



Jewish-Christian Glossary

| Voll, Fritz

A glossary of terms used in the Christian-Jewish dialogue

Jewish-Christian Relations: Glossary

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[A](#)

[aggadah](#)

See [seder](#)

[antisemitism](#)

Literally means opposed to Semites (which would include Arabic and other semitic peoples as well), but usually applied specifically to opposition to Jews - theological anti-Judaism or hatred of Jews. The term was invented in Germany in the late 19th century to give Jew-hatred a scientific ring in the context of a pseudo-scientific study of the human races.

[anthropomorphism](#)

In many places the Bible attributes to God human reasoning, feeling and action. The teachers of Israel interpreted these 'human-like' descriptions of God as figures of speech designed to show God's personal character. The Aramaic translations of the Bible that go back to the time of Ezra, the [Targumim](#), toned down certain anthropomorphic expressions by using other reverent terms for God in order to avoid contradictions between the 'unlikeness' of God and the description of God as 'human-like'.

[apocalypse](#) adj. apocalyptic

Greek revelation. A genre of literature (attested in Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions) in which the author claims to have received revelation(s), usually about the end -time, and expresses them in vivid symbolism. The [intertestamental](#) Jewish and the early Christian apocalypses are often pseudepigraphical. The final book of the Christian NT is sometimes called (in accord with its Greek title) "the Apocalypse" (it is also known as "the book of Revelation").

[apocrypha](#) adj. apocryphal

Greek, meaning to hide or concealed away. It is used in a technical sense to refer to certain Jewish books written in the [Hellenistic](#)-Roman period that came to be included in Septuagint. They are also included in the Eastern Christian biblical canon and in the Latin [Vulgate](#) Roman Catholic canon (as "deutero-canonical"), but not in the Jewish or Protestant biblical [canons](#). See [Septuagint](#), [Hellenism](#).

[Auschwitz](#)

The German name of the Polish town where one of the largest Nazi Concentration Camps was situated. More than 1.5 Million Jews were killed here. Auschwitz came to be used as synonymous to the words [Holocaust](#) and [Shoah](#).

[B](#)

[Babylonian Talmud](#)

see [Talmud](#)

Bar/Bat [Mitzvah](#)

Hebrew for Son/Daughter of the Commandment. The ritual in which a Jewish boy takes up religious responsibilities in the community when he is thirteen years of age. In Reform and Conservative congregations a similar ritual is observed for girls. As part of the ritual the young person is for the first time called to the *bema* or podium (called an *aliyah*) to read from the [Torah](#) scroll.

C

[canon](#), canonical scripture

The collection of books of the Bible recognized as authoritative. For non-canonical see [apocrypha](#). See also [intertestamental](#), Second Temple period.

CE = common era **BCE** = before common era

An attempt to use a neutral term for the period traditionally labeled "AD" (Latin: anno domini or "year of the Lord") by Christians. CE and BCE is now used in respect of other traditions, especially Judaism, for which the Christian Lord has no significance.

Christology

From Greek christos, "anointed". The Christian study of the Christ concept in its various associations and applications (e.g. as historical Jesus, Christ of faith, in his relation to God and to other humans, in his passion and redemptive work, as royal or priestly or prophetic figure, as eschatological agent, etc.). The Greek christos should not be re-translated into the word [messiah](#) which is of Hebrew origin.

Conservative Judaism

A modern development in Judaism, reacting to early Jewish [Reform](#) movements in an attempt to retain clearer links to classical Jewish law while at the same time adapting it to modern situations. Its scholarly center in the US is the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. See [Orthodox Judaism](#), [Reform Judaism](#).

