Literally, “God is all,” and the theological understanding that everything which exists is part of God, and that the universe, nature, and God are one and the same.
- patriarchs** Term for the major and larger-than-life figures of the Torah/Hebrew Bible: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses.
- Pesach** Hebrew term for the Jewish holiday of Passover.
- Pharisees** The radical and revolutionary class of Jews who, after the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 C.E. by the Romans, saved both Judaism and the Jewish people by reinterpreting the “system of Judaism,” calling for study of sacred texts, divine worship, and high ethical behavior. Contemporary religious expressions of Judaism are the descendants of their innovations. Misunderstood by the New Testament writers, especially those who wrote the Gospels, in all likelihood, they would have had more in common with Jesus than their competitors, the Sadducees, who wished to affirm the status quo and return to the priestly system.
- Pidyon Haben** The symbolic birth ceremony of “redeeming” the one-month-old Israelite boy from priestly service. Still practiced by both Orthodox and Conservative Jews, it was abandoned by Reform Jews as not representative of the equality of males and females.
- Positive-Historical Judaism** The original term for the Jewish denominational movement which has evolved into Conservative Judaism and originally founded in the Germany in the mid-nineteenth century as a response to the perceived excesses of Reform Judaism founded approximately one-half century earlier.
- postbiblical or Rabbinic Period** Interchangeable terms for the period subsequent to the canonization of the Torah/Hebrew Bible (70 C.E.) until the beginnings of the modern period in Jewish history.
- prebiblical or Biblical Period** Term used to designate the beginnings of the ancient Israelites through the period of biblical history and ending with the canonization of the Torah/Hebrew Bible (70 C.E.).
- Promised Land** Religious term of reference for the Land of Israel according to both Jewish and Christian religious traditions.
- Protestant Reformation** The term used to describe the rise of Protestant Christianity said to begin with Martin Luther’s (1483–1546) critique of the Roman Catholic Church and ending with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.
- Purim** The minor Jewish festival celebrating the successful vanquishing of the attempted genocide of the Jews of Persia according to the Book of Esther in the Torah/Hebrew Bible. Doubts remain as to the actual historicity of the events described.
- Pythagoreans** Followers of a particular branch of Greek philosophy with a particular focus on the scientific and mathematical.
- qidusha/holiness** A core concept of the Jewish religious tradition growing out of the Torah/Hebrew Bible and subsequent Jewish literatures and focusing on human behavior desiring to emulate divine perfection.

- Rabbinism or Talmudism** Terms used to describe the postbiblical period in Jewish history after the canonization of the Hebrew Bible (70 c.e.) and before the rise of modern period in Jewish history.
- rabbi (Hebrew, “my teacher”)** The postbiblical term for Jewish clergy meaning teachers and following no priestly tradition. Said to be the next stage in Jewish leadership after the Pharisees.
- Reconquista** Spanish, “Reconquest,” and referring to the Catholic retaking of Spain from the Muslims beginning in the 700s and concluding successfully in the 1200s. Two centuries later, it would result in the expulsion of the Jews from Spanish territories (1492).
- Reconstructionist Judaism** The modern American Jewish religious denominational movement founded by Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881–1983) as a more liberal form of Conservative Judaism but less liberal than Reform Judaism, and centered on Kaplan’s understanding of Judaism as a civilization. It is the smallest of the Jewish religious movements.
- Reform Judaism** Founded in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century, this liberal Jewish movement was originally a movement for liturgical reform and a progressive desire to enter into larger society through university education.
- religion** The generic term used to describe communities primarily concerned with moral-ethical behaviors and ritual-ceremonial behaviors and seeing themselves connected to their God or gods.
- Responsa** The tradition of rabbinic literature which is a series of questions addressed to leading rabbis and their answers citing various sources from the Talmuds and works by other rabbis. The questions asked tend to be of a more practical rather than theoretical nature.
- Rosh Hashanah** The Jewish holy day which marks the beginning of the new Jewish calendar year in the fall and inaugurates a ten-day period of introspection leading to Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement.
- Sefirat Haomer** Hebrew, the “Counting of the Omer,” or barley sheaves harking back to the agricultural history of ancient Israel and marking the seven-week period between Passover and Shavuot.
- Sabra** Hebrew for “cactus” and used to describe modern-day Israelis, prickly on the outside and sweet on the inside.
