



Divisions within Judaism

HPHP4013

Session Outline



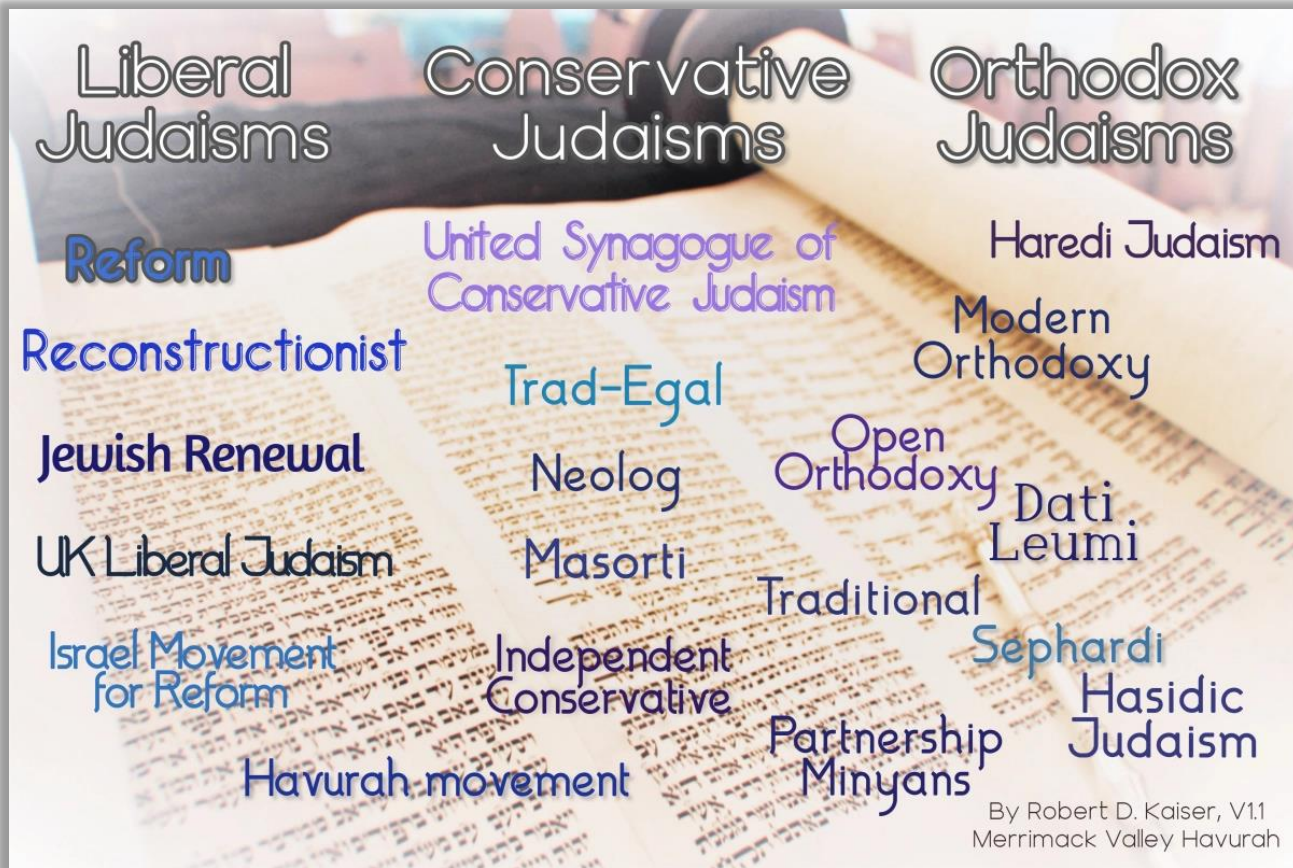
- The beginnings of Reform Judaism
- The response of Orthodox Judaism
- The beginnings of Conservative Judaism
- The development of Reform and Conservative Judaism in the United States

Recap: Enlightenment and Emancipation

- The 'Emancipation' – the period from the late 18th century during which Jews were released from inferior political status through the acquisition of equal rights.
- The *Haskalah* – an intellectual movement that sought to modernize Jewish life and thought.
- Key question facing Jews: to what extent should they turn their backs on their 'Jewishness' in order to assimilate into non-Jewish society?
- The stage now set for divisions within Jewish culture and society.



Jewish Denominations Today



The Beginnings of Reform Judaism

- ❖ The first Reform chapel built by Israel Jacobson (1768-1828) in Seesen in 1810.
- ❖ Shorter services, sermons delivered in German, choral singing accompanied by organ.
- ❖ Berlin a major centre for the new 'liberal' Judaism.



The Beginnings of Reform Judaism

- The Hamburg Reform Temple founded in 1818 by Edward Kley, an acquaintance of Jacobson.
- A number of major innovations made to the liturgy, not least the omission of prayers anticipating a return to Zion and the restoration of the temple cult.
- Fierce response from 'Orthodox' rabbis.