[covenant](#) (Hebrew brit, Greek diatheke)

A pact between two parties. The major covenants in Jewish scriptures are God's covenant with [Noah](#) (Gen. 9:8-17), Abraham (Genesis 15), and the Sinai/[Moses](#) covenant between God and Israel (Exodus 19-24). In Judaism covenant refers to the eternal bond between God and the people of Israel grounded in God's gracious and steadfast concern (Hebrew, hesed) that calls for the nation's obedience to the divine commandments (mitzvot) and instruction (torah). For Christianity God has made a new covenant, better: newer or renewed covenant (rendered as "new testament" in older English) with the followers of Jesus. For centuries Christianity believed that the "new" had superseded the "old covenant" with Moses at Sinai by applying Jeremiah 31:31-34 to itself (see [supersessionism](#), replacement). This anti-Judaic view should be rejected. Many Christians now use the terms "First" and "Second Testament" instead of Old and New Testament.

[D](#)

[decalogue](#)

A Greek term referring to the ten commandments (Hebrew 'aseret hadibrot) received by Moses on Mount Sinai according to Jewish scriptures (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21).

[deicide](#)

The killing of God, an accusation hurled against Jews throughout the centuries, blaming them for having killed the divine son of God and thereby God.

[deity](#)

from Latin deus, God.

[Deutero Isaiah](#) (Trito Isaiah)

From Greek, in scholarly usage Second Isaiah (chapters 49 - 55) and Third Isaiah (chapters 56 - 65).

diaspora

From Greek "scattering". Often used to refer to the Jewish communities living among the gentiles outside the land of Israel/Palestine.

dietary laws

See [kashrut](#).

dispensationalism

A modern conservative protestant position that divides history into various periods of divine activity (dispensations or households), each of which is identified by a specific characterization (an example are the interpretations in the "Scofield Bible").

E

election

A term used theologically in Judaism to indicate God's choice of Israel to receive the covenant - a choice not based on the superiority or previous accomplishments of the people, but on God's graciousness (see [covenant](#)). In Christianity, the concept of election is applied to the church and even to individual Christians.

eschatology adj. eschatological

From Greek eschaton, study of the "last" or the "end-time". Refers in general to what is

expected to take place in the last times (from the inquirer's perspective); thus the study of the ultimate destiny or purpose of humankind and the world, how and when the end will occur, what the end or last period of history or existence will be like. See also [apocalypse](#), [messiah](#).

[exegesis](#)

From Greek, the interpretation or exposition of scripture. See also [hermeneutics](#).

E

[festivals](#) (Jewish)

The three festivals that correspond to the three annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem during the times of the Temple are Pesach (Passover) Shavuot (Pentecost or Weeks) and Sukkot (Tabernacles). Minor festivals are Chanukah and Purim. See also [Passover](#), Seder, [Yom Kippur](#).

G

[gentile\(s\)](#)

Latin for "people", "nation(s)". Jews refer to non-Jewish peoples or nations as (Hebr.) goyim, (Greek) ethnos, people, nation. In ancient Jewish literature, when Judaism was the only known monotheistic religion, the term had the practical designation of "pagan." It often referred implicitly to the Romans..

H

[halakah](#) (halacha)

Derived from the Hebrew verb halakh, "to go," thus "the way to go". The collective body of Jewish religious law that observant Jews follow. It is derived from both, the 613 precepts (mitzvot) set forth in the Torah (248 laws are positive commandments and 365 are prohibitions), many of which can only be observed in the land of Israel or while the Jerusalem Temple exists, and the Oral Torah, which includes all the laws decreed by the sages throughout the ages. See [Orthodox Judaism](#), [Oral Torah](#), [Talmud](#).

[hasidim](#), hasidism

Hebrew "pious one". The term may refer to Jews in various periods: (1) a group that resisted the policies of Antiochus Epiphanes in the 2nd century BCE at the start of the Maccabean revolt; (2) Jewish pietists in the 13th century; (3) followers of the movement of Hasidism founded in the first half of the 18th century by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov.

[Hebrew](#)

A name used to denote the people of Israel, especially during the early Biblical era. It is originally used as an epithet of Abraham. Its origin is unclear. It might refer to their descent from Eber, a descendant of Noah and Shem, or to Abraham's status as one who came from "the other side" (of the Euphrates?), as viewed from the perspective of the Canaanites. The term has sometimes been preferred by certain modern Jewish communities and movements because of the negative associations attached to "Jews."