- Sadducees** The oppositional party in power to the Pharisees during the Roman period of oppression in Palestine. Said to be strict readers of the Torah/Hebrew Bible and rejecting the innovations of the Pharisees while upholding the priestly class.
- Sanhedrin** The governing supreme court of ancient Israel consisting of seventy-one members and tasked with legal responsibilities during the Second Temple/Roman period when the chair of the council was in fact the high priest.
- Second Generation** The term now used to describe the children of Holocaust/Shoah survivors, children of severely diminished families, who are now adults themselves. Many continue to struggle with the Holocaust/Shoah, some psychologically and others religiously.
- Second Jewish Commonwealth** The period during which the Temple stood again after its rebuilding following the Babylonian Captivity five hundred years before. It ended in the year 70 c.e. with the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.
- Second Temple** See Second Jewish Commonwealth.
- Sefer Kri’ut** Reference in the Torah/Hebrew Bible to a “document of cutting” by which the understanding is that of a divorcing document rendering a marriage null and void.
- Shabbat** Hebrew term for Sabbath, the Saturday event of rest from work in emulation of God’s “resting” according to the Book of Genesis. Perhaps the primary contribution of Jews to civilization.
- Shavuot** Hebrew for “weeks” or “oaths.” The Jewish spring holiday seven weeks after the Passover celebrating the harvesting of crops and, according to the religious tradition, the day when Moses returned from Sinai with the Ten Commandments.
- She’elot u-T’shu’vot (Hebrew, “Questions and Answers”)** A more technical terms for the *Responsa* literature of questions directed to leading rabbis and their written answers citing various sources in Judaic literature and the writings of other rabbis.
- Shelichim (Hebrew, “agents” or “representatives”)** According to the Jewish legal tradition, halakha, persons sometimes do not need to be physically present in

- order to conduct their business but may use designated persons instead.
- Shelosh regalim** The three “pilgrimage festivals” according to the Torah/Hebrew Bible when the ancient Israelites would journey to Jerusalem and present their gift offerings at the Temple, Pesach (Passover), *Shavuot* (Festival of Weeks), and *Sukkot* (Festival of Booths).
- Shelosh-a-Asar Ikarim** Hebrew, “Thirteen Principles of Faith” summarizing Jewish religious beliefs and enumerated by Moses Maimonides (1135–1204).
- Sheloshim** The thirty-day mourning period in Jewish religious tradition beginning with the moment of death and continuing for one month.
- Shemini Atzeret** The eighth day of solemn assembly and the festival of observance taking place at the end of the festival of Sukkot.
- Shemot/Exodus** The second book of the Torah/Hebrew Bible detailing the story of Israel’s imprisonment/enslavement in Egypt and subsequent liberation by Moses and Aaron and forty years of wandering in the deserts on the way to the Promised Land.
- Shirat Hayam** Reference to the “Song at the Sea” (of Reeds) or “Song of Moses” (Shirar Moshe) Exodus 15, and sung by the Israelites after their successful escape from their Egyptian pursuers.
- Shirat Moshe** See Shirat Hayam.
- Shivah** The seven-day mourning period in Jewish religious tradition commencing upon one’s return from the funeral.
- Shoah** The Hebrew, biblical term now preferred more and more to describe the wanton murder and callous slaughter of almost six million Jewish men, women, and children during the years 1939–1945 by the Nazis and their assistants. Best translated as “Destruction” or “Devastation.” A singularly unique event in the history of the Jewish people as well as all humankind.
- shofar** “Ram’s horn,” a reminder of the *Bereshith* (Genesis) story wherein *Avraham*/Abraham sacrificed a ram rather than his son *Yitzchak*/Isaac. Used in ancient Israel as both a military instrument and a call to gather the community. Associated today with the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).
- Shofetim/judges** The religious, political, civil, and military leaders referenced in the Book of Judges, most well known are Deborah and Samson.
- Shulchan Aruch** The compilation of Jewish law composed by Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488–1575) together with his commentaries and reflective of Jewish life in Spanish and other Mediterranean communities.
- siddur** The special Jewish “prayer book” for use at Shabbat (Sabbath) and Haggim (festival) services, as distinct from the *Machzor* used for the High Holy Days only.
