

# Matan -Judaism and the Isms

## Judaism and Christianity

### Part I – Who was the Historical Jesus?

#### The Book of Matthew

##### The Fulfillment of the Law

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

##### Murder

21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. 23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. 25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

##### Adultery

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

##### Divorce

31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

##### Oaths

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ 34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

##### Eye for Eye

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. 41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

##### Love for Enemies

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the

evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

youth. That **Jesus** would have been familiar with Hillel—and with some of his more famous teachings—can be assumed.

Comparisons between teachings of Hillel and **Jesus** can be beneficial for Jews as well, because it is quite possible that, in later centuries, anxiety about the revolution wrought in **Jesus** name spawned anxiety about those aspects of Hillel's teachings—the extraordinary openness to converts and the emphasis on loving and just behavior as God's central demand—that, though older than Christianity, suddenly sounded strangely un-Jewish.

It was perhaps in response to **Jesus**' emphasis on faith and love, and Paul's decision several decades later to drop the requirement to observe Torah laws,<sup>1</sup> that many Jews came to focus Jewish religiosity on laws, specifically the ritual laws that most differentiated Jews from Gentiles. For example, if two Jews are speaking about a third, and the question “Is so-

two Jews are speaking about a third, and the question “Is so-and-so religious?” is raised, the answer is based exclusively on the person's level of ritual observance. Such a standard is, of course, precisely the opposite of what Hillel taught about Judaism's essence.

All of this is not meant to suggest that Hillel was not concerned with ritual observance. He was. Very. Indeed, most of the disputes between Shammai and him and among their disciples were on matters of ritual law. He simply deemed Judaism's ethical demands to be foremost in significance, and it is one of the paradoxes of history that the very power of Hillel's moral teaching, having likely affected **Jesus**, his disciples, and the religion founded in his name, might have been

responsible for provoking an anxiety about those very teachings in Jews who felt threatened by the rise and growing popularity of Christianity—a feeling that intensified after Christianity had done away with the legal structure of the Torah and started to hold Jews accountable for their savior's death.

## **Part II – Was Saul of Tarsus (Paul) a double-agent?**

<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/>

Dr Shneur Leiman -

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/726352/dr-shnayer-leiman/jewish-perspectives-on-early-christianity-toldot-yeshu/>

Rashi explains an ambiguous text of the Talmud about Edom/Rome

בזוי אתה מאד: שאין להן לא כתב ולא לשון

'You are a lowly nation' (Obadiah 1:2): That they don't have their own script or language.

Rashi goes on to explain the above text:

**כתב ולשון:** אחרים תיקנו להם כל ספרי טעותם, יוחנן, פאולוס, פיטרו'; והם יהודים היו. **לשון:** הוא גראמטיקא, הוא הלטין שמדברים בו הגלחים. הם שנו ועקמו (ש"נ עמקו) הלשון ועשן להם הבל לחשבם בפני עצמם ולסלקם מעל ישראל; ולא שכפרו, כי לטובתן של ישראל נתכוונו; אלא מפני שראו ישראל בצער ובדוחק מתרמיטי ישו, עשו עצמם כאלו הם עמו בקדישות, וצוו עליהם הכל כמפורש בספור תליית ישו.

Ketav ve'Lashon: Others have given them (Christians) all their books of folly: John, Paul, Peter; and they were all Jews. Lashon: That is the Latin language that the bishops are fluent with. **They (the apostles mentioned before) changed their language and created folly for them so that would become a new nation and in order to separate them from the Jews; not because they abandoned their faith, only for the benefit of the Jewish people did they do it;** because they saw that the Jews were in a dread and distress from the student of Jesus[1], so they made themselves look as if they were with him [...] [2] and commanded them etc., as is recounted in the book *tehiyas Yeshu* [3].

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף כח עמוד ב

תנו רבנן: שמעון הפקולי הסדיר שמונה עשרה ברכות לפני רבן גמליאל על הסדר ביבנה. אמר להם רבן גמליאל לחכמים: כלום יש אדם שיודע לתקן ברכת המינים? עמד שמואל הקטן ותקנה, לשנה אחרת שכחה.