[Hellenism](#) adj. hellenistic; Greek word for "Greekish"

The civilization that spread from Greece through much of the ancient world from 333 BCE (Alexander the Great) to 63 BCE (dominance of the Near East by the Roman empire). As a result, many elements of Greek culture (names, language, philosophy, athletics, architecture, etc.) penetrated the Near East. "Hellenism" actually refers to the synthesis of Greek and Near Eastern cultures that resulted from that process.

[hermeneutics](#)

Greek to interpret, translate. The principles by which one interprets the scriptures. The term

is often used with reference to the study of Jewish and Christian scriptures.

Herod

The Second Testament of the Christian Bible mentions four ("kings" through the grace of Rome) by that name: 1) Herod the Great, a Judaized (or proselytized) Idumaen, ruled Judea tyrannically with Roman backing. He died 4 BCE, around the time Jesus was born (Matthew 2:1 ff.). He is said to have ordered the murder of the infants in Bethlehem. 2) Herod Antipas was the second son of Herod the Great (Matthew 14:1; Luke 3:1). He killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:14 ff.). 3) Herod Agrippa I, was a grandson of Herod the Great. He is mentioned in Acts 12:1ff. 4) Herod Agrippa II was a son of Agrippa I. He is mentioned in the passage Acts 25:13 - 26:32 (Paul defending himself against accusations of some fellow Jews).

Holocaust

From Greek, "entire burnt offering". A term used in recent times to refer to the Nazi German extermination of the Jewish people. See [Shoah](#), [Auschwitz](#).

I

imitatio Dei

From Latin, the imitation of God. The Jewish scriptures (the Bibel as well as the Talmud) contain numerous passages which describe God in human terms (see [anthropomorphism](#)). They are not only meant to show that God is personal and accessible to God's people, but that Godself acts according to the commandments given to Israel and sets the example to be followed. Fulfilling the commandments of Torah is an imitation of God and can therefore never be viewed as "legalism" (as Christians have tended to portray it). The *imitatio Dei* lies at the root of rabbinic Judaism. It has to be understood to appreciate the Christian teaching about the imitation of Christ, who imitated God by living the Torah.

[intertestamental](#) **period** Second Temple period

A Christian theological term. A formative period in the development of Judaism, between about 400 BCE, the traditional end date for the Jewish and the 1st century CE Christian canon. The Jewish intertestamental literature includes the Apocrypha (mostly preserved in Greek) and the Pseudepigrapha (works from this period ascribed to ancient authors like Enoch, the patriarchs, and Moses). This literature provides important background for understanding the period of Christian origins. For Second Temple period see [Temple](#).

[Israel](#)

A name given to the Jewish patriarch Jacob according to Genesis 32:38. In Jewish biblical times, this name refers to the northern tribes, but also to the entire nation. Historically, Jews have continued to regard themselves as the true continuation of the ancient Israelite national-religious community. The term thus has a strong cultural sense and refers to the Jews as a people. In modern times, it also refers to the political State of Israel. Christians came to consider themselves to be the "true" Israel and to be in continuation of the ancient traditions, which became one of the sources of Christian anti-Judaism throughout history.

[J](#)

[Jehovah](#)

A mistaken attempt by early Christian Bible translators to vocalize the divine name based upon the medieval practice of writing the Hebrew consonants, YHWH, with vowel pointing for "adonai" (Lord). Hebrew readers would automatically say "Lord" upon seeing this word. Jehovah is an artificial word that has fallen out of use. See [YHWH](#).

[Judaism](#) Jew

From the Hebrew name of the patriarch Judah, whose name also came to designate the tribe and tribal district in which Jerusalem was located. Thus the inhabitants of Judah and members of the tribe of Judah come to be called "Judahites" or, in short form, "Jews". In scholarship the term Judaism is used after about the 6th century BCE as a designation with varying characteristics at different times and places: especially ancient or early Judaism, rabbinic or normative Judaism. Prior to modern times, the term was never used by Jews themselves in their own writings; they referred to themselves almost invariably as "Israel." Different expressions of today's Judaism are [Orthodox](#), [Conservative](#), [Reform](#)/Liberal, [Hasidism](#), Reconstructionist etc.