- Simchat Torah** The Jewish festival marking the end of the holiday of Sukkot and celebrating the completion of the annual Torah reading cycle (*Devarim*/Deuteronomy) and the beginning of the next cycle (*Bereshith*/Genesis).
- Simeon bar Kokhba** Palestinian Jewish rebel leader who revolted unsuccessfully against the Roman oppressors in the year 132 C.E. Initially successful, he established an independent Jewish state which survived only three years.
- Sofer(im) (Hebrew, “scribes”)** Those Jewish scholars whose specialty is calligraphic work including Torah scrolls, *mezzuzot*, *getot*, and other documents important to the Jewish religious tradition.
- State of Israel** The modern State of Israel—the Third Jewish Commonwealth—declared its independence on May 14, 1948, in the aftermath of the tragedy of the Holocaust/Shoah.
- Stoics** A Greek philosophy which explored the relationship between cosmic determinism and human behaviors as well as the freedom to choose one’s path of such behaviors as the fulfillment of one’s philosophy.
- Sukkot** The Jewish festival which begins five days after Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement and commemorates ancient Israel’s agricultural heritage by the construction of a temporary outdoor dwelling.
- synagogue** The religious institution of the Jewish people and fulfilling a threefold purpose a house of prayer and worship, a house of study and learning, and a house of gathering and assembly.
- Talmud** The encyclopedia commentary of Jewish religious life based on the legal texts of the Mishnah and constructed in both Palestine and Babylonia.

- Temple of Solomon** The First Temple constructed at King Solomon's instigation after the death of his father David and destroyed during the Babylonian invasion in 586 B.C.E.
- Ten Commandments** Occurring in two places in the Torah/Hebrew Bible (*Shemot/Exodus* and *Devarim/Deuteronomy*), these ten statements ("You shall" and "You shall not") comprise the core of Jewish moral-ethical and ritual-ceremonial responsibilities.
- Ten Lost Tribes** The enduring myth that after the ten tribes of Northern Israel were conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. they somewhat survived and their descendants are alive today in such places as the Native Americans of North America or the Eskimos of Alaska among other possibilities.
- Tetragrammaton** The unpronounceable four-lettered name of God—Y-H-V-H—as found in the Torah/Hebrew Bible.
- Theodor Herzl** (1860–1904) Viennese journalist who became the father of modern political Zionism resulting from his coverage of the antisemitic trial of the falsely accused French Army captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935) and his publishing of *Der Judenstaat* as his solution to the problem of antisemitism.
- Theologico-Political Treatise** One of the two major philosophical works of Dutch Jewish thinker Baruch de Spinoza (1634–1677) and addressing his critique of Judaism and Christianity as well as their understandings of the Torah/Hebrew Bible.
- theology** Classically understood as the human attempt to gain knowledge of God through an intensive exploration of Sacred Scriptures (Torah/Hebrew Bible and/or New Testament). For Jews, however, the emphasis is on the *relationship* between humanity and God rather than on direct knowledge of God, regarded as an impossibility.
- Theophany at Sinai** The event at Mount Sinai in which the people of Israel, both present and future generations according to Sefer Devarim/Book of Deuteronomy, entered into a covenantal relationship for all time with the God of Israel.
- Third Jewish Commonwealth** A synonymous term for the reborn modern State of Israel founded May 14, 1948.
- Thirteen Principles** A summary statement of the basic principles of Jewish faith and belief and written by Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) and included today in many Jewish prayer books.
- Tikkun Olam** A principle of the Jewish religious tradition whereby Jews have a moral-ethical responsibility to partner with God in repairing a broken world by addressing its moral and social inequities.
- Tisha B'Av (Hebrew, 9th of Av)** The summer Jewish holy day marking collectively the various tragedies which have overtaken the people of Israel down through the centuries (e.g. First and Second Temple, Egyptian enslavement, etc.).
- Torah (Hebrew, "Way," "Path," "Teaching")** The Hebrew term for the Sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people consisting of three parts: First Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings.
- Torah sheb'al peh** Literally, "Torah that is upon the mouth." The Oral Tradition of Rabbinic interpretation later set down in such primary texts as the Mishnah and Talmuds. The so-called "oral tradition" continues to remain authoritative today for Orthodox Jews, less so for Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews.
- Torah shebichtav** Literally, "Torah that is written down." The written text that begins with *Beresith* (Genesis) and ends with *Divrei Hayamim Bet* (Second Chronicles).