### Part III – Can a Dead Human Being be the Messiah?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Rebbe,\\_the\\_Messiah,\\_and\\_the\\_Scandal\\_of\\_Orthodox\\_Indifference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rebbe,_the_Messiah,_and_the_Scandal_of_Orthodox_Indifference)

Berger, an academic expert on Jewish responses to Christianity, particularly [claims of Jesus' messiahship and divinity](#), criticized what he viewed as similar assertions made by some religious leaders of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement about Schneerson shortly after Schneerson's death in 1994 and even in 2014.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Berger argues that the assertion a person could begin a messianic mission, die, and posthumously return to complete his mission has been unanimously rejected by the Sages and Jewish polemicists for nearly 2,000 years. An example of Berger's proof-texts is the passage in the [Talmud](#) which shows that [Rabbi Akiva](#) set aside his previous assertions of [Simon bar Kokhba](#)'s presumed messiahship after bar Kokhba was put to death. To Berger, the Messianists' viewpoint on this issue is outside the pale of accepted Orthodox Jewish belief. Berger has been highly disappointed by the Orthodox establishment's reaction to Chabad-Lubavitch's claims that Schneerson is the [Jewish messiah](#), arguing that there is a "scandal of Orthodox indifference".

### Part IV - Major Theological Differences Between Judaism and Christianity

#### **#1 - Original Sin and Redemption of Man**

#### **R' Shimshon Raphael Hirsch – Genesis 3:19**

“One consideration...seems to us most significant. The only curses contained in this divine judgment are directed at the ground and at one particular animal. G-d's sentence does not include a curse of against man as such. There is not one syllable to suggest even the minutest change in man's lofty calling and in his ability to fulfill it. Only the external conditions in which he is to accomplish his mission have changed and even this happened only for his own good.....to this day every newborn infant springs forth from the hand of G-d in the same state of purity as did Adam. **Every child comes into the world as pure as an angel. This is the one of the basic concepts in the essence of Judaism and Jewish living.**

But what a miserable lie has been concocted from this historical account. A lie that undermines all the moral future of mankind! We are referring to the dogma of the original sin against which....it is a duty of every Jew to protest against most vigorously, with every fiber of his being. It is true that on account of the sin in the Garden of Eden all of Adam's descendants have inherited the task of living in a world that no longer smiles at them as once it did, but this is so only because this same sin is still being committed over and over again. ...but as for the doctrine that because of Adam's sin, all of mankind has become sinful, that man has lost his ability to be good and is compelled to go on sinning and that man's return to G-d and the restoration of paradise on earth require something other than a revival of devotion to duty, an

effort within the capacity of every human being – these are notions against which Judaism must offer its categorical protest. **Man needs no intermediary, dead or alive to return to G-d.** This is taught to us by all of Jewish History, which demonstrates that in subsequent generations G-d came as close to men of purity as he did to the first man....Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and other like them were able to win G-d's nearness simply by their pure striving and to remain faithful to their duty.

**Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Iggerot ha-Ra'aya, I, pp. 163-164**

This is just the antithesis of what the scholars among the gentiles, as well as those Jews who follow in their footsteps, think. Their reading of the Bible follows the Christian interpretation, through which this world becomes a prison. **The pure understanding, however, of the joy and light of life that is in the Torah, is based precisely on the sure guarantee of the past, when man was very happy, it being merely an instance of sin that distanced himself from his path. Clearly, a chance stumbling must be correctable, so that man will return to his high rank forever.**