K

[kashrut](#) kosher

Kashrut are the Jewish dietary laws. (Hebrew *kasher* became adopted into English as *kosher*, ritually fit). These laws are largely derived from the book of Leviticus. Only certain animals, birds and fish are acceptable as food, others are not kosher. Ritually fit animals have to be slaughtered a certain way so that the blood is drained most completely and quickly, because the eating or drinking of blood is prohibited. After an inspection by the *shochet* further removal of any blood is achieved by soaking, salting and rinsing the meat. One of the *kashrut* laws is the prohibition of cooking or eating meat and milk together. Observant Jews wait up to six hours after having eaten meat or poultry before eating any dairy product. *Kashrut* transcends the concept of hygiene because it demands discipline and is intended to lead to spiritual cleanliness. Christians cannot expect an observant Jew to participate in their meal. In Christian-Jewish encounters a common *kashrut* meal can easily be ordered.

[Ketuvim](#) or Ketubim

Hebrew for writings, the third and last division of the classical Jewish (Hebrew) Bible (*TaNaKh*), including large poetic and epigrammatic works such as Psalms, Proverbs and Job, as well as a miscellany of other writings (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Qohelet, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles). See [Tanakh](#).

L

[Lubavitch](#) **Hasidism**

One of the *hasidic* movements that derived its name from a town in Northwest Russia and is based on the teachings of the New York *rebbe* Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Though in its orientation ultra-orthodox it has made itself known in Northamerika as one the most intense religious brotherhoods in the modern world. With their particular flair for organization they have established their own schools, publishing houses and Jewish missionary outreach. See [hasidism](#).

M

[Maimonides](#) (RaMBaM = Rabbi Moses ben Maimon)

See [Orthodox Judaism](#), [halakah](#).

[Marcion\(ites\)](#)

A 2nd century Christian (and his followers) who was considered the first heretic by his opponents because of certain dualistic and gnostic ideas and his call for a severing of Christianity from its Jewish and First Testament roots.

[messiah](#)

Literally "anointed one", Greek christos. Ancient priests and kings (and sometimes prophets) of Israel were anointed with oil. In early Judaism, the term came sometimes to mean a royal descendant of the dynasty of David, who would restore the united kingdom of Israel and Judah and usher in an age of peace and justice. The concept developed in many directions over the centuries. The messianic age was believed by some Jews to be a time of perfection of human institutions; others believed it to be a time of radical new beginnings, a new heaven and earth after divine judgment and destruction. Followers of Jesus applied the name to Jesus of Nazareth. They were soon called "Christians" in Greek and Latin usage. Jesus is also Messiah in Islam. See [eschatology](#).

[midrash](#) pl. midrashim

From Hebrew darash, to inquire. It means exposition (of scripture) and refers to the "commentary" or homiletical literature developed in classical Judaism that attempts to interpret Jewish scriptures in a thorough (scholarly) manner or expound it in sermons preached in the synagogue. Literary midrash may focus either on halakah, directing the Jew to specific patterns of religious practice, or on [aggada](#), dealing with theological ideas, ethical teachings, popular philosophy, imaginative exposition, legend, allegory, animal fables, etc. — that is, whatever is not [halakah](#).

[Mishnah](#)

Hebrew teaching or oral recitation. An important digest of the recommended Jewish oral halakah as it existed at the end of the 2nd century CE and was collated, edited, and revised (orally) by Rabbi Judah the Prince. The code is divided into six major units ("orders") and sixty minor ones ("tractates"). The work is considered the most authoritative legal tradition of the early sages and is the basis of the legal discussions of the [Talmud](#).

[monotheism](#)

Greek, one deity. The belief that there is only one real and ultimate divine being.

[Mosaic covenant](#) or Sinai covenant

The covenant God made with the people of Israel in the desert at Mount Sinai after they had been freed from slavery in Egypt and before they entered the land of Canaan. It is best described in Deut. 26:16-19. Israel has chosen God and God has chosen Israel. Israel's obligations in the covenant were embodied in their acceptance of the Torah. The acceptance of God's and Israel's irrevocable covenant has to be the basis of any new relationship between Christians and Jews. See [covenant](#).