The Response of Orthodox Judaism



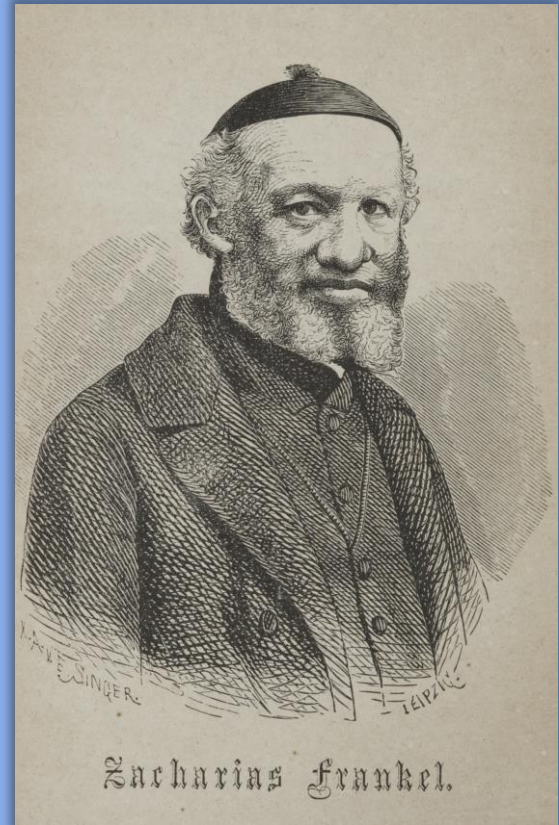
- ❖ Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-88).
- ❖ Regarded as the father of German Jewish Orthodoxy.
- ❖ *The Nineteen Letters on Judaism* (1836)
- ❖ The purpose of keeping God's law is to lead a religious life which testifies to the universal brotherhood of God's people.

The Development of Reform Judaism

- 1842 – the *Society of the Friends of Reform* established in Frankfurt. The validity and authority of the Talmud rejected outright, as well as belief in messianic redemption.
- 1844 – the *Association for the Reform of Judaism* founded in Berlin. Hebrew rejected completely, together with head-covering for men and the blowing of the shofar.
- 1844-1846 – a series of Reform synods held in Brunswick, Frankfurt, and Breslau, respectively.
- The Reformers argued that what is eternal in Judaism is a system of core values. Emphasis on ‘spirit of the law’ as opposed to ‘letter of the law’.

The Beginnings of Conservative Judaism

- ❖ Zacharias Frankel (1801-75).
- ❖ Resigned from the second Reform synod in Frankfurt.
- ❖ Asserted that the decision to permit worship in a language other than Hebrew was 'not in the spirit of preserving but of destroying positive historical Judaism.'
- ❖ Went on to become the head of a Jewish seminary in Breslau dedicated to free enquiry of the faith combined with a commitment to the Jewish tradition.



Reform Judaism in the United States

- Mass movement of Jews from Germany to the United States following the American Civil War.
- 1869 – Philadelphia hosts the first conference of Reform Rabbis.
- 1873 – *Union of American Hebrew Congregations* established.
- 1875 – the first Reform seminary, Hebrew Union College, founded in Ohio by Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900).
- 1885 – the principles of American Reform Judaism set out in the **Pittsburgh Platform**.

The Pittsburgh Platform (1885)

First...we hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages...

Second...We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domains of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age and at clothing its conception of divine providence and justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.

Third...Today we accept as binding only the moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

The Pittsburgh Platform (1885)

Fourth...We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state...Their observance in our day is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

Fifth...We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

Sixth...We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason...We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfilment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who co-operate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

The Pittsburgh Platform (1885)

Seventh...We reassert the doctrine of Judaism, that the soul of man is immortal...We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism the belief both in bodily resurrection and in Ghenna (Hell) and Eden, as abodes for everlasting punishment or reward.

Eighth...In full accord with the spirit of Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.



Sign in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Temple Emanu-El, a reform synagogue in New York.

The Development of Conservative Judaism

- Conservative Judaism (known as *Masorti* in the UK) also undergoing development in the US at this time.
- 1886 – the Jewish Theological Seminary founded in New York by adherents of the ‘Positive-historical’ approach to Judaism established by Zacharias Frankel and his seminary in Breslau.

The Influence of Solomon Schechter



- ❖ Solomon Schechter (1847-1915)
- ❖ President of the Jewish Theological Seminary between 1902-15.
- ❖ Desire to combine Jewish traditionalism with the scientific study of Judaism.
- ❖ Emphasized the importance of traditional rituals, customs, and belief, while allowing a place for critical enquiry.

Articles of faith

1

Main Jewish denominations

	Source of the Torah*	Authority of religious law (<i>halacha</i>)	Ritual and practice	Zionism and Israel	Definition of Jewishness
Ultra-Orthodox (<i>haredi</i>)	Dictated by God to Moses	All God-inspired and thus immutable	Minutely regulated by <i>halacha</i> and therefore unchanging, though emphasis may shift	Originally opposed to Zionism but most now accept Israel. Significant immigration to Israel	Jewish mother, or converted by ritual immersion, circumcision (males), accepting the <i>mitzvot</i> [†]
Modern-Orthodox	As above	As above but interpreted more flexibly	As above, but some scholars are pushing for change, especially regarding women	See Zionism as a divine manifestation and Israel as religiously significant. Substantial immigration	As above, but accepting the <i>mitzvot</i> interpreted more flexibly
Conservative	Inspired by God but interpreted by humans	Binding but being continuously developed by rabbis	<i>Halacha</i> significantly modernised; women and gay rabbis; ritual non-discriminatory	Support Zionism and Israel. Not much immigration	As above, but <i>mitzvot</i> commitment interpreted much more flexibly
Reform	As Conservative	No longer binding, except for its ethical aspects	Early radical changes but recent restoration of some rituals and practices	Originally opposed to Zionism. Reversed position in mid-20th century. Not much immigration	Jewish mother or father. For converts, some rabbis require immersion and circumcision but not <i>mitzvot</i> acceptance

Source: *The Economist*

*First five books of the Old Testament †Religious precepts

Summary

- Divisions within Judaism made possible by the Emancipation and *Haskalah*.
- Attempts in 19th century Europe at modernizing Jewish belief and worship lead to the emergence of Reform and Conservative branches.
- Fierce response to innovations from Orthodox Judaism.
- Reform and Conservative Judaism developed in the US by individuals like Isaac Mayer Wise and Solomon Schechter.