**Rabbi Meir Soloveitchik, Redemption and the Power of Man**

For Jews and Christians famously disagree as to the identity of the messiah. Christians argue that Israel's messianic expectations were realized with the birth, life, and death of Jesus of Nazareth; moreover, Christian doctrine asserts that Jesus was divine, God incarnate, and the second person of the divine Trinity. Jews not only argue that the messiah has not yet appeared, but also disagree vehemently with the concept of incarnation. Jewish tradition has always insisted that the messiah will be a human, rather than divine, redeemer, who will restore the Davidic dynasty and defend Israel from its enemies. **All too many Christians and Jews, however, assume that this is the only essential difference between Jewish and Christian eschatology**

It is true that the question of the messiah's arrival is one that will divide Jews and Christians until the end of days. Yet there is a more profound divide in the way Jews and Christians conceive the idea of the messiah. **This distinction relates not to whether he has already come, but rather to what part humanity plays in bringing about the messianic redemption, a distinction that reveals very different approaches to the moral capacities of mankind. For Christians, redemption is essentially an act of divine grace, the salvation of a humanity that is incapable of saving itself. For Jews, however, the reverse is true: Redemption depends entirely on the repentance of man, who is responsible for his own fate. As such, the difference in the respective religions' approach to the messiah is, in truth, a difference in the understanding of man's own moral capacity, and of the nature of good and evil itself.**

The difference between the Jewish and Christian approaches to the messiah can now be clearly discerned. Jews contend, as Rabbi Soloveitchik put it, that belief in the messiah by definition means belief in our ability to become worthy of the messiah. Christians, on the other hand, argue that belief in the messiah by definition means belief in our *inability* to become worthy of the messiah, in our needing the messiah to take our sins upon himself. For Christians, the coming of the messiah makes repentance possible; for Jews, repentance makes the messiah possible.

...How ought we approach God in repentance? What should our orientation be when we beg forgiveness from the Almighty? Jesus' answer is that we come before God not merely as men who have sinned and now wish to repent, but rather as sinners, whose sins reveal something ontologically awry, a metaphysical flaw in ourselves, that we cannot repair on our own. In contrast, the paradigmatic penitent in Hebrew scripture, David, consistently strikes a different posture than does the publican. David never asks God's mercy as an inveterate sinner, but rather as one who has sinned: Nathan said to David.... "Why have you despised the word of the Eternal, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites...." And David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Eternal."<sup>32</sup>

Thus far we have addressed the gulf separating the Jewish and Christian approaches to redemption, messiah, and repentance. Yet there is a sense in which these differences all indicate a deeper divide, one that colors the way each religion relates to the world in which we live. This divide concerns the meaning of history itself.

Paul's doctrine of original sin is a picture of a world gone awry, reflected in humanity's inability to live righteously. The nineteenth century's most famous Catholic convert, John Cardinal Newman, reflected that a brief look at the world should convince any theist of the truth of Paul's doctrine....Here Newman is presenting us not merely with a defense of the idea

of original sin, but also with a theodicy, an approach to evil's existence in this world. The wretchedness of man, Newman argues, and evil's reign on this earth allow us only one of two approaches: Either God does not exist, or something has gone terribly wrong with humanity. Those who affirm the existence of God must also admit that a wrench has been lodged in the machinery that is man, fettering his conscience and his ability to do good. According to Newman, this wrench can be removed only by Jesus' death on the cross.

In light of the foregoing, one may anticipate the following objection: Does not so positive an attitude toward mankind's abilities lead inevitably to hubris, to the belief that man can achieve greatness without God's assistance at all? Has not the modern era been plagued by worldviews such as communism and fascism, ideologies that were based precisely on the belief in man's ability to recreate the world anew? This question was posed by Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the twentieth century's most influential American theologians, and one of the most eloquent defenders of the concept of original sin:

The utopian illusions and sentimental aberrations of modern liberal culture are really all derived from the basic error of negating the fact of original sin. This error... continually betrays modern men to equate the goodness of men with the virtue of their various schemes for social justice and international peace. When these schemes fail of realization or are realized only after tragic conflicts, modern men either turn from utopianism to disillusionment and despair, or they seek to place the onus of their failure upon some particular social group, ... [which is why] both modern liberalism and modern Marxism are always facing the alternatives of moral futility or moral fanaticism. Liberalism in its pure form [that is, pacifism] usually succumbs to the peril of futility. It will not act against evil until it is able to find a vantage point of guiltlessness from which to operate. This means that it cannot act at all. Sometimes it imagines that this inaction is the guiltlessness for which it has been seeking. A minority of liberals and most of the Marxists solve the problem by assuming that they have found a position of guiltlessness in action. Thereby they are betrayed into the error of fanaticism.<sup>42</sup>

There is, Niebuhr argues, a danger in denying original sin, and in taking a positive attitude toward humanity's redemptive potential. In other words, the Jewish approach to man can be misused. "I have read enough," writes columnist John Derbyshire, "to know what a stupendous debt our civilization owes to the Jews. At the same time, there are aspects of distinctly Jewish ways of thinking that I dislike very much. The world-perfecting idealism, for example, that is rooted in the most fundamental premises of Judaism, has, it seems to me, done great harm in the modern age."<sup>43</sup>

The point is a powerful one, and it therefore bears mentioning that Judaism never asserted that man is inherently good. In fact, God's observation in Genesis that "the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth" has never been lost upon Jewish thinkers.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, unlike Christianity, Judaism never understood Adam as being inherently good before what Christians term the Fall. Rather, human beings were created with the ability to determine their own fate, an ability undiminished by the events in Eden.

The Jewish theologian Eliezer Berkovits puts it rightly: Judaism disagrees with the Christian interpretation of human nature. Man is, of course, not good, but he is capable of goodness. He is a responsible creature.... From the Jewish point of view, Christianity has not discovered an idea of God which is superior to the one taught by Judaism; rather, it has adopted a radically pessimistic evaluation of human nature as compared with the critical optimism of Judaism concerning all creation.<sup>45</sup>

It is true that Judaism is fundamentally optimistic regarding humanity's moral capacity, and that it rejects Christianity's thoroughly negative assessment of it. But this is, as Berkovits points out, a "critical optimism": Man must have pride in what he can accomplish, but also humility regarding what he must learn in order to do so. It is for this reason that Judaism has always stressed the importance of law as the medium through which man may improve himself. The Tora represents, on the one hand, the idea that man is beholden to a divinely decreed morality; he cannot seek to redeem the world in whatever fashion he sees fit. On the other hand, the very idea that man is obligated to a complex of laws such as the Tora is itself indicative of God's faith in man's potential.

Berkovits writes: The law is a sign of God's confidence in man. Man *can* follow it and the responsibility is his.... If, as a result of original sin, man's nature is corrupt, if he can do no good by his own strength, then of course the rigor of a code of "Thou Shalt" is meaningless. If, however-as Judaism teaches-man has been equipped by the love of God with the potential for continuous moral and spiritual increase, then the law expresses the idea that God does consider and regard man.<sup>46</sup>

While most Jews rejected Paul's theology, it is all too often assumed that they did so solely because they rejected Jesus as the messiah. Such a view ignores the far more profound disagreement between the two faiths, a disagreement which persists to this day. The Jews rejected the Pauline view not merely because it conflicted with their view of the messiah—indeed, Jewish history is filled with disputes over proposed messiahs, disputes that did not necessarily bring about the kind of rupture that separated Jews from Christians. Rather, the Jews rejected Christianity because Pauline theology contradicted everything they believed about the relationship between God and man, and about man's role in history. Evil, according to the Jews, could not be blamed on a cosmic flaw or original sin, for that would deny man's moral capacity. The messiah had yet to arrive, Judaism insisted, because man had yet to become worthy of his arrival.