[N](#)

[Nevi'im](#) sing. nabi

Hebrew prophets, prophet. See [prophet](#), [Tanakh](#).

[Noachide covenant](#)

The covenant God made with Noah and his sons, that is with all the people that survived the flood (Gen. 9:8-17). In rabbinic literature it is interpreted as seven commandments that

God gave the whole of humanity. The most widely accepted version of the commandments includes the following: to abstain from 1) idolatry (also from polytheism = worshipping multiple gods); 2) murder; 3) sexual immorality, especially adultery and incest; 4) blasphemy; 5) robbery; 6) brutality against animals; and 7) to establish courts of justice (the only positive commandment). Non-Jews who keep these laws will, according to rabbinic teaching, have part in the world to come. These laws obviously played a role in the considerations of the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), where the Jewish apostles decided, not to expect gentile followers of Jesus (Christians) to keep the full extent of the Torah. See [covenant](#).

O

[Oral Torah](#)

In traditional Jewish pharisaic/rabbinic thought, God reveals instructions for living through both the written scriptures and through a parallel process of orally transmitted traditions. Critics of this approach within Judaism include Sadducees and Karaites See [Mishnah](#), [Talmud](#).

[orthodox](#)

From the Greek for "correct opinion/outlook", as opposed to heterodox or heretical. The judgment that a position is "orthodox" depends on what are accepted as the operative or normative "rules" or authorities at the time. Over the course of history, the term "orthodox" has come to denote the dominant surviving forms that have proved themselves to be "traditional" or "classical" or "mainstream" (e.g. rabbinic Judaism; the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian churches; Sunni Islam), although new, relative "orthodoxies" constantly emerge (and often disappear).

[Orthodox Judaism](#)

Refers to the movement that arose in reaction to Reform and Liberal Judaism in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The name was initially given (by their opponents) to Jews who wanted to remain faithful to Torah against the modernizing trends of the time. Orthodoxy is very much based on the religious laws codified in the 16th century Shulchan Aruch. The Pentateuch in its present form is believed to have been revealed by God. Together with this written Torah the oral Torah was revealed, which was eventually compiled in rabbinic literature. While there is conformity in matters of faith and observance, there are different

streams of opinion. In Israel orthodoxy is the only recognized religious authority. A number of famous orthodox personalities have warned against participation in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, while they encouraged cooperation in the social area.

P

Palestine

From Greek for the Philistines, the seacoast population encountered by early geographers. An ancient designation for the area between Syria (to the north) and Egypt (to the south), between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan; roughly, modern Israel. Apparently the name was adopted by the Romans as a way of denying the Jews' connection to their homeland.

Passover

Hebrew pesach, is one of the three pilgrimage festivals (Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot). It celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from the tyranny and slavery of the Egyptians. See [festivals](#) (Jewish), [Seder](#).

Pentateuch

From Greek for "five books/scrolls". The five books attributed to Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; known in Jewish tradition as Torat Mosheh (the teaching of Moses), or simply the [Torah](#).

Pharisees adj. pharisaic

Hebrew perushim, "separatists" (?). The name given to a group or movement in early Judaism, the origin and nature of which is unclear. The designation probably resulted from their special stringencies in matters of diet and purity, which limited their social interactions with people outside their movement. Many scholars identify them with the later sages and rabbis who taught the oral and written law; some scholars see them as a complex of pietistic and zealous separatists, distinct from the proto-rabbis. According to Josephus and

the New Testament, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, in a balance between predestination and free will, in angels as active divine agents, and in authoritative oral law. In the early Christian materials, Pharisees are often depicted as leading opponents of Jesus and his followers, and are often linked with "scribes" but distinguished from the Sadducees. Trying to understand Pharisees by a reading of the New Testament is about as senseless as trying to gain an understanding of Jesus from a reading of the Talmud.

[phylacteries](#)

Greek protectors. See [tefillin](#).