- transcendent** The religious and theological notion common among both Jews and Christians that the God whom they both affirm is in the heavens beyond human visitation except after death.
- Trito-Isaiah** A view among some biblical scholars that the final chapters of the prophetic Book of Isaiah are from a third writer after the authors of chapter 1 to 39 and 40 to 59.
- Tu B'Shevat (Hebrew, 15th of Shevat)** The Jewish festival known as the "New Year of the Trees" and a reminder of the importance of forestation in the history of ancient Israel and the contemporary State of Israel.
- usury** Literally the charging of interest for loans. While Roman Catholic religious tradition condemned the practice, it has remained as a cornerstone of antisemitic thinking as indicative of a supposed Jewish preoccupation with monetary matters.

- V'shamru** Popular Shabbat (Sabbath) hymn emphasizing both the covenant and the creation story.
- Vayyikra/Leviticus** The third book of the Torah/Hebrew Bible and encompassing much of the Jewish legal tradition as well as the sacrificial system of the ancient Temple.
- Vidui** The “confessional prayer” text to be said by the religious Jew prior to death asking God’s forgiveness for any sins committed and not yet atoned. There are such prayers in all Jewish denominations.
- Vindiciae judaeorum** Text by Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657) articulating his rationale for a return to England by a formerly exiled population.
- Wisdom literature** A subsection of the third section of the Writings in the Torah/Hebrew Bible and including such books as Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Esther, and Job.
- Wissenschaft des Judentums (German: “Scientific Study of Judaism”)** The nineteenth-century German Jewish intellectual tradition whereby Judaism itself became the object of university study employing the methods pioneered in other fields of academic inquiry.
- Y'tziat Mitzrayim (Hebrew, “Going forth out of Egypt”)** The Hebrew term used to describe the exodus from Egypt and first recorded in Sefer Shemot/Book of Exodus. A cornerstone of Jewish religious memory today and leading to the development of the Jewish ethical tradition.
- Yahrtzeit** Literally, “year time.” The term acknowledging the anniversary of the death of a loved one. On such anniversaries, the names of the deceased are called out at the conclusion of the worship service and *Kaddish* is said by the mourners.
- Yavneh** The city in ancient Israel where, according to Jewish religious tradition and written in the Talmud, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai and his colleagues canonized the Torah/Hebrew Bible.
- Yeridah** Emigration from Israel. Literally, a “going down” from the Land of Israel. (See its opposite, *aliyah*, a “going up” to the Land of Israel.)
- Yesurin shel ahavah** Literally, “chastisements out of love.” The rabbinic tradition of examining critically those aspects of Jews life out of a sense of deep commitment and caring. The objective of such critical analysis is to improve, never to destroy, governed as it must be by love of one’s fellow Jews and one’s Jewish tradition, however interpreted.
- Yism 'chu** Popular Shabbat (Sabbath) hymn emphasizing creation rather than creation and covenant.
- Yochanah ben Zakkai** First-century head of the rabbinical academy in Yavneh and primarily responsible for the canonization of the Torah/Hebrew Bible.
- Yom Ha'atzmaut** One of the two newest Jewish holidays—Israel Independence Day—and celebrated both in the State of Israel and abroad commemorating May 14, 1948.
- Yom Hashoah** The other new Jewish holiday—Holocaust Commemoration Day—first commemorated in Israel in the early 1950s and now memorialized by Jewish communities all over the world.
- Yom Kippur (Hebrew, “Day of Atonement”)** Regarded by many Jews as the holiest day of the Jewish religious calendar, occurring ten days after Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and concluding the Ten Days of Awe.
- Zeman matan Torateinu** Literally, “the time of the giving of the Torah.” The summary description of the festival of Simchat Torah of the Torah/Hebrew Bible, coming at the end of the festival of Sukkot (Booths).
- Zionism** The modern political and religious movement of the Jewish people advocating a return of the people to its ancestral homeland. With the founding of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, Zionism today remains a worldwide movement of support by Jews and non-Jews for the State.
- Zohar (Hebrew, “Book of Splendor”)** The primary text of the Jewish kabbalistic or mystical tradition said to have been authored by Moses de Leon (1250–1305) and remains primarily a highly spiritualized commentary on the Torah/Hebrew Bible.