## #2 - The Virtue of Hate

During my regular weekly coffees with my friend Fr. Jim White, an Episcopal priest, there was one issue to which our conversation would incessantly turn, and one on which we could never agree: Is an utterly evil man—Hitler, Stalin, Osama bin Laden—deserving of a theist's love? I could never stomach such a notion, while Fr. Jim would argue passionately in favor of the proposition. Judaism, I would argue, does demand love for our fellow human beings, but only to an extent. "Hate" is not always synonymous with the terribly sinful. While Moses commanded us "not to hate our brother in our hearts," a man's immoral actions can serve to sever the bonds of brotherhood between himself and humanity. Regarding a *nasha*, a Hebrew term for the hopelessly wicked, the Talmud clearly states: *mitzvah lishno*—one is obligated to hate him.

Some would seek to minimize this difference between our faiths. Eva Fleischner, a Catholic interfaith specialist and another *Sunflower* symposiast, argues that "Christians—and non-Christians in their wake—have misread, and continue to misread, [Christian texts] interpreting Jesus' teaching to mean that we are to forgive anyone and everyone. . . . The element that is lost sight of is that Jesus challenges *me* to forgive evil done to *me*. . . . Nowhere does he tell us to forgive the wrong done to another." Perhaps. But even so, a theological chasm remains between the Jewish and Christian viewpoints on the matter. As we can see from Samson's rage, Judaism believes that while forgiveness is often a virtue, hate can be virtuous when one is dealing with the frightfully wicked. Rather than forgive, we can wish ill; rather than hope for repentance, we can instead hope that our enemies experience the wrath of God.

There is, in fact, no minimizing the difference between Judaism and Christianity on whether hate can be virtuous. Indeed, Christianity's founder acknowl-

edged his break with Jewish tradition on this matter from the very outset: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God, Jesus argues, loves the wicked, and so must we. In disagreeing, Judaism does not deny the importance of imitating God; Jews hate the wicked because they believe that God despises the wicked as well.

## Part V - Medieval Codifiers about the Status of Christianity

### #1 - Rambam

#### רמב"ם, פירוש המשניות ע"ז

אלו החגים הנזכרים היו מפורסמים באותו הזמן אצל הנוצרים והנלוים אליהם. וכן כל חג אצל כל האומות בכל גלילות הארץ, אם היו עובדי עבודה זרה, יחויב בהם מה שזכר. ודע, שזאת האומה הנוצרית העומדת בטענת המשיח, על חילוף כיתותיה, כולם עובדי עבודה זרה, ואידיהן כולם אסורים, ונוהגים עמהם בכל התורה כמו שנוהגים עם עובדי עבודה זרה, ויום ראשון הוא מכלל אידיהן של גויים, ולפיכך אין מותר לשאת ולתת עם מאמין המשיח ביום ראשון כלל בדבר מן הדברים, אלא נוהגים עמהם ביום ראשון כמו שנוהגים עם עובדי עבודה זרה ביום אידן, וכך ביאר התלמוד

#### משנה עבודה זרה א:ד

עיר שיש בה ע"ז חוצה לה מותר היה חוצה לה ע"ז תוכה מותר מהו לילך לשם בזמן שהדרך מיוחדת לאותו מקום אסור

#### רמב"ם, משנה עבודה זרה א:ד

...ולפיכך יש לדעת שכל עיר מערי האומה הנוצרית שיש להם בה במה, רצוני לומר בית תפילתם, אשר הוא בית עבודה זרה בלא ספק, הרי זו העיר אין מותר לעבור בה בכוונה, וכל שכן לדור בה...

#### הלכות עבודה זרה ב:א

עיקר הצווי בעבודת כוכבים שלא לעבוד אחד מכל הברואים לא מלאך ולא גלגל ולא כוכב ולא אחד מארבעה היסודות ולא אחד מכל הנבראים מהן...

#### רמב"ם הלכות עבודה זרה פרק ט:ד

הנוצרים עובדי ע"ז הם ויום ראשון הוא יום אידם, לפיכך אסור לתת ולשאת עמהם בארץ ישראל יום חמישי ויום ששי שבכל שבת ושבת ואין צריך לומר יום ראשון עצמו שהוא אסור בכל מקום, וכן נוהגין עמהם בכל אידיהם.