[pogrom](#)

From the Russian word for devastation; an unprovoked attack or series of attacks upon a Jewish community.

[prayer shawl](#)

In modern Hebrew called talit from l'talel, to cover (originally referring to any garment). This four-cornered garment is worn by male worshippers in private and congregational morning prayers, in the evening only on Yom Kippur. Its principal importance lies in the "fringes" (tzitzit) attached to its corners in fulfillment of the precept in the Book of Numbers. Traditional Jews also wear a fringed undergarment throughout the day. Non-Jewish guests to a synagogue would not be expected to don one.

[prophet](#)

From Greek, "to speak for" or "speak forth". Name given to accepted spokespersons of God (or their opposites, false prophets). The Prophets became a designation for a section of the Jewish scriptures; see [Torah](#), [Nevi'im](#), [Tanakh](#). The English (originally Greek) word, which designates one who foretells the future, does not reflect the function of the Hebrew "navi," though the perception of prophets as oracles has a long history in Judaism.

[proselyte\(s\)](#)

The Hebrew term ger (stranger, non-Israelite, who lived among Israel) was translated in the Septuagint into the Greek proselytos, which meant a convert to Judaism. Since the 4th century Jews have not engaged in organized missionary activities. Though individual proselytes are still welcomed into the community after intense study and baptism and (in the case of males) circumcision. There are considerable differences between the branches of Judaism. Today most conversions happen because of mixed marriages, where one partner converts in order to avoid potential conflicts in family life.

[Q](#)

[Qur'an](#) (better than Koran)

Arabic Al Qur'an, "The Recitation". The sacred scriptures of Islam, the religion of the Muslims (not Mohammedans as some dictionaries still render it) dictated to Muhammed by the Archangel Gabriel.

[R](#)

[Reform Judaism](#)

Modern movement originating in 18th century Europe which attempts to see Judaism as a rational religion adaptable to modern needs and sensitivities. The ancient traditions and laws are seen as historical relics that need have no binding power over modern Jews. The central academic institution of American Reform Judaism is the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and it is represented also by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Compare [Conservative](#) and [Orthodox Judaism](#).

[S](#)

[Sabbath](#)

Hebrew shabbat. The seventh day of the week recalling the completion of the creation and the Exodus from Egypt. It is a day symbolic of new beginnings and one dedicated to God, a most holy day of rest. The commandment of rest is found in the Bible and has been elaborated by the rabbis. It is a special duty to study [Torah](#) on the Sabbath and to be joyful.

[Sadducees](#)

An early Jewish sub-group whose origins and ideas are uncertain. It probably arose early in the 2nd century BCE and ceased to exist when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE. Sadducees supported priestly authority and rejected traditions not directly grounded in the Pentateuch, such as the concept of personal, individual life after death. They are often depicted as in conflict with the [Pharisees](#).

[scull cap](#)

Also Hebrew kippah (Yiddish yarmulke). In the days of the Temple the priests wore a turban during sacrificial services and the Jewish sages covered their heads most of the time. Today's traditional Jewish males wear the scull cap especially while at prayer, during meals and in the synagogue. Non-Jewish male visitors to the [synagogue](#) are offered scull caps at the entrance and are asked to wear them.

[seder](#)

The seder is a special Jewish meal conducted in Jewish households on the night of Passover. Seder means "order" and the text for the conduct of the meal is contained in the "Aggadah" ("telling" of the Exodus) which has numerous editions from those with commentaries of the sages to those filled with pictures for children. However, the basic text and the 15-part order are the same. See [Passover](#).

[Septuagint](#) (also rendered LXX = 70)

After the Greeks under Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) conquered the Middle East, Jews came under the influence of mixed (syncretistic) Hellenistic religion and culture. According to Jewish sources the High Priest Eleazar chose 70 (Latin septuaginta) of the

most educated Jews and sent them to Alexandria, Egypt, to translate the Jewish scriptures into the Greek language. This happened between 250 and around 100 BCE. The Septuagint was used by Jews living in the Diaspora and, when the gentile Christian church came into being, by the apostle Paul, who quoted extensively from the LXX. As with any translation there are considerable deviations from the original Hebrew in individual words as well as phrases. The Septuagint also includes apocryphal books (included in the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Bible), which are not in the Hebrew canon, and has a different order of the books than the Hebrew [Tanakh](#). The Protestant Bible contains only the books of the Hebrew Tanakh but uses the order of the Septuagint, which give the impression to Christians that the last prophet, Malachi, leads right into the Christian "New Testament". See [canon](#), [apocrypha](#), [Hellenism](#), [Tanakh](#).

[Shema](#)

Hebrew 'hear', the first word of Israel's ages-long primal confession of faith from Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one." The Jew recites the Shema as an expression of exclusive fidelity to God and God's unity. No system of value, no ideology, art, success, or personal happiness is allowed to replace God as the ultimate ground of meaning.

[Shoah](#)

Hebrew for destruction. See [Holocaust](#), [Auschwitz](#).

[supersession](#), replacement

The Christian teaching throughout almost two millennia that the church has replaced or superseded Israel in God's plan of salvation, and that after the destruction of the Temple Judaism has no theological or religious significance other than demonstrating God's wrath, while the church was seen as a demonstration of God's grace.

[synagogue](#)

Greek for gathering. The central institution of Jewish communal worship and Bible teaching since antiquity (Hebrew bet keneset), and by extension, a term used for the place of gathering. The structure of such buildings has changed depending on the surrounding culture, though in all cases the ark containing the Torah scrolls faces the ancient [Temple](#)

site in Jerusalem.

[synoptic Gospels](#)

Name given to the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) in the Christian "New Testament", which view the story of Jesus from the same general perspective.

I

[Talmud](#)

Hebrew for study or learning. Rabbinic Judaism produced two Talmuds: the one known as Babylonian Talmud is the most famous in the western world, and was completed sometime after the 5th century CE; the other, known as the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud, was edited perhaps in the 4th century CE. Both consist of commentaries and debates about the interpretation and application of the Mishnah collection of the Tana'im (the early sages) and the Amora'im (the later sages). The Talmud is also known by its Babylonian Aramaic equivalent "Gemara.". See [Mishnah](#), [Oral Torah](#).

[Tanakh](#)

A relatively modern acronym for the Jewish Bible, made up of the names of the three parts: [Torah](#) (Pentateuch or Law), [Nevi'im](#) (Prophets), and [Ketuvim](#) (Writings) - thus TNK pronounced TaNaKh.

[Targum](#) pl. Targumim

The ancient rabbinic translation of the Hebrew scriptures into the Aramaic vernacular of Palestine and Babylon. The *Mikra'ot Gedolot*, the Rabbinic Bible, presents the standard Hebrew text of the Bible, the Targum in smaller letters beside it, and a number of medieval commentaries in Hebrew surrounding both texts. According to the procedures described in the Talmud, the reading of each verse from the Torah must be followed by the recitation of its Targum. With the decline of Aramaic the practice has fallen into disuse in most communities. The Targumim used in the Palestinian liturgy, recited by the *Turgeman*, were

often elaborate literary creations that wove together elements from [midrash](#) and traditional teaching. The Targumim avoided the [anthropomorphisms](#) of the Bible by using, for example, the term *Memra*, Word, as a reverent circumlocution for God.

[tefillin](#)

From Hebrew tefillot, prayers. Refers to the small leather cubes worn by traditional Jewish males from their Bar Mitzvah on during the Shacharit (from the Hebrew, dawn) morning prayer service. In ancient times they were worn all day. They contain small parchments of scripture and are worn on the forehead and on the (usually) left upper arm in literal fulfilment of Deuteronomy 6:8 reminding the Jew to love God with his whole being, his mind and his emotions (left arm close to the heart). Tefillin are not used on the [Sabbath](#) or on [festivals](#).

[Temple](#)

In traditional Judaism, the only legitimate Temple was the one in Jerusalem. The first Temple was built by king Solomon around 950 BCE, destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar around 587/6 BCE, and rebuilt about 70 years later under Zerubabel and dedicated 515 BCE. It was enlarged and improved considerably by king Herod the Great. This second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. The site of the ancient Jewish Temple is now occupied, in part, by the golden domed "Dome of the Rock" Mosque. In recent times, "temple" has come to be used synonymously with synagogue in some Liberal or [Reform](#) Jewish usage.

[testament](#)

Term for an agreement between two (or more) parties, such as a "last will and testament". In Jewish tradition, the covenant concept plays an important role, and was translated as "testament", especially in Christian references to the scriptures of the "old covenant" (Old Testament) and the "new covenant" (New Testament). See [covenant](#).

[tetragrammaton](#)

Greek "four lettered [name]" See [YHWH](#)

theodicy

Greek theos "God" dikē "justice". The attempt to harmonize God's power and goodness with the injustices and evils in the world.

[Torah](#)

Hebrew teaching, instruction. In general, torah refers to study of the whole gamut of Jewish tradition or to some aspect thereof. In its special sense, "the Torah" refers to the five books of Moses in the Hebrew scriptures (see [Pentateuch](#)). (In the Qur'an, Torah is the main term by which Jewish scripture is identified).

[U](#)

[V](#)

[Vulgate](#)

From Latin, common, popular. The official Roman Catholic Latin version of the Bible, prepared or edited by Jerome (Hieronymus) around the year 400 CE. See also [Septuagint](#).

[W](#)

[X](#)

[Y](#)

[YHWH](#)

The sacred name of God which was revealed to Moses together with its meaning, which contains a "program" (Exodus 3:14). It is also known as the tetragrammaton. Since Hebrew

was written without vowels in ancient times, the four consonants YHWH contain no clue to their original pronunciation. In ancient Israel the name was only spoken in the Temple, and only on certain occasions (e.g. on Yom Kippur). Today most Jews do not speak the name, instead, other names for God are substituted, e.g. Lord (Hebrew Adonai). In most English versions of the Bible the tetragrammaton is properly represented by LORD. This is most acceptable to Jews. However, in contemporary scholarship and even in some Christian translations of the Bible (Jerusalem Bible) the tetragrammaton is often rendered "Yahweh". In some new translations even the tetragrammaton itself is used. Both these renderings are offensive to many Jews. They hear Christians (often even in their presence in the dialogue) pronounce this special divine name, which they themselves would never dare to speak. It signifies for them the "program" of Israel's special calling and relationship with God, which Christians should learn to respect. See also [Jehovah](#).

[Yom Kippur](#)

Hebrew the day of atonement, also called the Sabbath of Sabbaths, the most sacred day in the Jewish calendar devoted to fasting, prayer and confession. It is the culmination of the High Holidays which begin with Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year. They are also called the Days of Awe.

[Z](#)

[Zealot](#)

From Greek, to be enthusiastic. A member of an early Jewish group or perspective that advocated Jewish independence from Rome

[Zionism](#)

From Mount Zion, a hill in the city of Jerusalem. In biblical times already (Isaiah 1:27) and later in rabbinic Judaism it is used to describe the whole of Jerusalem as symbol of a reconstructed Jewish homeland which gathers its exiles around a rebuilt Temple. The "Return to Zion" was expected as God's work. The Zionism of the 19th century used some of the earlier rabbinic motifs, but its definition of peoplehood (Jews are a people like the French or the English etc.) was taken from a contemporary European context rather than from the traditional understanding of the covenantal relationship between God and the people Israel. Many of the early Zionist leaders were atheists or agnostics. Growing antisemitism and, finally, the mass-murders of the Nazis led to more acceptance among

religious Jews of human action (rather than waiting for God) to create a Jewish homeland. Zionism has had and still has a variety of meanings, but apart from some Reform and Orthodox fringes, Jews of all persuasions support the State of Israel founded in 1948. A "Christian Zionism" has arisen in evangelical and fundamentalist churches which sees the founding of the State of Israel and the gathering of the Jewish exiles as the first stage of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, expected to be followed by the second stage, the return of Christ and the conversion of all Israel to him.

Prepared by Fritz Voll.

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